12th Minnesota River Congress full session

Summary

Recorded by Scott Sparlin Coordinator/Facilitator

There were 86 registered attendees at the St. Peter Legion Club for the 12th Minnesota River Congress held on 5-16-19

The full session began with a brief overview of the focus for the evening. The focus was the topic of water storage. Action Board member and Public Policy Network team leader Ted Suss gave an up to date talk about how the focus for the evening was arrived at. He noted that after numerous meetings and in direct consultation with several key organizations is has become obvious that the basin is going to need increased water storage capacity in order to avoid chronic breakdown of both urban and rural infrastructure as well as insuring the viability of agriculture in the future. Coordinator/Facilitator Scott Sparlin followed Mr. Suss with an update on meetings with SWCD cluster Areas within the basin. He also provided information on previous meetings held with area state legislators and various governing agency staff associated with water. He stated that there is a willingness to bring significant water storage funding to the legislature for consideration. He also stated there is a needed process involving strategies and component development. He called on SWCD’s to offer component elements for implementation of such an initiative. He also stated we would need to have endorsement from key sectors of those involved in Agriculture. It was then noted that this would be the primary focus of the Minnesota River Congress going forward indefinitely until something was in place that sufficiently and sustainably addresses the need for water storage.

Next was a report from Action Board member and Minnesota State University Mankato, Water Resources Director Kim Musser and assistant Emma Young. They gave an overview summary from the recent Water Storage Summit held in Mankato at the Kato Ballroom earlier. They reported on the various presentations which were given that included climate, actual projects completed that addressed water storage along with data that has been collected which all pointed to the need for more storage which could be achieved on a larger scale regarding a number practices involving land management.

The next presentation was from Dr. Karen Gran Professor at UMD. Dr. Gran gave the outcome from the Collaborative for Sediment Source Reduction study completed recently. It was clear that factors and data collected pointed to the need for significant additional water storage in the Minnesota River Basin.

Her presentation was followed up by a message from Senator Nick Frentz which encouraged the Minnesota River Congress to continue its path towards building support for best management practices that will help water quality and that he is poised to work with us to achieve those goals.

Next was SWCD Area 6 Director Mark Schnobrich and SWCD Area 5 Director Clark Lingbeek who reinforced the need for more storage and how it could be implemented if carefully crafted and with the right amount of resources. It was noted by them both that water storage is in their priorities and that they will be seeking support to make it a top priority.

Lastly Crystal Waters Project organization leader Mike Roll gave a presentation on successes within the Lake Crystal watershed which involved engaging the rural community and what it took to achieve them.

An update on the upcoming event being hosted by the Minnesota River Congress in Mankato at Riverfront Park called “The Spirit of Water” scheduled for August of 2020 was brought up. A great deal of the planning has been completed by the MRC Arts, History and Spirituality Network Team and scheduling of the days events is now being finalized along with marketing and networking tasks and needed tools. The team is meeting monthly and all are welcome.

The full session adjourned at 9:15 PM