Summary of Aggregate Ad Hoc Team Meeting

June 28, 2017

A group of about a dozen representatives from the aggregate industry, local units of government, legislature, and state agencies came together to discuss, brainstorm, and start planning for aggregate's future in Minnesota. Participants were engaged as they discussed concerns and shared their prospects for the future.

This is a brief overview of the 3.5 hour session.

What would make your life easier?

The three overarching events voiced by the group include the ability to blend deposits, greater consistency in process, environmental issues, and ordinances/regulations, and expanded resources particularly with mapping.

- Being able to blend deposits from various sources using overlays in zoning maps.
- Being able to consult with county engineers early in the process.
- For industry to 'locate' their facilities away from citizens – have buffer areas. EX: portable asphalt plants
- For all stakeholders to be consistent on water issues especially in relation to groundwater. Educate the public on how this works.
- To be able to reconsider restrictions on floodplains.
- To ensure good ordinances and regulations are in place across the state.
- Have aggregate maps for the entire state that are included in the zoning maps, and connected to other DNR maps (i.e. protected waters, biologically sensitive areas etc).
- Maps to help quantify and establish demand and look for shortfalls.
- Know what's being produced although assumptions would be close.

FORWARD FOCUS RECOMMENDATIONS:

- Reclamation and future use
- Balancing environmental protection with permitting and regulations
- Planning for future supply of aggregate including mapping, planning, permitting, and secondary land use.
- Blending deposits to meet standards
- Be an opponent and advocate for preservation

STRENGTHS:

When asked to explain the group strengths - what the group is really good at - there was a variety of areas that emerged. Good communication was noted on several fronts. Simplicity of process opened the door to compliance success and collaboration.

- MPCA – general permits use a simple process for industry to operate. It's a hybrid process that insures consistency without over regulating.
- Collaboration – Communicating with those involved provides clarification and understanding of intent.
- DNR communicated information well.
- DNR mission support economic development in the state as well as protecting natural resources.
- Producers follow through with neighbors and LUGs. They do what they say.
- State allows counties to have aggregate tax.
- Industry does a good job of staying compliant.
- The flexibility of local control works well.
- LUG's regulate rather than the state.

WEAKNESSES:

On the weakness spectrum time was a consistent factor. Short seasons and processes that drag out which then lead to an additional factor of personnel changes can hold projects hostage. Environmental issues and funding round out areas where there is room for improvement.

- Held hostage by time meaning the construction season, and processes. Both can kill a project.
- Public safety issues.
- Environmental issues such as endangered species.
- Improper use of environmental reviews pressure decision makers to push a project along. The only challenge is through a legal process.
- Lack of good outreach/education campaign to citizen scientists.
- Too frequently being dismissive of environmental issues.
- Personnel changes, consolidation, moving, re-organizing, etc. means working with new faces that don't have the background and/or institutional knowledge.
- Need funding for mapping.
- State's technology capabilities require funding to stay current with needs.
- Misuse of county interim-use permits tighten up site time 'til project can't survive. Leave no guarantee for renewal.
- Permitting that threatens real property especially with adjacent land ownership changes.

OPPORTUNITIES

There were some exciting happenings expressed by the group. Emerging technology for optional road materials is viewed as a good option for the non-renewable aggregate resources.

- Whole Duluth complex for sale.
- Cost effective on public side for road construction long term.
- Glacial deposits offer different mining opportunities from other parts of the country.

- Emerging technology may mean less use of aggregate, i.e. better road products, better use of recycled materials, etc.
- Blending deposits

THREATS

Barriers to success were also noted by the group. The fact that eventually we will run out of aggregate led the list. Reclamation and other environmental issues are outlined here in addition to public perception of the industry.

- Certain parts of the state will run out of aggregate. This threatens growth of the industry as well as maintaining current levels. Additional resources will be needed.
- Cost of hauling.
- Threat to native prairies.
- Groundwater issues.
- Environmental restrictions (more emotional based citizen-scientist)
- Inconsistencies between regulating groups, i.e. counties, agencies, state vs. local when regulating same idea.
- Poor and/or improper reclamation of pits. Gives industry a bad name.
- Potential movement of invasive species. Again, goes back to what the public sees.
- Make standards flexible enough to meet needs of different parts of the state. (Wisconsin's NR135)
- Legacy site/non-reclaimed sites.
- Groups fighting silica sand may start to overlap into aggregate.
- Public doesn't consider aggregate a resource.
- Environment easements that are being placed on land shut down the expansion opportunities. Local governments need to know placement of these early on.