

Wright County NWQ Aggregate Resources Committee Meeting #5
July 10, 2008

Committee Members: Brad Arntson, John Jones, Ken Scadden, Tommy Thompson, Phyllis Latour, Joe Holthaus, Tim Ferrell

Staff: Stacy Marquardt, Scott Deckert, Tom Salkowski

Audience: Ralph Douglas, Charlotte Quiggle, Dick Anderson

Deckert reviewed the requests from the previous meeting regarding the policies and the maps. He also reviewed the Aggregate Ready Mix handout discussing the new tax laws. Basically they came up with a “green acres” for gravel. If you voluntarily put your land into this program the assessor is required to value it as agricultural land. The way it is valued must be the way Ag land is valued, this helps landowners who are under development pressures.

Deckert reviewed the policies handout that was used for the NEQ. These are the same as what we are proposing for the NWQ with the exception of number 6 where there is some new language being proposed. We recognized that the reclamation fund was raised and we should utilize this money. It can be used to reclaim some of the old pits that were mined but never reclaimed. Salkowski stated that if we don’t urge the private sector to do something about these they assume the County will just take care of it. We should come up with a program for the private sector to do something about these old pits.

Jones asked if we have tried to prioritize the old pits? Deckert answered that we have not. He stated that it seems like a good idea to have a program in place for the private owners to clean up these old pits. Latour stated this is a good idea if the landowner knows up front that they are responsible for reclamation process, we should not give them the option to use this money at first, but maybe later on in the process. Salkowski stated we will need to talk about what reclamation means and it may mean different things depending on who you are talking to.

Thompson asked if we should be focusing on the plan for the future and not necessarily the mess from the past. Salkowski answered that we want to focus first on the mapping for the NWQ plan so we can present this to the public and then we can dive into some of the other areas such as ordinance amendments where the reclamation process will need to be addressed more thoroughly.

Deckert questioned if there area any other changes in the polices the committee wants to see? It was determined that the policies are good.

Jones is concerned about the size of the aggregate area. Latour stated it is our whole township and it is by the lakes. Deckert replied that we stayed out of the shoreland areas around the lakes (1000 feet) so that should not be an issue. Latour agreed and noted that was correct. Jones asked if we can just use the areas that have the prime gravel and remove areas that have throw away gravel that you will never use. He would like to see Brad’s data. Salkowski reminded him that once you get that third layer of data overlaying the data we have presented, you might not like what you find since there is a lot of gravel in the shore land area near the lakes.

Salkowski reviewed the overall goals of this district such as minimal development, long term pits, etc. Right now the whole county only has the zoning district AG (for mining purposes) and you can mine anywhere in that district. We want to limit these areas and determine where we should place the long term pits so residents know there is an end date in sight. Outside this district we could control it better and may limit it to just short term pits. Ferrell stated that they refer to short term pits as borrow pits and these would not make a good long term pit. With long term pits you set them up and then they sit there for a while. He also stated that the really good gravel is often outside these yellow lines, by the lakes.

General discussion about the lines on the map and where they should be placed. Ferrell questioned what about the gravel that is in Silver Creek? Deckert/Salkowski both answered that we were looking for areas that are large and contiguous. In Silver Creek there was a lot of smaller parcels and scattered development with a state park in the mix, so it was hard to justify since there were not large concentrated areas.

General discussion about specific pits in Wright County and if they have “good” gravel or just a lot of sand. Mining is not as economical if there is too much sand. Arntson asked how long this plan is for? Salkowski stated we are looking to go out about 20 years but it will be reviewed more often. Thompson gave a map showing where we should not mine and it seems to coincide with Deckert’s map pretty well. He is looking at this from a control standpoint.

Deckert discussed the Monticello area map. We ended up with two gravel areas in this township after taking out all the smaller lots. Scadden asked what happens when the OAA area gets developed and they move the perimeter into this area? Salkowski answered that we will have to look at that but is pretty sure their phases go to the west and not as much to the south. He or Deckert will check on that. General discussion on the Monticello map and all the committee seemed in agreement on the revised map as presented.

Holthaus asked how are we going to inform the landowners? Salkowski explained what we are doing in the Natural Resources District. He stated we could do that for this district as well. Deckert asked how the committee as a whole would like to handle notifying landowners? Do we want to have an open house or talk to each land owner individually? Or do we just want to map it and wait until the public hearings? Salkowski said that eventually it is the Government’s job to ultimately come up with the decision and say this is what we are implementing due to the good of the County and put the plan in place, but we want as much participation throughout the process as we can get. Arntson stated I think we still need to make sure the property owners know and Salkowski agreed.

Deckert asked if we need to add a policy #7 stating what happens after they are done mining in these areas?

Thompson said he would like to see something that protects the sensitive areas (mostly outside the line). Salkowski reviewed the work of the Natural Resources Committee and Marquardt.

Arntson thinks that the plan should be reviewed in 10 years because we might have a huge need for aggregate all of the sudden and we would not want to be restricted only to these areas for pits. Salkowski stated he would like it to be a bigger area but then conflict arises with the residents along with other controversy.

Deckert asked what the committee would like staff to have ready for the next meeting? Salkowski would like to get Brad’s map before then and have staff refine a final map to bring to the next meeting.

Next meeting scheduled for August 14, 2008 1:30 pm