

**LOCAL WATER MANAGEMENT PLAN
ADVISORY COMMITTEE (LWMPAC) MEETING
Minutes from July 14, 2005 Meeting
Submitted by: Steve Hofstad, Clay SWCD**

DISCUSSION ITEMS

The Clay County Comprehensive Local Water Management Plan Advisory Committee met on July 14, 2005. Members present included; Anton Benson (The Nature Conservancy), Bob Merritt (DNR Hydrologist back from a 1 yr. "mobility assignment"), Bob Backman (River Keepers), Bruce Albright (BRRWD), Kevin Kassenborg (Clay SWCD), E. Robert Olson (BRRWD Manager) Frank Kimm (Citizen and Tansem Twp), Greg Hoch (Concordia College), Pete Waller (BWSR), Mark Chase (USFWS), Jack Frederick (MPCA) and myself.

We began the meeting by starting with the question of "What did the natural resources (landscape) of Clay County look like during "pre-settlement" times?" We looked at "original vegetation" maps (Marschner) denoting large areas of prairie, river bottom forest, wetlands and woodlands, and then compared those maps to the "current state" of the landscape. With those differences fresh in our minds, we reviewed maps of the County Biological Survey (CBS) information coupled with USFWS, DNR and TNC lands. These maps show a definite trend of management priorities – the beach ridges and glacial moraine landscapes of Clay County are priority zones for natural resources enhancement and protection in terms of flora and fauna.

Summary of Natural Resources Concerns

The group discussed some of the main threats to the natural resources of Clay County. They include; upcoming expiration of CRP contracts in 2007 and 2008, connections/linkages of remaining habitat (buffers) and the issues of "habitat fragmentation", gravel mining issues, rural development trends, the increase in ethanol production and how that may impact crop rotations and chemical and land use within the shoreland zones.

Discussion turned to the development of Goals, Objectives and Action Items. When viewing a map of the "geomorphic regions" or different landforms in Clay County and how natural resource issues are managed, it becomes clear that goals should be based on these regions instead of watersheds as the BWSR recommends. As such, the Advisory Committee focused on Natural Resource Enhancement and Protection Goals based on the glacial lake plain, beach ridges and glacial moraine areas of Clay County.

Glacial Lake Plain – NRE&P Focus

Despite the lack of remaining natural resource features in the glacial lake plain, the group emphasized the need for buffers along rivers, streams and ditches in this area. Key tools to define the extent of buffer focus include the 100 year flood plain and frequently/occasionally flooded soils. The success of buffer establishment will determine the success of the other priority concerns identified in the Clay Priority Concerns Scoping Document (PCSD). The Advisory Committee acknowledged that buffers may be a "tough sell", but hope that the positives of the CREP II and CCRP encourage producers to enroll those annually/semiannually flooded portions of fields along rivers, streams and wetlands into the available programs.

Glacial Beach Ridges – NRE&P Focus

As previously mentioned, the Beach Ridges are the focus of many NRE&P efforts - for good reason. The soils, topography, groundwater regime to name a few, drive the land use in this area. Given these physical features, the Advisory Committee discussed the following items:

- The need for adequate buffers on all streams/rivers and wetlands in this region
- The need for enhanced wetland habitats including wetland restorations & wetland buffers using available conservation programs such as CREP II, CCRP, WRP, WREP, and wetland tax exemption programs. As a slight aside, the group discussed the "resurrection" of the "Clay County Wetland Model", a GIS based model designed to rank existing wetlands and potential restoration sites via a "functions and values" point system. Adopting a Wetland Management Ordinance did not work out in 2000 due to certain political reasons. However, the model can still be used for enhanced management of the County's wetland resources.
- Focus CREP II and WRP enrollment on lands adjacent to existing blocks of habitat (DNR, USFWS and TNC lands).
- The need for grade stabilization on specific reaches of streams and rivers throughout the beach ridges. This was done through the installation of rock riffles in the unnamed stream in Spring Prairie Township through the Subwatershed Assessment (Spring Prairie Erosion) Challenge Grant. The practice is widely accepted, relatively low cost, and popular to landowners.
- The concern of the effects of gravel mining and "unenforced" reclamation requirement of mined areas - complete a quality restoration complete with grading, shaping, seeding with native vegetation, and vegetative management. Use the proposed reclamation as a public outreach/education event.
- The need for grassed waterways and sediment basins/diversions. Despite conservation requirements on highly erodible lands (HEL), gully erosion is prevalent on cropland in the beach ridge (perhaps more so further east). One idea is to utilize GIS to select soils with C slopes or greater ($C \geq 6-12\%$) to target establishment of these practices and subsequent enrollment into conservation programs.
- The need to educate the public, and perhaps sway the perception, that the beach ridges are a "wasteland". This is a unique area, above and below ground, and concerns such as locating a site for a future county landfill are "looming large".
- There are many existing management plans and natural resources management groups (one specifically stated Watershed District Project Teams) that echo these concerns and potential solutions. It will be critical to "tie-in" to these planning and implementation efforts in the coming years.

Glacial Moraine – NRE&P Concerns

Like the beach ridges, the moraine region of Clay County is important in terms of NRE&P. Many large wetlands/small lakes, small lakes and rivers/streams are located in this region, as are remnant woodlands. Numerous wildlife species reside in this region, and habitat fragmentation is a major threat here. Land use practices are probably the greatest threat to existing and future natural resources in this region, so the Advisory Committee discussed the following items:

- The concern of issues resulting from increased rates of rural development - there is a concern that future development will hasten fragmentation of existing woodland and

wetland/grassland habitat.

- The need for adequate buffers on stream/rivers, wetlands and lakes in this region - there is a legitimate concern that lakeshore development is destroying the few, shallow lakes Clay County has, and the Advisory Committee discussed stricter enforcement of vegetation removal in the shoreland zone.
- The need for wetland restoration and enhancement using available programs and tax incentives - this would also serve to enhance flood damage reduction and water quality measures for the county.
- The threat to remaining remnant Oak Savannah and "big woods" habitats - again, there are tax incentive programs to compensate landowners for protecting such areas.
- The concerns with gravel issues, specifically mining expansions and new gravel mining.
- The need to publicize the vast "outdoor based" recreational opportunities in the eastern portion of the county - canoeing, kayaking, hunting, fishing, birding, hiking, etc. are all viable "ecotourism" opportunities.

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. Once the discussions have been held on the Priority Concerns of *Erosion* and *Flood Damage Reduction*, the plan is to have a meeting 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. The Advisory Committee can then react to draft goals, objectives and action items before and during the meeting – it may be easier for the committee to react to, and recommend changes to, something in writing as opposed to brainstorming.

The next meeting will focus on the remaining Priority Concerns of *Erosion* and *Flood Damage Reduction*. Given the schedules of the Committee, the next Clay County LWM Advisory Committee Meeting will be held on **August 11th (Thursday) from 9:00 AM until noon** at the Clay SWCD/NRCS Office Conference Room.