

## Schutz Lake

### Outcomes from April 6, 2017 Conversation

Prepared by Freshwater Society

On Thursday, April 6, nearly 30 community members gathered for a presentation from Minnehaha Creek Watershed District (MCWD) and a discussion with Jen Kader of Freshwater Society to learn more about the health of their lake and begin figuring out next steps the community can take.

The following pages are an overview of the outcomes of the community conversation. They are intended as a starting point for further conversations as the community around Schutz Lake decides the role it wants to take in pursuing their shared vision. Jen Kader is available through her role with the Watershed Association Initiative (sponsored by MCWD) to help facilitate future conversations if desired.

### **Appreciating what is**

There are so many things that were identified for why Schutz Lake is a valued asset in the community.

The overarching theme that emerged was that residents feel (and appreciate) that Schutz is a unique and special lake. Specifically, they appreciate the natural beauty, tight-knit community, and varieties of ways the lake can be enjoyed. Each of these is explored in a little more detail below.

- Natural beauty: Schutz Lake's natural beauty is a point of community pride. With its large setbacks from the shore, it can quickly feel as if it were located "up north" or deep in the woods.
- Tight-knit community: As a small residential lake, neighbors around Schutz form a community where people are connected to each other and dedicated to sharing and caring for the use and health of the lake. People feel safe and respect each others' lake use desires. They also enjoy the rural feel of their lake while maintaining close access to goods and services.
- Variety of ways to enjoy: Schutz is a quiet lake ideal for taking in the natural beauty of the surroundings, whether this is done from the shore or in the lake. Quiet activities such as kayaking, canoeing, and paddle boarding provide opportunity to enjoy and be a part of the natural surroundings and community. Schutz is large enough and deep enough to also enjoy fishing and other motorized activities. Neighbors' respect each other's desired uses and work together to ensure a safe and enjoyable time can be had on the lake by all.

### **Imagining what could be**

Generally speaking, much of what residents would like to see for the future of Schutz Lake is that issues like water quality are sustainably addressed, and that those things that make the lake and community feel special—small community, unique character, etc.—are supported.

### **Envisioning Success**

It is important to set broad goals like those above to help provide grounding for a shared community vision, but it takes time to reach such broad and ideal goals. Work—especially the kind involved in community efforts to address natural resource concerns—can take a lot of time, and the benefits of that work may not be realized for even longer. With that in mind, setting intermediary goals only a couple years out can provide tangible targets, help motivate participants, and more easily be tracked against to understand the group's success.

The group identified several different areas they'd like to work first by identifying what they felt success looked like in the next two years. These areas are detailed below.

- There will be an actionable plan in place based on a solid understanding of impacts to the lake, and is actively being implemented.

- The group will be working with a network of partners to help improve the health of Schutz Lake. Specifically among these partners is the city (with whom the group will be working to address infrastructure and development projects) and the community.
- The group will still be involved with monitoring and will be assisting in efforts to better understand existing impacts to the lake as well as impacts of other projects and changes made.
- Further understanding of changes in Schutz Lake's water quality and quantity will have been gained, and measures to begin making appropriate changes will have been taken.
- This group will be more formally organized and actively involved in (and leading) efforts to educate, provide guidance, and serve as lake stewards, all while bringing the community closer together.

### Strategies to Meet Goals

(This section is written from the perspective of the group so as to make it easy for any copying pasting done from this document into any plan developed by the group.)

It became quite clear in the conversation that we wanted (and needed) an action plan to help us meet our goals. The list of strategies below is a first step in that direction, but additional work is still needed to identify the challenges we'll face in implementing these strategies, as well as the specific action steps we'll need to be successful in this work. For now, though, the following was identified, and are listed in no specific order.

1. Develop and implement a comprehensive communications plan. Consistent communication with a variety of stakeholders (city, developers, residents, etc.) will be an important tool for building our base and maintaining the city's focus on Schutz Lake. We should be thoughtful in putting this together, thinking about how communication can help us meet our goals, and the best way to communicate with our different audiences.
2. Create an organizational structure that works for our group. As we begin the work laid out in these strategies, setting an initial structure will be important. This can help clarify roles and responsibilities, provide the opportunity to focus on the work at hand, and create a pathway that leads to success.
3. Build partnerships. We cannot do this work alone. We will need to actively work in partnership with residents, MCWD, other lake associations, and the city to build the relationships that will help us in the long run. Special attention to working with the city should be paid to maintain the focus on Schutz Lake and the momentum we currently have with the city.
4. Collect and share educational materials with the community and our group. As we begin this work in earnest, education should be a key focus—both to increase the group's understanding of the issues and opportunities as well as to help others in our community better understand how they, too, can be a part of the solution.
5. Identify and seek community projects and activities. Even while we wait to gather more data, we know there are things we can begin working on now. We will actively seek and support projects that will help us reach our goals.
6. Influence policy and development decisions. Our region is growing, with now development or redevelopment projects already in construction or proposed within the lakeshed. Since it is easier to reduce runoff in development from the start than it is to address runoff after the fact, we will get involved with development and infrastructure projects and work to address the relevant policies at the city level.
7. Provide guidance for sustained community engagement. One thing we don't want is to have this effort start up but be unsustainable. In that regard, we will work to build sustained engagement and help keep those involved focused on our shared goals.