



PUBLIC KICKOFF MEETING REPORT

June 2022

The Kettle River & Upper St. Croix public kickoff meetings were held in June 2022. Two events were held, one near Sandstone and one in Moose Lake to accommodate people in the north and south of the watershed. The goal of these meetings was to hear diverse viewpoints on watershed priorities and values. We also wanted to understand the issues, concerns and opportunities of watershed residents and stakeholders. This information was gathered by having participants complete two activities.

Seven topic areas were identified by the Steering Committee and Policy Committee. These included:

- Lakes
- Rivers / Streams
- Wetlands
- Forests
- Farms
- Groundwater / Drinking water
- Stormwater

Basic information on each topic was compiled into a poster for watershed stakeholders to view during the events. These posters were used to help residents have a shared understanding of the topics.

The events were advertised using print and social media ad campaigns. In addition, Steering Committee members advertised the events using their contact lists and connections. For those who could not attend the events in person, an online survey was made available. The survey ran for one month.

A total of 40 people participated in the events (13 in Sandstone and 27 in Moose Lake). In addition, 4 people completed the online survey.

Kickoff Meeting Activities

Identifying Issues, Concerns and Opportunities

A list of watershed issues, concerns and opportunities were compiled by the Steering Committee for each of the seven topics. The list was used to create a voting poster. Participants from each event used stickers to vote if they agreed with an issue. They were also provided with sticky notes to add new issues if they felt something was missing. A complete list of issues is listed at the end of this report.

Prioritizing Watershed Topics

Event participants were given four \$100,000 bills at the beginning of the event. They were asked to view each of the seven topics and think about how they would spend this money to protect and restore natural resources in the watershed in the next 10 years. Money could be spent all on one topic or spread over four.

Other Information

Using a paper survey, we asked participants to describe how they interact with the watershed, where they were from and a list of words that describe the watershed. This information was used to understand geographic spread of participants and representation of the seven topic areas. We were also able to generate a word cloud which will be used later in the process to develop our vision statement for the plan.

Online Survey

The online survey mimicked the in-person event as much as possible. The same list of issue statements was listed for each topic, and participants were asked to rank the four highest priority topics.

Results

Where were participants from?

As expected, those who attended the Sandstone meeting were largely from the south while the Moose Lake meeting participants were mostly from the north. Participants indicated they were from:

- Kettle River
- Sandstone
- Finlayson – Big Pine Lake
- Grindstone Lake
- Moosehead Lake
- Moose Lake
- West Branch Moosehorn River

- Island Lake
- Sand Lake
- Sturgeon Lake
- West Branch Kettle River
- Mahtowa

While there was a good spread of participation from north to south, a noted gap was from the Upper St. Croix watershed.

Who Attended?

Participants indicated that they interacted with the watershed in the following ways:

- Residents
- Lakeshore owners
- Forest owners, loggers or people who work in the wood products industry
- Farmers
- City residents
- People who hunt, fish or recreate in the watershed
- People who work in the watershed
- People with cultural or family ties to the watershed

Top Issue Statements

The top three ranked issue statements were collected for each topic.

Lakes

- Lakeshore owners are not aware of their role in protecting lake health.
- Lakes have increasing algae levels that are affecting our ability enjoy them.
- Some septic systems are too old or not maintained, and they are affecting lake health.

Rivers / Streams

- Stream banks / shorelines are not well protected or have too much erosion
- Flooding, rainfall changes and/or climate changes are impacting rivers/streams
- Dams and undersized culverts are impacting fish habitat

Wetlands

- People do not understand the importance / value of wetlands
- Wetlands are at risk of being lost due to development or land use change
- Wetlands are hard to identify, and people are not always aware they are impacting them

Forests

- Landowners are unaware of programs that help manage and protect their forests
- Forests are a risk of being converted to development, farming or other land uses.
- Some tree species are at risk of diseases / pests that are affecting forest health

Farms

- There is too much paperwork / restrictions for farmers to enroll in conservation programs to protect lakes, streams or wetlands
- Manure runoff or livestock accessing lakes, streams or wetlands are impacting the health of water resources
- Soil health could be improved with more cover crops, less tillage or grazing management

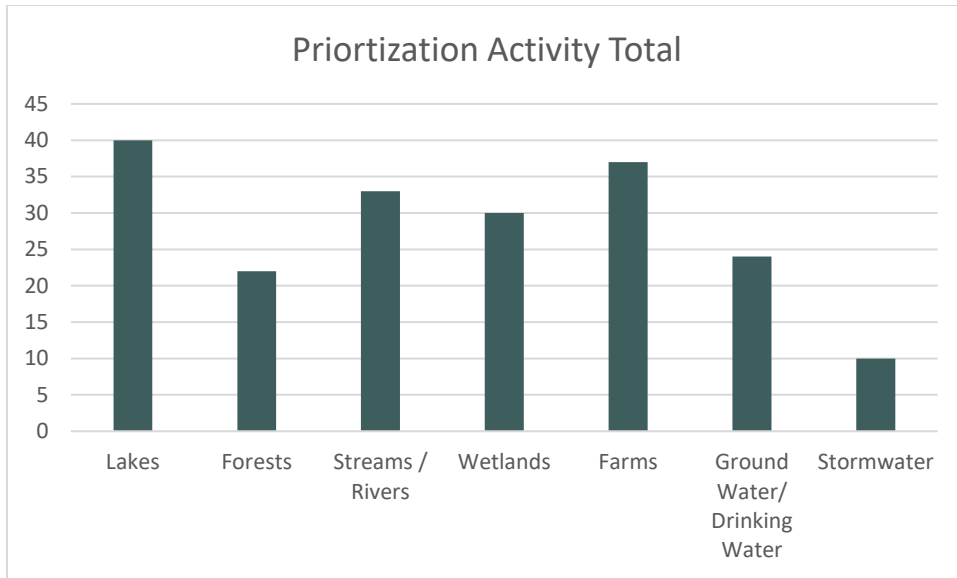
Groundwater / Drinking Water

- People are unaware of risks or concerns impacting ground water / drinking water
- More testing / monitoring is needed to track groundwater / drinking water safety / quality
- Flooding, rainfall changes and/or climate changes are impacting groundwater / drinking water

Stormwater

- Stormwater runoff is affecting lakes, streams and wetlands & Stormwater runoff has resulted in changes in lakes or streams (more erosion, more algae) (similar issues with high scores)
- Flooding, rainfall changes and/or climate changes are affecting city's / town's ability to manage stormwater
- Tie: Individual property owners can do more to manage stormwater & More funding is needed to help install projects to better manage stormwater

The prioritization activity saw some differences between events. In the south, rivers/streams was the highest ranked topic, with wetlands and drinking water tying for second. In the north, lakes and farms tied for the highest ranked topic, with streams and wetlands coming in second. When both events and the online survey were combined, lakes ended up has the highest ranked topic, with farms coming in second.



The words used to describe the watershed focused on the beautiful and wild landscape, along with the opinion that it is a hidden gem in Minnesota.

What are the opportunities, concerns, or issues of lake health in the watershed?

<p>There are not enough rules to protect lakes, or the current rules are not enforced</p> <p>10</p>	<p>Lakeshore owners are not aware of their role in protecting lake health.</p> <p>24</p>	<p>More cost assistance is needed to help lakeshore owners complete projects on their property.</p> <p>4</p>
<p>Lakes have increasing algae levels that are affecting our ability enjoy them.</p> <p>24</p>	<p>Some septic systems are too old or not maintained, and they are affecting lake health.</p> <p>23</p>	<p>Aquatic Invasive Species are affecting lake health or make it difficult to enjoy recreating on lakes.</p> <p>18</p>
<p>There is a lack of professionals / technical experts to help landowners protect the lake</p> <p>4</p>	<p>Changing lake levels are causing too much erosion</p> <p>8</p>	<p>Lakes are healthy and well protected</p> <p>0</p>

What are opportunities, concerns or issues of forests in the watershed?

<p>Landowners are unaware of programs that help manage and protect their forests</p> <p>18</p>	<p>More funding is needed to cost share forest health activities / forest management plans</p> <p>7</p>	<p>There is a lack of professionals / experts to help interested landowners manage their forests</p> <p>4</p>
<p>Completing forest management projects is too difficult / there are not enough contractors for projects</p> <p>1</p>	<p>Invasive species are affecting forest health</p> <p>17</p>	<p>Changing weather patterns are affecting forest health</p> <p>16</p>
<p>Forests are a risk of being converted to development, farming or other land uses.</p> <p>20</p>	<p>Some tree species are at risk of diseases / pests that are affecting forest health</p> <p>22</p>	<p>Forests are healthy and well protected</p> <p>0</p>

What are the Opportunities, Concerns or Issues with Streams / Rivers in the Watershed

<p>People do not know how to protect or restore streams</p> <p>14</p>	<p>There is not enough funding for stream / river projects</p> <p>13</p>	<p>Ditched or altered streams need to be restored</p> <p>15</p>
<p>Stream banks / shorelines are not well protected or have too much erosion</p> <p>18</p>	<p>Flooding, rainfall changes and/or climate changes are impacting rivers/streams</p> <p>18</p>	<p>There are fewer fish for anglers than there once were</p> <p>3</p>
<p>Streams and Lakes are not clean enough to recreate in during certain times of the year</p> <p>5</p>	<p>Dams and undersized culverts are impacting fish habitat</p> <p>19</p>	<p>Streams are healthy and well protected</p> <p>0</p>

What are the Opportunities, Concerns or Issues with Wetlands in the Watershed

<p>People do not understand the importance / value of wetlands</p> <p>32</p>	<p>There are already enough wetlands or wetlands are functioning as they should</p> <p>0</p>	<p>More funding is needed to restore lost wetlands</p> <p>11</p>
<p>More research / studies are needed to understand where wetlands should be restored</p> <p>15</p>	<p>Wetlands are changing because of flooding, rainfall changes and/or climate changes</p> <p>9</p>	<p>Invasive species are affecting the health of wetlands</p> <p>9</p>
<p>There are not enough rules to protect wetlands, or the current rules are not enforced</p> <p>10</p>	<p>Wetlands are at risk of being lost due to development or land use change</p> <p>21</p>	<p>Wetlands are hard to identify, and people are not always aware they are impacting them</p> <p>19</p>

What are the Opportunities, Concerns or Issues with Farms in the Watershed?

<p>Farmers are unaware of programs to help protect lakes, streams or wetlands.</p> <p>6</p>	<p>There is too much paperwork / restrictions for farmers to enroll in conservation programs to protect lakes, streams or wetlands</p> <p>12</p>	<p>There is not enough cost share to help farmers install projects to protect lakes, streams or wetlands</p> <p>8</p>
<p>Timelines/deadlines for conservation programs are too strict</p> <p>1</p>	<p>There are not enough rules / regulations to protect water resources</p> <p>2</p>	<p>Manure runoff or livestock accessing lakes, streams or wetlands are impacting the health of water resources</p> <p>25</p>
<p>Soil health could be improved with more cover crops, less tillage or grazing management</p> <p>30</p>	<p>Flooding, rainfall changes and/or climate changes are impacting farms</p> <p>10</p>	<p>Farms are already managed to protect water resources</p> <p>2</p>

What are the Opportunities, Concerns or Issues with Ground Water / Drinking Water in the Watershed

<p>People are unaware of risks or concerns impacting ground water / drinking water</p> <p>26</p>	<p>There is not enough funding to help landowners protect groundwater / drinking water</p> <p>3</p>	<p>More rules are needed to protect groundwater / drinking water</p> <p>8</p>
<p>More testing / monitoring is needed to track groundwater / drinking water safety / quality</p> <p>18</p>	<p>The groundwater / drinking water supply is limited / at risk</p> <p>7</p>	<p>Groundwater / drinking water safety / quality is at risk from sinkholes or porous soils</p> <p>4</p>
<p>Flooding, rainfall changes and/or climate changes are impacting groundwater / drinking water</p> <p>16</p>	<p>More information is needed to understand groundwater / drinking water risks</p> <p>13</p>	<p>Groundwater / drinking water is already protected and safe / healthy</p> <p>2</p>

What are the Opportunities, Concerns or Issues with City Stormwater Management in the Watershed

<p>Cities and towns need help from professionals / experts to better manage their stormwater</p> <p>8</p>	<p>More funding is needed to help install projects to better manage stormwater</p> <p>11</p>	<p>Stormwater runoff has resulted in changes in lakes or streams (more erosion, more algae)</p> <p>15</p>
<p>Cities and towns are unaware of stormwater issues</p> <p>3</p>	<p>Stormwater runoff is affecting lakes, streams and wetlands</p> <p>26</p>	<p>Flooding, rainfall changes and/or climate changes are affecting city's / town's ability to manage stormwater</p> <p>11</p>
<p>More rules are needed to help manage stormwater</p> <p>2</p>	<p>Individual property owners can do more to manage stormwater</p> <p>16</p>	<p>Cities are already managing their stormwater effectively</p> <p>0</p>