

# UPPER BIG BLUE NRD WATER QUALITY MANAGEMENT PLAN

## Implementation Phase



## STAKEHOLDER MEETING 1 SUMMARY

In Partnership With



Zoom Meeting

Wednesday, December 16, 2020

6:30 p.m. - 8:30 p.m.

### ATTENDEES

Present	Name	Project Role
X	Marie Krausnick	Project Team - UBBNRD
X	Jack Wergin	Project Team - UBBNRD
X	Adam Rupe	Project Team - JEO Consulting Group
X	Andrea Gebhart	Project Team - JEO Consulting Group
X	Elbert Traylor	Project Team - NDEE
	David Cast	Stakeholder - Landowner/Operator
X	Adam Darbro	Stakeholder - Municipality
X	Tena Ehlers	Stakeholder - Landowner/Operator
X	Anthony Kriefels	Stakeholder - Landowner/Operator
X	Gayle Marsh	Stakeholder - Landowner/Operator
X	John Mittman	Stakeholder - Agri-Business
X	Gary Moody	Stakeholder - Landowner/Operator
X	Patty Morner	Stakeholder - Landowner/Operator
X	Steve Moseley	Stakeholder - Recreation
X	Doyle Onnen	Stakeholder - Land Management
X	Leslie (Les) Pohl	Stakeholder - Landowner/Operator
X	Aaron Sindelar	Stakeholder - Agri-Business
X	Jess Spotanski	Stakeholder - Landowner/Operator
X	Brent Swartzendruber	Stakeholder - Landowner/Operator
X	Jenny Rees	Technical Resource (UNL Extension)
X	Matthew Perrion	Technical Resource (NGPC)
X	Josh Bowers	Technical Resource (NRCS)
	Jennifer Swanson	Technical Resource (NARD)
X	Steve Melvin	Technical Resource (UNL Extension)
X	David Eigenberg	UBBNRD
X	Bill Kuehner	NRD Board Member
X	John Miller	NRD Board Member
X	Richard Bohaty	NRD Board Member
X	Ronda Rich	NRD Board Member

## MEETING MINUTES

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Note: These minutes are not intended to be a transcript of the meeting, but a summary of the discussion that took place. Digital audio recordings of the meeting are available upon request.

Presentation available at [www.upperbigblue.org/WQMP](http://www.upperbigblue.org/WQMP)

### 1. Welcome and Overview of Zoom

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- Opening remarks by facilitator Andrea Gebhart (JEO)

### 2. Overview of Project

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- Summary of Water Quality Management Plan (WQMP) efforts provided by Marie Krausnick (UBBNRD)
  - 2017: received funding to develop WQMP
  - 2018: stakeholder effort to develop goals and objectives for WQMP
  - 2019: drafted WQMP
  - 2020: received EPA approval in March
- Overview of current efforts provided by Andrea Gebhart (JEO)
  - Use stakeholder input to identify and prioritize best management practices (BMPs) to implement in the priority areas identified in WQMP
  - Stakeholders are not signing up to implement at this time, rather helping NRD understand what resources and programs would be most useful and beneficial for district landowners/residents

### 3. Stakeholder Introductions

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Stakeholders introduced themselves, identifying name, location in watershed, occupation/interest in water quality, and why they chose to be part of this stakeholder effort.

Andrea Gebhart (JEO) also introduced:

- Technical Resources, who will join meetings to help answer questions, as well as listen to stakeholder discussions. Stakeholders will be provided contact information for these resources.
- NRD Board members, who have been invited to join and listen to meetings. May be able to provide some context of past NRD decisions, but primarily joining to listen.



#### 4. Existing Conditions

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- Technical presentation on Existing Conditions. See presentation for more detail.
  - Watershed background (Adam Rupe, JEO)
  - Recharge Lake (Matthew Perrion, NGPC)
  - Beaver Creek Watershed (Adam Rupe, JEO)
- Stakeholder Discussion
  - Data that was collected in 2001-2003 was quite a while ago. Many efforts went into education and farmers have made changes since then. What is status of atrazine impairment now regarding numbers?
    - Adam Rupe (JEO): We used the best available data to write the WQMP. Planning effort indicated a lot more monitoring and sampling could be done throughout district. Identified monitoring priorities in the WQMP.
    - Elbert Traylor (NDEE): Still showing the stream impaired in 2018 report (data through 2016). 2020 report (data through 2018) shows impaired for atrazine. If still on the list, there's still an impairment there.
  - Where is the Mercury coming from?
    - Adam Rupe (JEO): Likely seeing that from Recharge Lake, typically found in fish tissue samples. That's generally atmospheric deposition and bioaccumulated in ecosystem of lake, then found in fish tissue. When it's identified, advisories are put out to not eat fish. Generally, not a water quality caused problem, but good indicator there may be other issues.
    - Elbert Traylor (NDEE): Would recommend developing a monitoring strategy in the first year of the project to establish baseline data over two years to isolate pollutant sources above and below target area(s).
  - The *E. Coli* contamination was a surprise.
  - Beaver Creek is dry around here. How often does it flow around York?
    - Marie Krausnick (UBBNRD): Through York, it does flow every day of the year. Along the way, it does pick up municipal discharge, or treated water.
  - Would like to focus on nitrate in wellhead protection areas, groundwater, and drinking water efforts.
    - Marie Krausnick (UBBNRD): Wellheads are considered "special priorities areas," which is a place we can implement BMPs.
  - Is there any way to reestablish depth in lake?
    - Jack Wergin (UBBNRD): NRCS came out with boat to chart depth, haven't gotten data back yet. We may need to dig out some of the sediment piles on upper end, but that is also very costly. 15 feet is probably max depth in some areas of lake.
    - Does lake have sediment trap?



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- Jack Wergin (UBBNRD): No contained trap, just restrictions.
- Building sediment trap could be a possibility.
- Adam Rupe (JEO): Plan includes some in-lake strategies (dredging, sediment removal, adding in containment basins). Many of these are heavily engineered and have associated maintenance efforts.
- Back in day, water quality was good in lake because it used to be dry and groundwater needed pumped in there. Is there a way to turn over the water?
  - Jack Wergin (UBBNRD): Ran pumps a couple weeks ago in preparation of winter icing.
- Elbert Traylor (NDEE): For NDEE regulations, need to demonstrate efforts to address erosion and sediment control (from the watershed) before approval of in-lake strategies like dredging.
- What is more important: in-field runoff control (cover crops, no-till) or waterways and stream borders buffers? Or both?
  - Adam Rupe (JEO): It's better to keep water, soil, and nutrients where they are in the field. Using BMPs like no-till, cover crop, applying nitrogen when plant needs it reduces the need for stream buffers and downstream/field measures.
  - Elbert Traylor (NDEE): A system approach is best. One BMP is great, but there's compounding interest effect if one BMP feeds into the next which feeds into the next. The effects are multiplied.

## 5. Existing Programs

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- Jack Wergin (UBBNRD) and Marie Krausnick (UBBNRD) provided an overview of existing NRD programs related to water quality BMPs. See presentation for more detail.
  - Land Treatment Program
  - Nebraska Buffer Strip Program
  - Private Dams Program
  - Municipal Water System Assistance Program
- Stakeholder Discussion
  - We've used the EQIP program
  - We used Municipal Water program. We constructed two municipal wells at \$850,000 per well, and program covered a good chunk of each project. Reason for wells was high nitrates. Since wells were installed, those are lowest nitrate wells. Found a good area to maybe drill some more. Highest nitrate reading we've had out of either was 2.2 mg/L. It's been a successful use of funding.
  - Can buffer filter strips be hayed?



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- Jack Wergin (UBBNRD): Yes but will probably need to address that in contract. They can be hayed or grazed but will check with Nebraska Department of Agriculture before doing it.
- How are the programs advertised? I have heard from a couple small towns in the UBBNRD that might qualify.
  - Jack Wergin (UBBNRD): Advertise on UBBNRD website. Also do a *Blueprint* Newsletter and see quite a bit of interest with these articles.
- Monthly newsletter works here.
- A monthly email with information on current programs and funding or social media outlets.
- Seems like you have great programs in place to mitigate these issues, why do you think there isn't more participation?
- Would like to compare program advertisement to EQIP program. It's a widely known program through word of mouth and easy to use. Very good program with positive impact. NRCS right away pulled out plain paperwork for it. With some of these programs, unsure where to go first: NRCS or NRD. I wasn't even aware you could initiate projects with NRD, seems fuzzier. Not sure what was different about EQIP program, but it seemed more open and accessible.
- EQIP is a great program we have used, was not aware of the many cost-share opportunities the NRD provides
- Currently using NRCS for converting 30 acres of gravity to pivot and cover crops. They've cost shared about 40% of the pivot. Really just letting people know more about these great programs.
- The article in the newspaper struck a chord because newspapers are great at presenting complicated information in user-friendly format. Also tells story of landowners who have already implemented this, are seeing success, and had a good experience. Good advertising; also helps other landowners maybe see themselves doing it. Might be better than handout or email with technical terms and logistics, sometimes that's overwhelming. First step is getting landowners excited by seeing someone who has done it. Provide links in article for them to dive into the technical information second.
- York paper always looking for content, have eliminated so much staff with fewer people to cover stories. Stakeholder with newspaper experience would be willing to pitch and develop stories to paper. Would love to work with NRD to get information out there and work with NRD communications person.
- NDEE recommends coordinating programs and funding so wherever you go (NRD, NRCS, UNL Extension) people are trained in all the programs. This gives a one-stop-shop for landowners regardless of who they contact. Then agencies coordinate the hand-off, instead of putting that on the landowner.
- On the buffer strips, up on west side of Beaver Creek cost-share was \$130 acre, which doesn't even cover the rent. Don't see how buffer strips pay to even think about it.



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- Jack Wergin (UBBNRD): There are some who farm right through Creek, but success depends on the year. Do have program that identifies high-risk and low-risk areas that we could approach high-risk areas and make it financially beneficial to implement practices.
- Is there outreach to the communities with public use wells from the NRD or are they needing to reach out on their own?
  - Marie Krausnick (UBBNRD): It's both. Usually at start of calendar year, we reach out to communities indicating budget planning is taking place, and if they have projects to let us know. Also have communities reaching out to us asking for opportunities to help them when they start to see issues. McCool cited as an example.
- Is there much cost sharing for cover crops, and if so, what is it? There's a lot of people that could benefit from that.
  - Marie Krausnick (UBBNRD): That's something that will resonate from this group: there's a desire to do some type of cost-sharing for cover crops. We did have project with York, with funding from NDEE though source-water grant, to put cover crops in wellhead protection area. That's something we could look at for future 319 projects through WQMP in wellhead protection areas and other vulnerable areas where we see sediment moving into water bodies. EQIP has some dollars for cover crops. The upcoming project with the Nature Conservancy has funding for this (information to be provided at future meeting). Those are the primary funding sources right now. But with input we could begin to identify what kind of dollars it would take for producers to implement more cover crops and focus areas. No funding source to provide district wide, even at 50% adoption. Need to find ways to focus dollars and help where we can.
  - Elbert Traylor (NDEE): The new farm bill has source water protection initiative in it. If you're in wellhead protection area delineated by state, cost-share for cover crops is up to 90%.
- The objections I have heard to cover crops is that we don't have drills, we don't have equipment, making it a large capital expense to get into them. That's a potential obstacle to overcome.
  - Elbert Traylor (NDEE): In Bazile project, used highboy in June/July. Cover crop starts to grow, then suppressed by canopy, then cover crop takes off after corn harvest. Looking hard at this and working with UNL to develop technology to address this. Make it easier for producers to put them on.
- In terms of publicity, the papers in Hastings, Aurora, and Seward would likely cover stories about these programs, too.
- Were there other communities that applied for the program that were not granted funding or have all applicants received the assistance upon application?
  - Need answer: Milford had applied for funding and were placed on hold until they had an approved Wellhead Protection Area Plan. Completion of



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the plan did not fit their project timeline, so they elected to withdraw their application.

### 6. Next Steps

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- Project team to set up online resource center to house meeting materials, referenced resources, and project team/technical resource contact information.
- Stakeholders to mark calendars. Meetings will be virtual until further notice.
  - Stakeholder Meeting 2: Wednesday, January 20, 2021, 6:30-8:30 p.m.
  - Stakeholder Meeting 3: Wednesday, February 17, 2021, 6:30-8:30 p.m.
  - Public Meeting/Input: March 2021

