

# DeKalb County Watersheds Council Meeting Minutes



**DATE:** Wednesday, April 1, 2026

**MEETING CALLED TO ORDER AT:** 3:04 p.m. by Dean Johnson

## **ATTENDANCE:**

**COUNCIL MEMBERS:** Matt Anderson, Peggy Anesi, Kris Aves, Grace Coveliers, Dean Johnson, Kelsey Musich, Nick Newman, Beth Prestegaard (via Zoom), Kyle White, Jolene Willis and Anita Zurbrugg

**STAFF:** Brooke Watson

**GUESTS:** Joyce Klein-Munch

**ABSENT COUNCIL MEMBERS:** Autumn Carlson, Matt Deitch

**APPROVAL OF THE AGENDA:** Anita Zurbrugg moved to approve the agenda, Kris Aves seconded the motion, motion carried.

**APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES:** Grace Coveliers moved to approve the January 28, 2026 meeting minutes, Kelsey Musich seconded the motion, motion carried.

## **REPORTS:**

### **Watershed Coordinator:**

- 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. There will be future opportunities to promote in their monthly newsletter again.
- DeKalb County SWCD will have a booth at DeCarbon DeKalb Earth Fest on Saturday, April 11. Staff will promote the watershed plans and the new Watersheds Council Banner will be prominently featured. Promo items including stormwater coloring books, stormwater magnets and Watershed Council stickers have also been ordered for giveaways.
- The cities of Kingston, Kirkland, Genoa have adopted the watershed plan for the Central South Branch of the Kishwaukee River. DeKalb County has approved the Central South Branch of the Kishwaukee River and City of Sandwich - Lower Little Rock Creek Watershed Plans. New and refreshed momentum is needed from city officials and local citizens in several communities, especially with recent retirements of key city staff.

# DeKalb County Watersheds Council Meeting Minutes



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## Watershed Coordinator (Continued)

- 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.
- NIU will be starting work to transform part of the North 40 to restored prairie. Dean Johnson is serving on the project advisory board. The bid process will take place this spring-summer, with a goal to start conversion activities this fall.

## 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 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.
- 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. Citizens will be encouraged to attend and hear new floodplain boundaries. Assistance will also be offered for completing updates with insurance. The enterprise zone around the I-88 corridor in DeKalb will be a central focus.



## DeKalb County Stormwater Management Committee (Continued)

- Three years ago, updates to the DeKalb County Storm Water Ordinance were proposed to include 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. There has been support for these updates from municipalities and many groups but no forward progress with the DeKalb County Board and DeKalb County Zoning Committee. Kelsey has sent fact sheets to all Board members and is 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 detentions throughout the county are in-line with neighboring detention areas, which creates greenspace connectivity.
- The DeKalb County Storm Water Management Committee offered their support of a 3D watershed mapping initiative.

## Natural Resources Educational Coordinator:

- Peggy Anesi reported results from the Watershed Stewardship for Leaders participant evaluations. Of the 40 people registered, 33 individuals completed the survey. 97% reported the course was exceptional. Prior to the course, 30% felt confident in their knowledge of watersheds. After taking the course, 80% felt confident in their knowledge. 76% said they would apply what they learned in supporting watershed partnerships. If Watershed Council members hear about any partnerships that resulted from connections made through the program, please share them with Peggy.
- The Watershed Stewards program is still scheduled for the end of May. Peggy has had sign-ups at Russell Woods to allow Genoa residents to have the first chance to sign-up. The course will include four classes and one fieldtrip. Online registration will be launched soon.

# DeKalb County Watersheds Council Meeting Minutes



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## DeKalb County Community Foundation:

- Jolene Willis reported the DCCF universal scholarship application was due at 11:59 p.m. April 1. DeKalb County high school students fill out one application but it qualifies them for over 100 college scholarships through DCCF. This includes scholarships that have environmental and sustainability applications.
- There are a large number of scholarships and grants with April deadlines that must be reviewed and allocated by May. Much of DCCF staffing is focused on these processes and timelines currently. The fall cycle for the DCCF Community Needs grant, which projects from the DeKalb County Watersheds Council would be eligible for, opens July 1, 2026 and closes September 1, 2026. Grant decisions will be announced November 1, 2026.
- Give DeKalb County is May 7, 2026. The DCCF encourages local supporters to donate to nonprofit organizations on this designated day of giving.

## City of DeKalb:

- Matt Anderson reported he is settling into his new position. He 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.

## Kishwaukee Water Reclamation District:

- Nick Newman reported the district is making progress on their capital improvement plan, including planting trees, cleaning up areas with old equipment storage, converting new areas to native plantings, and adding solar energy solutions.
- The next phase of the plan will include extending the sewer system to Waterman. This will help to eliminate some of the current discharge points and positively impact water treatment.



## Kishwaukee Water Reclamation District (Continued)

- Nick gave a presentation about the district and local watersheds, as part of a March NIU Steam Café event. Nick is available upon request, to provide a similar presentation for other area community groups.
- The Kishwaukee Water Reclamation District Nutrient Assessment Reduction Plan was positively received thanks to improvements that have been done to the Kishwaukee River through the watershed plans.

**APPROVAL OF THE REPORTS:** Nick Newman moved to approve the reports. Anita Zurbrugg 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.
- Discussion took place about potential future partnerships which will allow for community engagement opportunities specifically with the Watersheds Council. Members are encouraged to actively bring those opportunities forward. The North 40 project could be an opportunity for those touch points.
- Discussion took place about hosting a Water Quality Summit, to build on the interest and momentum of Watershed Stewards for Leaders. This will be added to a future DeKalb County Watersheds Council meeting agenda to discuss further action.

# DeKalb County Watersheds Council Meeting Minutes



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## 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, identify 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.

## ADJOURNMENT:

**MOTION TO ADJOURN:** Anita Zurbrugg moved to adjourn the meeting, and it was seconded by Jolene Willis.

The meeting was adjourned at 4:17 p.m.

## ANNOUNCEMENTS:

The next meeting of the DeKalb County Watersheds Council will be Wednesday, May 27, 2026 at 3 p.m. The meeting will be held at the DeKalb County Farm Bureau's Center for Agriculture in Sycamore, Illinois.