



Lower Grand River Watershed Project

Information and Education Subcommittee Minutes

Meeting Date: February 23, 2004

Time: 1:30 p.m. – 3:15 p.m.

Location: Kent County Road Commission – 1500 Scribner, Grand Rapids

Prepared By: Donna Stevens

Attending: Katy Brandt, Jason Buck, John Koches, Patricia Pennell, Bonnie Shupe, Donna Stevens, Don Stypula, Janice Tompkins, Peggy Weick, Dan Wolz

Item 1: Introduction

Mr. John Koches brought the meeting to order and began introductions. Mr. Koches passed out and went over the agenda for the meeting.

Item 2: Review of Minutes

The committee reviewed the minutes from the February 3, 2004 meeting. The committee accepted the minutes.

Item 3: Lower Grand in the News

Mr. Dan Wolz passed out an article from the Wyoming Advance (Published on 2-17-04 on page 5). The article is entitled “Communities Unite for Grand River Study.” Other members of the committee mentioned that they had seen the same article in different newspapers.

Item 4: Member Presentations

WMEAC: Ms. Patricia Pennell began the discussion on projects that WMEAC is currently working on.

- Rain Garden project- The reason for starting the project was the EPA phase II stormwater regulations. WMEAC first began stormwater education when the stream search-monitoring program began. The Rain Gardens of West Michigan Project is designed to connect people to their watershed and make them aware that they are part of the problem, then to give the solution of planting a garden. WMEAC is designing educational materials for the Great Lakes Basin. Currently, WMEAC has produced a brochure, poster, and exhibits for this project. All of these products refer back to the project’s web site.
- Mr. Koches inquired about funding.
 - Ms. Pennell’s response was that the Rain Gardens of West Michigan Project is being funded by: local foundations, a City of Grand Rapids contract, WMEAC is also receiving lots of gifts. Ms. Pennell is also earning a small amount of money as a consultant. In the future WMEAC will package their communication materials and help support the project by marketing the products.
 - WMEAC believes that their communication materials are effective. They have built evaluations and learning objectives into every product.
- Mr. Koches asked how long the Rain Gardens of West Michigan Project would go on.
 - Ms. Pennell replied that as long as WMEAC could continue getting funding the project would continue. WMEAC is seeking municipal contracts currently.
- Ways that the Rain Gardens of West Michigan Project has been effective:
 - One measure of effectiveness is the number of invited presentations that Ms. Pennell has received. Ms. Pennell has noticed that people have actually changed the way they do business. Example: A landscaping company has changed their name and has started doing only native landscaping and rain gardens.
 - People have also started to take information from the web site to build their own rain gardens.
 - Companies are calling WMEAC to see how they can be associated with the project.
- Mr. Koches asked if there was an evaluation for Ms. Pennell’s presentations.
 - Ms. Pennell replied that she has not done any evaluations on her presentation, but she is looking into incorporating one.
- Challenges with the Rain Gardens of West Michigan Project:
 - Some people are not following the directions when building their rain gardens and the gardens are failing.

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- Ms. Pennell printed out a list of what WMEAC has worked on. This list was given to Mr. Koches. Ms. Pennell also produced a list of how WMEAC has been effective.
- WMEAC has been effective in watersheds by starting watershed councils. Mr. Tom Carry of WMEAC can give more information to interested parties.
- Adopt-A-Stream and the Rain Gardens of West Michigan Project both have contracts with the City of Grand Rapids; these two projects are part of the City's official stormwater education for the public. The city has given a tax break for businesses that participate for an entire year with a specified level of activity. Mr. Corky Overmeyer will have more information on this topic.
 - Ms. Bonnie Shupe commented that cities would have a lot more freedom doing tax breaks than townships.
- Universities are a big help to WMEAC. Universities will provide a location for events, the professors will announce it during class and usually a lot of students will show up.
- Mr. Koches asked if it would make sense to have collaboration on a watershed level. Ms. Pennell believed that it would be beneficial. Mr. Koches continued with suggesting a regional center with satellites for Adopt-a-Stream, and some kind of support for watershed councils.
 - Mr. Wolz added that a festival or conference could really tie the Adopt-a-Stream and watershed councils together.
- Mr. Koches asked Ms. Pennell if there was something on her "wish list" that she would like to do.
 - Ms. Pennell replied that Adopt-a-Stream is a very frenzied and varied program. WMEAC would like to have a conference where all of the groups could come together; however, there are large scheduling conflicts. More people on the staff would really lower the amount of running around. Ms. Pennell added that there had been some attempts made at regional planning. Ms. Cynthia Price would have more information on this topic.

DEQ: Ms. Janice Tompkins continued this topic with DEQ's Expectations.

- Ms. Tompkins brought "Blue Books" to hand out, and a photo copy handout. Ms. Tompkins asked everyone to turn to Chapter 9, page 31. The blue book contains what the DEQ wants as a bare minimum for a 319 project. The photo copy handout has what requirements are for CMI grants. There has not been much discussion for an I/E strategy for CMI plan.
- Lessons Learned and Challenges:
 - People with these types of projects are not spending enough time learning about the audiences. Not enough focus groups. We do not know how effective we are being. Mr. Andy Bowman and Ms. Tompkins are working on this aspect.
 - What is appropriate on a large watershed level and what is appropriate on a small sub-watershed?
 - Are we going to want an organizational structure that is really going to take the place of the sub-watersheds or an organizational structure that is a service?
- Mr. Koches proposed that we need more discussion before answering the above mentioned questions.

FTC&H: Mr. Jason Buck continued this topic with FTC&H's activities. Mr. Buck handed out a list with information on who is working on stormwater education, what kind of materials they have produced, and what they would like to do in the future.

- FTC&H will be beginning a public education committee and will be submitting a letter to all of the phase II communities asking if they would like to join. This committee is only for phase II communities.
- Mr. Buck indicated a need for someone to sit on both committees whether it be himself or someone else.

Mr. Koches would like a summary of what each organization in the subcommittee would like to do in the future. Also, what each organization feels that they are good at. WMEAC has already submitted their summary. Mr. Wolz submitted a pamphlet on what the Clean Water Plant is doing, and what they would like to do.

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Item 5: 9 Criteria Conference in Lansing

Ms. Tompkins brought to the members a short synopsis of what occurred at the 9 Criteria Conference in Lansing that took place on February 23, 2004.

- The East Side of Michigan feels that they cannot affect master plans.
- Most of the watersheds are thinking about writing a TMDL. The EPA would like individual or watershed groups to identify pollutant sources and BMP's. Also the EPA would like these individuals or watershed groups to identify the pollutants that are going to be removed.
- The 9 minimum measures focuses on pollutant loadings. This focus will limit our ability to educate individuals on behavior changes and getting the necessary laws passed. Fourteen years experience in watershed management has shown that the biggest impact of pollutant loadings is on small sub-watersheds. Starting at a regional level is the best way to get the necessary laws passed and to influence behavior changes.

Item 6: AWRI Matrix of Pollutants and Sources

Mr. Koches needs more specifics on how involved the council would like to be in creating the table on page 34 of DEQ's "Blue Book".

Ms. Tompkins replied that nothing could be truly answered until the visioning committee meets next.

Mr. Koches brought up the AWRI Matrix and proposed that work be continued on it while the subcommittee looks at the big picture.

Ms. Tompkins brought up evaluations. She stated that we, as a committee, want the Lower Grand to be more of a service to the sub-watersheds

Ms. Bonnie Shupe would like the AWRI Matrix to be more comprehensive and give it a potential evaluation tool.

Mr. Koches asked the members if AWRI should begin working on the Matrix in order to start fulfilling the grant, while the committee concentrates on something else. When a large portion of the Matrix is complete, Mr. Koches will bring the Matrix back in for review.

The members agreed with Mr. Koches on this plan of action.

Item 7: Watershed Education Center (WEC)

Mr. Wolz has agreed to be the chair for the WEC. Mr. Don Stypula has agreed to be on that committee.

Mr. Koches proposed that they put together a 6-page paper (more like a proposal) on the WEC.

Ms. Shupe suggested a WEC mobile (like the library's bookmobile) be made to move the center around the watershed at different events.

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Ms. Tompkins suggested that the group work with the chamber of commerce and develop some kind of calendar of events to pass around the watershed.

Item 8: Next Meeting

March 22, 2004 at 1:30 at

Kent County Road Commission
1500 Scribner,
Grand Rapids, MI 49504

For the next meeting:

- Ms. Tompkins will bring in the focus group rough draft (if available).
- Each organization will bring in a “wish list” of things they would like to see their organization accomplishing.
- Mr. Wolz will give the group an update on the WEC