



# Lower Grand River Watershed Project

## MEETING MINUTES

Project: Lower Grand River Watershed Project Meeting Date: March 4, 2004  
Subject: Steering Committee Meeting Start: 11:30 a.m.  
Meeting Site: FTC&H Conference Room Meeting Adjourn: 2 p.m.  
Grand Rapids Office  
Prepared By: Mr. Jason E. Buck Project No.: G02408  
Attending: Mr. Corky Overmyer - City of Grand Rapids, Environmental Protection Services  
Mr. Tom Doyle - Barry County Drain Commissioner  
Mr. Brian Donovan - City of East Grand Rapids  
Ms. Kristine Huizen - Frey Foundation  
Mr. Don Stypula - Grand Valley Metropolitan Council (GVMC)  
Ms. Laurie Beth Nederveld - Grand Valley State University (GVSU)  
Annis Water Resources Institute (AWRI)  
Ms. Janice Tompkins - Michigan Department of Environmental Quality (MDEQ)  
Mr. James E. Smalligan, P.E. - Fishbeck, Thompson, Carr & Huber, Inc. (FTC&H)  
Mr. Jason E. Buck - FTC&H

### 1. Welcome and Introductions

### 2. Subcommittee Updates

#### Urban Subcommittee

- Mr. James E. Smalligan, P.E. provided an update on the progress being made by the Urban Subcommittee on the development of an interactive Best Management Practice (BMP) selection tool.
- The BMP selection tool will be part of a Watershed Guidebook (Guidebook) for local governments to use to implement water quality protection programs in their communities.
- The Urban Committee has prepared a list of BMPs for use in urban watersheds. FTC&H staff has used this list to create a database of BMPs that are recommended for use in the Lower Grand River Watershed (LGRW). The BMP selection tool takes the user through an interactive process of selecting BMPs that protect resources from specific pollutants. The process for selecting BMPs using this tool is being reviewed by the Urban Subcommittee.
- A pilot workshop is being planned for the City of East Grand Rapids to demonstrate the use of the LGRW and the interactive tools.
- Mr. Corky Overmyer asked if the BMP selection tool would contain data on pollutant removal efficiency and cost/benefit comparisons. Mr. Smalligan responded that this information is not available but would be added in future revisions, if there is interest and funding.



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## Rural Subcommittee

- Ms. Laurie Beth Nederveld informed the Steering Committee that the Rural Subcommittee is also providing input for the BMP database and is reviewing the process for selecting BMPs using the interactive tool.
- The Rural Committee is working with the Lake Creek Watershed (Morrison Lake) in Ionia County to plan a pilot workshop for demonstrating the Guidebook and interactive tools. This workshop may be helpful for drawing in more participation from communities outside the Greater Grand Rapids area.

## Technical Subcommittee

- Mr. Smalligan provided an update on the Technical Subcommittees progress of reviewing the BMP selection tool. This committee is reviewing the content of both the rural and urban BMP spreadsheets.

## Vision Committee

- Ms. Janice Tompkins spoke to the Steering Committee about the Vision Committees' development of a vision and mission statement for the Grand River Watershed.
- All focus group sessions have been completed, and Mr. Andy Bowman is working on compiling the results in a table that will categorize the results into focus areas and strategies. Ms. Tompkins noted that it is challenging to keep the vision broad to let the details be developed by the Steering Committee.
- Mr. Don Stypula commented that the GVMC would use a similar strategy for future changes to the vision and mission statement.
- The results of the focus group sessions should be available by the next steering committee meeting.

## Evaluation Committee

- Ms. Nederveld announced that the evaluation team has nearly completed the first year evaluation of the project.
- The Steering Committee will be participating with the project evaluation via e-mail. A series of questions will be sent out by Ms. Kristen Huizen and forwarded to a third party evaluation consultant. All evaluation comments will be kept confidential and will not be seen by project staff.

### **3. Watershed Management Plan (WMP)**

- a. Mr. Jason E. Buck handed out draft copies of Chapter 2 of the WMP. This WMP will be relevant for the entire LGRW. Information that is more detailed or specific to a subwatershed will be available in a supplemental electronic database that will be available online or a compact disc.
- b. Content
  - Executive Summary
  - Chapter 1 - Introduction
    - Demographics.



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- Steering Committee and subcommittee tasks and responsibilities.
- Public participation.
- Chapter 2 - Physical Characteristics
  - Geography, hydrology, natural history, land use, etc.
  - Detailed information about each subwatershed will be available in the Watershed Information Matrix (online or electronic database)
- Chapter 3 - Creating an Implementation Action Plan
  - BMP selection tool.
  - Guidebook.
  - This chapter will be very useful to communities that will be developing a Storm Water Pollution Prevention Initiative.
- Chapter 4 - Information and Education Strategy
  - The Information and Education Committee is developing two strategies for public outreach in the LGRW. One level of outreach will be the development of tools for local governments and subwatershed groups. In addition, a second level will be a strategy for a broad outreach campaign and methods to integrate the LGRW project with existing environmental education programs at a regional or statewide level.
- Chapter 5 Evaluation
  - The Section 319 program is requiring more evaluation in LGRW projects.
  - Evaluation tools will be provided for testing the effectiveness of BMPs, information and education activities, and the accomplishment of the project's milestones.
- Chapter 6 - Sustainability
  - A plan for transitioning from the planning phase to the implementation phase.
  - What steps are needed to create a watershed organization?
  - Mr. Overmyer requested that the chapter title, "Sustainability," would be changed to describe the chapter's contents more accurately.

## 4. Watershed Organization

- a. Mr. Smalligan gave a brief synopsis of the watershed organization discussion panel that occurred in September 2003. Mr. Smalligan reminded the Steering Committee of the discussions from previous meetings that reviewed other watershed organizations across the state and identified features from each group that would be applicable to the LGRW. Using these discussions and the bylaws from each of these organizations, a series of transparencies were created that outlined the



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programs and organizational structure of each watershed organization (a copy of the transparencies is attached as an Excel Spreadsheet).

- b. Mr. Smalligan went through each transparency, discussed the programs of each watershed organization, and compared them to their organizational structure.
- c. The Steering Committee used the examples to decide what programs would be desired for an organizational structure in the LGRW. Ms. Tompkins offered a suggestion from the Vision Committee that individuals from grassroots organizations were concerned about a watershed organization that created another level of bureaucracy. These grassroots organizations were not as concerned about size as they were about having an umbrella organization that was effective and accessible.
- d. Ms. Tompkins stressed the importance of advocacy. Ms Tompkins gave the example of the Southeast Michigan Council of Governments' (SEMCOG) relationship with the MDEQ director. This relationship gives SEMCOG opportunities to continually showcase accomplishments, resulting in appropriations and grant funding for environmental projects. Mr. Overmyer also suggested that the organization would not only advocate state government, but also look at the bigger picture. Mr. Overmyer suggested advocacy of the Lake Michigan Forum and the Environmental Protection Agency Region V office in Chicago.
- e. The Steering Committee felt that the organization would avoid being labeled as a "rule maker." The initially feeling was that the watershed organization would not be too involved in regulatory/compliance issues. Ms. Kristine Huizen pointed out that the discussion on advocacy was leaning toward regulatory/compliance issues and suggested an alternative view of advocacy that would support local governments and organizations. Ms. Huizen suggested that the Steering Committee should consider how the watershed organization could meet local governments' needs for regulatory compliance by advocating on their behalf. She also recommended that the watershed organization would assume responsibility for attending conferences and meetings on behalf of communities and organizations in the LGRW since environmental policy is often discussed in conference committees, and local governments and organizations do not have the time or resources to attend these meetings.
- f. Mr. Overmyer asked if the watershed organization would create competition with the GVMC or the West Michigan Strategic Alliance. Mr. Donovan suggested that the watershed organization could form as an offshoot from the GVMC. Mr. Stypula supported this comment by demonstrating how the GVMC could support a watershed organization with existing staff, programs, and facilities. Ms. Tompkins voiced concern that the LGRW is much larger than the current geographic focus of the GVMC. The Steering Committee appreciated this concern, but felt that this boundary would not have to constrain a watershed organizations focus. Mr. Stypula commented that the GVMC's political boundaries have never been limited to just West Michigan.
- g. Mr. Tom Doyle and Mr. Donovan voiced other concerns about GVMC oversight of a watershed organization. Their concern was that the GVMC is largely owned by government entities. This may support the current public perception that the government is responsible for improving water quality.
- h. Further discussion of the watershed organizational structure was tabled for the next meeting.



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## 5. Next Meetings

- Thursday, April 1, 2004, at FTC&H from 11:30 a.m. to 1 p.m.
- Thursday, May 13, 2004, location to be determined.
- Thursday, June 24, 2004, location to be determined.

## 6. Adjourn

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Attachments

By e-mail

### Distribution:

#### Attendees

Mr. Karl Hausler - Michigan Department of Agriculture  
Mr. John Hardy - Maple Row Dairy  
Mr. Jim Oosting - Coldwater River Watershed Council  
Mr. Scott Conners - City of Walker  
Mr. Chris Kenyon - City of Ionia  
Mr. Jim Beelen - Allendale Township  
Mr. Jim Holtvluwer - Georgetown Township  
Mr. Paul Geerlings - Ottawa County Drain Commissioner  
Mr. Tom Leonard - West Michigan Environmental Action Council  
Mr. Andy Bowman - GVMC  
Mr. John Koches - GVSU, AWRI  
Ms. E. Wendy Ogilvie - FTC&H