

Project Name	Brown's Creek Watershed District (BCWD) Watershed Management Plan Update	Date	12-9-2024
Meeting Location	Stillwater Public Library		
Regarding	Watershed Management Plan Update; Land Conservation and Ecological Health		
Attendee(s) + Info.	CAC –George Vania, Jyneen Thatcher, Yihong Gao, Aimee Eberle, Sandy Noreen-Ruben, Board Liaison - Celia Wirth District Staff –Cameron Blake, Hannah Peterson Camilla Correll (EOR), Alexander Furneaux (EOR)		
Recorded By	Alexander Furneaux, EOR		

Meeting Overview

EOR staff attended the Community Advisory Committee (CAC) meeting to lead a discussion on climate change impacts as part of the BCWD Watershed Management Plan (WMP) update. Alexander provided a summary of the Plan's progress, including input received from the TAC on the Issues of Lake Management and Wetland Management. Alexander noted that the BCWD Board provided initial comments on the Issues discussed with the CAC and TAC in October. The remainder of the meeting was used to discuss applying a climate change impact lens to the WMP update through a climate change storytelling workshop process, inspired by [Climate Stories Project](#)'s approach.

CAC members were asked to share personal observations of climate change, drawing upon sensory experiences such as sight, smell, sound, and touch to communicate how these changes are unfolding. CAC members were encouraged to draw on observations they have experienced in areas within the BCWD, however they often spoke to more geographically broader experiences from places they have lived in Minnesota and elsewhere. CAC members were invited to share a recorded climate story with EOR following the CAC meeting.

Discussion

A climate change storytelling approach utilizes three modules to construct a narrative of individual's stories. These modules are based on understanding places, resources, and experiences that people care about, an exploration of the experiences of climate change on the things people care about, and how the impacts of climate change move people to be motivated or take action to help address climate change. Responses from the CAC are organized as follows according to these modules.

Places, Resources, and Experiences the CAC Cares About

- Recreational opportunities such as cross-country skiing, ice fishing, sledding, running, biking, and getting out on the water.
- Access to clean air and water.
- Scenery.
- Animals and their habitats.
- Seeing the life in Brown's Creek.

Experiences of Climate Change

- Losing a sense of the Minnesota identity of braving/bragging about cold tolerance, and loss of winter traditions for outdoor activities.
 - People used to have skating rinks in their yards as an afterschool activity.
 - Shorter and more inconsistent cross country ski season – used to be December to April, now January to early March.
- Change in bird species.
 - More Northern Cardinals singing year-round.
 - House Finches displacing House Sparrows – House Sparrows now seen mostly in non-residential areas, while House Finches seen in residential areas.
- Inconsistent rainfall resulting in conditions that are too dry for plants to produce nectar for bees, the pollen is still there but the nectar can be lacking.
- Snowplow only came once in 2024. There is less consistent snowfall generally.
- Smokey summers present concerns about health impacts, reducing opportunities to enjoy time outside in summer.
- Observing the increased growth of Buckthorn due to warming temperatures.
- Observing the change in selection of plant species for the area as the hardiness zone changes, assisted migration.
- Shift towards extremes such as the big snow in 2023 followed by no snow in 2024.
- Precipitation and temperature variation creating bigger snows, bigger melts, and potential for bigger flooding and flash freezing.

Motivations and Actions to Address Climate Change

Motivations

- Personal costs of living.
- Feeling like we are doing our part to address climate change as individuals.
- Inspired by people's innovation to adapt.
- Inspiring a culture and mindset change, "if you do it, the neighbors will catch on".

Actions

- Tree preservation.
- Participating in the Climate Impact Corps (AmeriCorps).
- Communicating environmental issues to family, friends, colleagues, and the broader public.
- Driving less.
- Planting prairie instead of turfgrass.
- Reducing energy use through efficient appliances and passive cooling (shade trees on home).
- Taking steps to get off the grid (solar panels, geothermal).
- Recycling.
- Advocating internally within organizations to change behavior. For example, planting native seed mixes instead of turfgrass.