



Squaw Creek Watershed ZOOM Meeting Minutes Thursday, January 21, 2021 – 4:00 p.m.

Attending: Selden, Jean, Tanner, Mike K, Penny, David, Linda, Dan, Tracy, Neil, Amber, Rick, Laura Merrick, Mitch
Started at 4:02p.m.

Welcome

Jean Eells, Chair
S. Creek Watershed Management Authority

Review and Approve Agenda

Amendment: Move voting on new officers to the beginning. Motion passes
Linda moves to adopt, Tanner seconds. Motion passes.

Review and Approve October 15, 2020 Minutes

Tanner moves to approve, Linda seconds. Motion passes

Board Member Updates

WMA Board Members

Jean: Nothing new with the Hamilton County SWCD. Trying to host a cover crops farmer roundtable, Tuesday morning. Virtual meeting without the free food, no farmers/operators have signed up yet. minor change to Brian Dougherty will be the guest expert from ISU for the roundtable on manure spreading equipment.

Selden: Story County SWCD had a meeting on Wednesday. 5-year plan with CDI is coming along. Public meeting will be held 2/2/21. Each commissioner is trying to recruit up to 6 farmers to join the meeting. Looking forward to discussing the Story County Water Quality Monitoring Plan.

Amber: Tracy and Neil will update for Ames.

Tracy: Capital improvements plan has been presented to city council. New program introduced, Skunk River Improvements. Looking to do something between SE 16th and 13th to reduce flood levels. Trying to not increase flows after the DOT works on roads. Wetlands are an option, and now landowners are being contacted. About to hire an engineering consulting firm to assess Squaw Creek. Slope stabilization will be the primary activity. Partnering with the library for some virtual EcoChats, which will take place Marc through August. Subjects include gardening, trees, 3Rs, Water, Watersheds, Electric.

Neil: Ducks Unlimited meeting for a wetland design that outlets at Squaw Creek near Gilbert. Dotson subdivision will be the location. Excited for the new partnership. Wetland will be drainage point for over 2000 acres. Currently in the feasibility study. Working on a memo with the Iowa DNR, gaining credits for work on watershed projects. City of Ames will be the 4th community that does offsite nutrient reduction projects.

Linda: Is IDALS involved in the Dotson farm? Yes, IDALS was who put Neil in contact with Ducks Unlimited.

IDALS will hopefully be funding the project.

Tracy: Can the 3 drainage districts meet? Linda does not think so, but an informational session would be helpful. Low head dam removal is moving toward final completion. Planning a May 1st open house with a ribbon cutting event.

Tanner: Attended Boone County SWCD 5-year planning workshop. Very good and informational with some fantastic ideas. Public meeting is planned and coming up. New supervisor has joined the Boone Board of Supervisors. Sounds like he is interested in joining the WMA, will be a good addition.

Mitch: Drainage issue is in the hands of the Hamilton County Supervisors.

Linda: Will update on Headwaters of the South Skunk WMA in old business.

Old Business:

Update: Headwaters of the South Skunk River WMA Linda Murken

Linda: Thank you for everyone that wrote letters of support. DNR has granted the WMA a grant project worth \$100K. 28E signatories have been updated on current events. Boards will need to approve 28E agreements before joining to create a legal entity. Putting together an RFP for the watershed assessment. Directors will set up a technical committee to finalize the RFP. Story County work will hopefully be able to be transferred to the rest of the watershed. Hoping for an in-person meeting in a few months.

Update: Story County Water Monitoring 10-Year Plan Tracy Peterson

Tracy: PRI has been working really hard on the plan. Lots of data has been consolidated by Dan.

Dan: High e coli levels have been seen in Squaw Creek and around Story County as a whole. Lots of issues are out there that are overlooked by the DNR. We now have a solid approach to start tackling this issue. Surprised at all of the data that is out there.

Selden: Read through all 85 pages of the project, very impressive work. Are mechanical samplers installed, and will those be useful in a comprehensive sampling program? Mechanical sensors are in place for nitrate sensing, but they only do nitrate sensing, so no e coli or phosphate testing.

New Business:

Iowa Rivers Revival City/Town of the Year Award – Dan Haug
PRI nominated the City of Ames

Dan: We nominated Ames for this award. We should be hearing an announcement on this very soon. Can highlight our work and partnerships in Ames and beyond.

Tracy: Thank you to Dan and PRI for nominating Ames.

Jean: Webster City won a while ago, and they enjoyed celebrating the achievement.

Discussion of Priorities and Projects for 2021 WMA Board Members

Selden: Looking for ideas from everyone in the board. We need to expand water quality monitoring into Hamilton and Boone counties. We need to be more involved in outreach and communication. Farmer roundtables in Hamilton County have been very successful and can be a good model for the WMA.

Tanner: Agree with expanding monitoring in Boone and Hamilton Counties. Staffing is a limitation, but Boone County Conservation can be flexible for Boone County monitoring.

Penny: Final comments and plan publication will be finished in January. Will be presented to other partners, counties, and the public in the upcoming months.

Linda: The two projects mentioned are plenty for the board. Nice opportunities to build upon from member organizations.

Election of Chairman of the Board of Managers Jean

Jean is stepping down, will stay on as Hamilton SWCD representative.

Linda nominates Selden, Selden accepts.

Jean motions to vote, motion passes. Congratulations to Selden!

Opportunities for Guests to Update WMA Members

Jean: Are farmers using Zoom?

Mitch: Some of the younger ones are, but the older ones barely use it.

Linda: Several landowners from the drainage districts have been using zoom.

Rick: Farmers will use the internet for things they deem important, i.e., drainage issues and finances. Visibility and transparency is very important

Laura: Faculty member in agronomy at ISU. Working on water quality monitoring in the south branch of Worle Creek. Visualization of data opportunity with Nitrate strips. Will be moving toward a Master of Public Health at U of I.

David: Nectar Network. Currently working on a state pollinator conservation plan for Central Iowa. Updating the current lists of Species of Greatest Conservation Needs (SGCN) and doing further analysis of total conservation land (Public, Reap, CRP, EQIP, etc.) Monitoring program is also being developed. Will be presenting this project to reps from the 9-county central Iowa area over the next couple of months.

Jean: Sat in on a soil health conference in South Dakota. Cattle owner used some virtual fencing for cattle grazing, could be used for other livestock in the Squaw Creek watershed. Goats might be able to be trained to do some forest restoration. Project is called "Vence".

Adjournment

Adjourned at 5:05

Next Meetings in 2021 – April 15th, July 15th and October 21st