

DeKalb County Watersheds Council Meeting Minutes



DATE: Wednesday, May 27, 2026

MEETING CALLED TO ORDER AT: 3:17 p.m. by Dean Johnson

ATTENDANCE:

COUNCIL MEMBERS: Kris Aves, Autumn Carlson, Grace Coveliers, Matt Deitch, Dean Johnson, Kelsey Musich, Beth Prestegaard and Anita Zurbrugg

STAFF: Brooke Watson

ABSENT COUNCIL MEMBERS: Matt Anderson, Peggy Anesi, Nick Newman, Kyle White and Jolene Willis

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

APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES: Anita Zurbrugg moved to approve the April 1, 2026 meeting minutes, Kelsey Musich seconded the motion, motion carried.

REPORTS:

Watershed Coordinator:

- Watershed planning presentation was made to the Regional Planning Commission, which included details about the benefits a 3D mapping project of the aquifer could have.
- The DeKalb County Storm Water Management Committee was supposed to meet earlier this month to start discussions about a 3D mapping project of the aquifer but did not have a quorum so could not discuss new business.
- The City of DeKalb is working with Jason Thomason from the Illinois State Geological Survey, to identify a new site on the west side of DeKalb to drill a well. The new well will add capacity to the water supply. This is a great example of how the 3D watershed mapping initiative could positively impact future planning.
- The City of Genoa promoted the adoption of the Central South Branch of the Kishwaukee River Watershed-based plan in their March newsletter, which was mailed to homes with the water bill and is also available online. Two follow-up articles were submitted for future newsletters but have not been utilized.



Watershed Coordinator (Continued)

- The Watershed Stewards program was cancelled due to low enrollment. Peggy is planning on rescheduling the program for the fall. Online registration and promotion will launch later this summer.
- NIU STEAM professor, Chrissy Swartz, is looking to include lessons about watershed planning and sustainability into the curriculum for summer camp open to high school students. DeKalb County SWCD staff will meet with her soon to finalize the opportunity.
- DeKalb County is updating the Hazard Mitigation Plan. All communities are gathering and updating their plans. There is a question on the survey for city leaders, inquiring if they are utilizing watershed plans.
- Illinois State Water Survey and FEMA are making updates to the flood map for DeKalb County. They are planning public meetings later in the process, tentatively scheduled for May 2027.
- We are still waiting for an announcement from IEPA regarding the grant application for the Somonauk Creek Watershed. Baxter & Woodman will assist with consulting once it is finalized.
- Dean will deliver a presentation about the role of the DeKalb County SWCD and watershed plans to the DeKalb County Farm Bureau Board on June 6, 2026. Their Board has several new members, and it has been a couple of years since Dean last shared with this group. Kelsey will send Dean slides to include the proposed updates to the DeKalb County Storm Water Ordinance.

DeKalb County Stormwater Management Committee:

- Kelsey Musich reported the upcoming deadline for MS4 permit submissions to the IEPA is June 4, 2026. As part of the submission, they will include a summary of the Watershed Stewardship For Leaders program and a synopsis of the evaluation survey. There is new permitting criteria this year, but very little guidance has been provided from the IEPA.
- Kelsey is seeking forward progress on the DeKalb County Storm Water Ordinance proposal, which includes better policies on greenspace, water connectivity and water volume. In the proposal, any development over 25,000 square feet would be responsible for better management of water treatment, not just water detention, through a naturalized water basin approach. Naturalized water basin management strategies would include eliminating the use of concrete, installing more native plants, reducing mowing and developing meandering channels.



DeKalb County Stormwater Management Committee (Continued)

- There has been support for the DeKalb County Storm Water Ordinance updates from municipalities and many groups but no forward progress with the DeKalb County Board and DeKalb County Zoning Committee. Kelsey recently received feedback asking if the DeKalb County Farm Bureau has expressed support. Dean's presentation to their Board in June is a great opportunity to create awareness and seek their support. Kelsey is still planning on speaking at a future zoning and/or board meeting. The goal is to have DeKalb County adopt the new ordinance, so all municipalities feel supported in adopting it and enforcing the updates. It would ensure that water detention throughout the county is in-line with neighboring detention areas, which creates greenspace connectivity.

DeKalb County Watersheds Council Outreach/Marketing Committee:

- Beth Prestegaard reported that several members met with Dr. Jason Gorham from Northern Illinois University's College of Business, to discuss opportunities to partner on a marketing and outreach project with NIU students. The focus would be to help provide resources to communities with completed watershed plans. Two options were presented including partnering with either the Business in Action course or the Experiential Learning Center. The Marketing and Outreach Committee will identify the goals for the potential partnership and the project framework to submit to Dr. Gorham for consideration. He will decide which program is the best fit for the partnership, which would commence in either Fall 2026 or Spring 2027.

DeKalb Sustainability Committee:

- Anita Zurbrugg shared an update about the new DeKalb Sustainability Alliance group. It is a group of citizens seeking to encourage activism in attending and participating in Planning and Zoning and Board Meetings, as well as accountability and transparency from city and county leaders. Water resources are a primary concern, and they enjoyed hearing a presentation at the last meeting from Dean. Participants have been encouraged by the diversity of attendees in age, profession and background.

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NIU:

- Matt Deitch reported the Forty North project has stalled as they develop the bid process to identify the contractor who will complete the seeding and manage maintenance of the site.
- 400 trees were planted this month on NIU's campus thanks to a grant from the Morton Arboretum, under the oversight of NIU's Sustainability Initiative.
- NIU will be breaking ground this fall for the new Northern Illinois Center for Community Sustainability (NICCS), which will be located on the west side of campus.

APPROVAL OF THE REPORTS: Matt Deitch moved to approve the reports. Kris Aves seconded the motion, motion carried.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS: None

NEW BUSINESS:

- Discussion took place about the 3D watershed mapping initiative. This will be added to a future DeKalb County Watersheds Council meeting agenda to discuss further action. The goal would be for the DeKalb County Watersheds Council to make a recommendation to endorse the 3D mapping project of the aquifer. This recommendation could be presented to the DeKalb County Storm Water Committee with the encouragement that they take the lead. The recommendation could also be presented to the DeKalb County Community Foundation for endorsement.
- Discussion took place to identify the goals for the potential partnership with NIU's College of Business and the project framework to submit to Dr. Gorham for consideration.
- Discussion continued about hosting a Water Quality Summit, to build on the interest and momentum of Watershed Stewards for Leaders. The consensus was that it will remain an agenda item for future meetings so action and development of the opportunity can continue.



NEW BUSINESS (Continued)

- Grace Coveliers shared the new DeKalb County Interactive Watershed Map, available on the DeKalb County Watersheds Council website. It features all of the points with their priority levels from the “Management Measures Action Plan” from all of the completed watershed plans, along with NIU water quality sampling sites, streambank and riparian area restoration recommendations, wetland restoration recommendations, other “Management Measure Recommendations,” outlines of each watershed planning area, the National Wetland Inventory and DeKalb County Wetland Inventory, HUC-12 Watersheds and FEMA Floodplains. Each feature also has an interactive note linking to the specific page where each point is mentioned in the various watershed plans, so viewers can learn more details about its designation.

ACTION ITEMS:

Review partnership opportunity with NIU and Dr. Jason Gorham: The Marketing and Outreach will meet before the next Watersheds Council meeting, to further review the two options presented for partnership including collaborating with either the Business in Action course or the Experiential Learning Center. The Marketing and Outreach Committee will:

- Formalize if the Watersheds Council should proceed with a partnership with Dr. Gorham and NIU Students.
- If yes, finalize challenges/barriers/”pain points” to help guide the framework of the project.
- Provide outcomes to Dr. Gorham who will recommend if we should collaborate with Business in Action or the Experiential Learning Center.

3D Watershed Mapping Initiative: Continue to educate citizens and various connected committees about the opportunity to support a 3D mapping project of the aquifer in DeKalb County.

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ADJOURNMENT:

MOTION TO ADJOURN: Grace Coveliers moved to adjourn the meeting, and it was seconded by Anita Zurbrugg.

The meeting was adjourned at 4:25 p.m.

ANNOUNCEMENTS:

The next meeting of the DeKalb County Watersheds Council will be Wednesday, July 29, 2026 at 3 p.m. The meeting will be held at the DeKalb County Farm Bureau's Center for Agriculture in Sycamore, Illinois.