

MEETING OF THE
CARVER COUNTY WATER MANAGEMENT ORGANIZATION ADVISORY COMMITTEE
MEETING MINUTES
Tuesday April 29, 2025

COMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT

Attending virtually
Marcus Zbinden

SWCD Board Representative

Attending in person

Mike Lynch

Citizen representing Commissioner District 4

Jim Boettcher

Citizen representing Commissioner District 1

Joe Polunc

Citizen representing Commissioner District 5

Kayla Pascoe

Citizen representing Carver Creek watershed

Michael Wegner

Citizen representing the Crow River watershed

Kevin Zahler

Citizen representing Commissioner District 2

Kellen Schmidt

Citizen, Bevens Creek

Mary Stasson

Citizen representing East & West Chaska Creek watershed

Megan White

Citizen representing Commissioner District 3

COMMITTEE MEMBERS ABSENT

Vacant

SWCD Board Representative alt

STAFF PRESENT

Paul Moline

Carver County Planning & Water Mgmt.

Madeline Seveland

Carver County Planning & Water Mgmt.

Kristen Larson

Carver County Planning & Water Mgmt.

Abby Janey

Carver County Planning & Water Mgmt.

Tim Sundby

Carver County Planning & Water Mgmt.

Lea Payette

Carver County Planning & Water Mgmt.

Thomas Lloyd

Carver County Planning & Water Mgmt. & MN GreenCorps

Meeting Minutes

The meeting was called to order at 6:02 by Chair Jim Boettcher.

1) Roll call and introductions completed.

2) Approval of the March 25, 2025, meeting minutes

Pascoe moved to approve the March 25, 2025, meeting minutes. Stasson seconded. Motion passed unanimously. Zahler noted that he attended the meeting in person. Seveland responded that she would change that.

3) Approval of April 29, 2025, agenda

Lynch moved to approve the April 29, 2025, agenda. Wegner seconded. Motion passed unanimously.

4) Notes from the field

Abby Janey introduced herself as the water resources technician with Carver County Water Management Organization. She presented the notes from the field on macroinvertebrate monitoring.

- Macro-invertebrates are small organisms without a backbone and that can be seen with the naked eye.
- Aquatic macro-invertebrates are used as bio-indicators because they have limited mobility, are affected by changes in the stream, different species have different tolerances to pollution, and their presence or absence can indicate cumulative impacts from pollution.
- Each species is assigned a pollution tolerance value between 0 (very intolerant) and 10 (very tolerant).

Field sampling

- Staff sampled seven different sites in 2024 on East Chaska Creek, West Chaska Creek, and north and south of Spring Peeper Meadow.
- At each location, staff collect samples of macro-invertebrates and conduct a stream habitat assessment.

Lab process

- During the winter staff identify the macro-invertebrates and determine site scores. Each species is identified to family and order.

Results

- Samples are scored using the following measures.
 - o Family Biotic Index or FBI is a weighted average of the pollution tolerance values of all macro-invertebrates in the sample. West Chaska Creek's site CH1 had the best FBI score.
 - o EPT is a score based on the number of species observed in three less tolerant orders of insects: ephemeroptera (mayflies), plecoptera (stonesflies), and tricoptera (caddisflies). West Chaska Creek's site CH1 and East Chaska Creek's site EC2 had the best scores for EPT.
 - o Species richness looks at the number of families at a sampling site. The more families of macro-invertebrates found indicates that the site has better habitat and/or water quality. West Chaska Creek's site CH1 and East Chaska Creek's EC2 site had the highest number of families found.
 - o Shannon diversity index measures species diversity accounting for the number of species found and the relative abundance comparing diversity across the habitat. West Chaska Creek's site CH1 had the best Shannon diversity score.

- Janey presented overall site grades for the seven sites sampled. The sites with the best scores for FBI, EPT, and number of families were West Chaska Creek and East Chaska Creek 2.

Zahler inquired how this information is used. Janey responded that these scores are factored in with the water quality data and other biomonitoring data to get an overall look at the health of the stream sites.

Pascoe inquired how sites were selected for monitoring. Janey responded that there is a rotating schedule for sites. In 2014, some sites were selected specifically because of work being done around Big Woods Lake so data can help track if there are impacts from construction.

Zahler inquired what can be done if the index scores are bad. Janey responded that would indicate there might be a pollutant entering the water. The macro-invertebrate data combined with water quality will provide a whole picture of stream health and potential pollutants which can then be addressed. Moline added the numbers around Spring Peeper Meadow surprised him given that the area by the Minnesota Landscape Arboretum. Seveland added that sometimes low scores can be a result of poor habitat not water quality. These macro-invertebrates need specific habitat's such as streambank vegetation or areas of fast moving or slow-moving water. Macroinvertebrates with specific habitat requirements won't be present even if the water quality is good.

Stasson inquired if the waters are troubled, what is the process for determining where pollutant sources are coming from and addressing that. Janey said staff will use the data to find hot spots and pinpoint areas of concern. Moline added that staff are looking at trends to help us focus on to see why there might be changes.

Boettcher commented that Spring Peeper Meadow is at the intersection of Hwy 5 and Hwy 41 and there is construction going on there. Moline shared that the wetland itself is pretty healthy. Seveland added that the wetland has drier than normal the past couple years given the drought.

5) Business items

• **Groundwater Plan update**

Kristen Larson introduced herself as a planner with the Carver County Water Management Organization. She is here to present on the Groundwater Plan update that will begin this year.

Groundwater Plan background.

- The groundwater plan defines the County's role in groundwater resource management.
- The plan helps the county work in partnerships with existing stakeholders.
- The plan identifies goals and actions to achieve those goals.
- The 2016 Groundwater Plan included information from the following plans 1) Carver County Geologic Atlas, 2) 2030 Comprehensive Plan, 3) previous groundwater plans, and 4) the 2020 Water Management Plan.

Stakeholder involvement

- The process to develop and update a plan is outlined in state statute.
- The 2016 process involved the general public, state agencies, city staff, Carver County Water Management Organization advisory committee, and the Groundwater Plan advisory committee.

Existing plan goals

- Protect groundwater quality
- Protect groundwater availability or quantity
- Protect groundwater dependent natural resources

Groundwater quality concerns

- Aquifers have some natural contamination (radium, arsenic), especially deeper aquifers.
- Aquifers are vulnerable to manmade contamination through open and abandoned wells.
- Glacial surface wells highly vulnerable in some areas (private wells).

Larson shared a map showing which areas of the County are more vulnerable to aquifer pollution from the surface.

Groundwater availability concerns

- The glacial layer can be hard to find productive areas for putting in a well. Locating a well that can produce enough water to be used as a drinking source can be challenging.
- Not all aquifers are available in Carver County.
- Groundwater use metro-wide will drawdown aquifer levels in Carver County.
- Very slow recharge rate for some aquifers.
- Mt. Simon (deepest aquifer) use is restricted by Minnesota law, seeking to preserve for future generations.

Larson showed a cross section of aquifers in the Twin Cities Metro Area.

Zahler inquired who owns the aquifer and confirmed that it does connect to other counties. Larson responded that the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources and the Metropolitan Council regulate who can drill wells, for what purposes, and what are the impacts to other users of that aquifer. Carver County does not provide drinking water. The County can comment on permits issued by the Department of Natural Resources and the Metropolitan Council's planning on groundwater needs. The County's role is more education, promoting conservation and programs.

Zahler asked for a definition of glacial drift. Larson responded that it is the unconsolidated material that sits on top of the aquifer. It is what was left when the glaciers receded. In Carver County, it is mostly clay and some sand. The glacial drift areas can store water. It is a less consistent source of groundwater but easier to access.

Zahler inquired if the water becomes cleaner as it flows through glacial drift. Larson responded that yes as water flows through sand and other materials, it can be filtered.

Groundwater dependent natural resources

- Some streams and natural areas depend on groundwater to support the plants and animals found there. Seminary Fen and Assumption Creek, located in Chaska are examples. Fens are a unique and rare worldwide.
- Plants found at Seminary Fen include valerian (species of special concern), small white lady's slipper (species of special concern), marsh marigold, and Michigan lily. Seminary Fen likely has the most diverse plant community in the County.

Larson shared a graph showing stakeholder roles in groundwater management

- Minnesota Department of Health sets drinking water standards and does education.
- Board of Water & Soil Resources is involved in planning and provides cost share programs.
- Metropolitan Council is involved in planning, education and research and monitoring. When we update comprehensive plans every ten years, the council identifies growth and drinking water need. Staff work on modeling and research to understand how the groundwater system in the metro area works.
- Minnesota Geologic Survey does the groundwater atlas.
- Minnesota Department of Agriculture does research and monitoring. County has partnered with them on monitoring for pesticide and nitrates in groundwater sensitive areas of the County.
- Minnesota Pollution Control Agency is involved in regulation and monitoring.
- Department of Natural Resources has roles in planning, regulation, education, water supplier, and monitoring and research.
- Local government units (cities) are involved in planning, regulation, water supply, and education.
- Carver County identified that it has a role in planning, education, research, and monitoring.

2016 Groundwater Plan implementation activities

Larson shared existing goals, programs, and activities from the 2016 plan.

- Research/monitoring
 - o Gather and improve access to groundwater data through observation wells.
 - o Explore expanding the monitoring well network. Improve access to this information.
- Education
 - o Provide information on testing to residents and work with cities on joint messages.
 - o Well sealing cost share program and smart irrigation controller program.
- Planning / collaboration
 - o Promote stormwater reuse to reduce use of groundwater for irrigation.
- Cost share
 - o Promote well sealing cost share program via targeted mailings.

Zahler inquired why some areas are slower to recharge verses faster. Larson responded that it depends on the type of materials at the surface. Many of the soils at the surface in the County are clay. It takes a lot longer for water to move through clay soil. Where there is sand, water can move through the particles and pore space easier.

2025 Groundwater Plan update process

- Stakeholders will include state agencies, city water supply staff, public, CCWMO advisory committee and groundwater stakeholder advisory committee.
- The updated plan will include the following plans 1) Metropolitan Council 2025 Water Policy Plan, 2) 2040 Comprehensive Plan, 3) Previous Groundwater Plans, and 4) 2030 Water Management Plan.
- County will maintain a similar role in groundwater management.
- Plan will include updated programs.
- Plan will include updates to issues including the following.
 - o Overall increase in groundwater usage as region grows
 - o Nitrates and pesticides in groundwater
 - o Conservation/reducing inefficient outdoor summertime use.

Polunc inquired how data centers are going to impact Carver County, the plans you have in place, and the data you collect. Larson responded that often data centers will have a secondary well for cooling purposes. County staff get notified on those appropriations permit and can comment but the Department of Natural Resources is the one that approves those. The department has limits on daily or annual use. Moline added that the County does not have a role in regulating how much water data centers would use but would permit the facility so would have a say in what they do with that groundwater and where it goes. It would be great if they reused some of their water.

Polunc shared that some cities are getting flak from citizens for permitting data center, but the issues should be with the state. Moline responded that if the data center is drilling their own well, then yes, it would go through the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources. With the City of Chaska, the center would be using some city water. He shared he thought the one being proposed is going to have a separate well. Larson added that is a concern and we expect we'll hear more about it.

Polunc inquired if the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources is the ultimate authority. Larson responded that the department has daily or annual limits and if the permit is within those limits they generally approve them. If a business or a city puts in a well and it begins to impact neighbors, there is a process to resolve those challenges through the department. The best time to comment is when the Department of Natural Resources updates their permitting or regulating process. Moline shared that staff have an opportunity to comment, but have not seen a permit denied, just the amount of water appropriated lowered.

Stasson commented that she thought some cities have ordinances or rules that require residents to use smart controllers on irrigation systems. Larson responded that she is not sure. Through the plan

update process staff will be speaking with cities and getting updates on what their rules and regulations are, and work with them to get messages out.

Timeline

Larson shared a schedule for updating the groundwater plan.

- May 2025 – meeting with state agencies
- May – Oct – assemble GW plan advisory committee and develop plan
- July 2025 – WMO advisory committee update on goals and strategies
- October 2025 – Ask WMOAC for recommendation to County Board
- Late fall 2025 – County Board opens 60-day public comment period
- Winter 2026 – Public hearing, approve submission to state agencies,

Zahler inquired if there was anything listed in the plan about data centers or agencies who want to bottle water. Larson responded that there is nothing specific about data centers. There are several strategies on preserving groundwater. Those specific scenarios did not come up in the development of this plan. Zahler asked for confirmation that the existing plan looks at conservation and over consumption. Larson responded yes and since the County does not regulate, education and partnerships with cities has been the priority action.

Pascoe inquired if those specific over consumption practices are included in the Metropolitan Council's 2025 plan. Larson responded she is not sure, but that staff will review the Metropolitan Council plans as part of the development of the groundwater plan. Larson indicated that conservation measures are required by the Metropolitan Council, and cities will have to update their plans and their ordinances to reflect those.

Zahler inquired if staff look for trends on quantity and pollution. Larson responded that yes, there is a summary component of the plan with info on groundwater resources. Water use data from the Department of Natural Resources is publicly available so staff can compare historic use with present. There is the Metropolitan Council does modeling to show impact at different water use levels at different points in the future, and the Department of Agriculture has information on pesticides and nitrates.

Wegner commented that it is a complicated system. It is difficult to get people aware of water conservation. He says the City of Chanhassen goes from 1.5 million/day gallons of water use in the winter to 9 million of gallons/day in the summer and it is all irrigation. Boettcher shared that he learned of similar increases when he toured the Eden Prairie water treatment facility.

Committee members discussed a possible tour of Chanhassen water treatment center during the June tour.

• **2026 project considerations for WMO levy**

Tim Sundby introduced himself as the water resources supervisor with Carver County Water Management Organization and his presentation is on the 2026 project considerations for the WMO levy.

Moline ran through the 2026 WMO levy timeline and shared this is the beginning of the process.

- Feb/March – staff solicit project requests.
- April - the advisory committee provides input to proposed projects.
- May – the County establishes preliminary financial indicators.
- May/June – the County establishes the preliminary County Board budget strategy.
- May – the advisory committee hears the preliminary WMO levy recommendation.
- July - the advisory committee hears the final preliminary WMO levy recommendation.
- August – the County Board hosts a budget hearing and work session.
- September – the County Board sets preliminary WMO levy.
- December – the County Board adopts final WMO levy.

Sundby reviewed the 2026 project funding request process. Staff reached out to cities in February and received five project requests from cities.

City of Waconia projects

- Fox Run Ravine Phase 2
 - o Project will finish stabilizing the Fox Run ravine from Fox Run Park to East 13th Street.
 - o This project is identified in our Carver County Water Management Plan – ID 65.
 - o Total project costs: \$250,000
 - o Requested WMO cost share: \$50,000
- Reuse System updates
 - o Project would upgrade the reuse control systems that operate irrigation pumps at the 10th St. pond and Hunters Crossing Pond. New control systems will improve tracking and optimization of the systems.
 - o Not directly included in the Water Management Plan but relates to any reuse system.
 - o Total project costs: \$32,532.
 - o Requested WMO cost share: \$10,000.
- Reuse master plan
 - o City of Waconia intends to complete a city-wide reuse master plan to identify opportunities for future reuse projects and expansion of existing facilities with a framework to implement this plan.
 - o This is a feasibility study that would be completed by Bolton and Menk on behalf of the city.
 - o This is tied to various projects within the County's Water Management Plan – IDs 45, 66, and 67.
 - o Total project costs: \$61,500
 - o Requested WMO cost share: \$30,750.

Boettcher inquired where the 10th street pond water goes. Sundby responded that once the water leaves that pond, it makes it way down to the Waterford Park pond. From there it goes to Carver Creek. Moline added that the areas that pond irrigates are shaded in green on the map.

City of Watertown

- Angel Ave sump and baffle
 - o The city is upgrading the storm sewer system in a small neighborhood and is requesting funds to include a sump and baffle to increase sediment removal.
 - o Over 5 acres of impervious surface will be captured within this storm sewer and will be routed through the new sump and baffle.
 - o The project is listed in our Water Management Plan – ID 17.
 - o Total project costs: \$43,756.26.
 - o Requested WMO cost share: \$27,878.13.

Wegner inquired if the City of Watertown has put in the baffle system behind the grocery store. Sundby responded that the city just got the bids and will be working on that this year.

Laketown Township

- 201 system upgrades around three lakes.
 - o Lake Township is pursuing options to upgrade aging septic system that services three regions around the township that includes Reitz Lake and Lake Bavaria within the CCWMO. The third area is outside the WMO. Current state funds are not available, and the township is requesting gap funding to make sure that planning continues.
 - o The current system is 40+ years old and is past its life cycle. The project will remove tanks, add lift stations, and new sanitary sewers.
 - o The project is not identified in the Water Management Plan and does not meet the goals of the project funding.

Wegner asked for clarification on the community septic systems. Sundby responded yes, for example on Reitz Lake boat landing there is a structure there that is a lift station for the community system. Moline added that the grey water goes into the Metropolitan Council system and there are mound systems and holding tanks. Each homeowner must get their tanks cleaned out.

Sundby added that the township asked for \$2 million. The WMO does not have those funds to help with their gap in funding, and the WMO project funds weren't intended to tackle this kind of problem. Lynch commented that the WMO should not be putting in sewer systems as that would be a bad precedence. Moline added that there is nothing in the Water Management Plan that talks about doing that.

Sundby reviewed the ranking process for projects.

- Each project application is scored based upon a matrix of 18 individually scored criteria.

- Criteria are separated into two main categories, water stewardship and county project funding criteria.
- Goal of criteria is to remove as much subjectivity as possible and create a process that is consistent over time.
- 2026 proposed project scores
 - o Waconia Fox Run Ravine – score of 56
 - o Waconia reuse planning – score of 53
 - o Watertown Angel Ae Storm Sewer improvements – score of 49
 - o Waconia reuse controllers – score of 45

Lynch asked for confirmation that the WMO helped put in the stormwater reuse projects in Waconia. Moline responded that yes, the WMO contributed funds. Lynch inquired if we are headed down the wrong road by helping them maintain it as well. Sundby responded that the WMO's stance is that it a project that receives funding cannot just be maintenance. It must have something that improves the system.

Pascoe commented that in the past years, requests for Waconia stormwater reuse projects have been funded lower than what is requested. Sundby responded that yes, typically the final amount has been less than requested.

Pascoe noted that the Fox Run ravine project is proposing mostly riprap which committee and staff spoke about at the last meeting as not the preferred method. Sundby responded that rip rap on a streambank is different than rip rap on a ravine. On a ravine it can be unavoidable when there is a nick-point that needs to be prevented from moving.

Kellen commented that he agrees that the WMO should not be helping with maintenance.

Wegner inquired if staff know what level of improvement would be necessary on the reuse controller request. Sundby responded that he does not have a great answer for that right now. Moline added that one aspect we thought might be useful is getting better data on reuse that would help us fund future systems.

Potential CCWMO projects

Sundby shared that along with the city's project requests we also consider WMO projects for funding. These projects are listed in the WMO Water Management Plan table 5-5. Preliminary recommended projects are as follows.

Eagle Lake curly-leaf pondweed treatment.

- Project would study the effects of internal phosphorus cycling of the lake and test the effects of life cycle of curly-leaf pondweed.
- Costs for one full lake treatment is \$17,000.
- Project is listed in the Water Management Plan – ID 37.
- Recommendations are a minimum 5-year treatment regime for curly-leaf pondweed.

Zahler inquired how the WMO will budget for the reoccurring treatments of curly-leaf pondweed. Sundby responded that as of now, staff will likely do a levy request every year. If there is a time that the WMO can budget more, that is a possibility. Sundby added that Carver County Parks is starting their master plan for this park and might be interested in helping with these costs. There are also MN DNR grants. Future funds might be available from these two organizations. Zahler inquired if the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources will approve a full-length treatment. Sundby responded yes.

South Fork cutoff channel

- There is a cutoff channel forming along the South Fork Crow near 86th St and Vega Ave in Camden Township. A feasibility study was completed in 2022 that identified options to address the issue. The cutoff channel will impact a township road if left unaddressed.
- This project places trees and shrubs in to armor the streambanks and is the first step.
- The project is listed in the Water Management Plan – ID 63
- Total costs is projected around \$50,000.

McKnight ravine feasibility study

- The WMO is working with the City of Chaska on identifying and inventorying ravines around the Grace Chain of Lakes.
- This ravine complex is next to McKnight Road and is contributing sediment to McKnight Lake.
- The feasibility study will develop options with costs and estimated pollution reductions and set up the project area well for grant funding.
- This project is listed in the Water Management Plan – ID 57
- Total project costs:

Pascoe inquired if the area is private property. Sundby responded yes, and the next step is to reach out to the landowner. Pascoe commented that many of the Grace Chain of Lake ravine stabilizations have been on private property in the past. Sundby responded yes, and this would be similar. It is contingent on getting permission.

Bavaria boat landing

- The current parking lot at the boat landing at Lake Bavaria uses red rock, a limestone aggregate material, which breaks down fast and contributes sediment to the lake. It is a sizable area, about 14,000 ft².
- Project would change the red rock to crushed granite which doesn't break down as easily and would not cause water clarity issues in the lake.
- Project is identified in the Lake Bavaria management plan and the WMP – ID 61.
- Total project costs: \$25,000
- Staff will work with Carver County Parks as they manage the boat landing.

Lynch inquired what will hold the granite in place in a heavy rain as it is just smaller rocks. Sundby responded that there is not much of a slope, it would be graded in, and edging could be used if

needed. Lynch inquired if clay is put down first to pack it in. Sundby responded that with the In-Towne Marina project, it was dug out, put in a subgrade, and built it out that way. The Lake Bavaria landing has a higher water table, so it might have to be placed on top and driven in as people drive over it.

Boettcher commented that the granite would be denser and inquired if both sides of the boat ramp would be done. Sundby responded that this project would just be in the parking area, we wouldn't be allowed to place it in the lake.

SSTS direct discharge program

- The current subsurface sewage treatment system direct discharge program funds will likely run out in 2026. The WMO would like to replenish the funds and target the remaining direct discharges in the Crow River and the MN River area.
- Total likely 2026 program costs in \$75,000.
- Requesting \$40,000 because some 2025 funds would carry over.
- The project is listed in the Water Management Plan – ID 11 and ID 14.

Preliminary cost recommendations

- To fully fund all projects presented would cost about \$264,000.
- Staff want to target \$180,000 to \$200,000 for a 2026 project budget.
- The project fund also includes the landowner cost share program and the maintenance budget.
- Staff will also look at future grants and want to make sure matching funds are available.

Moline shared that staff will fine tune the list and come back to the committee in May with a final dollar amount.

Sundby requested that as the committee reviews and thinks about these projects over the next few weeks that members reach out to him with thoughts.

Zahler inquired why more cities do not participate. Sundby responded that the City of Chaska is finishing up big projects in 2025, so they were not in a position to apply this year. For Chanhassen, there is only a small piece of the city that is within the WMO boundaries, and the project would have to take place there. Staff reach out to all city administrators and city engineers each year for project request. Moline added that Cities of Cologne, Mayer, and New Germany do not have large budgets and are not often doing the projects that need help.

Pascoe shared that the City of Carver is requiring best practices from builders in the developing portion of the city. Moline added that the existing downtown portion of City of Carver is in Lower Minnesota River Watershed District so that portion would be outside the WMO boundaries and wouldn't be eligible for funding from the WMO for retrofit stormwater projects.

Polunc inquired how the uncertainty on state funding would affect projects. Sundby responded that the annual project budget is typically around \$180,000 to \$200,000. If adjustments are needed, the projects at the bottom of the list may be cut off for 2026. Or staff may ask the committee for recommendations on what to cut.

6) Information items

Sundby updated the committee on the Clemons cost share project that was presented last month. The homeowner has bids from 3-4 different contractors and is reviewing them. Some of the contractors are proposing methods that would meet the criteria of the WMO landowner cost share program

Moline updated the committee that there is an opening on the Soil & Water Conservation District Board, and they are taking applications for it.

Seveland reminded the committee that the annual tour will take place on June 24, 2025. Any ideas for tour site visits can be sent to her.

Committee members shared that Eagle Lake and a visit to feedlots or ag runoff would be of interest.

Next meeting May 27, 2025.

Meeting adjourned at 8:25 p.m.