

# SUMMARY NOTES OF THE AUGUST 25, 2021, MEETING OF THE OAK CREEK WATERSHED RESTORATION PLAN ADVISORY GROUP

## INTRODUCTION

Because of the COVID-19 safety protocols, the August 25, 2021, meeting of the Oak Creek Watershed Restoration Plan Advisory Group was held virtually via GoToMeeting. The meeting was called to order at 9:06 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**

Philip Beiermeister ..... Environmental Engineer, City of Oak Creek  
Timothy Detzer ..... Senior Environmental Engineer and County  
Conservationist, Milwaukee County Environmental Services  
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, Secretary ..... Chief Environmental Engineer, SEWRPC  
Julie Kinzelman ..... Associate Lecturer, University of Wisconsin-Parkside  
Glen Morrow ..... City Engineer/Director of Public Works, City of Franklin  
Cheryl Nenn ..... Riverkeeper, Milwaukee Riverkeeper  
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 Beauchaine ..... Planner, 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 Mittag ..... Senior Project Manager, Milwaukee Metropolitan Sewerage District  
Aaron Owens ..... Senior Planner, SEWRPC  
Jacob Zimmerman ..... Water Resources Engineer,  
Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources

Ms. Herrick welcomed all attendees to the eighth 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 July 29, 2021, Advisory Group

meeting, review of draft Plan Chapter 6 Sections 6.7 through 6.11, and discussion of the next steps for Plan development.

## **CONSIDERATION OF THE SUMMARY NOTES OF THE JULY 29, 2021, ADVISORY GROUP MEETING AND COMMENTS ON CHAPTER 6 RECEIVED AFTER THE MEETING**

Ms. Herrick reviewed the summary notes from the July 29, 2021, Advisory Group meeting.

Ms. Herrick stated that Commission staff received comments indicating that the title “stormwater management pilot projects” used to refer to the examples of stormwater projects developed, modeled, and costed out by Commission staff was confusing. She explained that the intention was to develop several types of stormwater projects that could be costed out and serve as examples of projects that could be implemented in the watershed. Ms. Herrick noted that these projects were not taken to preliminary design. She indicated that this section identifier will be changed to “example stormwater management projects.”

Ms. Herrick stated that in response to a comment from Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (WDNR) staff during a subsequent meeting after the July 29, 2021, Advisory Group meeting, Commission staff created a map of the Oak Creek watershed showing the portions of the watershed that are served by municipal separate storm sewer systems (MS4). She noted that the areas served by storm sewers or municipal drainage systems are different from the communities’ corporate limits. She commented that whether a proposed project addresses conditions of an MS4 permit bears upon the availability of funding provided under Section 319 of the Federal Clean Water Act. Ms. Herrick noted that this map will be added to Chapter 4 of the plan report as Map 4.44. She noted that the areas served by MS4s will also be added as an overlay to Maps 6.1 through 6.13 which show the locations of projects recommended in Table 6.1. Mr. Zimmerman commented that this map looks good for both MS4 and grant purposes. Mr. Craig asked whether the white areas on the map represent areas that are not served by an MS4, and Ms. Herrick confirmed. Mr. Craig commented that this constitutes an initial MS4 map that can be modified as plan implementation progresses.

Ms. Herrick stated that two recommendations were added to the urban stormwater management subsection of Section 6.2 of Chapter 6 in response to comments from WDNR staff. She indicated that these consisted of a recommendation for municipal leaf and grass clipping management programs and a recommendation for municipalities requiring the submission of as-built drawings for all stormwater management practices installed as part of development and redevelopment.

Ms. Herrick stated that Commission staff received several comments from Brian Russart of the Milwaukee County Parks. She reported that that the recommendation to reintroduce beaver into portions of the watershed was removed at Mr. Russart’s request because the existing beaver population is currently damaging the remaining live trees in portions of the Oak Creek riparian area. Ms. Herrick noted that a recommendation was also added at Mr. Russart’s request to conduct a survey of bridge crossings to assess which bridge underpasses do not provide dry land passage for wildlife. The additional text also recommends installing dry-land wildlife passage lanes under those underpasses as retrofits to reduce dangerous encounters between wildlife and traffic.

Ms. Herrick reported that Mr. Russart and others had expressed concerns regarding the designation of “Responsible Parties” in Table 6.1. She stated that this title in the table has been changed to “Key Project Partners”.

In reference to the recommendation in the subsection related to toxic substances and emerging contaminants in Section 6.2 of Chapter 6, Mr. Detzer commented that Milwaukee County has banned the use of coal-tar pavement sealants.

[Secretary's Note: Milwaukee County was added to the list of local governments that have banned coal-tar sealants in this recommendation.]

Ms. Herrick stated that in response to a comment from the Milwaukee Metropolitan Sewerage District (MMSD), a footnote was added to Table 6.1 to clarify that MMSD will only be involved in addressing debris jams when such jams increase flood levels and impact insurable structures. Mr. Mittag added that it is generally the responsibility of the property owner to address debris jams.

Ms. Herrick stated that Commission staff discussed the costs of implementing the MMSD green infrastructure plan with MMSD staff. She indicated that these costs have been changed in Chapter 6 to reflect the results of these discussions. She added that a recommendation has been added to Chapter 6 that MMSD update its green infrastructure plan.

Ms. Herrick stated that in response to a comment from U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (USEPA) staff, a map was added to Chapter 6 showing just the locations of high priority projects from Table 6.1.

No other additions or corrections to the Summary Notes were offered by the attendees.

## **REVIEW OF SECTIONS 6.7 THROUGH 6.11 OF DRAFT PLAN CHAPTER 6, "PLAN RECOMMENDATIONS"**

At Ms. Herrick's request, Mr. Boxhorn reviewed Section 6.7, "Recommended Actions for Public Awareness and Participation in Watershed Restoration Activities."

Mayor Brooks asked whether Commission staff would come before elected officials such as councils to ask for adoption of the plan. Ms. Herrick replied that it is preferable that local government staff take the lead on this; however, Commission staff can provide support. Mayor Brooks asked when the communities should adopt the plan. Mr. Boxhorn replied that he anticipates that the plan could be adopted starting in December of 2021. He added that communities do not need to wait for the plan to be approved by WDNR and USEPA in order to adopt the plan.

Mayor Brooks asked whether local adoption would be helpful for the WDNR and USEPA review. Ms. Herrick replied that adoption would show that the communities are invested in the plan. Mayor Brooks asked whether it is the goal for all the communities in the watershed to adopt the plan and Ms. Herrick confirmed that is the goal.

Mr. Zimmerman commented that implementing the information and education elements of the Oak Creek watershed restoration plan could be used to help the MS4 communities meet the education requirements in their permits. Mr. Fincher noted that his group could assist with information and education efforts.

Mr. Detzer requested that the municipalities be added to the organizations designated for lead roles in the first row of Table 6.20 for educating elected officials.

[Secretary's Note: "Watershed municipalities" was added to the organizations designated for lead roles in the first row of Table 6.20.]

Mayor Brooks asked whether SEWRPC has resources for developing outreach materials. He noted that electronic resources would be preferable to pamphlets. Ms. Herrick replied that she would discuss this with him at a separate meeting closer to plan completion.

Mr. Failey commented in the online chat that Milwaukee Mitchell International Airport supports the recommendation to change the name of the Mitchell Field Drainage Ditch to Mitchell Creek.

Mr. Boxhorn next reviewed Section 6.8, "Priority Projects for Implementation."

Mayor Brooks asked whether dredging the Mill Pond is a high priority project. Mr. Boxhorn replied that it is not, explaining that whether the Mill Pond is to be dredged depends on which alternative Milwaukee County selects for addressing the Mill Pond and dam. He added that the recommendation to collect sediment cores from the pond and analyze them for contaminants is a high priority project.

Mr. Boxhorn continued with a review of Section 6.9, "Measuring Plan Progress and Success."

Mr. Detzer asked whether Commission staff would conduct the collation, analysis, and interpretation of monitoring data that is recommended to be completed at intervals of about 10 years. Ms. Herrick replied that this effort could be discussed, in collaboration with other monitoring groups in the watershed.

Ms. Nenn commented that conducting water quality monitoring through the Water Action Volunteers (WAV) program would require a sponsoring entity to provide coordination and training. She expressed concern about the limited funding available through the WAV program. Mr. Giordano commented in the online chat that Root-Pike WIN has conducted sporadic monitoring in the Oak Creek watershed; however, obtaining funds to support this has been a problem.

Mr. Detzer asked whether the entity responsible for tracking implementation would be responsible for determining whether the plan and adjustments to the plan were consistent with USEPA's nine key elements for a watershed plan. Mr. Boxhorn replied that that entity would not be responsible for this. He explained that the plan will be submitted to the WDNR for review after it is completed and WDNR and USEPA will determine the plan's consistency with the nine key elements at that time. He added that WDNR and USEPA will then approve the plan for a fixed time period. Mr. Boxhorn stated that adjustments to projects will not affect the nine key element approval. He noted that a formal renewal of the watershed plan may be needed at some point.

Mr. Boxhorn next reviewed Section 6.10, "Implementation."

In reference to the implementation schedule, Mr. Detzer commented that the County and municipalities will need time to include plan projects into their five-year capital improvement plans (CIPs) and budgets. He suggested that this could make achieving early milestones challenging. Mr. Boxhorn replied that the milestones given in Table 6.38 for the first five-year period require that projects only be initiated, thus providing time for incorporation into CIP budgets.

Mr. Boxhorn reviewed Section 6.11, "Required Technical and Financial Assistance." He noted that information regarding funding programs is constantly changing and that groups looking to implement projects should check with the funding programs for current information.

In reference to the cost summary given in Table 6.40, Mayor Brooks asked whether the costs of implementing the MMSD green infrastructure plan could be separated from the summary. Mr. Boxhorn replied that it is important to keep them in the summary both because it is a significant component of the plan's approach to addressing urban runoff and because implementation of the MMSD green infrastructure plan will depend on funding from multiple sources and not just MMSD. Mr. Boxhorn noted that it is likely that the number and mixture of recommended practices and the attendant costs are likely to change when the MMSD green infrastructure plan is updated.

At Mr. Boxhorn's request, Mr. Owens reviewed the format of Table 6.1 which included specific recommended management actions organized by watershed assessment area. He noted that the locations of the projects in the table are also shown as points on Maps 6.1 through 6.13. Mr. Owens commented that the focus areas addressed by each project are indicated by the color of the point on the maps.

Mr. Detzer asked how the total suspended solids load reductions were estimated for streambank stabilization projects. Mr. Owens replied that this was done using USEPA's STEPL model.

Mr. Beiermeister noted that it might not be feasible to implement project MOC-62, which calls for the daylighting of a storm sewer. He explained that the City of Oak Creek completed a retrofit of the sewer to address a backwater effect from Oak Creek to the existing subdivision. Ms. Herrick replied that Commission staff would examine this.

[Secretary's Note: MOC-62 was removed from the specific projects recommended in Table 6.1. Because it serves as an example of the type of storm sewer daylighting project that could be implemented elsewhere in the watershed, the discussion of it in Section 6.1 of Chapter 6 was retained.]

There were no other questions or comments on draft sections 6.7 to 6.11 of the plan.

## **NEXT STEPS FOR PLAN DEVELOPMENT**

Ms. Herrick discussed the next steps for plan development. She stated that questions and comments on Sections 6.7 through 6.11 of Chapter 6 will be accepted from the Advisory Group up to September 17, 2021.

Ms. Herrick stated that Commission staff has scheduled an online stakeholder meeting for September 29, 2021, to review Sections 6.1 through 6.5 and 6.7 through 6.11 of Chapter 6 with the public. She noted that Section 6.6 that presents recommendations for the Mill Pond and dam area was already presented at a June 23, 2021, stakeholder meeting. Ms. Herrick noted that questions and comments on Chapter 6 will be accepted from the public up to October 15, 2021.

Ms. Herrick stated that she anticipates that the plan report will be completed and placed online in late November 2021.

Ms. Herrick stated that Commission staff has scheduled a final stakeholder meeting on December 8, 2021, to roll out the completed plan. Mayor Brooks asked that Commission staff try to find a way to conduct this

as a live meeting and suggested holding it in an open house format. Ms. Herrick agreed that a live open house type format is preferred for this final stakeholder meeting but holding a live meeting versus an online meeting will depend on coronavirus protocols at that time.

Ms. Herrick stated that she anticipates that the completed plan will be submitted to the WDNR for nine key element review in mid-December 2021. SEWRPC will maintain the project website ([www.sewrpc.org/oakcreekwrp](http://www.sewrpc.org/oakcreekwrp)) for the foreseeable future and maintain the final plan document there.

Ms. Herrick noted that this is the last Advisory Group meeting for plan development. She thanked the Advisory Group for their service and their contributions to developing the plan.

No further questions or comments were offered by the Advisory Group regarding the next steps for plan development.

## **ADJOURNMENT**

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 10:30 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Joseph Boxhorn  
Recording Secretary

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