



MEMORANDUM

To: MCWD Board of Managers
From: Becky Christopher, Minnehaha Creek Watershed District
Brian Beck, Minnehaha Creek Watershed District
Date: June 20, 2019
Re: Long Lake Subwatershed Assessment Discussion

Purpose:

To provide the Board an overview of the partnership in the Long Lake Creek Subwatershed and update on the status of the subwatershed assessment. Staff also would like to use this discussion to synchronize expectations on approach, roles, and level of effort in the Long Lake Creek Subwatershed with the Board and gauge Board interest in pursuing an EPA 319 Small Watershed Focus Grant.

Background:

In 2016, the three cities in the Long Lake Creek Subwatershed (Medina, Long Lake and Orono) passed resolutions to enter a system-wide partnership to pursue water quality improvement in the Long Lake Creek Subwatershed. The partnership outlined potential projects to pursue, which included regional infiltration projects, wetland/stream restoration, and carp management. In parallel, the Long Lake Waters Association (LLWA), a non-profit entity composed of residents throughout the Long Lake Creek Subwatershed, formed to protect and enhance water quality within the Long Lake Creek Subwatershed.

Between 2016 and 2018, the partnership between the District, Cities, and LLWA continued to strengthen, however, the sole focus of the partnership efforts was on carp removal. At that time, the District was supportive of partner interest in carp removal, but were hesitant to contribute funding since the scientific understanding of carp impacts on water quality were limited.

In 2018, District staff realized the momentum of the Long Lake Creek Subwatershed partnership was a unique asset, but the local partners lacked the technical foundation needed to make science based decisions. The Board and District staff decided that a holistic approach to diagnosing water resource issues and identifying the pathway to improved water quality would require short-term technical leadership and long-term support from local partners for implementation.

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Therefore, the District has assumed two primary roles in the partnership, which include convener and technical adviser. The District has the technical capacity to synthesize the water quality and biological data to identify drivers of poor water quality and ecological health within the Long Lake Creek Subwatershed. The District has also assumed the role of convener for the group as a regional unit of government spanning the three cities, which allows the District to weave the partner's land use plans with natural resource needs to develop a comprehensive roadmap for achieving water quality goals in each impaired lake.

The Cities play a key role within the partnership bringing their local knowledge to the group and will be critical in overlaying their planned improvements with natural resource issues identified by MCWD. The Cities of Long Lake and Medina and the LLWA have also partnered to accelerate our understanding of how carp impact water quality in Long Lake.

Long Lake Waters Association (LLWA) has taken on a stewardship role within the community, outlining the importance of addressing water resource issues through a watershed wide approach that reinforces the importance of the regional partnership. They play a critical role in raising awareness and support for the partnership's efforts.

In keeping with that role, and with the support of the partners, the Board authorized staff to apply for a Board of Soil and Water Resources (BWSR) Accelerated Implementation Grant (AIG) to assess natural resource issues, identify costs to improve water quality, and develop a roadmap for the partnership to reach water quality goals. In 2019, the Long Lake Creek Subwatershed partnership was awarded \$112,000 from BWSR for a watershed and carp assessment in the Long Lake Creek Subwatershed.

Discussion:

Project Update

The Long Lake Creek Subwatershed Assessment is being led by the District to assess the water quality and ecological conditions to develop a roadmap for water quality improvement within the Long Lake Creek Subwatershed. The progress made on the project to date includes:

Carp Assessment:

- 1) MCWD has implanted tracking devices in 200 carp to identify potential locations for carp barriers. MCWD and WSB staff will be implanting approximately 600 more carp PIT tags throughout 2019 to obtain a better understanding of where carp migrate throughout the year.
- 2) Carp Solution has set up real time carp tracking sensors at the County Rd. 6 pond and at the outlet of Long Lake. These sites will be tracking the movement of the tagged carp throughout 2019.

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Watershed and In-Lake Nutrient Assessment:

1. MCWD has collected sediment cores on Wolsfeld and School Lake to characterize in-lake phosphorus cycling.
2. MCWD staff have made a cursory selection of wetlands to receive in-depth ecological health assessments. MCWD will have a wetland specialist from Wenck Associates recommend other potential wetlands for in-depth assessment.
3. MCWD has begun compiling water quality and flow data within the Long Lake subwatershed.

Communications:

MCWD has developed several communication items based on partner input. The three items that have been created include a fact sheet, social media, and a project web page.

1. **Fact Sheet:** MCWD has developed a fact sheet that provides an overview, deliverables, and timeline of the Long Lake Creek Subwatershed Assessment. City partners indicated that the fact sheets were useful items to update their Councils on the progress of the project.
2. **Social Media:** MCWD is using Twitter, Facebook, and Splash to promote activities in the Long Lake Creek Subwatershed. The LLWA indicated that they have been forwarding Long Lake related Twitter and Splash posts to their members to communicate.
3. **Long Lake Creek Subwatershed Assessment Web Page:** MCWD has also developed a public web page for the Long Lake Subwatershed Assessment. This page has similar content to the fact sheet. However, the web page can be updated more frequently than the fact sheet. A link to the web page is located [here](#).

Funding Opportunity

District staff have identified the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) 319 Small Watershed Focus Grant as a potential funding source for the Long Lake Creek Subwatershed. The EPA 319 Grant is a potential source of implementation funding through the EPA that is administered by the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency (MPCA). The MPCA selects 10 watersheds, which each receive \$1,000,000 over a 16 year period (\$250k every four years). The MPCA's goal for this funding is to provide "*..longer-term funding to a select number of Focus Watersheds*".

Staff want to use this opportunity to check in with the PPC to ensure that staff and the Board stay in sync in terms of the District's approach, role, and level of resource commitment in the Long Lake Creek Subwatershed.

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Next Steps:

Pending feedback from the Managers, District staff plan to bring a request for authorization on July 11th to pursue the EPA's 319 Small Watershed Focus Grant.

If there are questions in advance of the meeting, please contact: Becky Christopher or Brian Beck at bchristopher@minnehahacreek.org or bbeck@minnehahacreek.org, respectively.

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