*Itasca County Water Plan Implementation Committee*

*Regular Meeting Minutes:* **February 12, 2019**

SWCD Conference Room, Grand Rapids, MN

Chair Norman Miranda opened the meeting at 9:33 AM.

**WPIC members present:** Norman Miranda, Dick Lacher, Norley Hansen, Don Klandee, Mike Oja, Lester Kachinske, Tom Nelson, Dan Butterfield, Harold Goetzman, Cal Saari (SWCD Board; also present was Chad Severts (BWSR Conservationist), and *ex officio* SWCD Manager Andy Arens, and Water Resource Specialist Kim Yankowiak.

**1) Agenda**. **Motion** made to approve the agenda by Dan with second by Norley; **Approved**.

**2)** **Minutes.** **Motion** to approve the minutes, with additions after-the-meeting (in italics) from the October 9th and October 23rd, 2018 meetings by Cal, **Second** by Norley; **Approved**.

**3) Officers Nomination and Election. Motion** by Mike with Second from Lester that the WPIC officers from last year continue through 2019: Norm Miranda, President; Dan Butterfield, Vice President; Tom Nelson, Secretary. **Approved.**

**4) Schedule for 2019.**  **Motion** by Dan with Second from Harold; **Approved.** Regular meetings dates will be April 9, June 11 (corrected from Agenda), August 13, October 8 and December 10.

**5) County Commissioner Participation.** It was agreed that the Commissioners generally, or one so designated should be encouraged to attend WPIC meetings, since WPIC is an advisory committee formed by the County Board.

**6) Water Plan Update.**  A Letter and Resolution of approval from BWSR and the County Board, respectively, were included in the meeting packet. The County Board had requested on change to the Water Plan: removal of reference to the Itasca County Comprehensive Land Use Plan from 2000, for reason of being outdated. Unfortunately, both the CLUP full revision from 2007 with assistance from a paid consultant and participation of over 100 citizens, and then another from 2013 (the current CLUP), again with over 100 citizen participants, were overlooked. It should be noted that there have been very minor revisions for special issues amended to the 2013 Plan. The full 2013 plan can be seen here:

[***http://www.co.itasca.mn.us/DocumentCenter/View/632/Comprehensive-Land-Use-Plan***](http://www.co.itasca.mn.us/DocumentCenter/View/632/Comprehensive-Land-Use-Plan)

**7) Status of Upper Mississippi Headwaters: One Watershed / One Plan.** Included in the Agenda Packet was a cover letter from BWSR Director Doug Thomas describing the 1W/1P approach as voluntary for the included Counties, which outlined some of the advantages of this approach. The letter emphasized that participation would in no way change or challenge local government, and that continuing with only the mandated County Water Plan would remain an option. Non-participation would not jeopardize state block funding so long as the local Water Plan remains up-to-date. Implementation agreements on projects would remain local decisions within 1W/1P program.

Also in the Agenda Packet was the **Memorandum of Agreement** among the County Boards and their County SWCDs from Beltrami, Itasca, Cass, Hubbard, and Clearwater, outlining among other items, the Purpose, Terms, General Provisions, Administration, Fiscal Agent, and Grant Administration.

Discussion centered around the perceived difficulties for the County governments (the SWCDs are all enthusiastic). These difficulties center around loss of local control or unfunded mandates with threats to the tax base, with some resentments going back to the 70s regarding plans to expand the Wild and Scenic Rivers restrictions. The claim that this approach will “streamline” and “simplify” the planning process remains to be seen, since it will require cooperation of all participants, not just the local SWCD. Replacing the competition for grants between the counties with collective grants could be a help. Most of these concerns are addressed in the cover letter from BWSR Director Thomas. Only Hubbard remains hesitant, even though all have signed the Memorandum of Agreement. The Association of Minnesota Counties (AMC) also supports the 1W/1P. Beltrami (together with Itasca as having the greatest area of the watershed) has become the fiscal agent and leader of the 1W/1P project. Funding for planning and especially implementation is provided through BWSR, the State Clean Water Fund with recommendation from the Clean Water Council. Local Water Plans will be consulted in the planning and the PCA’s WRAPS program establishes prioritization through public meetings.

SWCD District Manager Andy will attend the upcoming County Board work session in support of the new concept. Additionally, a **Motion** by Dan, with Second from Mike, was made to compose a letter of support for 1W/1P to the County Board; **Approved**.

**8) Sampling/ Assessment Program.**  Kim will continue to utilize the Surface Water Assessment Grant (SWAG) to develop and implement 2019 activities. Greater Pokegema Lake Association has contracted for some independent sampling/testing.

**9) Work Plan for Water Management in 2019**. Preliminary musings on what to prioritize and how to deal with choice between traditional County Water Plan vs Watershed approach with cooperating counties. The current Water Plan just approved was a temporary extension, with another due 2022. It was noted that the current Plan no longer has the summary page listing each of priorities in outline as checklist (see Table 1 on p.8 of the old Plan). Dick recommend that a checklist of **Priority Concerns: Summary of Actions to be Taken** be reestablished for the Committee.

**10) Distributions from GRACF Funds.** The 1000 Land and Rivers Fund and the River Watch Fund each have dividend/interest available. **Motion** by Norm, with Second from Dick, to NOT take the distribution this year, rather add it to the fund balance; **Approved**.

**11) Wild Rice/ Sulfate Task Force.** Norm provided an update. A report was provided to the legislature, and then the TF disbanded. Recommend that a permanent TF be formed as this will be a continuing issue of concern. The Tribes have their own studies of this issue with a great deal of data that would be of use to the State.

**12) Adjournment.** **Moved** by Dick, Second by Mike at 11:08; **Approved**.

Minutes compiled and submitted by Tom Nelson, WPIC Secretary

*Secretary NOTE: Meeting listed in agenda for June 12 was apparent error (not second Tuesday);*

*changed to Tuesday, June 11.*

Next Meetings: County Board Work Session (1W/1P discussion), March 5th

Next WPIC Meeting: April 9

Remaining 2019 WPIC: June 11, August 13, October 8, December 10