



LOWER MINNESOTA RIVER WATERSHED DISTRICT

Executive Summary for Action

Lower Minnesota River Watershed District Board of Managers Meeting

Wednesday, February 21, 2018

Agenda Item

Item 6. F. - LMRWD Projects

Prepared By

Linda Loomis, Administrator

Summary

i. **Eden Prairie Area #3 Stabilization**

The LMRWD received notice from the Corps of Engineers that funding maybe available for projects where infrastructure may be threatened. This information was passed along to the city of Eden Prairie and staff will meet with the city to discuss submitting this project to the Corps for funding.

ii. **Riley Creek Cooperative project Hennepin County Flying Cloud Drive/CSAH 61 reconstruction project**

The county has let the construction contract for the Flying Cloud Drive reconstruction. I have included an article from the Star Tribune about the archeological work that was done in preparation for this project.

iii. **Floodplain Lake Coring Project with Freshwater Society**

The team collected longer cores on February 7th. Carrie Jennings did contact me about taking additional cores would add to the cost of the project. I okayed additional money for the project, as it seemed the District was already in this far so we might as well take to longer cores to gather the data we need.

iv. **Seminary Fen ravine stabilization project**

No new information since last update

v. **Analysis of Dakota County Monitoring**

No new information since last update

vi. **East Chaska Creek - CSAH 61 & TH 41 Transportation improvements**

The District received notification on Friday February 16th, that the final report and implementation plan are almost complete. Staff is currently reviewing the documents that the District received.

vii. **Savage Fen Ravine Project - no change since last update**

Attachments

Flying Cloud Drive article from February 17, 2018 Star Tribune

Recommended Action

No recommended action

Project digs into Flying Cloud Drive and 1,000 years of history

Archaeologists were given access before the construction rattles the land this spring.

By Kelly Busche Star Tribune | FEBRUARY 17, 2018 — 11:39AM

Excavated rock fragments, ceramic shards and stone tools are painting a picture of more than 1,000 years of land use in western Hennepin County.

A project to reconstruct Flying Cloud Drive in Eden Prairie and Chanhassen, set to begin this spring and conclude by 2020, prompted an archaeological dig that has uncovered more than 5,000 artifacts since 2013.

Hennepin County hired the 106 Group, a St. Paul-based culture resource management company, to conduct the multistage dig. After several years of excavations, the firm is now analyzing artifacts recovered from the project area.

“There’s a lot of great information on these really unique sites ... that’s really useful to help our other archaeologists learn from it,” said Adam Kaeding, archaeology manager for the 106 Group. “But it’s also interesting and useful for people who aren’t archaeologists.”

Colin Cox, Hennepin County’s senior communications specialist for transportation, said the road project’s timeline hasn’t yet been finalized but that crews could be out as early as this week for preparatory work. Construction will likely begin in the next few weeks, he said.

The road project aims to raise Flying Cloud Drive over the 100-year flood plain, build a multiuse trail along the north side of the highway and result in a three-lane road that includes a center turn lane. The first stage will focus on Flying Cloud from Charlson Road to Spring Road; the second phase next year will involve work between Spring Road and County Road 101.

Hennepin County is leading the project with Carver County, Scott County, Eden Prairie, Chanhassen and Shakopee collaborating.

“It’s a pretty major project and it’s going to be doing a lot of improvements, and we anticipate that there will be [a] couple different staged closures too, so people should be ready for that,” Cox said.

In the meantime, analysis of the artifacts found by the 106 Group indicates that the land around the highway has been in continuous use for more than 1,000 years, Kaeding said.

“The Shakopee Dakota are still right there in this landscape,” Kaeding said. “This kind of shows that the people have been using this landscape in similar ways for that whole period of time.”

The 106 Group began its work by determining if archaeological artifacts were in the project area, Kaeding said. Because other artifacts have been found along the Minnesota River, he said, “Everyone knew that this was a high potential area.”

The most commonly found artifacts were flakes — pieces of stone broken off while making tools, he said. Crews also found animal bones, ceramic shards, small bits of metal and stone tools.

“Sometimes we can conceive of these areas where we live of having this history that dates back to maybe the colonial period or early settlers. It’s nice to illustrate that ... [this] right here goes much further back. People have been living here for quite a while,” Kaeding said.

Many more ceramic shards were found in the next phase of excavations, he said. A ceramic’s style, construction, form and decoration can help determine how people interacted during the period.



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106 GROUP

Crew members with 106 Group, a St. Paul-based culture resource management company, worked on the archaeological project in 2015 ...

The excavation sites are dug up until “you think you’ve learned everything you can,” Kaeding said, because excavation and construction will destroy them.

An excavator removes several inches of soil while several archaeologists watch for features being exposed — markings on the landscape showing human use on the landscape, such as fire pits and post holes from tepees or long houses.

“That helps us ... [refine] our understanding of how this landscape was used at that time,” Kaeding said. The artifacts are studied to find how people used the Minnesota River for trading goods and ideas, he said.

Kaeding said the 106 Group has worked with historic preservation officers from several Dakota tribes throughout the project. Now they’re collaborating on artifact interpretation and presentation — determining what the artifacts can show and how to share information about them. Potential interpretations range from tribal elder interviews to signs on trails near Flying Cloud Drive denoting the archaeological history.

The artifacts aren’t museum-quality pieces, so they won’t be displayed. But they will be curated at the Minnesota Historical Society and available for future research.

Sherry Butcher Wickstrom, an Eden Prairie City Council member, said she was fascinated by the excavation project. “To say what was uncovered and what it means is important is an understatement. ... It’s not just curiosity — it places us within a context of humanity.”

Kelly Busche is a University of Minnesota student on assignment for the Star Tribune.
