

9th Minnesota River Congress Summary
11-16-17
Scott County Association for Leadership and Efficiency
Jordan MN

The 9th Minnesota River Congress began with a successful Networking Fair. It certainly accomplished the goal of people and groups having an opportunity to be exposed to others progress on projects and initiatives in the Minnesota Basin. We were glad to welcome 2 new groups who had not participated in the past. Several individuals were also new to the Networking Fair and shared work and projects that had direct connections to the Minnesota River Congress teams, policy statement and adopted resolutions. Much of the conversation progressed into the dinner hour with new connections and discussions between people who entertained potential actions regarding the river system and watershed.

Following the Networking Fair, a presentation from Patrick Belmont was given. An attachment with this email will enable you to view the presentation. It was very informative and well received. Numerous questions, clarifications and much discussion followed as well.

Next on the agenda was an update on progress from various team leaders, resolution authors and Action Board Liaisons regarding our adopted resolutions and Interest Network Team actions.

Public Policy team leader and Liaison Ted Suss reported on actions regarding the Soil Organic Matter resolution. He stated that Linda Meschke is spearheading the initiative for the congress and has assembled working group and is presently looking for two more individuals to participate going forward. She submitted a proposal to the LCCMR and was asked to present to the commission but was subsequently turned down. She also has a proposal pending with the McKnight Foundation which she will hear from by December. Ted reported that the basis of the initiative is to work directly with crop consultants to accomplish the learning and methodology involved in building increases in soil organic matter. Ted also reported on a soil organic building workshop he participated in which was well attended and received by 80 farmers from the middle and upper part of the basin. He stated that there were 4 farmers on a panel and that they were practicing management components designed to increase soil organic matter and for

several different reasons. He reported they each agreed and were convinced of the multiple benefits their management decisions had on their land.

The Streams Flow Control was the next resolution to be reported on. Scott Sparlin represented the Coalition for a Clean Minnesota River as the author of the resolution reporting on actions since its adoption by the congress. He shared that after face to face meetings with related professional staff at the state level, several options for actions were being explored. One component of the resolution was to ascertain which state agencies or entities would potentially have the most impact regarding leadership on coordinating a more collective and effective effort. An important goal of the resolution is to increase the implementation of water runoff management practices which have been proven to mitigate the impacts all rainfall events and especially increased extreme events which have become more frequent and are expected to continue in trend. More consultation with organizations and key rural and urban drainage experts is being sought to identify which of the state agencies to approach and solicit for taking on leadership and coordination of such an initiative.

The next resolution to be reported on was the Waters Connectivity resolution. Authors of the resolution are the Coalition for a Clean Minnesota River and representing them to report once again was Scott Sparlin Executive Director and Jack Lauer MNDNR Regional Fisheries. Scott shared that the CCMR board of directors had met on several occasions to research if any plans existed within state or local entities which addressed the issue of connectivity of 1st 2nd and 3rd order streams to the main system. After meetings and researching it was found that one such a plan exists within the MNDNR Fisheries which is an important component of overall fisheries management and does address this issue. Jack Lauer made the case for the importance of a connected system and encouraged reaching out to fisheries managers and staff in the various sections of the river. He stated that Minnesota River Congress participants and teams could work to see where potential projects might be considered in this regard. He also stated that fisheries staff was very aware of the issue of connectivity and that other state and local agencies could also be a potential source of such connectivity project collaborations.

Funding for the Minnesota River Basin Data Center was the next resolution actions report. The author of the resolution was John Hickman and he along with

Minnesota State Mankato Water Resources Center Director Kim Musser reported on actions and next steps. It was reported that ascertaining specific needs from several sectors would be helpful to guide information and formats the data center could potentially provide. It could be accomplished using a survey sent out to different categories of users. Some of the categories for users to be considered would include, watershed professionals, elected officials at all levels, non-government organizations, youth and students and the public at large. Steps are being taken to identify the various sources of sustainable funding and developing a plan to better describe and communicate the nature and purpose of the center.

The next report on resolution action was from Jessica Nelson, Civic Engagement Team Leader and member of the Management Committee. She reported on the Eco-Systems Services adopted resolution. The nonprofit collaborating with Minnesota River Congress, Conservation Marketplace Midwest (CMM), met with leadership from MDA, MPCA and MDH to describe opportunities and successful case studies of environmental credit trading systems. CMM is developing a protocol to quantify, aggregate and trade environmental credits among citizens, public entities and private organizations. Future meetings will be held to continue the conversation and develop a strategy.

The next resolution action reported on was the Granite Falls Fish Passage and Whitewater Park. Dennis Frederickson MNDNR reported on actions which have transpired since the adoption of this resolution by the Minnesota River Congress. He also reported that the Minnesota Falls land acquisition resolution had been accomplished since being adopted.

Scott Sparlin addressed the Fort Ridgley Golf Course resolution next and stated that after a large and coordinated effort, an agreement on keeping the course open was dropped after the city of Fairfax declined to undertake the final financial commitment to the initiative. Agreements were reached after significant negotiations but the financial commitments to finalize them could not be met.

Minnesota Valley and Minnesota River State Trails adopted resolution was the next actions report given by Ted Suss.

The final actions report given was on was the Paddler Access resolution. Jay Gustafson a member of the Recreation Team who had paddled the Minnesota River this past year reported that he chronicled the trip and took numerous pictures. He reported that there is a lot of public access work to be done and that many times the existing maps were wrong and that markers were not in place designating where access points were. He is in the process of finalizing a report for the MNDNR and will be working with the Minnesota River Congress participants and others to make improvements and changes going forward regarding public access to the river system. Scott Sparlin then reported that one of the supporting organizations to the MRC, The New Ulm Area Sport Fishermen had reached an agreement to open a new access point approximately 7 miles upstream from New Ulm. The agreement will involve the development of a new access for canoes, kayaks and small boats and will be maintained for fishing and primitive camping by the NUASF.