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**Whitewater Joint Powers Board**  
**May 19, 2016**  
**Whitewater State Park Visitor's Center**

**Minutes**

- 1. Call to Order:** Chair Matt Flynn called the meeting to order at 8:39 a.m.

Board Members Present: Matt Flynn, Steve Jacob, Claron Krogness, Arlene Nelson, Mike Wobbe (alternate for Rich Hall), and Roland Wood

Others Present: Daryl Buck, SWCD; Sheila Harmes, Whitewater Watershed; Greg Hoch, DNR; Matt Kruger, Wabasha SWCD; Katherine Logan, MPCA – Rochester; Bryan Lueth, DNR; Donald Nelson, DNR; Cynthia Osmundson, DNR; Christine Priest, DNR; and Joyce Tlougan; Winona County Planning and Environmental Services

- 2. Approve Minutes of April 21, 2016**

A motion was made by S. Jacob and seconded by A. Nelson to approve the minutes.

Voting: Yes – 6 (All).

- 3. Approve Agenda**

S. Harmes stated she had an addition to the agenda; an Ag Certainty Action Item document that needs a signature. A motion was made by S. Jacob and seconded by R. Wood to approve the amended agenda. Voting: Yes – 6 (All).

- 4. Approve Consent Items**

Bills & Payroll

Sheila Harmes explained all bills and payroll items. A motion was made by S. Jacob and seconded by R. Hall to approve the Consent Items. Voting: Yes – 6 (All).

- 5. Board Reports**

Arlene Nelson

Advised the SWCD had approved some cost share. There is a position opening for a Resource Specialist. Township Nitrate testing project work as started. The next SWCD meeting is scheduled June 8 and will be at the Lewiston Community Center and will be followed by the Winona County Working Group meeting.

Steve Jacob

Reported the county had approved a third Solar Project. He stated Winona County Board is considering putting a ban on all sand that can be used for fracking. He voiced his concern about how to distinguish sand, sand usage and is not sure how one industry could to be singled out for a ban. Winona will be a pilot regarding banning.

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Joint Powers Board Members

Matt Flynn, Chair  
Olmsted Co. Commissioner

Steve Jacob, Vice-Chair  
Winona Co. Commissioner

Richard Hall  
Wabasha Co. Commissioner

Roland Wood, Secretary/Treasurer  
Wabasha SWCD Supervisor

Arlene Nelson  
Winona SWCD Supervisor

Claron Krogness  
Olmsted SWCD Supervisor

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Mike Wobbe

Reported solar applications are coming through Wabasha County. He said Wabasha County is dealing with Zoning Ordinance violations that have been in violation for years and possible future legal ramifications as a result.

Roland Wood

Advised that Wabasha SWCD had its annual 5<sup>th</sup> Grade Field Day for Lake City, Plainview and Wabasha school students. The kids went to a dairy farm, were educated on land use, and visited a trout stream. He said Wabasha County is dealing with Wetland issues.

Claron Krogness

Spoke to a Wetland violation; that a party was advised not to proceed but did anyway and now the problem will be dealt with. He said Dave Copeland will be moving from working on Ag Certainty to a position with BWSR. Three (3) Soil and Water District Supervisor positions will be up for election.

Matt Flynn

Advised a constituent questioned him as to if the 50 foot buffer applies in city limits. He referred to Daryl Buck who stated the buffer maps are not out yet. S. Jacob stated he had heard of the buffer exemptions in city limits and referred to Gilmore Creek running through the City of Winona. Katherine Logan advised exemptions in the cities are handled differently. M. Flynn continued with his report and stated the housing boom continues in Rochester and will have an impact on neighboring counties.

**6. Board Discussion and Action Items**

a. Financial Update:

S. Harmes explained and spoke to an additional document that had been distributed to the board members, concerning a change made in the financial summaries.

b. Letter of Support for the MN CREP Proposal:

S. Harmes explained she had drafted the letter at the direction of the Whitewater Joint Powers Board; it was included in the Board packets. She requested a signature to the letter. A motion was made by S. Jacob and seconded by C. Krogness to approve the letter and signature.  
Vote: Yes – 6 (All).

c. Rental agreement between WJPB and SWCD:

S. Harmes explained the rental agreement was reduced by \$350.00 due to computer usage fees expiring. A motion was made by R. Wood and seconded by A. Nelson to approve the rental agreement. Vote: Yes – 6 (All).

d. Ag Certainty Update:

S. Harmes explained there is a media blitz at this time supporting the certification application progress. Matt Kruger explained the areas where his has been working toward farmers' certifications.

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e. Ag Certainty Action Item

S. Harmes provided a cost share assistance document that needs Board approval and signature. One of the farmers participating in Ag Certainty needs a septic system upgrade in order to qualify for certification. This cost share assistance contract (Ag Cert #008) will not exceed \$10,000 or 75%; an estimate was provided. C. Krogness advised that this farmer uses good conservation practices. A motion was made by M. Wobbe and seconded by C. Krogness to approve the application for Ag Cert #008. Vote: Yes – 6 (All).

f. One Watershed, One Plan Discussion

BWSR is currently accepting applications for the next round of (One Watershed One Plan) 1W1P pilots. S. Harmes asked for input from this Board. Would it be appropriate at this time for an application to be submitted for the Mississippi River-Winona Watershed (which includes the Whitewater Watershed)? A map was included in the packet showing the suggested watershed planning boundaries. Board members discussed the pros and cons on a 1W1P application and cited the current planning process for the Root Watershed.

S. Harmes noted that if all local governments that are responsible for water planning transition to watershed-based plans, the current number of plans in the state would be reduced from over 200 to 63 plans. BWSR has a draft ten-year transition plan. Board members voiced concern that the watershed boundaries, at the local level, create more complexity in water planning. M. Flynn stated that One Watershed, One Plan is not simple in Olmsted County; this county is in three major watersheds. S. Jacob noted that the 1W1P process would result in more fragmentation not stream-lining the planning process. Rather than one county-one plan, there would be one county-three plans.

Referring to Root 1W1P, M. Flynn stated the Winona County Attorney drafted an agreement that the parties work together. S. Jacob voiced concerns that this is circumventing local authorities. It's less complicated for Fillmore County since the entire county is in the Root planning Area.

The Winona County Water Plan expires in 2018. S. Jacob asked if the Winona County Water Plan could be updated rather than doing a 1W1P. S.Harmes responded that updating county plans is still an option written, but eventually funding will be impacted. State funding will be available for watershed plans and not county plans.

C. Krogness noted that a decision to transition to 1W1P does not need to be made now. BWSR will be having applications for 1W1P next year. Consensus of the Board was to wait.

g. Whitewater WMA Leased Lands Discussion - Cynthia Osmundson & Don Nelson

Don Nelson of the DNR introduced himself and other DNR staff present at the meeting and gave background on how DNR has managed leasing of lands for agriculture. S. Jacob explained that he asked that this discussion be placed on the agenda. He was recently contacted by a constituent who farms on Wildlife Management Area (WMA) lands and was notified that there will be changes to those agreements. Don Nelson noted that he recently informed farmers who lease DNR lands that, at this time, contracting will be done on a yearly basis due to anticipated program changes in 2017. Reasons for the changes will be discussed today.

The Whitewater WMA includes 27,000 acres, of this land 2700 acres (10%) is leased for agricultural purposes. Farmers in these contracts do not pay rent. They purchase the seed

143 and incur the costs to plant, but leave 1/3 of the crop unharvested. This provides winter food  
144 (food plots) for deer and turkeys. DNR has contracts with forty (40) cooperators and has 45  
145 agreements. Farming of state lands has been done for 40-50 years and provides benefits for  
146 wildlife as well as farm operators. The farmers that DNR works with have done so for many  
147 years and there is a good working relationship. DNR is looking at farming policies of its lands  
148 statewide, not just the Whitewater WMA.

149  
150 The WMA management plan needs to be updated and as a part of the update process, DNR is  
151 incorporating information that was not available previously. The intent is to manage the lands  
152 in a manner that is best for the WMA wildlife and environment. There are increased concerns  
153 for water quality and for impacts to pollinators; DNR staff have determined that insecticides  
154 should not be used within the WMA.

155  
156 Other considered changes include:

- 157 • Decreasing (but not eliminating) the amount of farming done on WMA lands. The  
158 reduction in farmed acres will be phased in over time; there is an understanding that it  
159 takes time to make changes in a farm operation.
- 160 • Transitioning toward less row crops and more hay and grasses;
- 161 • Increasing the use of multi-species cover crops; and
- 162 • Incorporating BMPs that improve soil, wildlife and water.

163  
164 Answers to some Board member questions

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166 A. Nelson - Will aerial application of fungicides be considered?

167 D. Nelson – this has not been looked at yet. A. Nelson noted that five cows had aborted last  
168 summer after fungicide use.

169  
170 S. Jacob – Is the insecticide restriction the driving force behind the changes in lease  
171 agreements?

172 D. Nelson – Yes, lease agreements have transitioned from multi-year to one year agreements  
173 due to changes that are expected in the program for 2017.

174  
175 R. Wood – Were there any changes in farming as a result of Ag Certainty?

176 D. Nelson – Not a lot of changes were needed to meet Ag Certainty guidelines. DNR already  
177 prohibits fall tillage. Ag Certainty added nutrient and herbicide BMPs. He also clarified that  
178 the Ag Certainty program is intended for the whole farm operation. The farmers using WMA  
179 land are not certified (in Ag Certainty) unless all of their managed lands are assessed. Their  
180 current contracts are written to include practices that meet certification standards.

181  
182 S. Jacob – Would reduction in amount of farmed state lands result in increased crop damage  
183 to non-state lands?

184 C. Osmundson - We have a depredation program to assist farmers, including shooting  
185 permits and help with fencing. There is a challenge in managing the deer population (do not  
186 want too many deer that damage crops and want enough deer for hunters). There needs to  
187 be a balance. The Whitewater WMA isn't the only area where farming changes are being  
188 considered.

189  
190 C. Osmundson stated the DNR knows the direction they want to go to ensure farming on  
191 WMAs benefit wildlife. Changes will be addressed in a new Whitewater WMA – Master Plan.  
192 She stated there are changes coming, details of those changes or how they will be

193 implemented has not yet been determined. It is likely that those changes will include more  
194 grass and hay land, less row crops, less chemicals, and less farmed acres. There are  
195 currently some grazing agreements and DNR will increase that number.  
196

197 A. Nelson stated she appreciates the leasing program and that DNR has a long history of  
198 working well with farmers. D. Nelson advised that three of the WMA cooperators are organic  
199 operations and an additional one is getting certified.  
200

201 S. Jacob – Will there be an elimination of row cropping?

202 C. Osmundson - Acres of row crops will be reduced, not eliminated.  
203

204 C. Krogness – What is DNR definition of cover crops?

205 G. Hoch - Cover crop planted early into the corn. The cover crop grows under the corn.  
206 Leaving the corn will increase wildlife. There will be a push toward multi-species cover crops.  
207

208 S. Jacob – Will farmers be able to graze their livestock?

209 G. Hoch – Cooperators in other areas have realized benefits in grazing state lands; vet bills  
210 are down and cattle weight is up by 50 lb. When a farmer can graze on state land, it gives  
211 their (the farmers') land a break. The Cooperators benefit; they have received positive  
212 responses from producers.  
213

214 S. Jacob – Is there a move toward Organic farming within the WMA? Will this give Organic  
215 growers an edge over Conventional farmers?

216 C. Osmundson - Organic farmers are able to harvest a larger share of their crop (3/4 rather  
217 than 2/3). Only three (3) of the Cooperators are Organic, another is in the process of  
218 becoming Organic-certified. There is not a move toward making all farming on a WMA  
219 organic; organic farmers may be given a preference.  
220

221 S. Jacob - Is the shift to reducing row crops supported by hunters?

222 C. Osmundson – This has not been presented to hunters, but is in line with the Governor's  
223 statute for water quality and wildlife.

224 D. Nelson - The WMA plan rollout will include public comments from hunters as well as  
225 farmers.  
226

227 C. Osmundson – DNR knows the direction that it needs to go with farming to benefit wildlife.  
228 Changes will be addressed in the Whitewater WMA – Master Plan. Details of those changes  
229 have not yet been determined. It is likely that those changes will include more grass and hay  
230 land. There are currently some grazing agreements at other WMAs in the state and DNR will  
231 increase that number. DNR staff will work individually with cooperators throughout the entire  
232 process.  
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## 234

## 235 **7. Public Comments**

## 236

237 Katherine Logan reported the Watershed Restoration and Protection Strategies (WRAPS)  
238 document for the Mississippi River- Winona Watershed is in internal review and will be out on  
239 public notice in mid-June. She advised the information will be available for One Watershed  
240 One Plan or County plan updates. Shaina Keseley will be available to speak to the Board  
241 when it is finalized.  
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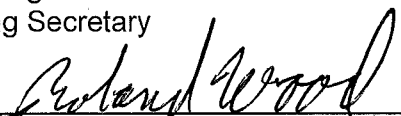
A. Nelson suggested Xerces Society has excellent information on pollinating and would be a good informational program at a future meeting.

**8. Next Meeting:** June 16, 2016

**9. Adjournment:** On motion of S. Jacob the Whitewater Joint Powers Board adjourned 10:24 a.m.  
Voting: Yes – All (6).

Respectfully submitted by:

Joyce Tlougan  
Recording Secretary

Signed   
Roland Wood, Secretary/Treasurer