

**SUMMARY NOTES OF THE JULY 29, 2021, MEETING OF THE
OAK CREEK WATERSHED RESTORATION PLAN ADVISORY GROUP**

INTRODUCTION

Because of the COVID-19 safety protocols, the July 29, 2021, meeting of the Oak Creek Watershed Restoration Plan Advisory Group was held virtually via GoToMeeting. The meeting was called to order at 9:03 a.m. by Laura Herrick, Chief Environmental Engineer, Southeastern Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission (SEWRPC). Attendance was noted by SEWRPC staff via the GoToMeeting participant listing.

In attendance at the meeting were the following individuals:

Advisory Group Members Present

Robert AndersonProfessor of Biological Sciences, Wisconsin Lutheran College
Benjamin BenninghoffNatural Resources Basin Supervisor,
Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources
Greg Failey Environmental Manager, Milwaukee Mitchell International Airport
Jacob Fincher..... Executive Director, Southeastern Wisconsin Watersheds Trusts, Inc.
Dave Giordano..... Executive Director, Root-Pike Watershed Initiative Network
Laura Herrick, SecretaryChief Environmental Engineer, SEWRPC
Janette Marsh..... Nonpoint Source Technical Program Manager,
U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, Region 5
Brian Russart..... Natural Areas Coordinator, Milwaukee County Parks
Tom Slawski Chief Biologist, SEWRPC
Kyle Vandercar.....City Engineer, City of South Milwaukee
Jennifer Wright.....Watercourse Section Manager, Engineering Department
Milwaukee Metropolitan Sewerage District

Guests and Staff Present

Megan BeauchainePlanner, SEWRPC
Joseph Boxhorn.....Principal Planner, SEWRPC
Erik Brooks.....Mayor, City of South Milwaukee
Andrew Craig.....Water Resources Management Specialist,
Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources
Stacy Hron.....Water Resources Management Specialist,
Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources
Mark MittagSenior Project Manager, Milwaukee Metropolitan Sewerage District
Aaron Owens..... Senior Planner, SEWRPC
Zijia Li Engineer, SEWRPC
James Mahoney Engineer, SEWRPC
Julia Orłowski Engineer, SEWRPC
Jacob Zimmerman Water Resources Engineer,
Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources

Ms. Herrick welcomed all attendees to the seventh meeting of the Advisory Group for the Oak Creek Watershed Restoration Plan (Plan). Ms. Herrick began the meeting with a brief explanation of the GoToMeeting platform and its features. Ms. Herrick then shared her screen to go over the agenda for

the meeting, which included review of the summary notes from the May 18, 2021, Advisory Group meeting, review of draft Plan Chapter 6 Sections 6.1 through 6.5, and discussion of the next steps for Plan development.

CONSIDERATION OF THE SUMMARY NOTES OF THE MAY 18, 2021, ADVISORY GROUP MEETING

Ms. Herrick reviewed the summary notes from the May 18, 2021, Advisory Group meeting. No additions or corrections were offered by the attendees.

REVIEW OF SECTIONS 6.1 THROUGH 6.5 OF DRAFT PLAN CHAPTER 6, "PLAN RECOMMENDATIONS"

At Ms. Herrick's request, Mr. Boxhorn reviewed Section 6.1, "Introduction." He stated that the subsection entitled "Recommended Actions and Environmental Justice Populations" was added to the introduction in response to comments from the Advisory Group at its May 18, 2021, meeting. He distinguished between general recommendations and specific project recommendations. He noted that specific project recommendations are listed in Table 6.1. Mr. Boxhorn asked the Advisory Group to hold questions and comments on the projects in this table until the next Advisory Group meeting, explaining that the table contains a large number of projects, and the Commission staff would like the Advisory Group to have sufficient opportunity to review it in detail.

At Mr. Boxhorn's request, Mr. Li reviewed the subsection entitled "Stormwater Management Pilot Projects." Mr. Benninghoff asked whether the preliminary screening criteria for siting these projects are those discussed on page 8 and Mr. Li replied that they were. Mr. Li added that this screening was conducted using GIS and that site investigations will need to be conducted at the identified locations to confirm that they are suitable for identified practices. Mr. Benninghoff asked how the four types of practices were selected. Ms. Herrick responded that these represented potential urban stormwater management practices that could be installed in the watershed. She explained that they were not intended to represent all of the types of stormwater practices that could be used and that there may be others that are suitable for use in the watershed.

Mr. Li stated that Commission staff had received comments from Milwaukee County Parks staff regarding the placement of the retention pond pilot projects. Ms. Herrick added that Commission staff will discuss these comments with County staff.

[Secretary's Note: Commission staff scheduled an August 17, 2021, meeting with County staff to discuss the placement of these pilot projects. Additional comment response for this instance is included below in the section on comments received prior to or following the July 29, 2021, meeting.]

Mr. Craig asked whether the whole watershed was subject to MS4 permit requirements. Mr. Boxhorn replied that all of the municipalities in the watershed and Milwaukee County are permitted MS4s. He noted that there is a limited amount of agriculture in the watershed. Mr. Benninghoff added that there may be some directly draining areas along watercourses that are not part of the municipal MS4 systems.

[Secretary's Note: Commission developed a map showing the approximate portions of the watershed that are served by MS4 systems. This map was added in Chapter 4 of the plan report.]

At Mr. Li's request, Mr. Boxhorn completed reviewing Section 6.1. There were no additional questions or comments.

Mr. Boxhorn reviewed Section 6.2, "Recommended Actions to Improve Water Quality." In reference to the recommendations related to post-construction monitoring and maintenance of stormwater best management practices, Mr. Zimmerman commented that the WDNR is requiring such actions as a part of MS4 permits. Mr. Boxhorn replied that he referred to a recent permit in order to make the plan recommendation consistent with recent permit language.

Mr. Boxhorn reviewed the subsection on green infrastructure. Mr. Mittag stated that he has asked Bre Plier of the MMSD staff to review this subsection and her comments will be forthcoming. He noted that MMSD supports the implementation of its green infrastructure plan. He added implementation of the green infrastructure plan will require efforts by many partners.

[Secretary's Note: Comments from MMSD staff were received following the meeting. They will be documented in future summary notes.]

In reference to the recommendation that the City of South Milwaukee conduct an audit of its municipal code and ordinances to identify barriers to the implementation of green infrastructure practices, Mr. Zimmerman asked whether Commission staff examined local zoning ordinances on the minimum number of parking spaces required. Mr. Boxhorn replied that the examination of this is captured as part of the audit process. Mr. Benninghoff suggested adding language to the text to make this clearer.

[Secretary's Note: Text was added to the recommendation for conducting audits of municipal codes and ordinances to clarify that such audits should include examination of zoning ordinances on the minimum number of parking spaces.]

Mr. Boxhorn reviewed the subsection on best management practices to reduce concentrations of dissolved phosphorus using iron enhancements. Mr. Benninghoff commented that he appreciates recommending a pilot project approach to addressing dissolved phosphorus, as much of the watershed is regulated under MS4 discharge permits. He suggested not limiting this approach to iron enhancements, noting that the section could be expanded to discuss other technologies. Mr. Boxhorn responded that iron amendments were emphasized because field data regarding their performance were more available than for some other suggested amendments and because many of the alternatives appear to have limitations related to altering other water quality parameters, clogging of filters, or the amendments passing through filters. Mr. Benninghoff suggested Commission staff discuss this with Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (WDNR) staff at a separate meeting.

[Secretary's Note: Commission staff scheduled an August 5, 2021, meeting with WDNR staff on to discuss this and other issues related to the watershed restoration plan. Text was added to this section of Chapter 6 to leave the door open for future promising nutrient removal technologies.]

Mr. Boxhorn reviewed the section on recommended rural nonpoint source pollution control measures. Mr. Craig asked how much of the watershed is in agricultural land uses. Ms. Herrick replied that as of 2015, agricultural land uses accounted for about 9 percent of the watershed's area. She noted that the tables in Chapter 3 show that future land use projections show that agricultural land in the watershed is expected to go away. Mr. Boxhorn added that much of the current agricultural land consists of County-owned and rented agricultural fields that are being converted to grassland or forests. Mr. Craig explained that the WDNR has been wrestling with how to address urbanizing watersheds with relatively small amounts of agriculture. He noted that he would like to have a discussion with Commission staff on this at separate meeting.

[Secretary's Note: Commission staff scheduled an August 5, 2021, meeting with WDNR staff on to discuss this and other issues related to the watershed restoration plan. Commission staff will confirm that the majority of the remaining agricultural land in the watershed will be converted to grassland or forests in the future and add text as appropriate.]

Mr. Boxhorn reviewed the subsection on recommended actions to reduce instream concentrations of fecal indicator bacteria and pathogens. In reference to the recommended mycoremediation pilot projects, Mr. Zimmerman asked whether the fungal mycelium would attract nuisance wildlife. Mr. Boxhorn replied that this was unlikely.

Mr. Boxhorn completed review of Section 6.2. There were no other questions or comments on the section.

At Mr. Boxhorn's request, Mr. Owens reviewed Section 6.3 "Recommended Actions to Improve Habitat." Mr. Owens reviewed the subsection on recommended actions to maintain and restore natural surface water hydrology. Mr. Craig asked what portion of the watershed is depicted in Map 6.29. Mr. Owens answered that the map shows the southeast corner of the watershed. No further questions or comments were offered on this section.

At Mr. Owens' request, Ms. Beauchaine reviewed Section 6.4 "Recommended Actions to Improve Recreational Opportunities." No questions or comments were offered on this section.

Ms. Herrick reviewed Section 6.5 "Recommended Actions to Address Targeted Flooding Problems." She noted that specific projects related to addressing flooding may be discussed at the next Advisory Group meeting if needed. No questions or comments were offered on this section.

NEXT STEPS FOR PLAN DEVELOPMENT

Ms. Herrick discussed the next steps for plan development. She stated that questions and comments regarding specific projects listed in Table 6.1 will be discussed at the next meeting of the Advisory Group. Ms. Herrick noted that any remaining questions and comments from the Advisory Group related to Chapters 1 through 5 of the Oak Creek Watershed Restoration Plan will be accepted, via email or SEWRPC's Oak Creek website, up to August 6, 2021. She stated that questions and comments on Sections 6.1 through 6.5 of Chapter 6 will be accepted up to August 20, 2021.

Ms. Herrick stated that Commission staff was considering holding two stakeholder meetings as part of completing plan development. One for Chapter 6 (minus Section 6.6 for the Mill Pond and dam which has

already been presented), and then one late in the year for roll-out of the completed plan. Online versus live stakeholder meetings will depend on coronavirus protocols at that time.

No further questions or comments were offered by the Advisory Group for the next steps for the Plan.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 11:30 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Joseph Boxhorn
Recording Secretary

COMMENTS RECEIVED PRIOR TO OR FOLLOWING THE JULY 29, 2021, MEETING

Comments related to Chapter 6, Sections 6.1 through 6.5 submitted by Mr. Russart via email on July 26, 2021.

Mr. Russart asked that the bullet point stating that “Reintroducing beaver or relocating them from areas of the watershed not conducive to their activities to these areas of restored floodplain and wetland” be removed from page 102. He explained that existing beaver populations are aggressively targeting remaining riparian tree species and are furthering the loss of riparian canopy caused by the emerald ash borer. He noted that Milwaukee County has a robust beaver population that repopulates readily on its own.

[Secretary’s Note: The bullet point was removed from the text.]

Mr. Russart suggested adding a recommendation for inventorying and modifying stream corridors under bridges in the watershed. He noted that adding an approximately two-foot-wide flat area through the riprap under a bridge will allow wildlife to safely pass along the stream corridor and avoid going up onto the road. He added that this would also improve safety for County residents by reducing the potential for vehicle-wildlife collisions.

[Secretary’s Note: A bullet point was added recommending that bridge underpasses within the watershed be assessed for adequate dry land passage lanes during baseflow periods and that such passage lanes be added as retrofits to those bridges lacking them to reduce habitat fragmentation by preserving and further enhancing connections between riparian buffer areas, open space, critical species habitat sites, and natural areas.]

Mr. Russart stated that Table 6.1 contains a substantial number of recommendations for bank stabilization projects in County parkland. He noted that these recommendations list Milwaukee County as the sole “responsible party.” Mr. Russart explained that the main drivers of streambank erosion are excessive flows due to loss of wetlands and natural habitat, increased amounts of impervious surfaces, direct stormwater

discharges into receiving waters, and streambank channelization. He noted that because all of the municipalities in the County are incorporated, the County has no control over historical and current development decisions that have played a significant role in less than desirable water management within the watershed. He concluded that the local municipalities have a responsibility to assist the County in the streambank stabilization process on sites within County-owned land and that placing the entire financial and logistical burden of repairing the failing streambanks on the County is unfair.

[Secretary's Note: Commission staff agrees with Mr. Russart that streambank erosion is an issue that often stems from management issues throughout the watershed. The column heading "Responsible Party" was not intended to assign sole responsibility of each project. For the streambank erosion projects located within County-owned land, the entry in this column was changed to "Milwaukee County, municipalities, and other watershed partners."]

Mr. Russart stated that the recommended wet retention ponds shown on Maps 6.16 and 6.17 are located on top of existing Oak Leaf Trail. He noted that the Milwaukee County Parks would not support installing such ponds in these locations. He also noted that the Parks Department is not actively seeking to solve stormwater runoff concerns from private residences by installing retention basins on parkland.

[Secretary's Note: This issue will be discussed with Milwaukee County staff at their August 17, 2021, meeting with Commission staff. The intent of the stormwater pilot projects related to pond retrofits in sewersheds with no existing detention was to determine if they were feasible, and if so then to develop costs and load reductions. If these two particular projects were carried forward to preliminary design, the issues Mr. Russart brought up would need to be addressed.]

Mr. Russart commented that the proposed storm sewer daylighting proposal shown on Map 6.20 needs to show the park drive. He noted that these types of proposals will also need further vetting by the Parks and Architecture and Environment Departments before being incorporated into the final watershed plan.

[Secretary's Note: The map was revised to show the park drive. Projects such as this will be discussed with Milwaukee County staff at their August 17, 2021, meeting with Commission staff. The intent of the storm sewer daylighting pilot projects was to determine if they were feasible, and if so then to develop costs and load reductions. If these types of projects were considered for preliminary design, the issues Mr. Russart brought up would need to be addressed.]

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