

BEAR PARK MODIFICATIONS

PROJECT TEAM MEETING MINUTES

Location: 101 Washington Avenue NE
Sand Hill River Watershed District, Fertile, MN
Date: May 28, 2026



1. Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 9:00am.

2. Roll Call (Attendees)

Attendees: April Swenby (Sand Hill River Watershed District Administrator); Zach Herrmann (Houston Engineering); Roger Black (Landowner); Scott Olson (Bejou Township and Landowner); Nathan Olson (MnDNR); Bethany Bethke (RRB Coordinator), Scott Schroeder (MPCA) Moria Rueffr (BWSR), Henry Van Offelen (BWSR), Stephanie Klamm (MnDNR) and Nick Kludt (MnDNR). Swenby stated that Mike Gunderson (Landowner) was absent but provided written comments.

3. Update on board action for a channel survey

Swenby confirmed that the Sand Hill River Watershed District authorized Houston Engineering to perform a channel survey downstream of the structure to Rindahl. The survey will be completed over the summer, and reviewed with the Project Team once done.

4. Purpose and Need Statement

The draft purpose and need statement was updated based on comments received at the prior Project Team meeting. The updated document was provided to the Project Team via email prior to the meeting, with MPCA and Mike Gunderson provided written comments. Those comments were incorporated,, and were reviewed with the Project Team. After presenting the revised purpose and need statement, the Project Team discussed additional modifications for consideration.

Nick Kludt (MnDNR) suggested including in the purpose and need any restoration of natural stream corridor upstream and downstream where applicable, to maximize funding opportunities for the resultant alternative.

Landowners noted that approximately one mile downstream of the structure, Norman County 1 overtops during high flows, resulting in repairs. Consideration will be required to

operational modifications at Bear Park Dam to impacts to Norman County 1 and addressed as part of alternative development.

Landowners also discussed overtopping that occurs approximately three miles east of the structure at County Road 7. Because this location is upstream of the structure and within the flood pool, landowners suspect that the Dam may have contributed to the overtopping. Landowners have observed that flood flows generally favor a more southerly route through the floodplain rather than through the County Road 7 bridge on Sand Hill River channel. This southerly route does not appear to have sufficient capacity through County Road 7, and results in overtopping. The Project Team discussed potential causes of the observed issue, which could be caused by backwater from the structure, years of sediment deposition in the downstream channel limiting conveyance, or not from the structure at all. Additional analysis would be required to properly diagnose the issues and develop a solution.

This discussion led to a broader discussion on the scope of the project. If the project consists of restoration of some riparian function within the flood pool in addition to the structure modifications, it may be viewed favorably by potential funding partners.

As an example, Nick Kludt discussed the Geomorphic Design Approach program within the MnDNR for funding floodplain connectivity via additional culverts through County Road 7. The MnDNR uses funds from the Clean Water Legacy Fund to provide 25% cost-share to local units of government to replace bridges and culverts at river crossings in a manner that is less constrictive on channel and floodplain flows. The Project Team also discussed that this could be part of a larger Lessard Sams grant application that would provide a higher rate of cost share.

To better understand what may be happening in the flood pool, the Project Team suggested that the district consider adding to the scope of the channel survey to include upstream of the structure to the Norman/Polk County line. Having this information would inform any alternatives presented and would guide the engineering team towards effective solutions.

Stephanie Klamm will forward to staff the evaluation of hydrology change EHC Technical Summary document that was performed by the MnDNR on the Sand Hill River.

5. Action Items

- **Revised draft purpose and need:** Herrmann continue to revise the draft purpose and need statement for modifications to Bear Park Dam, with focus on flood damage reduction, riparian restoration, and water quality improvements incorporating the discussion from the participants in the meeting. The team plans to move towards a final draft to present to the district board.
- **Upstream channel survey:** Consider asking the district board to extend the extents of the channel survey.
- **Engineering:** Herrmann will develop a plan of work document for the board to review and approve. This will incorporate the permitting needs for the project. The group desired identifying early coordination partners with permitting agencies and funding partners.

8. Next Meeting

The Project Team is scheduled to reconvene when the survey results are available and the draft purpose and need is approved by the district.

9. Adjournment

The Project Team adjourned at 10:00 am.