

Meeting Minutes
Water Policy Committee
09.04.2008
Dorsey and Whitney
Time: 5pm to 7pm

Members present: Jonathan Abram, Larry Baker, Alex Bakkum, Janna Caywood, Karen Chesebrough, Shelly Enzler, Janne Flisrand, Sherri Knuth, (Co-chair) Dianne Krizan, Joseph Mansky, (Co-chair) Gene Merriam, Wallace Neal, Jack Ray, Shelly Shreffler, Erika Sitz, Jay Sjostrum, Joel Spoonheim, Kaitlin Steiger-Meister, Judy Titcomb, Michael Troemel, Danielle Waldschmidt.

Staff present: Annie Levenson-Falk, Jim Horan, and Bob DeBoer

Others present: Dick Sandberg, Jan Sandberg, Rachel Walker

Objectives:

- Identify a fairly narrow set of policy topics that we may focus on for this study
- Be prepared to make a final decision at the next meeting

Facilitator: Dianne Krizan

Welcome and Outline of Brainstorming Exercise

- a. Special thanks to Jonathan Abram for hosting the meeting
- b. Joel Spoonheim will organize and lead the brainstorming process
- c. Annie Levenson-Falk: Our goal tonight is to narrow the menu of issues. We are sending out regular emails to a broader group of individuals, more than 200 interested people. Attached to this meeting's agenda are some comments from legislators who are receiving the email.

Brainstorming Results:

Governance Group:

Poster:

- How do we achieve effective, efficient and collaborative implementation of water management regulations?
 - o Coordination at state agency level
 - o State-local
 - o Implement good water management techniques.

Comments:

- Is what we have sufficient or is restructuring needed?

- What does restructuring mean? (organizational, legal, etc.)
- Are we implementing the right policies in the first place?

Water Quality Group:

Poster:

- Should agricultural non-point source pollution move in a more regulatory and less incentivized direction?
- What is the mix of zoning, changing behavior, and treatment is needed to attain urban water quality goals?
- What tools should be used to address municipal and septic system waste water quality?

Comments:

- "Changing behavior" could include regulations, incentives, education, etc.
- We didn't mean to reduce incentives in agricultural nonpoint source pollution but, wanted to know if the incentives system was effective.
- Do we need to go from incentives to regulations?
- Issues: Agriculture, Urban Zoning, and Treatment.
- Incentivizing: Programs to encourage Best Management Practices (BMPs), including the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP). Do we need more programs/regs/incentives to push BMPs?
- We haven't regulated farmers the way we've regulated industry. Perhaps we need to center on agricultural issues more.
- Are taxes part of incentives or regulations?
- TMDLs were discussed and are included in each of the issues.

Water Quantity Group:

Poster:

- How do we find out whether ground water withdrawal rates exceed our recharge rates for our region?
- We cannot sell the need to conserve to either the decision makers or general public without a problem statement supported by data.
- We need to have the data that will enable us to have a good discussion about sustainability, need, collection, monitoring, and modeling.
- Meanwhile, while we are obtaining the data, what precautionary principles should we take and what political decisions can be made?

Comments:

- What really is the baseline (data)?
- Advocate research into future use and water losses, current supply (research is an issue that also came up in other groups)

- Is our usage sustainable or not?
 - o Don't have data in MN
 - o Globally, pretty clear that we're on unsustainable path
 - o Why can't MN be the leader in conserving and regulating ground water before it becomes an issue? But people need to see the need for conservation first
- Can this group do anything?
 - o Citizens League couldn't do the data gathering but could have impact on work in the meantime
 - o Citizens League can make a call to action - there is a big dispute between agencies on the scope, breadth, depth of the issue and what should be done - the root is that there's not a high enough priority on data collection to be able to answer these questions
 - o We could make a valuable contribution to the precautionary principal discussion.
- Advocate funding and research to future use and water losses.
- Where do we channel development with ground water in mind?
- If we don't have the citizen demand for this research we don't have a need for it and it isn't an issue.

Economics Group:

Poster:

- Examine how we price water.
- Consider how we should price water
 - o Consumption
 - o Pollution
 - o Allocation – claims for use
 - o Incentives for practices
- Principles (how we value water/should value water)
- Mechanisms (how we can/could do it)

Comment:

- Water is currently used in ways that don't make economic sense because it is free
 - o Sense of the economic value of the input helps to make decisions regarding the economic values of the output
- Do we have ways we could price?
- Incentives to best management practices?
- What was the problem statement behind pricing?
- If something is free it's going to be overused.
- How do you create a series of incentives to encourage the best management practices?
- We don't have enough current economic incentives to encourage best management practices currently.
- This is a tool to encourage better use and get to larger goals.

- Once you make a point on the value of the product you can show the quality/value of those best uses.
- There is a question on how we use/consume the water and how we regulate commercial use.
- Demand-side management is a solution in place in some parts of the country.
- Consuming water vs. consuming the assimilative capacity of water to deal with pollutants
 - o How to price non-consumptive uses is more complicated (e.g. what's the price for returning water to a river 10 degrees warmer?)
 - o Pollution trading has created pollution markets. Currently thought about in Minnesota though not currently pushed.
- Pricing is a tool to address quality, quantity, and engagement.
- Non-market value of water is very unknown (i.e. real estate values due to water, ecological value of water).

Engagement Group:

Poster:

- What are the roles of citizens in freshwater resource management in Minnesota?
 - o Define the Role:
 - What is the view of Citizens?
 - What is the view of Non-Profits?
 - What is the view of State Agencies?
- How do we facilitate this role?
 - o What organizational/structural needs?
 - o What citizen education/engagement needs?
 - o What info sharing/access needs?
- Who does what?
 - o Institutional arrangements.
 - o Organizing place based stewardship so grassroots collective create ownership within the state.
 - o Interface with existing regulations: EPA on down

Comments:

- What is the definition of Citizen?
 - o Do we include every water user in the state?
 - o Are we including corporate citizens? If so, we'd have to ask corporations to come as a citizen, not as a corporate citizens.
- Is this the only place that education showed up?
- Would any of this come up in the method and tool portion of our study?
- Citizens need to rely on cities for technical aspects. However, citizens need to lean on cities to use good practices.
- There needs to be power sharing between citizens and cities

- Define engagement: Active Participant through → basic understanding
- What is the citizen role and what is the role of cities?
 - o Power sharing: How do we ensure cities take citizens seriously.
- Impetus from citizens in city engagement is needed.
- Much more active citizen engagement is needed.

Evaluation:

- Scores: 3-5
- Effective
- Nice not to be talked at
- Please review the criteria for selective a study topic before next meeting
- We need to look at overlap before next meeting
- Before moving forward we need to respect the chairs in calling on people
- How many heads can go through this before next meeting?
- Co-chairs should do a better job of looking around entire table and noticing people with their hands up
- We didn't get to an articulation of the couple of core principles that we need to get to as a group
- We need more focus if we're going to be effective
- We assumed there are problems but didn't articulate what the problems are.
- We're in search of core problems.
- "Intense ambivalence"
- We haven't articulated enough
- We may have missed some big focal points.
- Impressed with how much we got done however, we have a lot further to go.
- Remember that not everyone deals with water issues on a daily basis.