



UPDATE: DNR HOLDS PROJECT ADVISORY TEAM MEETING

The Project Advisory Team (PAT) for the Straight River Groundwater Management Area (SR GWMA) met on Thursday, March 26, 2015 in Park Rapids.

Project Background: The Minnesota Department of Natural Resources (DNR) is establishing a Groundwater Management Area in the Park Rapids area to enhance its ability to make better decisions on groundwater appropriation permits. The DNR shares responsibility for managing groundwater resources with public sector partners, as well as with individuals and businesses that use groundwater. The DNR is responsible for permitting high volume groundwater users, for collecting information on groundwater resources, and for providing technical assistance that supports groundwater conservation.

AGENDA TOPICS:

Review of Sections 1-5 of the SR GWMA Plan

Members reviewed DNR response to comments from the last meeting. Members agreed that the format was helpful. Review and discussion continued on the Draft Plan, Sections 1-5. These Sections include:

1. Introduction
2. Boundary and Area Background
3. Goals and Objectives
4. Status of the Area
5. DNR Actions

Members continued to review the Draft Plan and worked in small groups to answer three questions:

- 1.) Based on the notes from previous meetings and on DNR's response to comments so far, what ideas would you emphasize to DNR that it should incorporate as it makes changes to the draft plan?
- 2.) What additional ideas for changing the draft plan would you like to suggest?
- 3.) What hasn't been said yet that needs to be said about the draft plan and the GWMA project?

Responses and additional questions were shared in the large group. Members continued to ask for additional background information on the state of the aquifer and the watershed. Suggestions were made for additional modeling and a detailed analysis of the "build out" potential for irrigation water use or any additional high capacity use. Members shared that there is still a need for more detail on water conservation practices and suggested that promoting and requiring conservative use of water is a reasonable approach. This is an important piece because conservation will most likely be the tool used to reduce water usage.

Several members commented that we need to focus more on outreach and education. The public needs better information so that they have facts. For example, explain the role of evaporation from surface waters and compare it to water use from wells.

In response to questions about water quality and contaminants, it was noted that state agencies are expected to provide agency specific comments as addenda to the plan, including from MN Dept. of Health, Pollution Control Agency and Dept. of Agriculture.

Status of Section 6—Implementation

The Draft Implementation Schedule that incorporates recommendations from the PAT was distributed for review. The Draft Implementation Schedule shows three areas: the GWMA/District, Statewide, and When (Yr.). Members were asked to provide comments on the Draft to DNR.

Meeting Conclusion and Summary

Members commented that the planning process has been transparent and open and will continue to be.

PAT member Tod Becker commented, “We are all taking time from our schedules and we are communicating. We’ve come a long way from the first meeting. We are trying to get to the same goal, but we want to do it responsibly. We’ve done that by letting the facts lead us and leaving emotions behind. This is a plan for the next 50 years; it takes time.”

The Draft Plan will be posted online for public comment in April and May. One or more community public meetings will be held in June in Park Rapids. The next meeting of the PAT is scheduled for Thursday, June 11 at 9:00am-12:00pm at a location to be determined. Advisory Team meetings are open to the public and time is provided for attendees to offer comments and ideas.

CONTACT INFORMATION

For more information on this project, please contact Tim Crocker – DNR Project Manager at 320-616-2450, ext. 232, tim.crocker@state.mn.us. You can also [visit the DNR webpage](#).