

Wright County NWQ Aggregate Committee Meeting #2 Summary
April 3, 2008

Attendees:

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

Staff: Tom Salkowski, Scott Deckert, Stacy Marquardt

Audience: Charlotte Quiggle, Ralph Douglas

Speakers: Heather Arends, Fred Corrigan

I. Introduction:

Scott introduced speaker, Heather Arends who is from the MN DNR Division of Lands and Minerals. One of her main roles is to map the aggregate areas for counties to help make land use decisions. Each individual consumes 1.71 million pounds of stone, sand, and gravel in their lifetime. Sustainability in mining is based on a balanced approach including environmental, social and economic factors.

II. What is Aggregate? Aggregate is broken down into two categories; sand/gravel and crushed rock. Sand/gravel is formed through glacial deposits and crushed rock comes from the mechanical crushing of rock. Aggregate is produced in all 87 counties in Minnesota and all 50 states. The producers of aggregate recycle almost 100% of the product they use (such as old roads). Some of the uses of aggregate are concrete aggregates, which have the most restrictive aggregate requirements, asphalt, and fill. These are the highest percentage of uses for sand and gravel. There are three types of pits; gravel pit, sand pit, and borrow pit. Sand and gravel pits are mined above and below the water table. Many people feel there is a risk to mining below the water table; however the 2005 DNR waters study has proven that unless there is significant dewatering, there is little to no impact of mining below the water table in gravel deposits. Crushed Stone is also mined above and below the water table. This is used to construct berms to preserve the topsoil and act as a screen. Crushed Stone mining is mined in benches.

Aggregate consumption is 50% funded with public tax dollars. 60% of consumption requires high quality aggregates that need to pass rigorous specifications. Current Agg. Resources have a 70% reduction due to development/urbanization and the mining/use of the material. Supply and demand is greatly affected by transportation, finding and accessing aggregate close to the market and land use conflicts such as expanding development, which sometimes covers the deposits and can cause the depletion of older mines. Inventorying this resource is done thru a new Agg. resource mapping program that the DNR has set up. They are working through the state of MN; our county was one of the first counties to be completed. It is important to note that protecting our Agg. resource is just as important as protecting our lakeshore, agricultural lands, etc. It is considered a priority resource greatly due to the rise of gas prices. Planning for this resource can be done many different ways: Through creating gravel mining districts, creating buffers for current mining activity, planning for future access to Agg. resources using geologic information and planning for post-mining land use, which is commonly referred to as the reclamation process. There are many post mining land uses that these pits can be converted to. Some of these are recreational areas such as parks or wildlife habitat. Many of the pits have been converted to small lakes with higher end residential homes surrounding them, atv trails, baseball fields, or just turned back into agricultural lands.

Information, publications, or questions can be directed to

http://www.dnr.state.mn.us/lands_minerals/aggregatmaps.html

MN/DNR – Lands and Minerals

500 Lafayette Road Box 45

St. Paul, MN 55155-4045

651-259-5959

III. Scott introduced the second speaker Fred Corrigan the Executive Director of the Aggregate and Ready Mix Association of MN. Fred introduced a new term, "Construction Aggregate." The 2000 aggregate Task Force report is a great resource to assist local government in managing aggregate resources under their jurisdiction and providing for consistency across jurisdictions. Preservation of this resource is key in the planning process. There are many areas of MN that are witnessing the depletion of this resource at a rapid rate. They are covering up the resource with residential development. Woodbury is an example of this. The Twin Cities area is talking about removing the industrial area along the river and getting rid of the use of barges. They want to rezone this area for residential and recreational areas. This will result in increased truck traffic on our roads.

Preservation of aggregate is also a concern. In 2000 the seven county metro area had permitted reserves estimated to last only about thirteen years based on current demands. This is a concern since most aggregate is used within 50 miles of the place of extraction, otherwise it becomes too costly. This is why proper land use planning is key. Planning for preservation of aggregate resources, accommodating aggregate operations, the reclamation process, and noting that mining can be compatible with other land uses all need to be addressed with these land use plans. One way to convey this through the land use planning process is the creation of overlay districts. This allows for buffering, puts property owners on notice that there is aggregate in this area, allows for land use controls within this district, and establishes transportation routes during the mining phase. This district also ensures that the removal of aggregate occurs prior to development and removes that uncertainty for community and mining companies.

The role of the State of MN is communicated through the Aggregate Tax. This has not been updated since 1982, however there is a new proposal on the table right now. They are proposing that up to 5% is available as an annual administrative fee to the County Auditor and of the remaining revenues, 42.5% will go to the county road and bridge fund, and 42.5% to the general fund of the city or town in which the mine is located or to the county, if unorganized, to be expended for maintenance construction and reconstruction of roads and bridges. This would also allow for the area that is being mined to be taxed as industrial, but the rest of the area or the "reserve area" would remain taxed Agricultural until the pit is actually opened. Then when the pit is reclaimed, the property would be taxed accordingly. If it is developed it would be taxed as residential or if it is turned back into agricultural land it would be taxed that way.

Contact Information for Fred Corrigan: fcorrigan@armofmn.com or 952-707-1250

The next meeting is scheduled for May 1, 2008 at 1:30 pm.