

# Stormwater Program Review

## Focus Group Notes

Name: Brian Livingston (presenter & host) Kris Van Amber (facilitator); Mary Lynn & Anne Gelbmann (themes); Edwin Balcos (note taker), Gary Pulford

Date: 10/04/07

Time: 1:00 – 3:00

Location: League of Minnesota Cities, St. Paul

Attendees: MS4 Cities external

- Ross Bintner, City of Prior Lake, water resource engineer
- Jim Hafner, City of Blaine, Stormwater manager
- Sharon Doucette, City of Woodbury, environmental resources coordinator
- Randy Neprash, staff & consultant for cities coalition
- Anne Weber, City of St. Paul, sewer utility
- Kerry Thorne, City of New Brighton, picks up many duties due to the small size of the engineering dept.
- Paul Drotos, City of Red Wing, infrastructure asset coordinator
- Dara Geheran, City of Victoria (TKDA), consulting city engineer
- Andy, City of Moorhead (listener only, already participated)

\*Note taker: Please write down common themes that you hear. We don't want you to transcribe the conversation.

1. React to this vision statement about stormwater management. It is apparent from the statement it will take all of our efforts to accomplish.
  - “High” implies significantly improved. It should certainly be improved.
  - I like the vision statement. Keep it high quality.
  - Scratch “all”. “Reasonable and cost-efficient efforts will be made such that...”
  - What’s the cost of the future? “Cost-efficient” may not be appropriate.
  - How far do we go? Is there a point of reasonableness?
  - When is that level reached? What is the quality goal? Fine balance must be struck.
  - Goals should be relative to initial quality of the receiving water.
  - Standards necessary to reach goal.
  - The vision would have more impact in my permit vs. hanging on the wall at the PCA.
  - Operating definitions needed at the permit level.
  - How do we deal with water that has already been treated?
  - Goal to achieve quality to limit expensive treatment.
  - Things have changed since the goal of getting the water into the ditch.
  - Depending on the needs of a particular city, it may be a goal just to get the water out of town.

2. As you consider stormwater management in Minnesota, what is going well that you wouldn't want to change/lose?
  - The steering committees cooperative effort is very worthwhile, responsive.
  - Growing base of knowledge that what we do on the land affects the water.
  - Wide variety of requirements from different levels of govt.
  - Multiple levels/layers of govt. is actually pretty good compared to other areas of the country.
  - Agency has positive connotations.
  - As the programs have unfolded, there has been a high level of flexibility, moving forward in incremental steps, increased awareness has been achieved.
  - Need to continue sharing the story.
  - Impressed by the involvement of the University of MN
  - In comparison to other states, MN is a leader. However, there are still unanswered questions.
  - This effort has largely been built on partnerships. SSC and other groups really try to involve all affected parties. This is terrific and rare at a national level.
  - MNDOT adjusted nicely to new regulations set a framework for the municipalities.
  
3. What currently is not working the way you would like or what issues/opportunities do you see?
  - Slap contractors faster and harder. Instantaneous corrections necessary. Expedited settlement offer.
  - Additional funding is necessary. Limited to certain sized communities, for example. Use it for SWPPPs, BMPs, TMDLs
  - There exists a technology challenge. Real-time data and tools ("black box" needed)
  - Monitoring and modeling are needed, but will result in huge costs
  - Small communities have resource limitations.
  - Monitoring is very difficult and very expensive. We need a representative monitoring scheme that will lead to a program in a relatively small number of areas. This should be a state function.
  - There seems to be 2 separate tracks of dealing with stormwater.
  - Quantitative, but methodologies have not been agreed upon.
  - What happens in the watershed as a result of non-point sources. The city is the primary regulated party. Need a broader approach to management, perhaps a state-wide rule.
  - Need a relatively simple, agreed upon process to monitor load from a city (state function); as the city implements measures (BMPs), they need to know how they're performing (state function)
  - New and innovative practices need to be examined. State should lead this, so that it's more coordinated. Reduce duplication of effort.
  - Need more coordination/collaboration for greater consistency across the state.
  - Citizens need greater education and to be more accountable.
  - Education vs. regulation of citizens will be more effective.

- A lot of apathy. Very few attendees at public meetings. Analogous to early recycling efforts.
  - Education is one thing, action another. How do we motivate people to act?
  - Mass media efforts are under-funded. State should lead these efforts.
  - Focus on the pieces that the all citizens can influence (i.e. grass clippings)
  - Public perception (e.g. street sweeping doesn't cost them)
  - Focus efforts and be proactive. Public education can catch problems earlier in the waste stream. Identify the problems of the future, now.
  - Need a schedule (reasonable time frame) for MS4 permit review to get into water management plan to coordinate with comp plan. This need to be better coordinated/streamlined.
  - How will non-degradation rules affect the cities.
  - Too many requirements from different levels of govt. This need to be coordinated.
  - Planning time takes away from implementation time.
  - PCA requirements don't "scale" well for differing sizes of communities. On-size does not fit all. Not all communities can keep up. Need different approaches/programs/goals dependent on community size.
  - Need quicker turnaround time (from PCA and watershed) for construction permits
  - Perhaps construction would be better implemented at the local level. Depends on the level of development occurring in the community.
  - PCA is needed for CSW enforcement, unless the city has ordinances which can stop work.
  - Cities may be more nimble. PCA can be more heavy-handed.
4. What didn't we ask you that you want to tell us? (What one thing to leave us with?)
- Look for ways to do things as a group (at the state-level).
  - Expedited settlement/ticketing authority is worth pursuing.
  - What is the standard that we are shooting for?
  - Better coordinate all the regulations (not just PCA, but across state).
  - MS4 SWPPP is not a complete description of all stormwater. A permit is different than a planning document.
  - Better communication between and amongst MS4s, state agencies, LUGs
  - Better linkage/communication for a more coordinated, focused effort
  - Efficiency can be achieved. What about effectiveness?
  - "The PCA is a hammer and the city is the only nail to pound on."