



# SOUTH WASHINGTON WATERSHED DISTRICT

**County Road 75/Grey Cloud Crossing open house  
Washington County and South Washington Watershed District  
Wednesday May 25, 2016  
Grey Cloud Island Town Hall**

Washington County and the South Washington Watershed District together hosted an open house for residents of Grey Cloud Island Township regarding the County Road 75 pavement preservation and the proposed Grey Cloud Crossing project. The purpose of the open house was to present information about the crossing project including the preferred alternative for the crossing structure, explain sediment transport modeling completed for the project, provide information about the ecological restoration of the back channel and discuss the pavement preservation project and potential detour routes.

Forty-six residents signed in at the open house, however staff estimates that there were between 50 and 60 residents in attendance. The SWWD sent invitations specifically to land owners along the backwater channel. Washington County provided the general mailing to all Township residents. Residents were invited to visit the four stations that were set up and SWWD and County staff were present to answer questions. The four stations covered four topic areas; 1) Preliminary design of the pre-cast structure and details; 2) Sediment transport modeling of the backwater channel; 3) Ecological restoration of the backwater channel; 4) County Road 75 pavement preservation project.

Residents were free to visit each station and discuss questions with staff that were present. There was no presentation or official record of the discussion. This document is intended to provide a general summary of the questions and themes that were received by staff.

The conceptual pre-cast concrete bridge design was generally acceptable to residents in attendance. Several positive comments were received about the architectural details and the coloring of the structure to make it look more natural and match the surrounding area. Residents also agreed that the pre-cast concrete structure provided more flexibility for building the roadway and required a little less time for construction than a typical span bridge. Several positive comments were also received about increased roadway site distance and shoulder width in the vicinity of the crossing. Generally the residents support the use and functionality of the pre-cast structure and like the proposed improvements to the roadway.

Discussions around sediment transport centered on allowing for a full opening at the crossing that will allow water to flow from the river uncontrolled. The SWWD recognizes that water flowing into the backwater channel will carry sediment. Some sediment will be deposited in the backwater channel and during high flows some sediment will be scoured out of the channel. Allowing flow into the backwater channel will provide different flow regimes that will re-

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establish a channel via natural processes. There may be some islands that form and the channel may be cut deeper in some locations. Generally, most residents appreciated that information, historic photos, and third party review conducted by the SWWD on the sediment transport. There were questions about what guarantee would the SWWD provide that the channel would not fill in with sediment. It was explained that the SWWD is not providing a guarantee since the river is a dynamic natural system. While questions about sediment transport dominated the open house discussion, a general consensus exists that something should be done to restore flow.

Questions about the ecological restoration focused on the dissolved oxygen data collected by the DNR in the backwater channel. Data collected in 2014 and 2015 show that there are periods during the summer months that dissolved oxygen drops below 5 parts per million (ppm) which is the point at which game fish are affected. Readings in the main channel indicated that oxygen levels rarely drop below 5 ppm. This water will be delivered to the backwater channel as part of the restoration. With increased oxygen level the habitat will improve and the fish species from predominantly rough fish to a more diverse fish community. Changes to habitat will also include changes to the vegetation. By improving the water quality, native vegetation should begin to dominate. Some vegetation management may be required in the future to restore native vegetation. Re-establishment of the littoral zone will provide the necessary habitat for fish to spawn and establish winter refuge in the backwater channel. Generally residents agree that restoring flow will improve water quality, native vegetation and aquatic habitat will improve the ecological environment.

The County Road 75 pavement preservation project received questions regarding the pavement project and the detour during the crossing construction. The detour will need further consideration by the County and Township to finalize the route. The construction of the crossing is estimated to be approximately 65-days. County Road 75 will remain open during the pavement preservation project using land closures and flaggers to direct traffic.

A good turnout of residents created a good conversation about the project. The residents had lots of good questions and were generally supportive of the project. The SWWD and Washington County will continue to post information about the project on their websites (see links below).

<https://www.co.washington.mn.us/index.aspx?NID=2414>

<http://www.swwdmn.org/watershed-guidance-documents/1164/>