

Marengo River Watershed Partnership
“Local People, Local Food, Local Issues”
Project Partners Meeting
June 3, 2010
Grand View Town Hall, Grand View, WI
Meeting Notes

Meeting Attendees

Matt Hudson	Dan Vaillancourt
Valerie Olinik-Damstra	Gary Johnson
Ruth Oppedahl	Steven Spickerman
Kevin Brewster	Landis Spickerman
Pam Roberts	Morgan Peck
Naomi Tillison	Caryl Peck
Dorothy Lageroos	Doyle Blakeman
Tom McNurlin	Mark Dryer
Charles Ylitalo	Pam Dryer
Claire Ylitalo	Tony Wallner
Carol Seago	Dane Bonk
Teri Isaac	Jim Crandall
Ned Zuelsdorff	Mimi Crandall
Kathy Zuelsdorff	Pat Earing
Howard Sibbald	Hailey Earing
Michele Wheeler	Sara Hudson
Pat Seago	Dr. Henry Gradillas
Chuck Seago	Gayle Gradillas
Mike Amman	Tony Wallner
Dane Bonk	Jo Bailey

Local Foods Picnic

The meeting started with a local foods picnic. Food came from producers within or near the Marengo watershed and from watershed residents as a way to showcase some of the great food available locally. The picnic continued until about 5:45pm, when Matt and Valerie started the meeting.

MRWP Project Update

Matt presented and re-acquainted meeting participants with progress that has been made in developing a watershed action plan for the Marengo, why the project is taking place, and where we are in the process to complete the plan. He talked briefly about how a vision statement, issues and concerns, and goals have all been discussed at previous MRWP meetings and provided a pictorial “tour” of some of the people and places BRWA has experienced along our “Journey to Action.”

Valerie provided a summary of citizen involvement activities that have occurred since the 3/9 MRWP meeting. She described how she and Matt have been attending local meetings and events, meeting with watershed residents (focused mostly on farmers), meeting with watershed town leaders, and gathering project ideas for the watershed action plan on a large, aerial photo poster of the watershed.

Valerie described some of the key findings from her review of local resident surveys that have occurred as part of Ashland and Bayfield County comprehensive planning activities, a UW-Extension/Wisconsin DNR woodland landowner survey, and a brief survey BRWA has distributed as part of the project.

Local People, Local Issues: a panel of watershed residents (taken from an article by Kevin Brewster in the June 2010 BRWA newsletter)

Ruth Oppedahl from the UW-Extension introduced a panel of watershed residents to discuss the central theme of the meeting—local people and local issues. They each shared their unique perspective on what living in the watershed meant, what issues were important in its future, and addressed the question: “What do *you* do to protect land and water?”

The first speaker was Morgan Peck, a dairy farmer near Highbridge. At the core of Morgan and his wife Caryl’s desire to run an environmentally friendly dairy operation was the wish to “leave something better than when we started.” For example, cows are kept well away from the river to prevent degradation of the banks and channel. Nutrient management is a big part of lessening the impact of livestock operations, and the Peck’s approach includes paying close attention to slope severity in areas where manure is spread, and timing spreading to avoid rain-driven nutrient runoff.

Doyle Blakeman, a local logger living near Marengo, then discussed the development of low-impact logging services he provides to Ashland and Bayfield county clients. Since 2001, when he left farming to begin logging, Doyle has strived to reduce negative impacts of his operation through close adherence to the Wisconsin DNR’s Best Management Practices (BMPs). This is a set of voluntary guidelines that have been developed to lessen environmental damage associated with logging, including soil compaction, non-harvested tree damage, and erosion.

The final panel speaker was Pam Dryer, a landowner in the Town of Lincoln. Pam and husband Mark live on 278 acres along the Marengo River, where they garden, harvest apples, hunt, ski, hike and gather wood for heating. In spite of this close connection to their property, Pam’s first remark was that she was “truly humbled” by the people who had spoken before her, “people who make their livings directly from the land.” The Dryer’s have worked to protect their land in a number of ways, such as hiring a consulting forester to set up a land management plan, taking into consideration erosion control and invasive species management, and are seriously considering a conservation easement through the Bayfield Regional Conservancy to protect their land into the future.

Howard Sibbald, chair of the Town of Grand View, also offered some interesting information about the township’s relationship to the Marengo River: There are 20 miles of the river in the township, including 30 culverts and five bridges. He elaborated on some of the early families, history, and industry of the township. He closed stating that the township “has a good relationship with BRWA.”

A lively exchange then followed between the audience and panel members, addressing some key points that will be taken into consideration when addressing citizen's concerns in the watershed action plan.

Audience participation

Following the panel discussion, Matt, Valerie, and Ruth asked the audience to consider the question: "How can we use the Marengo watershed action plan as a tool to take care of our land and water resources?" The following summary is from Kevin Brewster:

"Some of the points discussed were that town officials and residents are often frustrated by regulatory delays that prevent timely remedies to problems; "top-down" regulation—specifically WDNR—is too far removed from the community and its needs. Concern was also raised about silt-induced flooding at a location on Hawkins Creek. Morgan Peck and some other area farmers in attendance discussed the benefits and limitations of local production and marketing. Residents representing the Marengo Lake Association also expressed interest in adopting a monitoring program like BRWA's to address a decline in fish in the lake."

Matt, Valerie, and Ruth encouraged meeting participants to continue sharing ideas with them over the coming months. Matt and Valerie described how the process of compiling project ideas and technical information to draft the watershed action plan will occur over the summer. A draft plan is due to be completed by the end of September.

The next MRWP meeting will be on Thursday, October 7th, where the draft plan will be released for public comment. Time and meeting location TBD. The final plan is due to be completed by the end of December, 2010.