Minnesota Pollution Control Agency
520 Lafayette Road
St. Paul, MN 55155-4194

Watershed Semi-Annual Report for Reporting Year 2016

Doc Type: Semi-Annual Report

Please complete and submit to your project manager.

Reporting Period: ☐ January 1 through June 30 (Due August 1)
☒ July 1 through December 31 (Due February 1)

All information is required by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency (MPCA). Do not leave blanks (unless otherwise noted). This report form can be typed using your computer. Use the "**tab**" key to move through the fields of this form. Enter responses using text and check boxes as indicated. Keep a copy for your records.

I. General Report Information

1. Project title: Watonwan River Watershed Priority Management Zone Strategy
2. Project sponsor (Grantee): Greater Blue Earth River Basin Alliance
3. Contact name: Kay Gross
4. E-mail address: Kay.Clark@windomnet.com
5. Funding: ☐ 319 ☐ CWP ☐ CWP Loan ☒ Clean Water Fund ☐ Other:
6. Contract number: 00000000000000000000077390
7. MPCA Project Manager: Paul Davis
8. Effective date (mm/dd/yyyy): 6/9/2014 Expiration date (mm/dd/yyyy): 6/30/2017

II. Semi-annual Report Information

1. Project activities completed during last six (6) months according to the program objectives or tasks (please be specific):

Task A Subtask 1: The Watonwan Watershed Technician (WWT) submits a monthly report which is disseminated to all GBERBA Partners. The WWT has also performed several presentations to Watonwan Watershed local staff and State staff on the process and results of the project. The WWT also participates in all Watonwan River Watershed Engagement Team meetings. Several meetings have occurred with Kim Musser of the Water Resources Center at Minnesota State University, Mankato and Mae Davenport and Amit Pradhananga of the University of Minnesota.

Subtask 2: The WWT has attended 4 Civic Organizing trainings along with other Watonwan Partners.

Subtask 3: Seven interviews with 9 different landowners (one interview included 3 individuals) were conducted during this 6 month period, bringing the total number of interviews for the project to 25. It was apparent that the views and opinions of a few demographics needed to be interviewed: young farmers, women, and bankers. The WWT approached local Watonwan Watershed partners for assistance in identifying citizens fitting these demographics. New interviews were also identified during other citizen interviews.

The results of the interviews were analyzed using a topic-based coding framework where topics and subsequent topics were organized in a nested design. Unique quotes from landowners that either represent a divergent or convergent view on a topic were also anonymously incuded. It is important to interviewees that their views and opinions remain discreet. The WWT focused on three main categories covered in the interviews: 1) Barriers to perceived advantages of BMP implementation, 2) Views on local water resources, and 3) Community Context. Specific highlights were gleaned from the theme tables and organized into a PowerPoint presentation that was given at 5 different events ranging from local to regional to state level. A copy of this presentation will be attached to this report.

We were able to document several barriers and opportunities to conservation practices. When asked about agriculture conservation practices, the most popular response is tillage; more specifically, leaving residue, trying not to get the ground too smooth, and not tilling the tops of hills or sandy soils. This is perceived as good practice to prevent soil erosion, suppress weeds, keep the soil covered, and save fuel and time. In general, a majority of the farmers interviewed percieved current tillage practice as "conservation tillage." The generally accepted definition of conservation tillage is 30% residue at the time of planting in the Spring. An updated tillage transect survey will help gauge whether the local perception of conservation tillage aligns with the 30% residue standard. No-till and strip-till were also extensively discussed with the greatest potential in strip-till.

The temporal alignment of the interivews with the current buffer legislation made buffers a topic of conversation. The majority view of the buffer legislation is that some of it is good and some of it is bad; more specifically, buffers are good but the "one-size-fits-all" aspect of it does not sit well with local citizens. Implementing filter strips where landowners perceive little or no benefit is taking good land out of production while land taxes remain the same. Some view the buffer legislation as a government land grab. A natural progression from buffers is talk about easement programs like CRP and RIM. Benefits of easement programs included ecomic gain, wildlife habitat, and protecting marginal land. A main barrier is the management inflexibility (especially with trees on CRP) and difficulty maintaining the vegetation (e.g. managing for noxious weeds).

Cover cropping had many percieved advantages, especially following canning crops that are harvested during the summer. Perceived advantages include soil health benefits like increasing infiltration, preventing wind erosion, and improving soil tilth and economic benefits related to yield increases and nutrient cycling. Barriers to cover crops were more generally related to a lack of knowledge rather than cost, including uncertainty in when and what to plant, how to plant it, what if it grows too much and I can't harvest my cash crop or what if it doesn't grow at all.

A more extensive final report will discuss this and more in greater detail.

Task B: Reporting has occurred within deadlines. Furthermore, the WWT reports on progress and findings in the monthly GBERBA report.

2. List all products (documents, pamphlets, videos, maps, etc.) produced in this reporting period:

Theme tables that compile interview data in 3 categories: 1) Barriers to and perceived advantages of BMP imlementation, 2) views of local water resources, and 3) community context.

A PowerPoint presentation coupling the Watonwan Civic Engagment project with results from the Watonwan PMZ was created with Kim Musser for oral presentations.

3. Challenges faced (optional):

4. Summary of monitoring data collected (if applicable):

N/A

4a. Have all monitoring stations been established in EQuIS? ☐ Yes ☐ No ☒ N/A

4b. Are the data being routinely submitted for storage into EQuIS? ☐ Yes ☐ No ☒ NA

If yes, last submittal date (mm/dd/yyyy): _____

5. Are the Best Management Practices data being annually entered into eLINK)? ☐ Yes ☐ No ☒ N/A

If yes, date last entered (mm/dd/yyyy): _____

6. Describe specific (quantifiable, if possible) results achieved during this period:

-7 interviews were conducted during this period, which included 9 individuals.

-5 oral presentations

*October- University of Minnesota Water Resources Conference

*October- GBERBA Technical Committee Meeting

*November- GBERBA Policy Board Meeting

*December- Minnesota Association of Soil & Water Conservation Districts Annual Convention

*December- Watonwan Watershed Citizen Group Meeting

Phosphorus Load Reduction: _____ lbs./year

Nitrogen Load Reduction: _____ lbs./year

Sediment Load Reduction: _____ lbs./year

7. Did the MPCA execute a change order or amendment for this project during this reporting period? No ☒ Yes ☐

If yes, summarize those changes:

N/A.

8 List anticipated program objectives or tasks to be completed during the next six (6) months please be specific):

Task A, subtask 2: Specialized trainings has been planned for Watonwan Partners.

Task A, subtask 3: The WWT will continue to reach out to local watershed citizens for interviews and conversations about water quality and conservation. The WWT will continue to present on the results of the project as opportunities arise.

Task B: A final report will be generated to summarze the results of the project.

III. Expenditure Information for this Period

Provide a copy of your work plan budget showing cumulative expenditures and budget balances by work plan objective and task. Also, fill out the summary below.

☒ Expenditure Report attached

Complete the table below:	**Amount**
Total Grant Amount	$58,638.00
Total Match Amount (if applicable)	N/A
Total Project Amount	**$58,638.00**
Grant Expenditures this period	$11,310.85
Match Expenditures this period (if applicable)	N/A
Cumulative Grant Expenditures to date	$34,265.23
Cumulative Match Expenditures to date (if applicable)	N/A
Total Cumulative Expenditures to date	**$34,265.23**

Date form completed (mm/dd/yyyy): 1/23/2017