MINUTES

SOUTHEASTERN WISCONSIN REGIONAL PLANNING COMMISSION

PLANNING AND RESEARCH COMMITTEE MEETING

Tuesday, February 7, 2023 1:30 p.m.

SEWRPC Office Building
Commissioners Conference Room
W239 N1812 Rockwood Drive
Waukesha, WI 53187

Meeting Occurred in Person and Virtually via Video and Telephone Conference

Present: **Excused:**

Commissioners:

Michael A. Crowley, Chairman	Charles L. Colman
Donna Brown-Martin	Jonathan Delagrave
Brian Holt	James Ladwig
Dewayne Johnson	Natalia Minkel-Dumit
Mary Knipper	
Robert W. Pitts	
Jeffrey D. Schleif	
Peggy L. Shumway	
David L. Stroik	

Staff:	Benjamin R. McKay	Interim Executive Director
	Elizabeth A. Larsen	Director of Administration
	Thomas M. Slawski	Chief Specialist Biologist

ROLL CALL

Chairman Crowley called the Planning and Research Committee meeting to order at 1:32 p.m. Roll call was taken, and a quorum was declared present. Chairman Crowley indicated for the record that Commissioners Colman, Delagrave, Ladwig, and Minkel-Dumit had asked to be excused.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES OF THE NOVEMBER 1, 2022, MEETING

Chairman Crowley asked if there were any changes or additions to the November 1, 2022, meeting minutes. There were none.

On a motion by Mr. Stroik**,** seconded by Mr. Pitts, and carried unanimously, the minutes of the November 1, 2022, Planning and Research Committee Meeting were approved.

REVIEW AND CONSIDERATION OF THE PROPOSED AMENDMENT TO THE REGIONAL WATER QUALITY MANAGEMENT PLAN: AMENDMENT TO THE SUSSEX-LISBON SANITARY SEWER SERVICE AREA

Chairman Crowley asked Mr. McKay to review the proposed amendment to the adopted regional water quality management plan pertaining to the Sussex-Lisbon sanitary sewer service area. A copy of the preliminary draft of the SEWRPC Staff Memorandum dated January 4, 2023, concerning this matter was provided to the Committee members for review prior to the meeting.

Mr. McKay indicated that by letter dated September 12, 2022, the Town of Lisbon requested that the Commission amend the Village of Sussex and Town of Lisbon sanitary sewer service area tributary to the Sussex wastewater treatment plant. Mr. McKay also indicated by letter dated September 20, 2022, the Village of Sussex wastewater treatment plant has capacity to handle sewage flows from the proposed area to be added. He stated that the sewer service area plan was updated in 2011 for the Village of Sussex and the Town of Lisbon. He then stated that the purpose of the amendment would be to include certain lands located outside, but adjacent to the currently adopted sewer service area.

Mr. McKay directed the attention of the Committee members to Map 1, which identifies the proposed area to be added to the Sussex-Lisbon sanitary sewer service area. He stated that the subject area encompasses approximately one acre and is located south of Good Hope Road and west of Townline Road (CTH V). He then noted the subject area does not contain any environmentally significant lands and includes one homesite that is currently outside the planned sewer service area. Under the Town's comprehensive plan, the future land use is designated as low-density residential.

Mr. McKay stated that the proposed addition of about one acre to the Sussex-Lisbon sanitary sewer service area tributary to the Sussex wastewater treatment plan represents an increase in the planned sewer service area of less than 1 percent. He noted the inclusion of the existing homesite in the subject area increases the population by about three people. The population that could be accommodated under full development of the sanitary sewer service area is approximately 17,213 people. The year 2050 population range for this area in the regional land use plan is 21,490 to 27,100 people.

Mr. McKay stated that the Sussex wastewater treatment plan has a design capacity of 5.1 million gallons per day (mgd) on an average annual flow basis. The current average annual flow to the Sussex wastewater treatment plan is about 2.25 mgd. The estimated sewage flow to be generated by the area proposed to be added to the sewer service area is about 375 gallons per day, therefore, the treatment plant has adequate capacity to treat sewage flows from the subject area.

He then said that a public hearing will be scheduled to be held at the Lisbon Town Hall to receive public comment on, and reaction to, the proposed sewer service area amendment. The amendment is consistent with the land use component of VISION 2050, the regional water quality management plan, and Chapter NR 121 of the *Wisconsin Administrative Code* governing the preparation of areawide water quality management plans.

Mr. McKay stated that the staff recommendation is for the Committee, contingent upon any public comments received at the public hearing, to recommend that the Commission amend the Sussex-Lisbon sanitary sewer service area. Upon adoption by the Commission, the amendment will be provided to the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (WDNR) for approval and the WDNR will then provide the amendment to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency for certification.

In response to an inquiry by Mr. Stroik, Mr. McKay stated that due to the failing septic system of the home, incorporating this one home into the sanitary sewer service area does not set a negative precedent and it

will be beneficial to the homeowner. Mr. Schleif stated the sewer main is in Good Hope Road and thus easy to connect the home to the sewer system.

There being no additional questions or comments, on a motion by Mr. Schleif, seconded by Mr. Stroik, the Amendment to the Sussex-Lisbon Sanitary Sewer Service Area was unanimously recommended by the Committee for adoption by the Commission.

PRESENTATION ON THE REGIONAL NATURAL AREAS PLAN UPDATE

Chairman Crowley introduced Mr. Thomas Slawski, Chief Specialist-Biologist to the Committee and asked him to provide an update on the Regional Natural Areas Plan Update.

During Mr. Slawski's presentation the following comments and questions were made.

In response to an inquiry from Mr. Schleif, Mr. Slawski stated that the natural areas plan update is guided by a technical advisory committee, which helps to make the significance determinations using ranking criteria that were developed for the first edition of the plan and remain in use today. The technical advisory committee ultimately determines the rank of a given site based on the recommendations provided by Commission staff. Commission staff base their rank determination on information collected in the field and may include relevant information collected by other entities such as the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (WDNR), county park staffs, non-profit organizations, citizen scientists, and municipalities. The Statewide significance rank is reserved for the best quality remnants remaining in the Region.

In response to an inquiry from Mr. Holt, Mr. Slawski stated that about 80 percent of the sites are a carryover from the current the plan, but new sites have been discovered by SEWRPC staff during field inventories.

In response to an inquiry from Mr. Stroik, Mr. Slawski stated that invasive cat-tail and phragmites most likely originated from European populations. The invasive Phragmites subspecies likely established from rhizomes carried over the Atlantic Ocean in ship ballast. A native Phragmites subspecies occurs within the Region and throughout the State but is not nearly as aggressive or common as the non-native subspecies. It is important to ensure ID is correct before starting control efforts. The invasive narrow-leaved cat-tail hybridizes with the native broad-leaved cat-tail to generate hybrid cat-tail. Hybrid cat-tail is probably the most common invasive cat-tail in the Region. The State-prohibited Graceful cat-tail is also present in the Region, which has been vouchered from both Milwaukee and Waukesha Counties.

In response to an inquiry from Mr. Holloway, Mr. Slawski stated that sites currently in a natural state are included in the plan, but other sites can be upgraded if they meet the criteria.

In a response to an inquiry from Mr. Holt, Mr. Slawski stated that the site profile locations, descriptions, and associated maps will be posted on the SEWRPC website. The site is anticipated to be interactive.

In response to an inquiry by Mr. Pitts, Mr. Slawski stated that all sites in Chiwaukee Prairie have been combined into one site. This change was proposed by Commission staff and accepted by the technical advisory committee at the December 19, 2019, meeting. The following sites will be combined to reflect WDNR ownership (and/or recommendation of WDNR ownership) and management within Chiwaukee Prairie State Natural Area. Included are the SEWRPC survey ID and 2010 designation for reference. SEWRPC species lists and rare species records for individual units will not be combined and will remain separate.

- Chiwaukee Prairie, SNA-10135 (NA-1)
- Tobin Road Prairie,10133 and 10134 (NA-2)
- Carol Beach Prairie, 10131 (NA-2)

- Barnes Creek Dunes and Panne,10132 and 10829 (NA-2)
- Carol Beach Low Prairie and Panne,10128 and 10131 (NA-1)
- Carol Beach Estates Prairie, 10129 (NA-3)
- 104th Street Mesic Prairie,10130 (NA-2)
- First Avenue Prairie, 11382, 11383, and 11384 (NA-2)

In response to an inquiry from Mr. Holloway, Mr. Slawski stated that over half of the land in Chiwaukee Prairie is protected and not accessible to the public. He also stated that Ownership for each parcel within a natural area or critical species habitat identified in the natural areas plan is tracked within a geodatabase. One key feature of the database is that it identifies sites that are protected or publicly accessible. For example, a site could be protected under a conservation easement held by a private conservation organization but not be accessible to the public as it is held in private ownership.

In response to an inquiry Mr. Holloway, Mr. McKay stated that the plan update will be provided to all counties and communities in the Region, and the plan will include recommendations for protecting various sites.

In response to an inquiry from Mr. Pitts, Mr. Slawski stated that sites can lose their designation because they were developed, farmed, logged, or the plant community was otherwise physically altered to a point that a representative community no longer exists. Additionally, natural communities can degrade over time to a point that they no longer meet natural area criteria, and thus lose their designation. The most common example of this is conversions of sedge meadow or marsh to a monoculture of invasive species such as hybrid cat-tail or common reed grass. Degraded areas can be restored and reassessed for inclusion in the plan. There are several examples of sites initially considered degraded that were eventually included within the plan as a critical species habitat or natural area following management. Mr. Holt stated that the report should present recommendations that will help communities protect important sites.

In response to an inquiry from Mr. Johnson, Mr. Slawski stated that the report will identify tools for site management and monitoring. Many of these sites do not currently have management plans. Funding is available from a variety of sources to control invasive non-native species throughout the Region. However, controlling invasive species is just one piece of the puzzle. Projects that seek to control invasive species and restore native plant and animal communities are generally higher priorities for funding. In addition, grantors may prioritize funding control efforts of a particular species in a particular area over others. A good example of this is the funding of early detection- rapid response projects, which seek to control invasive species before they become widely established and difficult to eradicate. Large established monocultures of invasive plants are difficult to control without continued follow-up action, especially if underlying root causes of establishment cannot be addressed by grant activities or related projects (altered hydrology, legacy nutrients, or natural disturbance regimes). Generally, grant funding for cat-tail or phragmites control in the Region is difficult to obtain, but partnering with other organizations, governmental units, or non-profit organizations on larger projects could improve the appeal of a grant application. Mr. Holt stated that there are many grant opportunities, but counties and communities may be in competition with each other for the funding. Mr. Slawski noted that the Commission partners with many governmental units and non-profit organizations to apply for grant funding involving a variety of projects throughout the Region. By request, the Commission will assist with grant applications or the development of site management plans (which may improve the ranking of a grant application), particularly for County-owned environmental corridors, natural areas, and critical species habitat sites.

Mr. Stroik noted that the University of Wisconsin Extension provides educational outreach regarding grants and site management tools. Mr. Slawski noted that is the type of information that will be presented in the plan and as part of the web-based “Management Tools and Resources” for communities and other entities looking for such information.

In response to an inquiry from Mr. Holt, Mr. Slawski stated that some waterbodies are poorly ranked in the plan due to low quality conditions, but the great majority of lakes and stream reaches are unranked due to lack of water quality and biological data. The ranking schemes are based on a maximum score of 100 points and are comprised of sub-categories nested within major categories. For lakes, the major categories and their assigned maximum points are as follows:

> Lake Score (≤100) = Morphology and Classification (≤7) + Water Quality (≤8) + Macrophytes (≤20) + Shoreline Buffer (≤5) + Connectivity (≤15) + Fisheries (≤25) + Natural Heritage Inventory Listings (≤20)

For streams and rivers, the major categories and their assigned maximum points are as follows:

> Stream Score (≤100) = Morphology, Modification, and Classification (≤7) + Water Quality (≤8) + Macroinvertebrates (≤20) + Riparian Buffer (≤5) + Connectivity (≤15) + Fisheries (≤25) + Natural Heritage Inventory Listings (≤20)

For the lake ranking, the top-scoring 5, 15, and 25 percent of lakes were designated as AQ1 (Statewide significance), AQ2 (County-wide or Regional significance), and AQ3 (local significance), respectively. This resulted in 10 AQ1 lakes, 22 AQ2 lakes, and 23 AQ3 lakes, which are distributed across each of the coastal counties except for Milwaukee County. The highest-ranking lake, Lulu Lake in Waukesha County, attained a total score of 68 out of 100 possible points.

The stream ranking used the same percent assignments as the lakes; however, due to the high number of stream reaches with no available fish or macroinvertebrate survey data, only 5, 15, and 25 percent of reaches with at least one survey were used instead of all stream reaches. There are 16 AQ1 stream reaches, 29 AQ2 reaches, and 30 AQ3 reaches, which are distributed across each of the coastal counties within Southeastern Wisconsin. Several streams, such as the Milwaukee, Mukwonago, and Oconomowoc Rivers, had multiple reaches that were separately ranked as AQ sites. The highest-ranking stream reach, a section of the Mukwonago River, attained a total score of 71 out of 100 possible points. Several stream reaches attained an AQ ranking despite the absence of either a fish or macroinvertebrate survey, as these reaches scored highly in other categories.

In response to an inquiry from Mr. Holloway, Mr. McKay stated that Commission staff uses the information and recommendations from the natural area plan when assisting counties and communities with updates to various types of local plans.

In response to an inquiry from Ms. Knipper, Mr. Slawski stated that a lack of funding and awareness both contribute to diminished management of natural areas and critical species habitat sites. For example, many private landowners are unaware that they own a natural area or critical species habitat site until their community or county requests the Commission review natural resource features on the property. Landowners may lack the knowledge, experience, or desire to maintain a given natural feature. A lack of sufficient funding may restrict the quality and quantity of management taking place. Many organizations have done a great job of seeking funds via grants and utilizing a strong volunteer base to accomplish management goals.

Mr. Crowley asked if there were any other questions about the presentation. There were none.

NEXT MEETING

The next meeting of the Planning and Research Committee will be held on May 2, 2023.

CORRESPONDENCE/ANNOUNCEMENTS

Chairman Crowley asked Mr. McKay if there were any correspondence or announcements. Mr. McKay stated that the March Quarterly meeting will be held in Kenosha County.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business to come before the Committee, on a motion by Mr. Pitts, seconded by Mr. Schleif, and carried unanimously, the meeting was adjourned at 3:01 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Benjamin R. McKay
Interim Executive Director

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