



Squaw Creek Watershed ZOOM Meeting Minutes Thursday, July 16, 2020 – 4:00 p.m.

Attending: Linda Murken Story County Supervisors, Steve Carlson Boone County Soil & Water Conservation District, Jean Eells Board Chair and Hamilton County Soil & Water Conservation District, Amber Corrieri and Tracy Warren City of Ames, Tanner Scheuermann Boone County Supervisors, Kayla Bergman Story County Soil & Water Conservation District (sitting in for Selden), Professor Laura Merrick, Kyle Ament Iowa DNR, Doug Gass ISU Extension, Sara Carmichael Iowa Rivers Revival and Prairie Rivers of Iowa staff: Mike Kellner, Dan Haug, David Stein and Penny Brown Huber,

Welcome and Water Testing

Jean Eells, Chair
S. Creek Watershed Management
Authority

No water tests were distributed ☹ keep in mind that tests can be mailed out.

Dan reported that nitrate levels are down in Squaw Creek after high levels in June. Nitrate typically goes down in late summer when crops are taking up nitrogen and weather is often drier.

Review and Approve Agenda

Approved

Review and Approve January 16, 2020 Minutes

Approved

Board Member Updates

WMA Board Members

Linda: Not too much to report due to covid-19, water quality group with the countywide assessment has recently met. Starting to plan next week.

Steve: NRCS is restructuring so the office has changed a bit. Jeremy Johansson is the new DC for Boone. Two new soil conservationists' have been hired for the Boone Office. Office is partially open for clients. Working with CDI to write the 5-year plan, supposed to put together a local working group meeting, likely to be virtual. Mapping out resource concerns for the county on where to conserve resources. Boone SWCD has a Facebook page now to promote things in the new coronavirus landscape. 700 letters have been sent out to local landowners to promote conservation practices. Prairie Pothole Habitat program is new and has high cost-share rates. 100 CRP applications accepted this spring, close to 2000 acres of cover-crops. Pollinator habitat grant with PRI and NFWF.

Tanner: Busy with parks, Covid-19 has been pushing people outdoors, which is fantastic. Worked with PRI on a monarch and pollinator conservation grant which would provide habitat for pollinators while providing water quality benefits along large rivers.

Tracy: Lots of rain in the last few days. Some good projects under construction: South 5th Street storm water wetland is under construction. Welch Ave redesign is underway, phase 4 has begun. A few RFPs are active, 2 stream stabilization projects. Working on a 10-year water quality monitoring plan with other municipalities throughout the county. Designating October as watershed awareness month. Working on videos and outreach materials for October.

Jean: Covid-19 has put strategic planning on hold in Hamilton County. Not a lot of new things has been approached. DC is retiring at the end of this month. A new DC will be hired eventually, but timeline is non-existent. Squaw Creek name

change did not go well. Hamilton County Supervisors have refused to take up the renaming issue. Hamilton is one of the counties with 4 active WMA's, so time and effort has to be split strategically.

Sara Carmichael: Iowa Rivers Revival Executive Director. Started in February, introducing herself to all WMA's in Iowa. Here to listen and be a resource. Trainings for River Restoration Toolbox will be happening in Clive and Fort Dodge; social distancing measures will be in place.

Old Business:

Update on NFWF project

David Stein, PRI Watershed Coordinator

See power point presentation attached.

Grants Application Updates

Penny Brown Huber/Dan Haug, PRI

- *Five Star and Urban Waters Restoration Grant* – oxbow project with Story County Conservation, learn about late summer/early fall. Written in January, a very exciting oxbow restoration project. This will be converted into an educational site after the grant is complete.
- *Iowa Partners in Conservation (NRCS)* – absentee landowner's conservation outreach, learn about in late summer. This idea stemmed from Jean's previous work with absentee landowners in urban areas. Working with landowners from out of state, and giving them the tools to implement conservation remotely. Start this project in Hamilton County, and then move into Hardin, Humboldt, and Franklin Counties over the multiple year grant. All virtual, so perfect for the Covid-19 landscape.
- *NFWF Grant* – connecting private lands to public lands in greenbelts In Boone and Story counties with pollinator plantings, learn about in early November. Trying to connect public lands with private lands to create a pathway for moving pollinators. Focus on Monarchs and Rusty Patched Bumblebees.
- *Conservation Innovation Grant (NRCS)* – working with the City of Ames to identify landowners north of the city to install nutrient reduction practices – learn about 10.31.2020. City Council had earmarked \$200K a year for projects in the watershed, so this relates to those funds and priorities. Where can Ames reduce nutrients the most for its investment? Matching the prioritization framework with DNR's credit system for these practices. Trying to figure out incentives for farmers to use these conservation practices.

Jean: Congratulations to all for submitting these grants.

New Business:

E coli data discussion – see attachment sent through email – can we choose some streams to focus on to improve?

Dan/Jean

See Attachment for full data and details.

Dan H. reported that these are the more recent results from Squaw Creek Watershed Coalition sampling. Originally coordinating with the DNR, now getting lab tests from ISU and City of Ames. Squaw and its tributaries have a lot of *E. coli*/fecal contamination. Management Plan did include an objective to address e coli contamination, and how we can spin up a project to address this. Lower Prairie Creek is very high in e coli, exceeding the standard in 7/7 sites. College Creek in Ames has historically had high e coli levels. There were some issues with faulty septic systems in the past, but recently has been improving. Clear Creek has high e coli. In Hamilton County, there are fewer hotspots, but exceeds thresholds when it flows into Boone and Story. Gilbert Creek may be improving due to improvements in City of Gilbert's WWTP, which will now include a UV treatment stage. Squaw Valley HOA will also be installing a UV treatment system.

Tracy: Moore Park needs to be evaluated, and sanitary sewers need to be checked.

Laura: Able to set up a collaboration with the State Hygienic Lab. We sent bacteria known fecal effluent from Gilbert and Ames to focus on human contaminants. The lab wants to offer human and animal bacteria identification in water sources as a public service, but on-hold due to covid-19. Looked into 2 methods for identifying human contamination sources; DNA-based identification, and optical brighteners found in laundry detergent. Of the 10 sites sampled for the hygienic lab, 9 samples were positive for human bacterial contamination. This was a successful collaboration between professionals and citizen scientists.

Kyle: The IA DNR has a few ongoing projects to address bacterial contamination in rivers/streams. They have had difficulty documenting improvements, so are hesitant to fund more through 319 program.

Penny: Dan, will all of these sites continue to be tested? Will we be selecting some of them to prioritize? Dan: Yeah, we're doing some monthly testing on 5 streams in Ames, and 10 other sites around Story County. 4 located in Squaw Creek Watershed. We should choose some priority sites.

According to Dan, Montgomery and Prairie Creek are on the impaired waters list. Tracy will take a look into Moore Memorial Park.

Linda: Frustrated that county government has limited authority to address water quality. Septic tank cleanout ordinance is on the table for Story County; we just need a public hearing. Have not heard back on IDALS program to work with drainage districts to create wetlands. Supervisors are drainage district trustees, but drainage law allows limited scope to address issues other than drainage.

The Board chose the following five streams to focus our attention on: Site SC11 Montgomery Creek 2, SC13 Prairie Creek 2, SC16 Squaw Creek above Gilbert Creek, SC26 Clear Creek Pammel Woods and SC31 College Creek near Elwood Drive.

Opportunities for Guests to Update WMA Members

Jean

Kyle: Has worked with other WMAs in western Iowa and wants to be a resource for WMAs in Skunk River basin as well. There is an opportunity for WMAs to learn from each other.

Mike Kellner: Re-doing the Prairie Rivers website, which includes WMA plans and minutes. Looks like we need to update member list.

Adjournment

Optional Field Zoom Visit – Jean Eell's Farm

Next Meetings **October 15, 2020, 4:00 p.m. – ZOOM**

Parking Lot: Next steps for the DNR and IDALS regarding support for WMA's