

# 2016 State of Water Conference

April 14-15

Conservation MN, Uof M Extension & Freshwater Society

Mary Ackerman notes

Highlighted TMLA key issues

## Watersheds-How You Fit In Karen Terry, MN Extension

The presenter gave us the illustration of global water resources: "Think of all the water on our planet as the size of a basketball. Now think of a golf-ball size...this is the saline water on the planet. Now think of a quarter coin size...this is the drinkable water on our planet. And, we are not making any new water. Ever."

Water and MN Economy:

- MN Population 5.2m
- 1.3m rely on surface water
- 3.9m rely on ground water
  
- If only 1/3 of MN lakes had their water clarity affected there would be a \$100 Billion drop in property values and \$900 Million loss in tax revenue.
- Fishing accounts for 43,000 jobs. \$2.8 Billion in revenue. \$640 Million in tax revenue. Over 90,000 non resident fishing licenses.
- 12,000 jobs in hunting and wildlife. \$1.5 Billion in revenue.
- What happens on land does affect water. Storm water runoff is the #1 water quality problem in the US.

Knowing our watershed maps is important to all lake associations. The WRAP project [see below] is helpful to break down the county line and state line thinking since watersheds cross lines. One watershed = One plan. 5 pilot WRAP projects going.

The Watershed Game is an interactive game created for public awareness of urban, rural and forestland issues. I loved it! Easy to get if we want to at no cost.

## Audobon MN – Clean Water & Birds Ashley Peters, MN Audobon

- MN has 60% of the migrating bird flyway up the Mississippi
- 57 important bird areas in MN
- Forests are critical link for migration.
- School Trust Lands should be considered
- Easements are important link
- We have 20% of the American White Pelican nesting population
- Lead continues to threaten birds.
- Suggested apps: EBird and Merlin

## Healthy Land for Healthy Water Rich Biske, Nature Conservancy

- Land use change and conversion threaten healthy watersheds. We need to review our land use policies and begin better enforcement of current policies. Variances are not our friend these days.
- MN is the 2nd highest rate of deforestation in the US. Between 2008-2012 400 sq. miles of forest/grasslands/wetlands were converted.
- We need to assess the risk of ag conversion to ground and source water carefully – potato fields, etc.
- Lake Associations: monitor adjacent wetlands and road culverts.
- Mississippi River is the first source of Metro drinking water....Pine River the second!

## Role of the County in Protection     Tim Houle, Crow Wing Cty Administrator

“Without good water quality, Crow Wing County is just one of the 10 most poverty ridden counties in MN.”

- Need more awareness. More data connected with other water data since many offices and agencies have ‘water’ as a responsibility.
- Lake Associations play a big part in data collection....also in citizen input and education.

## Watershed Restoration & Protection Strategy – WRAPS     Shaina Keseley, MN Pollution Control Agency

- 80 major watersheds are being studied in this first round
- 75% of the land in watersheds is privately owned....need voluntary responsibility for what goes into the watershed.

## Economics of Quality Water     Tom Watson, Whitefish Area Property Owners Association

Tom has aggregated the various “tourism industry” revenue streams: employment data, tax revenue and service industries, to show how water quality affects this MN industry and the urgent need for protection.

The combined travel and tourism annual expenditures in Aitken, Cass, Crow Wing and Hubbard Counties exceeds every MN county except Hennepin and Ramsey Counties.

Lake Associations are key to so many of the solutions to the potential and real threats to water quality in the north country. We have the only area of MN not either totally polluted or polluted/possibly restorable in MN. 40% of MN.

- 1/2 of lakes and streams in southern MN are too polluted for safe swimming & fishing. Protection is cheaper than restoration.
- Nitrogen and phosphorus common impairment of lake water.
- Oil pipelines a threat. MN Pollution Control Agency and MN DNR both recommend a different route than the one proposed by Canadian Company Enbridge for their new Energy Corridor through Itaska from Clearbrook to Duluth.
- 2014 MN Economic Impact for travel and tourism: \$13.6 billion in gross sales, \$878 billion in Tax Rev, 254,000 full and part-time jobs.
- In Cass Cty alone we have \$104M in gross sales revenue, \$6.4 M in sales tax revenue, 1,866 full time jobs.
- Lake Association Awareness to Threats: AIS, property variances, public apathy, lake shore development, pipelines, septic systems, storm water runoff, lack of funding
- Lake association members must be educated and mobilize. They often do not vote in elections.