

COPY

SOUTHEASTERN WISCONSIN REGIONAL PLANNING COMMISSION

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February 13, 2018

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Mr. Erik Brooks
Mayor
City of South Milwaukee
2424 15th Avenue
South Milwaukee, WI 53172

Dear Mayor Brooks:

We are writing to update you on the status and schedule for the Oak Creek watershed restoration plan (WRP) that is being prepared by the Southeastern Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission (SEWRPC) in collaboration with Milwaukee County; the City of South Milwaukee; the Cities of Cudahy, Franklin, Greenfield, Milwaukee, and Oak Creek; the Milwaukee Metropolitan Sewerage District (MMSD); the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources; and the Root-Pike Watershed Initiative Network (WIN).

Following execution of an intergovernmental cooperation agreement (ICA) between the City of South Milwaukee, Milwaukee County, MMSD, and SEWRPC on January 5, 2016, the SEWRPC staff collected extensive field data during 2016 and 2017, characterizing the physical and biological properties of the main streams in the watershed, including the Oak Creek main stem, the North Branch of Oak Creek, and the Mitchell Field Drainage Ditch. That data collection effort also included deployment of 25 water temperature sensors within those streams. In that same general time period, under programs coordinated with the WRP, the City of Racine Health Department collected water quality data and WDNR staff collected data on aquatic life throughout the watershed. Analysis of the data collected by the SEWRPC staff has now begun.

During the 2016 through 2017 field data collection period, the SEWRPC staff also worked to finalize the structure of the report documenting the plan, developed an online survey for the plan, and collated the numerous comments identifying problem areas that were obtained during the August 2016 stakeholder meeting.

The initial watershed stakeholder meeting at South Milwaukee City Hall on April 12, 2016, was attended by 50 people. At that meeting, those in attendance were provided with an overview of the issues to be addressed by the plan, and they had an opportunity to ask questions of the SEWRPC staff.

The second stakeholder meeting was held at the Oak Creek Civic Center on August 30, 2016. That meeting was attended by 37 people. Following a brief overview of the plan presented by SEWRPC staff, the attendees broke out into five groups organized by subwatershed and facilitated by SEWRPC staff members. Those groups helped identify problems related to the focus areas of the plan and suggested potential projects to address those problems. Problem areas and potential projects identified by attendees were noted on large-scale color orthophotographs of the subwatershed areas.

On April 26, 2017, at South Milwaukee City Hall, the SEWRPC staff presented an update on the progress of the plan and on information collected to date. That presentation was part of a Root-Pike WIN informational session on green infrastructure.

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The first Advisory Group meeting was held at the Oak Creek Civic Center on February 7, 2018. That meeting included a discussion of the role of the Advisory Group in reviewing and guiding the plan, an overview of the plan, and presentations by SEWRPC and WDNR on the extensive field work conducted in the watershed for the plan.

The planning effort was initially scheduled to be completed by the end of July 2018. As we have discussed with you, Milwaukee County, and MMSD, the date for completion of the study has now been extended to the end of 2020. We anticipate completing report Chapters 1 (introduction) and 2 (previous studies) in the summer of 2018. All report chapters will be reviewed in detail by the Advisory Group formed to guide the plan. Chapter 3 (characterization of the watershed) will be completed and reviewed by the end of 2018. Chapter 4 (inventory), and Chapter 5 (goals), will be completed and reviewed by the end of 2019. Chapter 6 (recommendations) and the plan summary will be completed before the end of 2020. Chapter 6 will include recommendations for the Mill Pond and dam. During the course of continuing plan preparation and review, we anticipate holding four more stakeholder meetings and six more Advisory Group meetings.

This systematic approach to developing draft chapters, reviewing them in detail with the Advisory Group, and presenting them to the broad-based Stakeholder Group has been successfully applied in other SEWRPC watershed planning efforts. Working with the Advisory Group, the SEWRPC staff logically progresses through establishing the connection of this study with past pertinent studies and characterizing the watershed features related to the plan focus areas, and then using that information to inform the development of plan goals and recommendations. The application of this process enables all parties involved in plan development and implementation (the public, municipalities, and public agencies) to participate and to thoroughly understand the basis for selection of plan recommendations.

We apologize for the need to extend the finish date for the plan beyond the originally proposed time of mid-2018. That extension was necessitated in large part when SEWRPC was able to obtain funding for the recently-initiated regional chloride impact study within a shorter time period than expected. The chloride study funding was secured after execution of the Oak Creek WRP intergovernmental agreement. We are currently seeking to add a Biologist to the staff to enable us to keep both the regional chloride study and the Oak Creek WRP on track to meet their current completion schedules.

We appreciate the opportunity to work with the City and the other study partners on this plan, and we thank you for your assistance in this effort. Please feel free to contact us with any questions or comments that you have now, or during the course of the project.

Sincerely,

Michael G. Hahn, P.E., P.H.
Executive Director

MGH/dd
#00240926

cc: Kevin Shafer, MMSD
Jennifer Wright, MMSD
Guy Smith, Milwaukee County
Sharon L. Gayan, WDNR
Dave Giordano, Root-Pike WIN

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