

Keigley Branch-South Skunk Watershed: Feedback from Listening Sessions

Little Wall Lake, Hamilton County. March 12, 2018 (9 people, open-house format)

Comments:

- Water quality data should be presented as pounds/acre of nitrogen or phosphorus lost, so that farmers can relate nutrient losses to their bottom line
- The watershed plan should include areas near Jewell and Ellsworth
 - These areas also drain to the South Skunk River
 - Residents on Little Wall Lake are still interested in pumping from Drainage Ditch 71 to maintain lake levels. DNR has not allowed this due to concerns about phosphorus and rough fish, but there may be potential for treating river water in containment site.
- Stream buffers don't work around drainage ditches because the dredge spoils block runoff. Need to filter water at surface tile intakes.
- Water quality monitoring on Keigley Branch should include tile outlets

McFarland Park, Story County. Feb 9, 2018 (28 people)

What goals or issues should be addressed by the plan?

- E. coli impaired waters
 - How many swimming areas do you need?
- Collect baseline data for South Skunk River and tributaries (dissolved oxygen, nutrients, and macroinvertebrates) and compare that to statewide averages
- Increase canoeable days on South Skunk by increasing baseflow
- Flooding
- Remove or redesign all low head dams
 - Safety issue for public
 - Liability issue for the landowner
 - Blocks fish passage
- Add primitive camping areas along the South Skunk
- Manage conflicts between recreational users of river and private landowners
 - Vandalism and littering by recreational users
 - Fences can block access
- Hold public and institutional landowners accountable
 - i.e. how is ISU managing their farmland
- Educate public about rules regarding
 - Bed and banks belong to landowner
 - Navigable water
- Stormwater management throughout Story County
- Educate public about cover crops and their benefits
 - Everyone in Story County should know what they are

What opportunities or strategies would make the plan successful?

- Identify obvious sources of nutrients and bacteria
- Keep up and improve biodiversity
 - Freshwater mussels, fish
- Connect with landowners and producers already interested in riparian improvement projects—help them get technical and financial assistance
- Teach kids boat skills, and get more people enjoying Iowa's waters
- Educate recreational users of rivers about their responsibilities
 - Be courteous, respect private property, haul your trash out
 - Water is owned by state but bed and banks may be privately owned
- Arkansas has law about glass containers and trash on navigable waters, could be a good model
- Encourage legislators to fund Natural Resources and Outdoor Recreation Trust Fund
- Clear signage and maps of public vs. private land along water trail, and regarding hunting and dogs
- Consumer pressure
 - Buy from farms and businesses that are good stewards of the land
 - Conservation projects can be a good public relations opportunity for businesses
- Communicate with Martin Marietta mine and other commercial landowners in the watershed
- Determine what proportion of landowners have current forest management plans and try to improve that over 5 years
- Dialogue between paddlers and landowners
 - Landowners that want to support recreation sometimes can't because of liability concerns

Fairview Lodge, Story City. November 13, 2017 (8 people)

What goals or issues should be addressed by the plan?

- Large livestock operations
- Fertilizer application rates in urban areas
- Development in floodplain
- Who's going to pay for the changes to be made
 - What grants and cost share programs are available?
 - Are these being adequately funded?
 - Who is ultimately responsible for bearing the cost of improved water quality?
 - Taxpayer or private landowners
 - Urban or rural
 - Local or state or federal
- Shared responsibility
 - Farmers and cities, upstream and downstream, we're all in this together
- Be prepared when funds become available
 - List of shovel-ready projects for State Revolving Fund (SRF) Sponsored Projects
- Groundwater usage
- Pharmaceuticals in wastewater
- Increased runoff from impervious surface and drain tiles

What opportunities or strategies would make the plan a success?

- Story City has free woodchips from ash trees that can be used for bioreactors
 - i.e. Clark Thompson bioreactor
- Wetlands for flood control and nutrient reduction in both urban and rural settings
 - i.e. stormwater wetlands by Ada Hayden

- Permeable pavers
- Get state to fund more State Revolving Fund sponsored projects
- Promote more diversified farming
 - Small grains, alfalfa and cover crops are more viable with livestock on the farm
- Review CRP policies for existing pastures
 - Is there currently an incentive to plow under pasture?
- Farmers with experience using a conservation practice are the most persuasive advocates
- Walk your land with another farmer or with conservation staff to get ideas
- Look at the incentives that drive farming of poor quality ground
 - Insurance payments
 - Taxes
- Leases can limit manure application, may slow down new CAFOs
- Incorporate some conservation practices into a pattern tiling project
- Reuse of drainage water for irrigation
- PR campaign to discourage flushing of drugs

Bessey Hall, ISU Campus, Ames. October 30, 2017 (13 people)

Goals and Issues to Address in the Plan

- Publicity and outreach
- Grants and funding sources
- Connect volunteers to conservation projects
 - 4H, ISU Soil & Water Conservation Club, ISU Environmental Science, high school students
- Establish demonstration sites for conservation practices
- Education
 - Share results of research into water quality and conservation practices
 - Legislative opportunities
 - Raise awareness of water quality in local streams
- Warn people about health hazards when water quality is poor
 - Recreation, livestock watering
- Drinking water
 - Nutrients and bacteria in private wells
 - Source water protection
 - Ames water is fine, but other communities may have concerns

Opportunities and strategies to make the plan successful

- Engage citizens
- Skunk River Navy—reorganize and continue trash cleanups
- Story County watershed mapping
- “Entering Watershed” road signs
- Envirothon: participants in this high school competition could take an active role
- Connect experts and speakers to schools and community organizations working on water quality
- Water quality trading: utilities can meet their requirements by funding projects in the watershed
- Landowners partnering with volunteers

- ISU Environmental Science has database of water quality monitoring (contact Hannah Carroll)
- ISU recreational clubs may be interested doing cleanup events

Gilbert City Hall, October 23, 2017. 31 people.

What goals or issues should be addressed by the plan?

- Limiting fertilizer use on farms and on lawns
 - Use only what is needed
- Land management to control agricultural runoff
 - Cover crops in upland, buffer strips along creek
- Drainage
 - Surveying, tiling
- Waste in stream
 - Clean up after creatures
- Decrease city runoff
 - Increase permeable surfaces
- Talk about conservation practices already in place
- Recreation goals should focus on improving Skunk River Greenbelt
 - Keigley Branch does not usually have enough water for canoeing
 - Walking trails along Keigley Branch are unrealistic—private land, creek meanders
- Large pig farms
 - Where does their waste go?
- Don't fence cattle out of creeks
 - Pasture is better than row crops up to edge of creek
 - Grazing can manage vegetation to stabilize slopes
- Impacts to upstream landowners
 - Impoundments for water quality, recreation, or flood control must avoid backing up water onto private land
- Development in floodplain
- Monitoring to track improvements over time
 - Start tracking pesticides and herbicides as well as nutrients
 - Correlate observations with rainfall

What opportunities or strategies would make the plan a success?

- Meet with farmers
 - Not during harvest
- Provide information to as many people as possible
- Work one-on-one with landowners in vulnerable areas
- Talk to farmers about ways they can minimize runoff
- Financial incentives for landowners
- Encourage grass near creeks (buffers, pasture, grassed waterways)
- Landowners along creeks or dredge ditches can prevent or report illegal dumping of trash or chemicals
 - Some farmers used to empty their sprayer tanks in the creek
 - Inform landowners of DNR hotline
- Address concerns about feasibility of cover crops
- Farmers who are already doing conservation need to know if they are doing everything they can or if there are more opportunities
- Inform elected officials
- Use watershed mapping
- Support educational programs in schools and elsewhere
- Soil injection of hog manure
- Work with cities to slow, stop, or treat runoff from streets and storm sewers
- Hire a county hydrologist