

Pine River, One Watershed; One Planning

The Crow Wing Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD) is undertaking the development of a Pine River Watershed-based plan consistent with the One Watershed; One Plan vision and program grant requirements adopted by the Board of Water and Soil Resources (BWSR). The process develops a strategic policy framework that is based on extensive analysis and community engagement. This bottom up approach ensures that the communities voice is heard, as the steering committee translates the community's challenges, and opportunities into goals and policies that can assist local elected officials in making difficult decisions. This framework also serves as a tool for developing and maintaining sustainable growth and development practices to assist local communities as they face future challenges.

On May 7th, 2018, the Crow Wing County SWCD launched the Pine River One Watershed; One Plan vision, with a half day, public, informational kickoff meeting at the Ideal Township Hall in Ideal Township. Participants were invited to enjoy a light breakfast before being welcomed with a review of the day ahead. Jake Frie, Crow Wing County Environmental Services Supervisor, kicked off the day with a brief 1 Watershed, 1 Plan overview before welcoming the events 1st presenter, Julie Westerlund who is the statewide 1 Watershed, 1 Plan Board of Water and Soil Resources (BWSR) who explained the One Watershed; One Plan, planning process and next steps for watershed.

Following Julie's presentation, Tad Erickson, Regional Planner with the Region Five Development Commission thanked Julie, and briefly introduced himself before providing a summary of the planning process as well as the roles and responsibilities of the Policy Board, the Advisory Committee, and the various organizations involved. Tad noted that Region Five's role would be to facilitate the Advisory Committee meetings, as the committee gathers, synthesizes, and translates watershed data into goals and policies for the plan.

Tad then introduced Mitch Brinks, Area GIS Mapping Specialist, who provided a presentation on the type of data available related to: Geographic diversity, forestry, surface water, groundwater, and habitat. Following Mitch's presentation, Jake Frie introduced Gary Roach, who is a nationally renowned fishing guide to talk about the value of water quality and the impact that watershed based planning has not only on the environment, but also on the industries that rely on our lakes and waterways.

Following Gary's talk Tad previewed the facilitated group table discussion before a 10-minute break. After the break, participants were invited to gather around their choice of five tables, each with their own topic related to watershed planning. These topics included: Geographic Diversity, Forestry, Surface Water, Ground Water, and Habitat. Each table was hosted by a table facilitator who invited participants to discuss the respective table topic and answer the following questions:

1. What is working well in watershed related planning?
2. Where are some opportunities for improvement?

Participants had 10 minutes at each table before cycling through to the other 4 tables. Table facilitators provided a report out to the larger group on major themes that came out of the table discussions.

Wrapping up the meeting, participants were thanked for their interest, involvement and input and were given the opportunity to stay informed by providing their contact information for regular updates on the Pine River One Watershed; One Plan, planning process. Tad informed the participants that the

information that the input they provided today would be used by the Advisory Committee in the coming months as they develop the plan.