



Lost Nation-New Landing
River Conservancy District of IL
205 Cuyahoga Drive; Suite A
Dixon, IL 61021



WATERSHED PLANNING COMMITTEE MEETING

June 22, 2009 7:00 PM to 9:00 PM

Lost Lake Community Center; 404 Lake Court; Dixon, Illinois

Attendees: **Ed Bettner** **Joe Baker** **Bill Kleiman**
 Dave Point **Rebecca Olson**

1. **Determine leadership necessary, nominate and elect leadership for the committee:** No leaders determined yet.
2. **Updates since last meeting:**
 - a. **Natural resource inventory completed so far:** Rebecca explained how she originally came to work for the RCD as a grant writer and has since taken on the role as facilitator for the WPC and the TAC. The RCD has applied for a couple grants; however, to be more successful in obtaining grants, it is helpful for a watershed planning committee to determine the needs of the watershed and the technical advisory committee to give the WPC the information (resource inventory) on the watershed that it needs to make an informed decision. Someone said that the RCD hired Applied Ecological Services about 15 years ago to do an analysis of the problem with the silt and they told the folks that they need to work with the watershed, however, it they weren't successful because it is difficult to work on the watershed.
 - b. **Formation of Technical Advisory Committee:** The Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) met for the first time on June 8th and identified a few individuals from different governmental and environmental organizations that would have the expertise that they would need to make informed decisions. They will be able to provide the WPC with watershed inventory data, for example the fisheries biologist said that she has data that goes back a long time that she can provide. When the WPC comes up with resource concerns, the TAC can either validate them or give reason why they don't think it is a concern or give them other concerns to consider. Someone asked how much money would be available to do something on the watershed and Rebecca said that it depends on the project. The Natural Resource Conservation Service has a lot of programs available and sometimes a program will have a set dollar amount for a particular project, for example on erosion control they may provide a certain amount per lineal foot that they will provide. The RCD has offered to work with the NRCS to pay for part of those projects and the Fish and Wildlife service has a Partners for Wildlife program and has committed funds and is really straightforward, for example, if you do an erosion control project on this stream they will give them up to \$2,500 in seed. There are other grant organizations that have different criteria like funding 60% of the project or some that may not have a set criteria. The more partnerships and money coming from other places, the better your chances of getting aid. It is also common to combine grants and programs.
3. **Discuss current conditions of the watershed:** Discuss current conditions in terms of agricultural and natural resources. For example, what land uses currently exist? What types of agriculture,

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productivity, recreation opportunities, natural areas, wildlife habitat, etc.? After the significant rainfall that they had this morning, the current conditions are the worst that they have been in a long time. The watershed is dominated by row crop agriculture with water runoff and flashy hydrology. Someone asked if we have acreage from the south creek and the north creek and someone said that they do and on the plus side they have a lot of grass on that property from the Nachusa Grasslands and the Orland property and grazing land. They were looking at whether they can turn a row crop farm into a grazing farm and make money at it but so far has been difficult. There are a lot of natural springs that help keep the lake full and someone said that on their property they can put down something and get water from natural artesian springs. They have a well that they only dug 30' deep and it has never gone dry. The houses in the watershed may or may not be using fertilizer and insecticides on their lawns. Some of the streams have really bad bank erosion. There are many soil types in the watershed. Rebecca asked how the productivity and someone said that there is a really good vein on the east edge of the watershed that holds a lot of class A soil. The closer you get to the river, the poorer the soils get. A lot of recreational opportunities in the watershed – fishing, boating, hiking, horseback riding, hunting. A lot of wildlife.

4. Identify strengths and obstacles. Identify strengths, challenges, limitations, and obstacles as a community and as individual producers.

a) Strengths:

- The watershed has a fair amount of cover that holds the soil – more than 64% agricultural (20% pasture, 23% cropland, & 21% row grass) and 36% is covered by forest.
- The lake at the end of the watershed acts as a sediment pond before the Rock River, which helps the Rock River, but doesn't help the lake out. The golf course has less sand on it because of this.
- Conservation tillage practices in use because they don't like to see their fields wash away
- Nature Conservancy has a Mackinaw demonstration farm where they try to take the tiles and run them into a wetland to clean it up before it is released further into the watershed.
- Abundant Wildlife
- Good quality soil
- Lots of recreational opportunities
- Producers more educated about conservation farming than previous generation
- Many owner/operator farmers
- Area is not commercialized

b) Challenges:

- Dollars rarely support the agricultural producer. Bill Kleiman said that a future answer could come if someone invents perennial corn so that they don't have to plow as much. He also mentioned using drainage tiles to catch their water before they release to the next property.
- Nitrates in water runoff
- Most people in the watershed have done the standard conservation projects and they may not invest in anything more.
- Cannot control macroeconomics, corn and soybeans are annual crops that have proven profitable vs. having grazing land for raising beef cattle; it's also easier for a farmer to do row crops longer than raising cattle. Cattle are typically grazed only on land that cannot be row-cropped.
- Stream banks eroded
- Stream specialist said that Clear Creek is in pretty good shape so may be harder to get funding than a stream that is worse off.
- Houses within the subdivision introduce fertilizers and insecticides into the water table

5. Prioritize natural resource concerns. Prioritize the concerns for the watershed and resource issues.

Top Priority

- **Minimize Creek Bank Erosion**

- **Landowners & operators find that it is easiest to work with stream banks.**
- **Begin with creek bank stabilization, then work into the waterways & fields**
- **Landowners would probably allow stream bank improvements**
- **Work with landowners that are currently not practicing steam bank conservation**
- **Save Class A & other Soils**

Secondary Priority

- **Minimize row crop erosion, including tiling, waterways and filter strips**
 - i. Difficult to control erosion in row crops
 - ii. Easier to farm straight rows vs. contoured rows
 - iii. Developing wetlands to filter runoff
- **Implement best management practices as pilot projects to use as examples, test procedures, and determine if others want to try it**
 - i. For example: break tiles to create a wetland to reduce nutrients in runoff
 - ii. Nature Conservancy has an example of this

Low Priority

- **Reduce runoff, use of fertilizer and other pollution from lawns**
 - i. Residential: Mowed Lawns and Possible Chemicals Used On Them

Other Priorities

- **Protect Wildlife and the rural lifestyle**
- **Maintain opportunities for recreation, hunting, and fishing**

Rebecca stated that the protection of the Rock River was a high priority to agencies that she has talked to for grant funding and that they would like to see projects started at the top of the watershed first. Whatever they do to the watershed will help the Rock River. Lost Lake acts as a sediment basin for the Rock River – they would like to make smaller basins before the lake to increase the quality of the water coming to the lake.