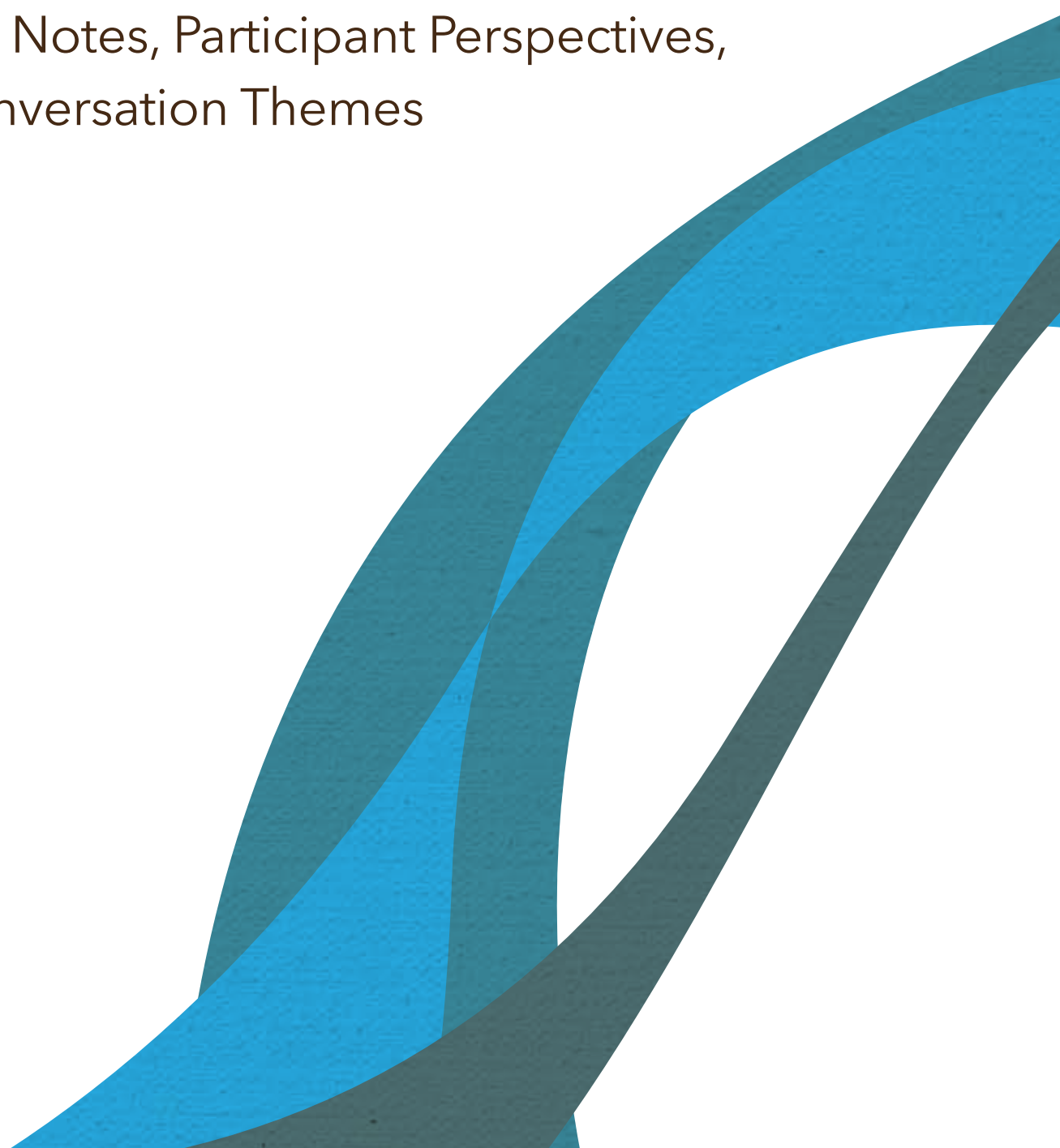


MISSISSIPPI RIVER-WINONA WATERSHED CITIZENS SUMMIT

TAU CONFERENCE CENTER / WINONA, MINNESOTA / FEBRUARY 19, 2013

Citizen Discussions:
Table Notes, Participant Perspectives,
& Conversation Themes





On February 19, 2013 more than 100 people gathered at Winona's Tau Conference Center to connect with neighbors and respond to the latest Mississippi River-Winona water quality data. They also heard the views of nearly one third of 3000 watershed households and absentee landowners who responded to a six-page survey related to water quality issues. Citizens shared a local foods dinner and presentations were made, then a live survey, two round table discussions and table talk summaries followed.

Participation was free.

The summit is the second in a series of three hosted by the Whitewater Watershed Project.

This summit is hosted by the Whitewater River Watershed Project, with funding from the State of Minnesota's Clean Water Land & Legacy Amendment.

Partners include:

- Olmsted/South Wabasha County Corn & Soybean Growers Association
- Soil and Water Conservation Districts of Wabasha, Winona and Olmsted Counties
- Land Stewardship Project
- Southeast Minnesota Water Resources Board
- Winona State University
- Southeastern Minnesota Water Resources Center, Winona State University
- Stockton-Rollingstone-Minnesota City Watershed District
- Minnesota Pollution Control Agency
- St. Mary's University
- Win-Cres Chapter, Trout Unlimited
- We-no-nah Canoe, Inc.
- GeoSpatialServices, Saint Mary's University

Citizen Discussions: What Was Heard & Learned

Twelve tables of eight people discussed the following two questions.

Question 1 IN THE CITIZENS SUMMIT HELD HERE LAST YEAR, PARTICIPANTS IDENTIFIED ATTITUDES THEY BELIEVE WE NEED TO CULTIVATE IN ORDER TO IMPROVE WATER QUALITY.

THESE ARE THE TOP ATTITUDES THEY NAMED:

- A. BE WILLING TO ADOPT NEW HABITS - 20 POINTS
- B. STOP POINTING FINGERS - 15 POINTS
- C. LEARN FROM ONE ANOTHER - 15 POINTS
- D. FORM PARTNERSHIPS- 3 POINTS
- E. FOCUS ON COMMON VALUES - 15 POINTS
- F. FOSTER OPENNESS AND NON JUDGEMENT - 27 POINTS

HOW DO THESE HOLD UP FOR YOU? TAKE A FEW MOMENTS TO RANK THESE ATTITUDES YOUR WAY, ADDING OTHERS AS YOU WISH. EVERY PERSON AT THE TABLE WILL HAVE A TURN TO SHARE A TOP CHOICE AND WHY THEY CHOSE IT.

Many discussion groups pointed out that all of these six attitudes work together, and all are important. We assigned the first attitude chosen by each group three points; the second, two points; and the third, one point. Using this ranking method, the points listed above in brown show exuberant agreement that openness and non judgement are the most important attitude for us to adopt if we want water quality to improve. Willingness to move from openness to action is the second highest vote-getter. And three attitudes tied for third place. All are concerned with our ability to relate to other people in a way that sustains the common good: looking for common values, no blaming, and an ability to share and learn from one another.

OTHER ATTITUDES PARTICIPANTS NOTED ARE IMPORTANT

Good quality communication and public education
Relating to the people who are “not in the room”
Hyper-local attention to characteristics of place, landowner knowledge, decision making and funding
Cooperation, as seen in current farmer-led councils
Openness to new ideas

Coordination of efforts by agencies and others
More consistent data
Clearly identified goals
Political and policy changes

Question 2 AFTER HEARING THE WATER QUALITY INFORMATION AND SURVEY RESULTS TODAY, WHAT STANDS OUT FOR YOU, AND WHAT ACTION STEPS DO YOU THINK ARE NEEDED TO RESTORE WATER QUALITY?

Comments made in this discussion are listed by discussion group. Groups alternate where bold turns to italic type.

- **Keep working together until we achieve consensus.**
- **Economics must be part of every solution.**
- **We need measurable goals. What are we striving for?**
- **We need to listen to the “other side”, and really “hear.”**
- **We need more data, because current data is spotty.**
- **Owners need to monitor their own farms. Do agencies have tools to help?**
- **Understand what has happened to the landscape over time to impact water.**
- **Change must move beyond science to new habits.**
- **We need to consider natural evolution and adaptation.**
- **Monitoring is extremely important.**
- **We need to consider and monitor “pollutants of emerging concern.” We don’t know their long-term effects.**
- **We need an “umbrella group” to consolidate and disseminate data.**
- **We must properly dispose of medicines.**
- **Educate.**
- **How do we enhance life so we don’t destroy it?**
- *We are dealing with 40 years of bad policy. What about incentives?*
- *It’s hard to consider the future when we need to feed families and make a living now.*
- *Minimize erosion to stop nitrate transfer.*
- *Plant crops that don’t need as much nitrate fertilizer.*
- *Focus on corn and beans.*
- *We have made great improvements in the last 50 years.*
- *We have incentives for corn and soybeans, but need more alfalfa because it’s good for the soil and fixes nitrogen.*
- *We need to manage nitrates differently. What are the economics and possibilities related to nitrate trends?*
- *We need nitrogen to raise crops. What are other nitrogen sources?*
- *We need corn stalk testing.*
- *Are we targeting USE or OVERUSE of nitrogen?*
- *Remember change takes time. When we change behavior and trends, there is lag time to realize benefits.*
- *There is no silver bullet. Solutions are abstract and take time, and many want results immediately.*
- *Address storm sewer issues. Why aren’t we more careful?*
- *Everyone has a part to play.*
- *Urban solutions include addressing storm water runoff: new vision for lawns and gardens.*
- *Do landowners really understand what they’re doing when they hire a lawn chemical company?*
- *Are lawn companies regulated?*
- *Are urban responsibilities clear?*

- *Do people realize what they're doing when they put city composted grass clippings on their gardens?*
- *How sophisticated is the data monitoring? Turbidity levels can be subjective.*
- *A low number of farmers are willing to make changes on their land.*
- *Farmers feel under attack.*
- *I question the trends (shown in the data this evening).*
- *I don't know how much incentives can do.*
- *We need more site-specific data.*
- *I was surprised to see "learn from each other" ranked so low (in this group) for question number one.*
- *There is not one simple step.*
- *Education, persuasion and examples are needed, not regulations.*
- *The average landowner/farmer is not there (on the land). We need to engage (absentee landowners).*
- *It's so overwhelming I'm not sure where to start.*
- *Use best management practices, septic system evaluations; we need to look at all parties who may contribute.*
- **There is still a lot of work to do setting priorities for rural areas and cities.**
- **Nitrate data must be correlated to real life on the landscape and row crop acres.**
- **We need to restore water quality, do things better, be good stewards without sacrificing production.**
- **Water quality must be valued even if that means fewer bushels per acre. This is difficult but may be necessary.**
- **How do we ask people to do that?**
- **Find more consensus between rural and city; provide better information.**
- **We need to feel more. Human beings make decisions to change when moved by something more than information.**
- **We need conversations between peers.**
- **We must find shared values between urban and rural residents. If we do, behavioral change follows, then information.**
- **When we put waterways in fields, that's seen by people in town.**
- **Birds are a common interest. Water quality can be, too. It doesn't matter where you live.**
- **The survey results showed areas of common ground.**
- **Is the survey alone enough to draw conclusions? We need qualitative data to better understand the whole picture and reach more robust conclusions and to understand attitudes. Action steps: 1) Use focus groups; 2) Review survey results, build activities around common value, help people see their shared notions about water quality--farmers and non farmers together.**
- **We need a billboard with a farmer and non farmer saying together: "We want clean water. We love our birds."**
- **Use word of mouth to get the word out.**
- **Christmas trees are good for the land and people can make a living growing them. We promote this by word of mouth.**
- **Go to people who influence water quality—water planners, NRCS, EQIP Working Group—and ask them to put incentives toward alternate practices like grazing.**
- **We need urban and rural policies that encourage good water protection practices.**
- **Water quality leaders value conservation over convenience. Can we balance the two?**
- **Young people need to be informed.**

- *Sedimentation is a big threat to cold water fisheries.*
- *Sediments from farming move chemicals.*
- *We need further study about the source of sediment (stream banks, farm fields, etc.)*
- *Everyone can do something to care for soil.*
- *If everyone makes a change, there will be a big impact.*
- *Everyone—farmers and non farmers—need to stop pointing fingers and take small steps.*
- *There are conflicting policies.*
- *Water will be the next oil. We can live without oil, but not without water.*
- *Water is undervalued.*
- *We need action: education and marketing; economics (pay for polluting); remember future generations; learn from one another—farmer to farmer, farmer to non farmer; demonstrations (urban and rural).*
- *Get away from “keeping up with the Joneses.”*
- *Get kids on farms.*
- **ISSUE: fertilizer | ACTION: cover crops, stream buffers, sustainable agriculture, GPS monitored application, organics, manure management**
- **ISSUE: municipal sewage and storm water | ACTION: Rain gardens**
- **ISSUE: silica sand | education**
- *Weather is a dictator to farm practices.*
- *Rules and regulations are not the answer!*
- *Why do nitrate levels still increase when the price of nitrogen is increasing?*
- *In the survey, city and farm folk are polarized opposites in their thoughts about who’s to blame. Have a discussion about this.*
- *Clean out ponds. This needs to be completed!*
- *Chemical usage shows negative health effects.*
- *Change usage of chemicals and types of chemicals; it helped when we quit using atrazine and went to Roundup.*
- *Use conservation practices even without financial incentives.*
- *Grazing helps control invasive species.*
- **We need teamwork and education.**
- **No more regulations.**
- **Accountability needs to be added into the mix of all this!**
- **Is there a correlation between more chemicals and cancers?**
- *Data showing a steady increase in nitrates is a concern.*
- *Nitrates are unregulated in cities, phosphorus is.*
- *There are more people in cities, and they are not as educated about the problem of nitrates.*
- *Monitoring is not shown above and below cities.*
- *Fingers are pointed only at farmers.*
- *Storm water needs to be treated.*
- *Farmers are more educated about nitrates than urban people. We should be informing clerks in stores to help consumers understand application amounts. We need more education on this—to youth and information posted in stores. Management and economics is important.*
- *There is not consistent monitoring of herbicide use, and there is not enough data for farm or city.*

- *Enforce current regulations; don't add more.*
- *Not much credit is given to farmers who are doing a good job. Farmers are trying to do good, and taking ownership of the problem. Atrazine use is down to almost zero.*
- *Develop a permitting system for spreading manure and enforce it better through counties. More farmers are learning the value of manure.*
- *More education is needed in the city. Promote the use of university resources, put more signs in stores.*
- *The economics of fertilizer use is self-regulating.*
- *The last few years we've needed to add sulphur to farm fields; better to use nitrogen.*
- **Past habits have caused issues, so we need new ones to fix this.**
- **To have constant or permanent change we need new habits.**
- **It's good to have communication, to hear all sides.**
- **We need to have more consistent data.**
- **Identify realistic, obtainable, measurable goals.**
- **Use land sustainably. (This is not the current trend.)**
- **We need coordinated efforts; agencies are not working together.**
- **Subsidize stewardship (possible tax incentives).**
- **Many issues contribute to water quality: air, land, water, run-off.**
- **We need better nutrient management and run-off control measures.**
- **Local knowledge is key.**
- **We must be open to ideas outside of our property and area, new ideas from other farmers, so we know what works and doesn't work.**
- **There is run-off from other areas besides ag, like woods. We must control gullies and erosion, restore cover, and provide more funding to restore these areas. This needs to improve!**
- **We need a sense of urgency! We must work collectively! Try to help different groups.**
- *Too often it is CITY vs RURAL. We need to work together.*
- *Have septic systems checked.*
- *We need answers about causes.*
- *Communication and education is KEY.*
- *Runoff and nitrates are important. We need to keep water on the land.*
- *HEAR other opinions.*
- *Farmers are informed. Provide appropriate incentives.*
- *Use new technologies for stewardship education.*
- *We need cover crops, monitoring and ponds.*
- *Action steps: education, stewardship, incentives, cover crops, work together.*
- **Water quality restoration steps: wastewater treatment, landscaping tips, lobby congressional reps for farm bill change, localize farm programs for funding, charge subsidy programs, look beyond politics, tell the stories of success.**
- **Farmers and city residents need to understand each other better; stop pointing fingers.**
- **Everybody needs to look at their behaviors and decisions.**
- **Farmers need to look beyond the sales pitch of input dealers.**

- **We need to know where our food comes from. Seeing is believing.**
- **Implement sediment controls.**
- **Continue farmer advisory councils. Expand outreach to other farms and add incentives.**
- *Move from finger pointing to knowing we're all in this together.*
- *Awareness and education.*
- *Foster community mindedness.*
- *Balance education, showing positive and education.*
- *Use smart fertilizer application techniques and testing (in farm fields).*
- *YOUTH - education, stream monitoring, nature experiences/youth connection to outdoors*
- *Have grass roots dialog to introduce the need for (change).*
- *Hold more field experiences and on-site education.*
- *Stay alert to outside corporate interests. Keep policy close; drive it here.*
- **We don't have the tools to get the job done, from the farmer perspective. We are coming close with nitrate fertilizer application. Help is needed with sediment control.**
- **It is economically sustainable to use less fertilizer.**
- **We need methods to reduce sediment. It's hard to do a good job with cover crops, because weather prevents it. We can do a good job planting no-till soybeans.**
- **Broaden the use of nitrogen stabilizers, utilizing University of Minnesota standards for application rates.**
- **We need to coordinate efforts and sampling among agencies.**
- **Find where bacteria is coming from.**
- **We agree that sampling is important, but dollars are also needed for conservation practices.**
- **There is disparity in funding sources.**
- **Everyone can contribute to the solution, for example using a mulching lawn mower.**
- **Education is needed in urban areas, because they are just as responsible for pollution.**
- **We need interest in educational opportunities. How do you get people to come?**
- **Septic system education is needed.**
- **How do reports relate to southeast Minnesota's karst region? Groundwater pollution affects everyone.**
- **Water quality education should start at a young age.**

CONVERSATION THEMES

Personal responsibility is the bottom line.

We must work together.

Listen and hear.

More effective, targeted water monitoring and data are needed. We must work together better to achieve this.

Nitrogen runoff is a big concern.

We need new vision.

The issue is complex.

Economics are a strong force in decision making.

Finger pointing exists between rural and urban residents, and must be overcome.

Reach to youth.

There is disagreement about the role of regulation and policy; some say we need more, some less.

Communication, education and grass roots dialog are needed.

We need methods to reduce sediment.

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