



Public Comment and Response

Sauk River Watershed District (SRWD) Board Meeting

Meeting Date: Tuesday, January 21st, 2020

Further questions may be directed to SRWD Staff:

320.352.2231

524 4th Street South

Sauk Centre, MN 56378

www.srwdmn.org

Comments have been summarized to capture the main points from each landowner. If there are questions or concerns regarding the information in this document, please contact the SRWD office.

1. Paul Hartmann - Osakis
 - a. Stated that he was verbally assaulted by board member.
 - b. Also stated that a board member had verbally attacked Kenny Zimmerman in March and April of 2016.
 - c. Asked board member Dennis Ritter to resign from board, also asked SRWD board to remove him if he did not resign.
 - d. Believes that sediment pond failure due to massive rain event in 2004 caused (guessing) 1,000 years of damage to Lake Osakis.
 - e. Unhappy with the SRWD, need to control spending.
2. Kenny Zimmermann – Sauk Centre
 - a. Petitioned the SRWD to close 500ft of ditch.
 - b. Received made up bills.
 - c. Tile sizing discrepancy.
 - d. Stated he was verbally assaulted by a board member in 2016.
 - e. Robert’s Rules state that the Board President should not influence a vote.
3. Dennis Ritter (Board Member) - Melrose
 - a. Provided context/additional information to the statements provided by Mr. Hartmann and Mr. Zimmermann.
4. Kenny Zimmermann
 - a. Stated that everyone should be treated equal at these meetings. If citizens need to stand at the podium and say their names the board members should do so as well.
5. Peter Koel – Osakis



- a. Building of a new building is a concern
 - b. Would like to see projects with a defined return on investment
 - c. Would also like to see a minimum acceptable value to proceed with a project
 - i. Cost-benefit information is taken into consideration in the design phases of a new project. When it comes to maintaining a water quality project, MN Statute 103D.631 Maintaining Projects states, "Subdivision 1. Maintenance required. The managers are responsible for maintaining the projects of the watershed district in a condition so that they will accomplish the purposes for which they were constructed." Subdivision 2 discusses the maintenance fund and how the maintenance should be paid for, but does not give a threshold for not maintaining a project. Regarding the costs for the JD2 Sediment Pond project, the cost per pound of phosphorus removed is about \$100 per pound (slightly under that), which is a low price for this type of reduction.
6. Pat Kraemer – Osakis
- a. A board member's wife received a sympathy card, unsigned, because her husband serves on the board. The card encouraged her to see her husband through different eyes. This behavior is not ok and if as citizens we would like respect from the board we need to treat them with respect as well.
7. Dennis Ritter (Board Member) – Melrose
- a. Responded about comments made by Ms. Hensley at a previous board meeting and how that impacted another board member. Also stated that Ms. Hensley had called that board member and apologized.
8. Annie Hemstock – Hastings originally, Osakis
- a. Would like to see measures for success built into the sediment pond project.
 - i. Answer: Staff has been working on ways to add this into the Operation and Maintenance Plan that is being developed for the project. This was discussed later in the meeting.
 - b. Requested monitoring data.
 - i. Answer: This was sent to Ms. Hemstock via email. All water quality data collected by the SRWD is public, and is available through the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency (MPCA) online database which can be accessed here: https://cf.pca.state.mn.us/water/watershedweb/wdip/search_more.cfm
 - 1. Because of the unique station IDs linked to monitoring sites, it can be difficult to find data for a specific site or water body without having the ID. If you have a specific water body you would like data on, please contact Sarah at the SRWD to get the station ID.
 - 2. Another option would be to click on the Map tab of the above link. Locate the water body of interest on the map and click on it. From there, several options are available, one of which is a Water Quality



Assessment. Clicking that link will bring you to a series of tabs with different water quality information.

9. Alicia Elfering – Freeport

- a. How ditch assessments are calculated is unfair, has CRP land and knows that others who were assessed less have drain tile.
 - i. Answer: Each landowner share of any ditch assessment on SCD #26 is determined by the Re-Determination of Benefits process that was conducted in 2010-11, as outlined in Minnesota Statute 103E.351. In the eyes of viewers, CRP is not a permanent program and any land enrolled in CRP at the time of the re-determination, will be considered as its use prior to enrollment. CRP requires there be a cropping history to be eligible for enrollment. Therefore, theoretically, once the CRP contract expires it could be returned to its former use. Therefore CRP does not affect the determination values assigned to that particular parcel.

10. John Elfering – Freeport

- a. What are you doing to your school districts if you keep taxing? They are not going to be able to pass school levies because of SRWD taxes.
 - i. I don't think we can answer this. This is an opinion.

11. Dorothy – Freeport

- a. Do any of you have a degrees in hydrology? A master's degree?
- b. Why are we doing this? There is so much duplication – what are watersheds doing that other agencies aren't?
 - i. Answer given at meeting: Sarah Boser (Water Resource Manager) read MN Statute 103.201 regarding the purpose of a watershed district. Scott Henderson (Administrator) further explained the difference between watershed districts and soil and water conservation districts as well as state agencies.

12. Joe Fry – Osakis

- a. We need data points for downstream of Lake Osakis, do we have that?
 - i. Answer: Yes. Currently the SRWD has monitoring stations at nine locations on the Sauk River and also conducts monitoring on seven primary tributaries. The SRWD also has a rotational schedule for lake monitoring. More specific questions regarding the monitoring plan should be directed to Sarah at the SRWD.

13. Josh Elfering

- a. What happens to the sediment from ditch cleanouts? All goes downstream.
 - i. Answer: Sedimentation/erosion during ditch cleanouts will occur, just like any other soil disturbing activity including agriculture. Steps are taken to minimize the sedimentation process during repairs of a ditch



system, to include seeding and mulching the disturbed soils as quickly as possible.

- b. Don't you (SRWD Drainage Authority) have to follow setbacks for ditch cleanouts?
 - i. Answer: Not sure I understand the question. The Drainage Authority is required to work within the construction limits/easement of any ditch system to be sure they can complete the maintenance process effectively. This includes the area where spoils will be placed and graded.

14. Representative Paul Anderson

- a. Assessments for ditch cleanouts and how the benefits are determined for calculating the assessments is laid out in statutes and is not something the SRWD board can change. That is for the legislatures in St. Paul and is not the responsibility of this board.
- b. There is a limit to what people can afford, some ditch assessments are very high. In regards to water quality projects, residents downstream benefit from the project but only a small amount of residents are paying for the project.
 - i. Answer: In regard to the JD #2 Sed Pond Project, the SRWD Board is considering alternative methods to funding the maintenance of the project. Unfortunately, the area currently assigned for this purpose, was established through the project development process and hearings outlined in Minnesota Statutes 103D, back in 2003-2007. Changing the assessment area could be considered for future costs but it cannot be changed for the past.