DeKalb County Watersheds Council

Meeting Minutes

DATE: Monday, September 21, 2026

MEETING CALLED TO ORDER AT: 3:06 p.m. by Grace Coveliers

ATTENDANCE:

COUNCIL MEMBERS: Peggy Anesi, Kris Aves, Grace Coveliers, Matt Deitch, Dean Johnson, Kelsey Musich, Beth Prestegaard, Kyle White and Anita Zurbrugg

STAFF: Brooke Watson

GUESTS: Sam DeDina, Joyce Klein-Munch and Christy Westman

ABSENT COUNCIL MEMBERS: Autumn Carlson, Matt Anderson, Nick Newman and Jolene Willis

APPROVAL OF THE AGENDA: Kelsey Musich moved to approve the agenda, Anita Zurbrugg seconded the motion, motion carried.

APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES: Beth Prestegaard moved to approve the July 29, 2026 meeting minutes, Dean Johnson seconded the motion, motion carried.

REPORTS:

Watershed Coordinator:

- Planning process has started for the Somonauk Creek Watershed-Based Plan (Somonauk Creek WBP). Grace and Brooke met with Cecily Cunz of Baxter & Woodman Engineering to discuss a tentative schedule of events, data collection and deliverables.
- Individuals to serve on the Steering Committee for the Somonauk Creek WBP have been selected. Candidates will be presented to the DeKalb County Stormwater Management and Planning Committee on September 24, 2026 for approval. Following approval, candidates will receive formal invitations to serve on the Steering Committee.
- Cecily and Grace have started developing the strategy and schedule for the Somonauk Creek WBP, including establishing project goals, identifying data collections needs, developing education and workshop outlines, and outlining the anticipated timeline for the planning process.

Watershed Coordinator (continued)

- Boone County's Helicopter-based Time-Domain Electromagnetics (HTEM) project is nearing completion. Data will be publicly available when complete.
- Water Resource Specialists from McHenry County and Boone County, Scott Kuykendall and Dan Kane, have offered support as DeKalb County explores the HTEM mapping process. Both counties have completed HTEM and are excited at the prospect of having a regional map.
- Grace met with ISGS researchers Kisa Mwakanyamale-Gilkie and Jason Thomason to finalize project goals and determine a total cost. They provided a quote outlining a $1.3 million cost for DeKalb County.
- Dean, Grace, Anita and Brooke had a positive meeting with Jessica Beezhold, a member of Rep. Lauren Underwood's staff, on Monday about the HTEM mapping project. She does think that this project aligns with Rep. Underwood's interests and goals around transparency with water resources and opportunities to provide the public and local leaders more data. She was also encouraging of both funding opportunities through Rep. Underwood's office and other federal grant processes. We will continue to move forward with sharing details about the project with DeKalb county groups and stakeholders, as well as further developing a budget. Jessica encouraged us to submit an application for this project to be considered through Rep. Underwood's FY28 Community Project Funding Requests (2 week application period opens in Spring 2027), which if selected could provide congressional funding in 2028.
- Dean will be attending the October meeting for the DeKalb County Planning, Zoning and Development Committee to share about HTEM mapping and seek their support in moving forward.

DeKalb County Water Futures Summit Planning Committee:

- Planning Committee including Grace Coveliers, Matt Deitch, Dean Johnson, Kelsey Musich, Nick Newma, Beth Prestegaard and Brooke Watson.
- The goal is to bring together professionals, community members, farmers, local leaders, conservation partners, and residents for a full day focused on one resource that connects all of us: water. We want to help attendees develop a strong foundation of knowledge so they can participate meaningfully in conversations and civic engagement surrounding water resources and leave with information they can put into action in their own homes, farms, businesses, and communities.
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DeKalb County Water Futures Summit Planning Committee (continued)

- Program is being developed to intentionally expand the conversation beyond any one aspect of water management. Throughout the day, we hope to explore topics including the water cycle, hydrology, urban stormwater runoff, best management practices, flooding, wastewater treatment, sustainable and traditional agricultural practices, water and economic development, watershed planning, and other issues that will help our community better understand where our water comes from, where it goes, and how our decisions affect it.
- The morning will feature two concurrent tracks of presentations, followed by lunch and additional presentations in the afternoon. Presentation formats will include both individual speakers and panel discussions.
- The group is working on finalizing the schedule, moderators, sponsorship information, registration details and promotional collateral.

DeKalb County Watersheds Council Outreach/Marketing Committee:

- Beth Prestegaard shared there is no business to report but they look forward to supporting the promotion of the DeKalb County Water Futures Summit.

NIU:

- The Forty North project is proceeding, with EnCap being selected as the contractor for the vegetation installation. The EnCap team is finalizing the locations of trails and will do the initial vegetation installation this fall.
- The new Northern Illinois Center for Community Sustainability (NICCS) will break ground this month. Construction will begin this fall with a completion and move-in goal of August 2027.

DeKalb County Community Foundation:

- Kyle White highlighted that other then DCCF's Emergency Grant for non-profits, it is between grant deadlines.
- Youth Engaged in Philanthropy (YEP) grants, which support projects and organizations seeking to enhance the quality of life for youth in DeKalb County, are moving the grant time period back with applications opening on October 15, 2026 and closing December 15, 2026.

DeKalb County Stormwater Management Committee:

- Kelsey Musich reported continued forward progress on the DeKalb County Storm Water Ordinance proposal, which includes better policies on greenspace, water connectivity and water volume. All the language for the new Ordinance has been finalized and will be presented for approval to the DeKalb Cunty Stormwater Management Committee on Thursday, September 24, 2026.
- Kelsey provided updates from recent Region 1 Planning Council (R1) meetings in Boone County. Boone County coordinated a multi-county infrastructure planning, hazard mitigation and regional priority projects across Northern Illinois with Boone, Winnebago, Ogle and Stephenson Counties. DeKalb County is not part of this group and there has been previous hesitation from DeKalb County officials in participating in discussions due to funding requirements to officially join. Boone County and Winnebago County are struggling to meet the new MS4 storm water requirements. These new requirements include improvements across testing, pipe mapping and outreach events. Kelsey has received feedback that DeKalb County is more confident they will be able to meet the new MS4 requirements.
- Kelsey also shared that Boone County has approached members of the R1 Committee to submit a 604(b) grant application for the Illinois EPA's Water Quality Management Grant Program to fund development of a Regional Stormwater Management Plan for Boone, DeKalb, McHenry, Ogle and Winnebago Counties. The goals of a Regional Plan would be to improve county level coordination, identify stormwater issues that impact the region, establish priorities, and support opportunities for continued education. Kelsey is requesting a letter of support from the DeKalb County Stormwater Management Committee at their Thursday, September 24, 2026 meeting. Anita Zurbrugg suggested drafting a letter of support on behalf of the DeKalb County Watersheds Council also.

Natural Resources Education (U of I Extension)

- Peggy Anesi reported that the Watershed Stewards program has been rescheduled for Tuesdays from 9:30 a.m. – 12 p.m., starting Oct. 6 through Nov. 17. Sessions will be in-person at Russell Woods Nature Center and will include an additional fieldtrip to the Water Treatment Plant. Only four people have signed up so far. Watersheds Council members requested flyers to assist with promotion and recruitment.
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Natural Resources Education (U of I Extension)

- Guest and County Board candidate Joyce Klein-Munch shared that during her community engagement efforts, she has had many conversations with local citizens who are very concerned about water quality and want to make sure water resources are protected for future generations.
- Peggy shared that Boon County has charged her with watersheds education. She recently hosted a Watersheds Stewards program there that was successful, as well as led a Paddle and Learn for the Stormwater Technical Committees for both Boone County and Winnebago County.

APPROVAL OF THE REPORTS: Dean Johnson moved to approve the reports. Anita Zurbrugg seconded the motion, motion carried.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS:

None

NEW BUSINESS:

- The Somonauk Creek Watershed Planning will include several outreach goals. In the grant submission, several workshops were identified under outreach including workshops for educators, lake and pond owners, and agriculture. Discussion took place about the categories. Suggestions were given to explore offering Continuing Education Units (CEUs) for workshops especially for educator sessions, with Peggy Anesi sharing that was well received and increased attendance at Extension events held at Russell Woods Nature Center. For the lake/pond management workshop, Holly Hudson, Senior Aquatic Biologist for the Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning (CMAP) was suggested as a facilitator, along with Brian Valleskey, Senior Environmental Scientist for Baxter & Woodman. For the agriculture workshops, suggestions included demonstrations, field days at local farms or "Farm Shop Talks."
- Suggested facilitators included drainage tile practitioners or contractors, as well as area farmers with conservation practices on their farms that are in the Somonauk Creek Watershed or neighboring watersheds in the southern part of DeKalb County.

NEW BUSINESS (Continued)

- Brooke Watson provided an update about the status of exploring participating in partnership with NIU's Dr. Jason Gorham and his Business in Action course. Dr. Gorham was pleased with the "Pain Points" list we submitted in August. He has us scheduled to partner with the NIU's Business in Action class in Spring 2027, as well as tentatively with the Experiential Learning Center in Fall 2027. Dr. Gorham provided feedback that we will need to further develop a couple topic areas that relate to Financial/Accounting/Growth/ Sustainability categories, so there are appropriate project options for students majoring in finance and accounting. Dr. Gorham would like to meet in October to finalize details for Spring 2027. Brooke will follow-up with Marketing and Outreach Committee members to schedule a prep meeting and a meeting with Dr. Gorham next month.

ACTION ITEMS:

Partnership opportunity with Dr. Jason Gorham: Brooke will follow-up with Marketing and Outreach Committee members to schedule a prep meeting and a meeting with Dr. Gorham next month.

Water Quality Summit: Water Quality Summit Sub-Committee will convene before the next DeKalb County Watersheds Council meeting.

- Members will discuss and provide direction on the event schedule, marketing, sponsorships and promotion.

ADJOURNMENT:

MOTION TO ADJOURN: Beth Prestegaard moved to adjourn the meeting, and it was seconded by Kelsey Musich.

The meeting was adjourned at 4:37 p.m.

ANNOUNCEMENTS: The next meeting of the DeKalb County Watersheds Council will be Monday, November 16, 2026 at 3 p.m. The meeting will be held at the DeKalb County Farm Bureau's Center for Agriculture in Sycamore, Illinois.