



Lost Nation-New Landing
River Conservancy District of IL
100 Park Drive; Dixon, IL 61021



WATERSHED PLANNING COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES APRIL 1, 2009

11:30-12:15

1. Introductions - Dan Pierce, Natural Resources Conservation Service – Dan said that the NRCS has opened up the amount of conservation things that they cost-share on to a lot more items, for example, timbers, managing wood lots, and stream bank erosion control. Nationwide, the whole approach is to get watersheds to implement an active planning group to come up with ideas and issues so that the NRCS can use some of their programs and open doors to other potential technical assistance from other agencies.

2. How did we get here? - Steve Larry, Lost Nation River Conservancy District- Steve said that the RCD is a steward of the lake, however, over the last two years, they have created a new focus goal from “How do we maintain what we are stewards of?” to “How can we improve what we have for this and future generations?”. One of the realizations that they came to was that the 10,000 acre watershed that we are a part of is that we are just a small part of the entire watershed and what we are doing as landowners and stewards of the land and what goes through our land, affects more than just our lake, it goes someplace else, namely, to the Rock River and eventually the Mississippi River. We need to move from maintaining to improving the property that we have and once we have improved it then we can move into a maintaining stance. To do this, they enlisted the help of a gentleman named Joe Rush, who has a background in lake management – he has worked with the RCD getting outside agencies involved in studying the level of the lake and the amount of silting in the lake and in giving the RCD guidance on how to better manage the lake. About a year ago, the RCD enlisted Rebecca Olson to help the RCD with obtaining grants to help support the watershed and with the watershed planning committee. The RCD’s first goal is to improve the ecosystem of Lost Lake, with ecosystem being the key word here as it is bigger than the lake. One of their current projects is a lake shoreline stabilization using riprap and vegetation of the RCD properties and a cost sharing rebate program for private lake front property owners to stabilize their shorelines. Tonight they are going to interview two engineering firms about the design of a silt basin on Babbling Brook, which empties into the lake, just as they do on Clear Creek. They are also going to look at a lake dredging program to get some of the existing silt out of the lake. By stabilizing the shorelines removing the silt, and reducing the amount of silt coming into the lake, the water clarity of the lake will improve, hopefully enabling native vegetation to grow in the water, thereby giving the fish breeding grounds and increasing the fish population so that they can reduce the amount of money that they spend on stocking the lake with fish. Another program that they have implemented is a Phosphorus Free Community

campaign for all the people that live around the lake and in the community to get them thinking about what they use on their lawns and when washing their cars. They met with Dan and Dave with the NRCS and talked about how the RCD can be better stewards of the watershed themselves and they would like to partner with other landowners in the watershed to form a watershed planning committee and extending the services of the RCD in terms of paying for Rebecca Olson and Joe Rush's services and even looking down the road at possibly participating in some cost sharing and financial assistance with local landowners in terms of helping improve how they handle the watershed in their area.

3. Why is watershed planning is important? –Dave Meisenheimer, NRCS – They brought maps that the IDNR provided that shows the boundary lines of the watershed and a relief map of the area. A watershed is an area where the water falls and it all drains into a particular outlet. The Clear Creek Watershed, of which drains into Lost Lake, is 10,000 acres covering Lee and Ogle counties. What we do in this watershed affects the Rock River, the Mississippi River, and eventually the Gulf and New Orleans area. It's important to create a watershed plan so that they can determine what exists in the watershed and then they want to identify the resources, which can be remembered by the acronym SWAPAH (Soil, Water, Air, Plants, Animals, and Humans), that are important to them in their plan. They also want to identify what is happening in the watershed, for example, like increased farming. And finally, they want to shape the future and make a positive change to the environment and take advantage of opportunities of technical and financial support.

9 Steps of the Watershed Planning Process:

Phase 1.

1. Identify Resource Concerns
2. Determine Objectives
3. Conduct a Resource Inventory
4. Analyze the Resource Data

Phase 2

5. Develop Alternatives
6. Evaluate Alternatives
7. Make Decisions
8. Implement the Plan
9. Evaluate the Plan

1. Inventory streams to identify causes and sources of pollutant loading.
2. Estimate load reduction expected from plan management standards.
3. Describe any other depth management practices (DMP) and identify critical areas where they could be implemented.
4. Estimate technical and financial assistance needed so that the plan will have some solid numbers that they can ask for grant money for.
5. Identify educational components to enhance public understanding of the project.
6. Schedule the implementation of management measures.

7. Measure their milestones.
8. Determine the progress that they have made.
9. Monitor their success.

The watershed planning committee will have an important part in the watershed plan a – they will be the ones to actually help implement it. There will be another committee called the technical advisory committee, which would be made up of agencies like the Fish and Wildlife Service, the EPA, the NRCS, and the DNR that will be able to advise in a technical capacity on some of the questions that the planning committee might need information on.

Some examples of point source contamination that can affect the watershed would be a construction site, livestock producers, agricultural row crops, construction activities, unstable stream banks, & septic systems. They want to estimate the load reductions of each of those pollutants and develop an informational and educational campaign using fact sheets and brochures, and educational activities.

They need a watershed mission and watershed description, which Rebecca has done but doesn't have with her today. They'll need to determine which conservation practices will achieve their goal, how much money it will cost, and where they can make the biggest impact. Eventually the planning committee will turn into an implementation committee.

4. What are the incentives for watershed planning? - Dave Meisenheimer – the landowners live and work here, and raise their families here and you want them to be raised in a healthy environment and to ensure that the watershed remains productive for agriculture for our current and future generations. Soil productivity refers to soil conservation measures to control erosion on farms, residential area, and timber areas. They want to promote clean water and healthier natural resources in this watershed and be proud of it. As stewards of the land, they have an impact on that land and they have the opportunity to be a part of the planning process.

At Bureau County, a 500 square mile watershed, Dave had the opportunity to get a grant and hire a coordinator for their watershed plan. Steve asked Dave what types of results he has seen in terms of the watershed plan and benefits to the landowners. Dave said that they have had grants issued for cost sharing of stream bank stabilization.

Marian Baker asked about the Nachusa Grasslands' project to take down trees; she would think that would be a negative effect and Rebecca replied that it would seem that way, but it's not. The Nature Conservancy has taken aerial photographs from the 1920's that they are looking at to try to figure out what the area was because now that there are no natural prairie fires that would normally not allow forests to grow there, they have trees growing where they didn't before. A lot of the trees may not be of good quality, like box elders or non-native trees and so they are basically weeds even though it's hard for people to think of them as such. The downstream portion of the watershed used to be forest and the upstream portion used to be all prairie land and the mission of

the Nature Conservancy is to restore that. Steve said that it would be a good question for Bill Kleiman; he has talked to him and walked the land with him and feels that he is a good steward of the land.

12:15-12:45: Lunch

12:45-1:30

5. What are the opportunities for watershed planning and implementation? Dan Pierce and Rebecca Olson, Olson Ecological Solutions – Rebecca said that they don't want to come in and tell the landowners what they should do, rather they want it to be the landowners' plan and they can provide the support that they need. With technical support, they will be able to identify the situations that they have and come up with great ideas of what needs to be done. On the Nature Conservancy's land, they wrote a grant for the IEPA to see if they could do something about an erosion problem that they are having. Rebecca showed pictures where you can see the silt falling into the stream there and then she showed a picture of a weir (or rock wall) that juts out into the Kishwaukee River. That may or may not be appropriate for the Nature Conservancy due to the size difference of the two bodies of water. Rebecca showed an example of a very successful project that was done on the south branch of Kishwaukee County near Monroe Center and Kirkland. One landowner initiated a program that originally involved 7 landowners who applied for a grant that has grown to involve 13 landowners over a six-mile stretch of river between two forest preserves. The property had cropland on it that the farmers would only be able to produce crops on every three years and so was not profitable to them. The program lasts 15 years and gives them an annual payment for planting the property back into trees, which was financially better for them and better for the environment because 400 acres of flood plain got planted into trees to prevent the continued loss of soil. The grant gave them a lump sum to help take care of the property and protect the forest that they just put in with a 30 year easement on the property. The DNR really liked the program – agencies like when property owners partner up like that.

Dan said that he wonders what would have happened if they had started this program 5 years later because 3 weeks ago they just started a sign up for a new program that is part of the stimulus program signed by the president EWP floodplain easement program, of which he has 6 applications in his office, where the NRCS will pay \$3,200 an acre for a lifetime easement to take it out of production to plant trees and have the NRCS own an easement to restore the land back to its natural condition. With farming they have been promoting no-till in the area with fuel prices the way they are. Dan said that there are two sides to the EPA, the regulatory side and the non-regulatory side and the NRCS' office usually works with the farmer to help them meet the regulatory requirements of the EPA. Most of the farmers and landowners deal with the regulatory side and tend to cringe when they have to get involved with the EPA, but actually, they do have a lot of very useful programs that can benefit them in many ways. Rebecca Olson said that she has never worked with the regulatory side of the EPA.

6. What is involved in the planning process? – Dan Pierce – They are trying to get a group of individuals together who have a strong conservation background. He wants the group to start thinking about what their concerns are then they would get the planning committee together to go through the nine steps that Dave mentioned. The inventory of the watershed would be done from Dan's office – they've already started some of it, their state office has a process where they randomly choose six different 160 acre sections to do an inventory on (about 10%) of the watershed to find out what the erosion rate is with the current practices in place.

7. What are your resource concerns? – Dan Pierce - It's not just about soil erosion and water quality. Usually they try to get resource concerns from the property owners; they want to find out what is bothering them. By working as a group, they can get different agencies involved and get the help that they need. They ask questions like "How does our watershed rank with other watersheds"? Dan said that most everyone there has a conservation plan and he strongly encourages that everyone get an updated plan. Dan asked Dave how many meetings Bureau County had before they started seeing results and Dave said 3 or 4 meetings a year and the plan started in 2006 and took about two years to get into place.

8. Who would like to be involved? - Dan Pierce Steve said that Dan has brought some of the conservation minded landowners in the watershed together today to explain what the vision is that they came up with and he asked them if this was a direction and opportunity that they would be interested in participating in. If there is an overwhelming yes, then they would sign up to be a part of the committee with the understanding that he is interested enough in what the outcome could be that he is willing to spend some time with this group doing whatever they feel that he can bring to it and what resources the RCD can bring like paying for Rebecca and her time. She has already started drafting a watershed planning program. If they were to try to do this without someone like Rebecca, they would have a daunting task before them, however; she has already done the homework on it. Dave asked how the RCD pays for Rebecca's watershed planning services and Steve replied that the RCD is funded by tax money from district members and they budgeted some of that money to pay for her grant writing services this past year and they will budget to fund her grant writing and watershed planning this year. Rebecca said that it is also possible to get some of her services paid for by grants. The grants can come from State, Federal and private sources. Discussion ensued about various grants and programs that are potentially available. Dan said that they need to develop a plan first so that they can apply for the appropriate grants and programs that fit their needs. The participants indicated that they would be interested in participating.

9. When is the next meeting? – Dan Pierce – June 22, 7:00PM at the Lake Court Center