

**Minnesota River Basin Data Center
Board of Directors
April 10, 2003 Minutes**

Attendees

David Ward, MN Corn Research and Promotion Council
George Rosati, City of Mankato
Sandra Hooker, MN Association of Townships
Richard Wurtzberger, MN Soybean Growers Association
John Frey, MSU
Diane Ovrebo, Minnesota River Board
Kent Johnson, Met Council, Environmental Services
Larry Gunderson, MPCA
Heather Offerman, Met Council, Environmental Services
Bill VanRyswyk, MDA
Pete Beckius, Scott SWCD
Dawn Tracy, Scott County
Pat Baskfield, MPCA
Bill Douglas, Bolton and Menk
Robert Finley, MSU Water Resources Center

George Rosati called the meeting to order at 9:30 a.m. Minutes of the January meeting were reviewed and approved.

Robert Finley opened discussion of the State of the Minnesota River Report: 2001. He noted the number of sites included in the report doubled from those in the previous one. Pat Baskfield, Heather Offerman, and Bill VanRyswyk commented on their involvement in putting the report together. The role of the data review team was discussed. It was suggested that the data review team, in addition to reviewing the report prior to publication, could also be called upon for guidance in using the report. For example, the report will be submitted to MPCA, but there are other audiences that could be explored. Kent Johnson explained the Metropolitan Council's involvement with surface water monitoring in the Mankato region. He noted that six stations are presently in operation and that the program began in 1988 when MPCA turned to the Council for assistance. PCBs and mercury were major concerns at that time. Johnson then indicated that funding for this program is due to expire at the end of June 2003. The Minnesota Department of Agriculture (MDA), according to Bill VanRyswyk, will continue a reduced monitoring program at the Blue Earth and Le Sueur River sites, but the rest will be shut down. Bill Douglas commented that this action was very disturbing, noting that short-term data wasn't very meaningful and that it's essential to have continuity at these stations. Pat Baskfield estimated it would cost approximately \$120,000 annually to keep the stations open and that this represents a small investment. He noted that most regional waters are impaired and the data gathered at the monitoring sites is necessary for formulating and carrying out TMDL plans. George Rosati concurred, stating that without data from these

sites the TMDL process would severely be compromised. Johnson stated that the monitoring equipment used at the sites is paid for and available for use by others. It was suggested that a request from the Data Center Board of Directors be directed to MPCA to reinstate funding for the monitoring stations.

Larry Gunderson provided an update on the Lower Minnesota River TMDL. He mentioned that the term "impaired waters" was beginning to get more use in place of TMDL simply because it has more meaning to most people. He estimated that 1,700 stream reaches were listed as impaired across the state, and in the Minnesota River Basin there are about 200. He stressed that the lower Minnesota impairment was a low flow violation for low dissolved oxygen. Gunderson went on to explain a stakeholder process that would assemble from twenty to forty people representing several point and nonpoint interests. These representatives would provide input on the TMDL implementation plan. Richard Wurtzberger commented that MPCA is not taking natural phosphorus loads into consideration in setting target phosphorus reductions. For example, he questioned how much phosphorus is entering the river from grasses. Baskfield called attention to findings in the 2001 State of the Minnesota River Report indicating orthophosphorus concentrations in the spring of 2001 during flood conditions were very high compared to 2000. Are the elevated concentrations related to grasses? Johnson commented on the need to use data contained in the report to influence public policy. Rosati talked about the June MESERB (Minnesota Environmental Science and Economic Review Board) meeting where equitable reductions in point and nonpoint sources were discussed. He said questions were raised about enforcement of these reductions. Douglas commented that considerable finger pointing will occur during the TMDL debate. He suggested attention be given to setting attainable goals. David Ward stated that this discussion highlighted the importance of good data and he emphasized that one of our top priorities is to obtain funding to continue the six monitoring stations. Without good, long term data how are we going to be able to target implementation activities and how will we know if they are effective? Douglas suggested contacting the Minnesota Center for Environmental Advocacy (MCEA) to see if they are willing to help fund the sites. Wurtzberger cautioned against getting involved with an environmental advocacy organization.

Diane Ovrebo explained that the memorandum of understanding between the Minnesota River Board (MRB) and Minnesota State University, Mankato was progressing. John Frey added that the agreement was moving through the University system and that he and others at MSU were optimistic about the new partnership. Ovrebo stated that MRB members were interested in obtaining data that could help them set Basin-wide policies.

David Ward observed that the role of the Data Center Board of Directors may be changing. Finley commented that it would be useful to form a joint committee of the Data Center and MRB to set an overall work plan, budget, and fundraising plan that would capitalize on strengths of both Boards. Johnson noted that the Data Center Board of Directors took a big step with the September 2002 Research Forum and that as more of these types of actions are taken the more likely it is that information will reach those in policy making positions.

The meeting adjourned at 11:30 a.m.