

**LOCAL WATER MANAGEMENT PLAN  
ADVISORY COMMITTEE (LWMPAC) MEETING  
Minutes from August 11, 2005 Meeting  
Submitted by: Steve Hofstad, Clay SWCD**

### **DISCUSSION ITEMS**

The Clay County Comprehensive Local Water Management Plan Advisory Committee met on August 11, 2005. Members present included; Doug Hedtke (DNR Wildlife), Bob Merritt (DNR Hydrologist), Bruce Albright (BRRWD), Kevin Kassenborg (Clay SWCD), Gerry VanAmburg (BRRWD Manager) Sharon Lean (NRCS District Conservationist), Greg Hoch (Concordia College), Pete Waller (BWSR), Mark Chase (USFWS), and myself.

First, we began the meeting with a discussion on **erosion**, specifically the historical observations from the 1960s to the present. The discussion revolved around changes in tillage equipment and tillage practices, disease (primarily “scab”), and economic considerations of erosion. Kevin Kassenborg led the discussion with a great deal of input and questioning from all Advisory Committee members. Following was a discussion of **flood damage reduction (FDR)** facilitated by Bruce Albright. The conversation focused on the FDR Agreement and the eight primary goals identified by this document. Last, we discussed the proposed timeline for the revised LWMP and the necessary public meeting and hearing, and subsequent state review. The goal is to meet one more time (twice if absolutely necessary) to finalize the goals, objectives and action items, finalize the plan, and plan a public hearing for mid-September.

#### **Summary of Erosion Concerns**

As previously mentioned, the committee focused primarily on the issues of tillage practices, evolution of farming equipment, and the economics of farming. In summary, tillage and planting practices have changed dramatically from the 1960s and 1970s. No-till and mulch-till are common practices in Clay County, especially in the east half of the County. This is considered a positive shift, yet there is still “room for improvement”. The “wet cycle” we are currently under has brought about a higher incidence of “scab” and related crop diseases, which has resulted in a change in tillage practices in an attempt to reduce disease problems. Of course, climatic variables have affected this change as well – something we have no control over. Another issue, in relation to disease, is the change in crop rotations. Crops such as barley, oats, alfalfa, etc. are less frequently grown due to the loss of “small farm” livestock. Currently the “standard” rotation is wheat and soybeans and corn, with sugar beets and potatoes considered “specialty crops”. The committee also discussed trends in farm size – small farms are disappearing, and large farms are becoming the norm. The trend is that the larger the farm and the larger the equipment, the likelihood of erosion prevention practice implementation decreases. Sediment basins, grassed waterways, and no/mulch-till incentives are less attractive and considered “problematic” to the larger operation. One alarming incident is the removal of field windbreaks. In the last few years, several field windbreaks have been removed and not replaced with new trees or shrubs. As such, the Committee discussed alternative practices to field windbreaks such as field borders and herbaceous wind barriers and the potential implementation of these practices. Again, the size of farm operations and trending towards “RoundUp-ready” crops does not bode well for these practices. From an economic perspective, the committee is curious if the rise in fuel prices reduces the incidence of “recreational tillage”. The hope is that the economics of farming discourage tillage that is not productive to retain residue and reduce the

potential for erosion. Lastly, the committee discussed the potential for enhanced marketing of commodities that are grown under “environmentally friendly” circumstances. This would parallel “shade grown coffee” marketing and would take advantage of consumers who wish to “make a change” by simply purchasing products that are labeled as, for example, “Soil Erosion Friendly”, or “Wetland Friendly”.

### **Areas of Focus for EROSION**

- Investigate the economics of tillage - coordinate with Clay County Adult Farm Educators to address the economics of tillage to illustrate the potential savings of reduced tillage for a “typical farm” (reduced recreational tillage, conversion to no-till or mulch-till, etc.)
- Investigate the relationship between residue management and incidence of crop disease.
- Provide a summary of the “Tillage Transect Survey” in the LWMP to document the trends in tillage and residue management.
- Market “alternatives” to field windbreaks in the form of replacing trees with shrubs (and thereby more windbreaks to adequately cover the entire field), implementing herbaceous wind barriers and field borders.
- Continue to market (in the eastern half of the county especially) no-till and mulch-till via the SWCD No-till Drill Program and the Environmental Qualities Incentive Program (EQIP).
- Research the Clay SWCD records to determine the percentage of producers who rented the no-till drill, then bought their own through the SWCD administered low interest loan program.
- Educate the public on new marketing strategies for commodities - “earth friendly” cereals, bread, etc.
- Once determined, use for educational purposes the results of the EPA-319 grant to the BRRWD quantifying the extent of in-stream versus introduced sediment in the South Branch - Buffalo River.
- Investigate the potential for a soil loss ordinance.
- Investigate and document the extent of farming of road ditches in the county.

### **Summary of FLOOD DAMAGE REDUCTION (FDR) Concerns**

FDR is at the forefront of nearly every resource organization in the Red River Basin. It is the intent of the Advisory Committee not to “reinvent the wheel” with this topic, but to expand on certain FDR Goals. To summarize, the FDR Goals are;

#### **1998 “MEDIATION AGREEMENT” FLOOD DAMAGE REDUCTION GOALS**

1. Prevent loss of human life
2. Prevent damage to farm structures, homes, and communities
3. Reduce damage to farmland
4. Reduce damage to transportation
5. Reduce damage to water quality
6. Reduce environmental damage caused by flood control projects
7. Reduce social and economic damage
8. Reduce damage to natural resource systems caused by flooding

Despite the attention to FDR and flooding in general, there are still several misconceptions that the public have in regards to flooding, drainage, and hydraulics (the modeling behind the timing of delivery of flood waters to the “outlet” and the importance therein). The “assessment” portion of the LWMP needs to summarize the information to minimize the potential for these misconceptions.

Another recurring theme was that of “short sighted” land use decisions. It seems we as a society are unwilling to “learn from the past” and avoid a higher potential for future problems. For example, there are several situations where houses are being built in flood prone areas in the county. Further, there are still problems homes and driveways constructed with seemingly no comprehensive plan in terms of water management (culvert elevations that are “all over the board”).

The Committee discussed the need to provide better information to decision making bodies, and to coordinate more closely with them.

### **Areas of Focus for FLOOD DAMAGE REDUCTION**

- The Local Water Management Plan must focus on those Flood Damage Reduction Strategies that apply (Flood storage wetlands, Wetland restorations, River corridor restorations, Riparian buffer strips, Retirement of land, Land Use and Best management practices).
- Provide maps to the Clay County Planning Commission and County Board that depict “problem areas” in terms of flooding concerns (additional maps could also depict areas where development is less destructive to natural resources).
- Interview township officers and create maps where flooding has consistently occurred in their township.
- Investigate the conflict in culvert sizing between fish passage and flow velocity.
- Investigate the perceived inconsistent use of roads as temporary floodwater control structures (not allowed on Hwy 31, but now being allowed on County Road 56 for the Whisky Creek).
- Investigate the effects of pattern tiling on water quality and water quantity, and track the incidence and location of tiling in the county.

### **Meeting “wrap-up” – Future Meeting Date**

Given the accelerated schedule of plan development, the Advisory Committee concurred that at least one additional meeting (maybe more) will need to be held to define specific Action Items that are measurable and meaningful to satisfy state requirements. The plan is to review a draft Clay County Local Water Management Plan with goals, objectives and action items for the four priority concerns identified in the Priority Concerns Scoping Document using a laptop and projector. The Advisory Committee can then react to draft goals, objectives and action items 1) individually before, and 2) collectively during the meeting, and recommend changes that can be made immediately.

The next Clay County LWM Advisory Committee Meeting will be held **August 29<sup>th</sup> (Monday) from 9:00 AM - Noon** at the **Clay County Courthouse, Meeting Room B (3<sup>rd</sup> Floor)**.