Our Missouri Waters Lower Missouri watershed meeting notes

January 18, 2017 at St. Charles County government offices

1. The January 18, 2017 Our Missouri Waters meeting, held in St. Charles County, MO, kicked off with a presentation by Aaron Young, Sustainability Planning Manager at East-West Gateway Council of Governments to introduce the goals and purpose of Our Missouri Waters program as well as some of the issues in the watershed already identified through stakeholder interviews. Tracy Haag from Missouri Department of Natural Resources followed with a presentation on water quality in the watershed and what it means to set a total maximum daily load of pollutants for streams that do not meet water quality standards.

2. Next up was a panel discussion on managing stormwater in tributaries. Panel 1 consisting of Paul Morris from MO Department of Natural Resources (DNR), Rich Gnecco from St. Charles County government and Roland Biehl from Metropolitan St. Louis Sewer District (MSD) discussed MSD's Phase II Stormwater Management Plan, stormwater management practices in St. Charles, and stream channel erosion issues and responsibilities. Points of discussion included:

- In St. Louis County there are about a dozen monitoring sites on stream tributaries. MSD worked together with 61 local municipalities with Municipal Separate Storm Sewer Systems (MS4) in order to develop the Phase II Stormwater Management Plan. In part, the Plan identifies the following control measures which were discussed at the meeting:
    1. Top ranked Best Management Practices (BMPs) for E-coli, sediment and nutrient removal and flood and channel protection–
        - Bio retention (rain gardens and swales)
        - wetlands
        - ponds
        - infiltration
        - biofilters
    2. Chloride reductions through the use of brine and reducing use of road salt.
    3. Public education – septic tank management and clean up events
    4. Elicit Discharge Removal – MSD inspects streams periodically to find problems
    5. Construction management – major source of sediment can be controlled with best construction practices
- St. Charles County has 9 MS4s which each handle their own inspections. St. Charles County has partnered with Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD) to handle education programs for homeowners and assistance with stream buffer inspections with the objective of protecting rivers and streams.
- Responsibilities of stream channel management and land use involves MSD who take care of channel erosion issues and local governments who are in charge of development issues. Land disturbance over an acre must be permitted through the local municipality
- Stream bank protection and buffers will save local government money by reducing the need to stabilize stream banks

- BMP tool box available at – www.stlmsd.com
- St. Charles County has mapped their septic systems and created a Neighborhood Improvement District - a taxing district which can levy a separate tax for development to pay for connection of sewers. Currently there are no combined sewers.

3. Panel 2 consisting of Shawn Sullivan from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (the Corps), Jim Boerding from St. Charles County Farm Bureau and Danny Kluesner from the Consolidated North County Levee District discussed Missouri River channel management including issues, priorities, water levels, levees, Masterplan, recreation, jurisdictional responsibilities, the Mo River Recovery Program and urban and rural nutrient contributions. Points of discussion included:

- There are at least 8 priorities to consider in managing the MO River – navigation, flood protection, aquatic habitat, power generation, recreation, water quality, drinking water source, agriculture.
- Spring rise has added water to the Missouri River to mimic natural systems. Levee districts are concerned that this increases the risk of flooding.
- Farmers are restricted on sediment that can be eroded into the river, while the Corps of Engineers land management for habitat has called for sediment to be washed into the river as part of channel creation. The policy seems unclear. The sediment could be physically removed and used as material to strengthen levees.
- Master Plan – formerly the Corps would prioritize navigation and flood control but now environmental issues must be considered. The Corps is obligated to maintain the river navigation channel. The Corps' process to repair levees takes a long time, and this puts property at risk. Environmental issues focus on the loss of shallow river habitat when the river channel was developed, and the need to create habitat for specific species, but the river is constantly shifting and that habitat is not easily created or maintained.
- Responsibilities of the Corps Districts relating to the Missouri River:
    - St. Louis District – has responsibility in St. Louis and St. Charles County for emergency management and levee safety / inspections.
    - Kansas City District – has responsibility for 500 miles of Missouri River in Missouri for navigation, wildlife, emergency management and levee safety.
- Disagreement and/or uncertainty about the role of agriculture, urban areas and natural sources in contributing nutrients to the Gulf of Mexico
- MO River Recovery Program is targeted at protecting several endangered species.
- In the original Master Plan for navigation, there was also a plan to provide 3000 to 5000 ft. of floodway but levees have narrowed it
- How far back in time should the river be managed for? The river was a very different water body thousands of years ago, 100 years ago and even 50 years ago because of people who now live in the watershed. The river would be different if we removed everyone who lives in the watershed.