

Minutes

Environment Committee



Meeting Date: June 28, 2022

Time: 4:00 PM

Location: 390 Robert Steet

Members Present:

E Chair, Peter Lindstrom D11
 Vice Chair, Wendy Wulff D16

Raymond Zeran, District 9
 Susan Vento, District 11

Kris Fredson, District 14
 Phillip Sterner, District 15
(arrived at 4:15)
 = present, E = excused

Call to Order

A quorum being present, Chair Wulff called the regular meeting of the Environment Committee to order at 4:00 p.m.

Agenda Approved

Members did not have any comments or changes to the agenda; consensus approval.

Approval of Minutes

It was moved by Council Member Fredson, seconded by Council Member Zeran to approve the minutes of the June 14, 2022 regular meeting of the Environment Committee. **Motion carried.**

Consent Business

None at this time.

Non-Consent Business

1. 2022-182: Priority Waters List Approval (Emily Resseger, 651-602-1033)

Discussion:

Chair Wulff asked if any lakes were removed from the Priority Waters List, as others were added. Staff replied that approximately 25 waters came off the list, as such the majority of the previous Priority Lakes List is included on this Priority Waters List. The primary reason for removal was the use of more comprehensive datasets about why waters are valued, with examples including:

- Waters which previously qualified for Recreation and Tourism for having a boat launch, a regional park, and being 100 acres or larger. When staff looked at the datasets, they noticed some lakes had incorrectly noted as having met the criteria.
- For the Healthy Habitat category, waters previously could qualify if they had just one designation, such as being a Waterfowl Feeding and Resting Area. Given the expanded datasets this criterion became one of many metrics staff used for waters to qualify.

Committee Member Vento questioned if other regions in the country do this [have a Priority Waters List]. Staff replied that they had not looked at whether other regions have prioritized their waters. Our region is unique in how many water resources we have. Some other regions

in the country have a lot of waters such as Vermont, New Hampshire, upstate New York, and Wisconsin, but most other regions are limited and have very few natural lakes. Committee Member Vento expressed that this is the kind of project that other parts of the country would benefit from, and thanked staff for this work in this area.

Committee Member Fredson asked if staff could speak toward why lakes that were not on the list in 2015 are now on the list, such as Como Lake. Staff noted that previous areas of evaluation: high recreational value, high habitat value, providing drinking water, or having good water quality. Waters such as Como Lake now qualify because the new list adopts a wider definition of waterbody benefits for the region, and has a reduced minimum size threshold.

Motion by Council Member Zeran, seconded by Council Member Vento.

Motion carried.

- 2. 2022-183: Innovative Water Conservation Pilot Project Grant** (Ali Elhassan, 651-602-1066)

Discussion:

The example of a vacant house which had a pipe break in December that went undetected until March was given. The leak lost almost 1 million gallons of water during that time.

Committee Member Zeran asked whether the house was considered a total loss given the amount of water damage. A representative of the SPRWS said they could only speculate that this was an accurate statement, noting that the water flow came from the upper area of the house which made it feasible to assume as such.

Committee Member Sterner inquired if this program would work similarly to the current Water Efficiency Program. Staff noted they were working to assist in the development of a rebate program, giving the power and flexibility to the communities to develop the program as best suits their needs.

Chair Wulff noted that not everyone that lives in an area of concentrated poverty is in poverty, and that communities need to be mindful of creating blanket approaches when they develop their individualized programs. Committee Member Vento provided praise to SPRWS for their service to the community.

Motion by Committee Member Vento, seconded by Committee Member Fredson.

Motion carried.

- 3. 2022-184: Joint Powers Agreements with the Mille Lacs Band of Ojibwe and Upper Sioux Community** (Chris Remus, 651-602-4538)

Discussion:

Committee Member Fredson inquired where this originated. Staff responded that tribal consultation is required per Executive Order 19-24 by Governor Walz and the Metropolitan Council is one of the named organizations within that order.

Chair Wulff inquired how it was decided which tribes to contact. Staff stated that based on consultation conversations, those respective tribes expressed interest in monitoring the construction projects identified in the Lake Minnetonka Facility Plan.

Motion by Committee Member Zeran, seconded by Committee Member Vento.

Motion carried

- 4. 2022-185: Saint Paul Inflow and Infiltration Demonstration Project Grant Amendment** (Kyle Colvin, 651-602-1151)

Committee Member Sterner inquired as to whether the property owner shares in the cost of the repair. Staff responded by stating that the repairs to the private service line will be covered 100% by grant funds. The purpose is to repair all identified I/I susceptible services by eliminating out of pocket expenses for the homeowner.



Committee Member Fredson asked whether the grant availability and repairs is still being restricted to within the original study area. Staff responded in the affirmative. The amendment to the agreement is for extending the project completion date and increasing the total grant amount. The project scope remains the same as the original scope in which the grant was awarded.

Chair Wulff noted the issues related to aging services and their susceptibility to I/I might be similar to what West St. Paul is facing and asked if this was an accurate assessment. Staff responded that the housing stock age in the project area is likely older and given the study area's location below the bluff and next to the river would make it more susceptible to I/I during high river stage.

Motion by Committee Member Fredson, seconded by Committee Member Sterner.

Motion carried.

Information

1. **2050 Water Resources Policy Plan Updates** (Jen Kostrzewski, 651-602-1078; Judy Sventek, 651-602-1156; Kyle Colvin, 651-602-1151)

Jen Kostrzewski, environmental analyst, Water Resources, provided an overview of the progress for the 2050 Water Resources Policy Plan Update (WRPP). She provided context as to the complexity of this work, and what has taken place thus far within the WRPP, water advisory, and other working groups; upcoming key deadlines; and how the various components of the work (e.g. white papers) inform the Regional Water Planning Framework and the Master Water Supply Plan.

Committee Member Vento inquired whether any environmental not-for-profits have been engaged in this work. Staff noted that there has been, but through informal means. They noted that there will be broader stakeholder engagement further down the line. Those who have been engaged thus far have been encouraged to provide contact information for those who they believe would be beneficial additions to the conversation(s) and work.

2. **Met Council Smart Ash Project, University of Minnesota** (Carl Rosen, 612-625-8114; Persephone Ma)

Mr. Rosen has been working on using sewer sludge ash (SSA) since the 1990s. The focus of their research was to test if SSA could be used as an agricultural phosphorus (P) source. Ms. Ma noted that phosphorus is a limited resource; it primarily must be mined.

At the end of their presentation, the team provided the following recommendations:

- a. Product development, e.g. pelletization.
- b. On-farm testing under realistic growing conditions in a variety of soil types and crops.
- c. Periodic monitoring of soil P tests and soil concentrations of elements of concern.
- d. Development of best practices for SSA application that include guidelines for analytical testing of available P, soil testing, and SSA application.

Discussion:

Committee Member Sterner inquired if:

- There were different varieties of seeds for the corn and soybeans. Ms. Ma noted that they used the same strain to reduce any variables, stating those used were GMO to mimic real-life practices of farmers.
- The type of waste solids impacted the final product (e.g. flushable wipes). Ms. Ma stated that this was not a concern given the incineration process takes care of most organic contaminants. However, if changes with regulatory process and structure around industrial waste occur, they may encounter issues in regard to certain



contaminants. (staff note: wipes are removed from the treatment process long before incineration)

- Have other vegetables been considered, such as strawberries, carrots, or organic produce. The study team noted that they did not see detrimental effects on the lettuce that they grew with the ash. Currently the regulation of ash is non-existent; it may be treated similarly to biosolids, which is not considered an organic amendment. Organic produce has to meet specific qualifications.

Committee Member Zeran asked if this practice is commercially viable. Ms. Ma replied that as an agronomic fertilizer– she believes – it is viable. Although it acts differently. Mr. Rosen noted that the economics are harder to project what the economics would be; it can be transported further given it is dry versus other forms of biosolids fertilizers.

Committee Member Vento asked if:

- Either presenter was familiar with the Baker Family Foundation, and their interest in this project. An alum of the U of M, who is part of the foundation, specifically target graduate students that focus their work on innovative ways to utilize waste.
- Have there been conversations with philanthropic entities or the Minnesota Department of Agriculture? Mr. Rosen noted that they are in more contact with the MN Pollution, with Met Council as the intermediary, as they are the one that regulates biosolids. The next step would be to discuss this with the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency, and then the Department of Agriculture if it becomes a registered product.

Chair Wulff asked if this team had concerns regarding Per- and Polyfluoroalkyl Substances (PFAS) levels based upon the use of biosolids. Mr. Rosen noted that this was not part of their study, but encouraged the Met Council to evaluate this. PFAS, based upon the literature, tend to be lower if it is even detected in the ash. When there are high PFAS detected, it tends to be due to industrial waste.

Reports

3. General Manager Report

Upcoming event: One Water Summit in Milwaukee, WI. This event is unique, as it has peer groups that attend together. When each group goes back home, they can collaborate in applying what they learned at the conference. We want to promote this event to staff, Committee Members, as well as those in attendance.

Adjournment

Business completed; the meeting adjourned at 5:40 p.m.

Certification

I hereby certify that the foregoing narrative and exhibits constitute a true and accurate record of the Environment Committee meeting of June 28, 2022.

Council Contact:

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