



UPDATE: DNR HOLDS PROJECT ADVISORY TEAM MEETING

The Project Advisory Team (PAT) for the Straight River Groundwater Management Area (GWMA) met on Thursday, September 18, 2014 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:

ConAgra Foods Water Use & Conservation – Brian Flynn

Brian Flynn provided an overview of the best management practices (BMPs) that ConAgra Foods has implemented to conserve water. Strategies include wastewater pretreatment, screening and grit removal, and metering at their pumping facilities. Their anaerobic digester produces excess biogas that is used to replace about 25% of their energy use. The company has weekly permit reporting requirements and has been awarded eight certificates of commendation for compliance since 1997 from the MPCA.

MDH's Role in Water Resource Management – Beth Kluthe, MN Dept. Health

Minnesota Department of Health has responsibility for state well code and the federal Safe Drinking Water Act requirements. The well code is a construction standard to protect the aquifer and ensure that wells operate efficiently. They do compliance sampling, sanitary survey (public water supplies inspection), plan reviews, financial assistance, and operator training and certification. MDH brings expertise and resources to problems when working with other partners.

MDA's Nitrogen Fertilizer Management Plan (NFMP) – Luke Stuewe

Luke Stuewe outlined the Minnesota Department of Agriculture's NFMP, which is the state's blueprint for minimizing groundwater contamination from the use of nitrogen fertilizer. The plan was prompted by increasing irrigation and nitrogen fertilizer use. The plan recognizes the limits of best management practices (BMPs) in highly vulnerable areas to mitigate and prevent nitrate from reaching groundwater. For example, in sandy, well drained soils row crop production may result in some fertilizer reaching groundwater, even with BMPs. In some cases Suggested Alternative Management Tools (AMT) that goes beyond BMPs to reduce nitrate leaching will be needed. Examples of AMTs include planting perennials, introduction of lower nitrogen use varieties, land swapping, or purchasing easements in

sensitive areas. The proposed timeline for implementation of the NFMP is three years (a typical crop rotation cycle).

MPCA's Role in Water Resource Management – Bonnie Finnerty

The Minnesota Pollution Control Agency deals mostly with chemical and industrial chemical releases. They also have a regulatory function for feedlots, waste water treatment facilities, landfills, petroleum contamination (spills) and emergency response. The PCA is responsible for an ambient groundwater monitoring network with about 230 monitor wells used to collect water quality data in developed and undeveloped areas throughout Minnesota.

Advisory Team Discussion

Participants worked in small groups to consider the questions: Thinking about the presentations, how can agencies best coordinate responsibilities to manage groundwater resources in the GWMA? And, how does this information affect you?

A sample of responses:

- Work together to coach and educate ground water users. The goal should be to avoid regulations and restrictions that may put the state at an economic disadvantage
- There is interest in continuing efforts at increased communication; increased sharing of resources, wells, data, etc., and looking for opportunities to do more.
- As a water user, we are hoping to learn and help lead the industry in sustainability and stewardship

NEXT MEETING OF THE PROJECT ADVISORY TEAM (PAT)

The next meeting is scheduled for November 20 at 9:00am-12:00pm at the Northwoods Bank in Park Rapids, MN. The Advisory Team meetings are open to the public and time is provided for attendees to offer comments and ideas. At the November meeting PAT will begin review of the draft plan.

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](#).