

Minutes of the Land Use and Resource  
Management Committee Meeting  
November 7, 2008

Attendees of the meeting:

Cindy Brookes called the meeting to order.

Introductions were made followed by the nomination of the Chairperson and the Secretary. Dave Baker moved to nominate Mike Hall as Chairperson of this committee, followed by a second from Joe Perry. All in favor, motion carried. Ann Bishop moved to close nominations followed by a second from John Crumrine. All in favor, motion carried.

Joe Perry nominated Ann Bishop as Secretary, followed by a second from Dave Baker. Joe Perry moved to close nominations and elect by acclamation followed by a second from John Crumrine. Motion carried.

Mike Hall, the new chairperson, carried on with the agenda.

#### Rock Creek Watershed Outreach and Education

A survey was conducted regarding the Best Management Practices (BMP's) and why or why not the local farmers adopted them.

The focus this winter is on education and outreach. Three practices were chosen:

- Cover crops

- Buffer strips/grass waterways and filter strips

- Nutrient management

Part of the connection is to study how perceptions changed regarding the above-mentioned and how. Cindy spoke with Joe Bonnell and he said that by distributing a newsletter or fact sheets to local farmers this might be a form of education. Cindy also stated that Mr. Bonnell thought it was a good idea to hold a meeting with the farmers from the Rock Creek Watershed. After presenting the materials to the farmers, Cindy thought it would be beneficial to let the farmers choose what will and won't work and possibly suggest things that were missed in the survey. It was felt that all suggestions would have an economic undertone.

John Crumrine stated that the Soil and Water Districts have a great impact on the farmers, what they do and what they perceive as beneficial, because they are familiar with the farmers at the ground level. John suggested that the Soil and Water Districts gather the information and report it back to their boards.

It was suggested that surveys could be utilized instead of having a meeting to find out what the perceived issues are in the field.

The practice of cover cropping:

- 65% of farmers feel they are using a cover crop

- Farmer's perception of a cover crop different

The education portion can be modeled after what happened at Broken Sword. Mike suggested that it would be beneficial for someone in the watershed to plant a cover crop and have the education portion out in the field.

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Would it be beneficial to hold a meeting to share the results of the survey? Would it be more beneficial to couple the survey results with an educational portion? Maybe take something out of the survey and give a visual and how it can be used, then have a meeting with information about what was examined.

The meeting will be a roundtable discussion

Farmers will get the final say to improve in areas where we're deficient

Hopefully have Ed Lentz, OSU Extension Agent, to speak

He's devising his 2009 programs

Allow the farmers to have input into his programs

The committee is getting pushed to use education materials used in other places. Cindy stated that we need locally devised educational materials. The survey that was developed needs to get watershed buy-in. There was almost a 45% survey response in the Rock Creek area, even during harvest season. A morning and evening meeting can be set up to review the survey results, to accommodate those who may work a different shift. John Crumrine thought that it might be beneficial to work with Republic Elevator.

There hasn't been any information released from the roundtable discussion at the Output of Land Stewardship Program. The program was well received and well attended.

An outreach meeting was initially scheduled for the beginning of December but will have to move to later in December. Mike thought that the meeting doesn't have to couple with an education portion but simply relay the survey results. There may be some sort of onsite education at a later date. It was recommended to see what the response is from the farmers and plan from there.

Where from Here?

Implementation efforts

The Honey Creek Watershed grant will be ending shortly. The Grant Lakes Protection Fund Grant will be underway in a few weeks. So far there have been 125 samples taken for stratified phosphorus. Dr. Baker hopes that the momentum for the request of samples picks up. Mike stated that there are people outside the Honey Creek watershed asking for the stratified soil testing and the grant money that may accompany the testing. Mike tells them that currently there isn't grant money but the testing may open up a grant for them in the future. Mike thought that the request for testing may springboard other areas into a grant that resembles the Honey Creek watershed grant. It was thought that the Co-Os probably won't springboard the soil testing into another grant. John Crumrine thought that it might help determine the soil needs and the Co-Op could be instrumental in recommending the fertilizer needed according to the testing.

The Lake Erie Management is looking at nutrient management regulations and how they may impact this area.

It was felt that very few people inject or directly apply fertilizer because they don't have the set-up or the \$120,000 to implement the set-up and have it pay for itself.

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Crop rotation would help incorporate soil testing. Top application leaves the fertilizer on top of the leaves prolonging the vulnerability of the water. If rain falls during that time, a farmer can lose up to one half of the phosphorus if using no till.

True no-till is better than rotational no-till because you get more infiltration. The soil tilth is a real benefit.

There is a great effort by the EPA and ODNR with the issue of stream flow. They want to reverse flashing in our streams. Slowing water coming off the fields by using cover crops reduces peak flow therefore reducing the amount of flashing.

Dale Lewis stated that he strip tills with very little run-off. His water doesn't run onto his neighbor's field either. He broadcasts his fertilizer. It's not cost effective to put it on through injection. He has found that the top row warms up quicker and after flooding the ground isn't nearly as hard as expected. Prior to strip tilling they were no tilling for about ten years. Their problem, because they are in a floodplain, with a big rain there is excess moisture that stunts or kills the seedlings. He has found that there is more runoff with no till than strip tilling. The soil stratification may be different for strip tilling because the strips may be in a different location in the following year.

The committee has to keep in mind that the projects must be in the watershed plan. The plan should be updated periodically to address areas of issue. Honey Creek is addressing many of them. OSU is paying for postage but as far as implementation, the group is on its own.

With implementation there is a fear of double reporting. At the top level there appears to be an emphasis on watersheds instead of Soil and Water Districts. ODNR is pushing for watersheds and the districts are doing the work. If it appears that the watersheds have all the information, the Soil and Water districts fear that they may be eliminated because they depend on a match from ODNR. Commissioners may be thinking watersheds instead of Soil and Water Districts. Dr. Baker thought it might be beneficial if a watershed group highlight what work the SWCD's are doing. Mike said that generally it is more of a problem higher up; they don't get the whole picture of who does what work in regards to reporting. It is probably a consensus statewide that the SWCD's are competing for the same pot of money as the watershed coalitions. Cindy stated that there isn't a fear of her competing for the money next year because through the reporting it doesn't appear that there are enough accomplishments to justify another funding round.

Jocelyn stated that when she worked in Union County that they went to the Commissioners to support the grant and funding. They stated that they would only support their endeavors if they wrote a grant for the other watershed as well. Joe Perry pointed out that neither of the watersheds was funded by DNR.

Mike asked if the watershed funding had been cut last year. Cindy stated that it was cut by \$400. Mike stated that the Districts might have had their budgets cut by at least half. It was

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thought that it would be in the best interest of the districts to make the coalition look strong to allow access to more grants.

Mike Hall stated that Director Logan focuses on watersheds, but the local work is done by the soil and water districts.

The Federation was supposed to work on the idea of eliminating the double reporting but nothing has been heard from that group. John Crumrine asked if the group thought that the size of the SWCD may be a problem and that other groups may not experience this same problem? Mike pointed out that NRCS, SWCD's and watersheds always report on the same waterways and acreage, where before the reporting didn't overlap nearly like it does now.

John asked if the practices are reported by location. Mike stated that there is a HUC attached to the numbers but he doesn't know if it follows the reporting. SWIMS was implemented to assist the districts in reporting to ODNR. The software is cumbersome and hard to use. All SWCD's are not at the same level of use. There is a GIS portion that works some days and some days not. There isn't a HUC in SWIMS model. They are leaning towards using a GIS code instead of HUC. The pinpointed accuracy is not present.

Mike would like to take the graphs and data for the stratified soil sampling and push forward with another grant. There is a lot of interest. Once the farmers understand it they want it. Honey Creek is directly related to soil testing. Using this information may help acquire additional grant money to subsidize for equipment to be used in critical areas.

Orthman volunteered to bring in a strip till. Soil stratification is more of an issue in the west. Here is more of a water quality issue than crop production. Everything is going to a Best Economic Practice (BEP) instead of a BMP.

John Crumrine asked Mike if it would be beneficial to have the steering committee contact the reporting agents to have the double reporting rectified. Mike suggested that meeting with Cindy and the four SWCD's to see what can be done may work better. This group would only have the DPA's. The group would decide what to do and go from there. If the devised plan doesn't work, they would have to go to a Plan B. Jocelyn said that she would be more than happy to sit in on the meeting but she says that she doesn't have any control.

Cindy's reporting goes directly to Greg Naggit. After the districts and Cindy meet, they can summarize the issues of double reporting and address them with Greg.

Cindy stated that the Watershed Coordinator applications are due April of 2009. She doesn't feel that the application will rank very high because the reporting shows that the accomplishments weren't what were expected.

John Crumrine stated that we should review the land use plans of the surrounding counties. The Smart Growth effort expires this year, so it is the last year to get assistance from Chris Riddle.

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Ohio Phosphorus Task Force

Needs to address the phosphorus issues as impact on Lake Erie. Who will do things and the SWCD's will do the work. What are the full recommendations and the roll that the districts play in Environmental and Agronomic problems?

Cindy stated that at the last Ag luncheon that Commissioner Bridinger stated that the number one industry in Ohio is agriculture. If so, why do they receive the largest cuts? Mike stated that they as commissioners are looking into that issue hard.

Upcoming TMDL Study

The TMDL study should be starting soon. It covers Wolf Creek and the counties to the North. It will also include a portion of the Sandusky River – Tiffin because it needs additional monitoring. Katie may have more information on the study, and Cindy will check with her during the next meeting.

Meetings must be held for the study and it is unclear whether it is public agencies or open to the general public. The meeting will discuss what is being done. If there is additional information needed, it was suggested to form a subcommittee to acquire it. The kick-off meeting in Sandusky was primarily agencies. There was very little advertising.

Cindy stated that the grant application for the Clary sediment trap should be in by the end of the day if she receives the needed information. She also stated that the Black Swamp support of the Conservation Easement is going well.

Dr. Baker suggested that there be another Sandusky River Watershed Symposium and possibly have Jerry Hatfield, from the Great Lakes Protection Fund, speak. He would underscore the cover crops issues. Another possibility is Mr. Hatley to talk about Phosphorus.

Joe Perry moved to adjourn the meeting, followed by a second from John Crumrine.

The next meeting date will be sent out to the committee.

The next Sandusky River Watershed Committee meeting is on Thursday, December 4, 2008.