

## Wright County NWQ Aggregate Resources Committee Meeting #3

May 1, 2008

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

**Staff:** Tom Zins, Stacy Marquardt, Scott Deckert

**Audience:** Ralph Douglas

**I. Introduction:** Reviewed prior meetings

**II. Gravel Pit Inventory** – All members requested a copy of the powerpoint presentation. It was suggested a noxious weed regulation should be part of the reclamation process.

### **III. Review Wright County's 1993 Aggregate Resources Study Group**

Was formed in 1991 by County Board and there were Four Major Topics:

- Identify resources and ways to protect it
- Reclamation
- Standards and regulations applied to ongoing operations
- Gravel tax

Nine Recommendations were made:

1. Wright County should fund or allocate staff time to conduct or complete further studies in these areas: Surveys of existing mining and use of aggregate; estimates of amount of aggregate exported; mapping and inventories of the location of known sources; compilation of available data on the quality of known sources; inventory of abandoned pits and problems posed by such sites; and as studies are completed, use these resources for protection and regulatory purposes
2. Wright County should revise its ordinances to provide better assurance that active gravel pits will be reclaimed.
3. Review the steps that could be taken to protect and preserve the readily available sources of aggregate, after the needed studies are completed.
4. Wright County should address the problems related to old and abandoned pits.
5. Wright County should review regulations which limit hours of operation in light of the increasing number of road projects which are required to operate at night.
6. Wright County should examine the possibility of establishing a two tiered system of gravel pit permits, with different types of permits for intermittent and ongoing mining pits.
7. Wright County should explore the possibility of licensing gravel pit operators and processors.
8. Wright County should require its Highway Department to incorporate the placement and permitting of a bituminous plant location into its plans for County Highway projects whenever possible.
9. Wright County should amend its zoning ordinance to include specific rules for the placement and operation of temporary and permanent bituminous plants.

### **IV. 2000 MN Legislature Aggregate Resources Task Force**

The Aggregate Resources Task Force, composed of twelve legislators and citizens, has examined these issues for the past fifteen months. After a series of hearings, field trips, public meetings, and considerable deliberations, the Task Force is recommending fourteen actions spanning the range of its discussions. If implemented, the recommendations will provide a broad framework for the management of aggregate resources throughout the state, helping to ensure the continued availability of these resources for future use at reasonable costs while maintaining existing environmental safeguards related to mining.

### **V. 2002 USGS – Managing and Protecting Aggregate Resources**

Key thoughts/ideas:

“Most valuable non-fuel mineral commodity in the world”. 3 times the \$\$ value of copper, gold and silver combined.

Aggregate occurs where Mother Nature put it, not necessarily where we need it.

There are potential environmental impacts, but most are “relatively benign” and can be controlled with best management practices.

Greatest reason for loss of aggregate resources is lack of planning and resources sterilization. Has been occurring since 1950s.

Shared responsibilities

- Government – develop policies, regulatory framework and economic incentives
- Industry – must work to become a responsible environmental member of community.
- Public – become informed.

#### **IV. Reviewed the 2007 NEQ Land Use Policies and Definition**

Aggregate Resource Policies:

1. Density – 1 per 40.
2. Reclamation – Reclamation plans are required. County regulations should be reviewed to require more detailed end use plans, financial requirements to ensure reclamation, and updated standards for screening and environmental protection.
3. Timeframe – Should be submitted to give an incentive to finish mining and close the pit.
4. Nuisance Mitigation – Plan should be submitted to address potential nuisances.
5. Further Study – A more detailed study should be completed for the mapped area to give more detail on the resource.
6. Changes in State Law – Monitor gravel tax money and what it can be used for, particularly if it can be used for reclamation.

This district is designated for areas that have high concentrations of aggregate resources and active mining operations. The purpose of the district is to identify areas where mining is likely to continue to be a significant use in the future, subject to review and regulation by the County. Existing, legal land uses will not be restricted, and housing will continue to be allowed in this area at agricultural densities (one per 40 acres) pursuant to current zoning. Landowners should consider the placement of any new residential sites, to ensure that the placement does not interfere with potential mining activities or is located such that future mining on nearby lands will not unduly impact the residential site. The review of other development proposals, such as residential clusters or conditional uses other than mining, should also consider potential mining operations. Agricultural zoning would continue to be appropriate for this district.

**VI. Next Meeting Scheduled June 5, 2008 1:30 p.m.**