

Meeting Minutes
North Raccoon River Watershed Management Coalition Annual Meeting
Friday, July 19, 2019 at 10:00 am

The quarterly meeting of the NRRWMC was called to order at 10 am by chair Keri Navratil, city of Storm Lake. Roll call was completed with 24 members present via a combination of in-person attendees, conference call and proxy vote which represents a quorum. (The acronym NRR in these minutes stands for the North Raccoon River watershed.)

Motion to approve minutes from the April meeting by Mark Hanson, seconded by Steve Reinart, and approved via unanimous voice vote.

Key finding of Hydrologic Assessment Report and Implications in the watershed management plan by Dan Gilles, IIHR:

The hydrologic assessment from the University of Iowa IIHR team was completed since the April meeting and shared with the board for review. The IIHR team modeled how the hydrology of the NRR would change under four different scenarios: (1) prairie conversion (pre-settlement conditions to provide a baseline), (2) full implementation of cover crops in agricultural land across the watershed over several years, (3) distributed wetlands and farm ponds, and (4) a mix of 50% cover crop coverage on ag lands with wetlands and farm ponds.

These four different scenarios were modeled under 6" rainfall and the results were as follows. Scenario 1 showed a 20-30% decrease in stream discharge. Scenario 2 reduced runoff and stream flows by 5-10%. Scenario 3 included 25,000 acre-feet (meaning a volume of water that would cover 25,000 acres of land with a sheet of water one foot deep) of water storage distributed appropriately and widely in sub-basins throughout the watershed. This resulted in around 2% reduction in stream flows. Scenario 4, which is a blend of scenarios 2 and 3, resulted in 2-5% stream flow reduction.

Why did Scenario 3, with wetlands and pond storage result in such a low stream flow reduction? To answer this question, Dan ran models under different volumes from 25,000 ac-ft up to 675,000 ac-ft which would be the equivalent of Saylorville Lake reservoir distributed in small pieces throughout the NRR. Only in the "Saylorville Reservoir" scenario did stream flows in the NRR reduce by more than 10%. A more mid-line scenario of both 100,000 ac-ft and 250,000 ac-ft reduced stream flows by 5-10%.

Discussion:

From this assessment, the board can better decide what a realistic goal can be for the NRR to address flooding. An afternoon meeting will follow this morning board meeting to explore this topic with the planning services team. Another point was made that rainfall has increased more than 5% in recent years due to climate change, so really this assessment shows how much investment is needed just to maintain historical trends in flooding. To truly prevent floods, goals would have to reach above increasing trends in rainfall. Following this, it was mentioned that the most damaging moment in a rainfall event is the initial surge, and any structure or practice that can lessen the surge effect would be good.

Update on planning services by EOR-RDG team led by Pat Conrad, EOR:

Pat Conrad presented an overview of the planning process to date and provided an overview of today's workshop to follow. Pat Boddy presented the major focuses of the planning team – 1) stormwater management and flooding, 2) agriculture, 3) natural resources and recreation, 4) social, education and policy goals.

Q&A Highlights: 21 of the 75 HUC-12 sub-watersheds have had an ACPF assessment run.

Update on Swan Lake by Pete Nadolny and Nate Anderson, WHKS:

From Nate – this could be the largest and best project in the Iowa Watershed Approach portfolio, but it has the potential to eat up all the available funds

Restoration of 300-acre historic lake that drains a 10,000-acre area. Could pull 400-500 cfs of flow which would be a significant flood reduction with roughly 1500 ac-ft of storage. Looks like project is not going to go through due to a landowner not willing to participate in the program. WHKS and Marius Agua, watershed coordinator, held months of outreach and scoping meetings with key stakeholders and landowners. Most of the land in the Swan Lake area is held by Pocahontas county and areas for potential easements were identified. One single landowner held out due to concerns about public access and trespassing onto their property.

Feedback from the board included that in the beginning concerns were known from multiple landowners in the Swan Lake area that were not addressed, including what would be the maintenance costs to Pocahontas county for Swan Lake, and how would neighboring drainage be affected?

The WHKS team is moving on next week with other potential sites by reaching out to landowners, surveying, design and environmental reviews.

Update on Women's Forum within NRRWMC by Jamie Benning, ISU Extension:

Jamie is working with Marius following the Watershed Training Academy to host a forum specifically for women landowners and women in the watershed who may be less engaged but play a vital role. Jamie, Marius, and women board members met over the phone in between meetings to start to map out a strategy for outreach to women landowners.

Financial Update by Cara Elbert, NW Iowa Planning and Development Commission

Have spent 14.98% of available HUD grant funds. Funds must be spent by September 2021. We are behind on spending down available funds to be in grant compliance.

Facebook page for NRRWMC: (<https://www.facebook.com/NorthRaccoonRiverWMC/>)

Motion to adjourn by Jack Butler, seconded by Doug Ollendike and approved by voice vote at 11:45 am. Our next quarterly meeting will be Friday, October 18, 2019 in Lake City.