

FROM THE DESK OF THE MAYOR ...



September 8, 2016

The FYRA Plan

The following provides an explanation as to why FYRA calls this a PLAN and not a STUDY. I am inclined to agree with them. I can't change what people want to call it, but this is FYRA's position as to why this is "not just another study". After this initial phase (Steps 1-2-3), there will certainly be some DIRECTION, but a PLAN (as the agencies that will be involved call it) cannot be close to being done for this initial task amount. The next phase (if we move forward with FYRA) will cost between \$100,000-\$300,000 but it will also be at this point when we know what grant funding will be available and what our share of this cost will be. Based on FYRA's past grant funding experience, it is anticipated that the City of Mitchell's share will be between 25%-40%.

This first phase (Steps 1-2-3) will be the development of a tool that can provide us answers. A study would tell you what the problems are...do past studies tell you what to do QUALITATIVELY, or QUANTITATIVELY? The bottom line is, that we all know that if we improve the watershed, keep cows from "wallowing in the creek" and use less fertilizers, etc. that nutrient delivery will improve. Does anybody know if that will improve ENOUGH TO MAKE A DIFFERENCE? The answer is NO....at this time, no one knows what level of impact any of those will have. IF they think they know, how do they know? (They don't...)

FYRA is developing a tool to provide these answers. No one else has done that to date. FYRA will be collecting some data to make their tool as good as it can possibly be, but they are not studying that data - They are formulating a model to put the existing data and new data to work. This phase is the first time that something is getting done! What past study has done that?

This effort:

1. Develops a tool (water/nutrient mass balance) that can be used to formulate a plan
2. Quantifies and segregates the source of the nutrients so that targeted efforts can be made to reduce them.
3. Identifies (through the identification of sources) agencies and grant programs available to help meet nutrient reduction goals.
4. Begins the public educational process and brings potential partnership agencies to the table to help establish goals for the lake.

For those that like to say this is a study, show me one past study that accomplished even ONE of these four above items. After these four steps, we will likely have some smaller actions that we as a community can start doing immediately while we work on addressing the larger more complicated issues.

The important thing that we must all keep in mind is how important is Lake Mitchell to our city? It is not only a backup source for our water supply, it is also a "quality of life" issue for recreational use that includes fishing, boating, skiing, swimming, camping, bike trails and walking paths. It was identified in a recent marketing study as a key resource to help our community with workforce development and retention. Let us not forget the economic impact it has for our community. Lake Mitchell is currently on the EPA's list of "impaired" lakes. Lake Mitchell is not going to fix itself and will only continue to get worse. On 09/07/16, I attended a Mayor's Water Summit in Sioux Falls. Cities are spending millions to create man-made lakes for the reasons noted above. We have a lake.....it needs our help.....let's take care of it.

Mayor Jerry Toomey