

OUTCOMES:

Rum River Watershed Comprehensive Management Plan – Implementation Planning Committee Meeting

Date: September 19th, 2022

Time: 12:30-2:30 PM

Location: Virtual Meeting **Zoom Meeting**

Meeting called by: Planning Partners

Type of meeting: Work Planning Meeting

Facilitator: Tiffany Determan

Note taker: Lydia Godfrey, Isanti SWCD

Attendees:

Voting members:

- Jamie Schurbon, Anoka SWCD
- Sam Seybold, Aitkin SWCD
- Sierra Cotter, Benton County
- Gerry Maciej, Benton SWCD
- Tiffany Determan, Isanti SWCD
- Lydia Godfrey, Isanti SWCD
- Deanna Pomije, Kanabec SWCD
- Susan Shaw, Mille Lacs SWCD
- Stephanie Souer, Mille Lacs SWCD
- Dan Cibulka, Sherburne SWCD

Ex-officio members:

- Micheal Wagner, Anoka County
- Barb Peichel, BWSR
- Darren Mayers, BWSR
- Michelle Jordan, BWSR

Other:

- Barbara Zeroth, BWSR
- Linda Donnay, BWSR
- Al Koczur, Isanti SWCD Board, JPE Board Representative

Welcome and Introductions led by Determan.

Updates

Determan reviewed the current IPC members. Isanti County currently does not have an IPC representative. The Rum River Watershed Partnership Board met in July and decided on ex-officio members at that time. The board decided any agency that has adopted the plan but has not signed the JPA can be an ex-officio member. The list of members invited is linked in this meeting's agenda. Some of the invited non-voting members have not yet responded. Shaw is going to reach out to the Mille Lacs Band of Ojibwe, since the partnership has not heard from them recently.

The Implementation Planning Committee will meet regularly on the third Monday of every month from 12:30pm to 2:30pm. Meetings may be canceled if they are not needed. Non-voting members will be invited as needed including meetings to discuss the annual work plan.

The outcomes of the Partnership Board meeting are online on the Mille Lacs SWCD website. A notable outcome is that the board decided to hire a private attorney and will look at quotes at the next meeting.

Timeline Review led by Determan

7/28/22 The JPE Board met for the first time.

8/31/22 IPC members were asked to submit comments on the work plan by the end of August.

9/22/22 The JPE Board will meet for the second time. They will approve the annual work plan so it can enter into the 45-day courtesy review period.

9/23/22 Will begin the courtesy 45-day review period for the annual plan. Individual boards may submit comments on the work plan if they chose, and those comments will be addressed at the next JPE board meeting.

10/17/22 Next IPC Meeting.

11/30/22 Final JPE board meeting of the year. The plan is for them to approve the WBIF work plan so it can be submitted to BWSR. The goal is to start implementing in 2023.

FY 23 annual work plan

Determan reviewed the annual work plan. There are 4 sections to the work plan based on what was called for in the comprehensive plan: Operating Budget, Partnership Funded Programs, All Funding Sources Program, and Implementation Tracking. The work plan was developed by asking partners what projects are planned in the priority areas to ensure goals will be achieved and WBIF will be used. If an agency did not submit a project to get funding into the work plan that does not mean the project won't receive funding. The Partnership Funded Programs section provides an overview on how WBIF will be used. IPC members should become familiar with the annual plan in case they are asked questions by their board.

The Operating Budget includes the cost to administer the JPE and manage WBIF funds. Other watersheds that have approved 1W1P have advised a lot of staff time goes into administering the grant. However, the Rum River Watershed is hoping the time to administer the grant will decrease as time goes on. Schurbon recommended that if an audit is not needed in the first year the allocated funds should go towards grant administration costs.

The Partnership Funded Programs section provides an overview of how WBIF will be used, and the spreadsheets provide more in-depth detail. Money is being targeted to surface water restoration, protection, and outreach and education since those are the tier 1 items in the work plan. Projects will be targeted in tier 1 areas but will move on to tier 2 areas if needed. An outreach and education committee will form the specifics of the outreach plan. Isanti SWCD and Anoka SWCD will provide outreach staff that will work watershed-wide. The FY23 Milestones are a requirement by BWSR. Determan split the Milestones into 3 years.

Determan sent the plan out to partners for comments and got very few back. The majority of partners said they would approve the work plan. The work plan will be approved using majority approval. Next, the plan will go to the JPE board for approval and afterward enter a 45-day courtesy review period for individual boards. Individual boards do not need to approve the work plan but may submit comments.

Discussion:

Schurbon suggested that if an audit is not needed in the first year that money should be allocated to staff payment since that section may currently be underfunded. Peichel informed that the audit is still being discussed and the partnership may need to check with their accountant. Maciej added that there is a state statute specifically for JPEs. The state statute has a threshold that determines if an audit is required, and Maciej suggested it is unlikely that an audit would be needed in 2023.

Maciej questioned how often projects are going to be approved and decided on. Determan relayed that would be a discussion for the next IPC meeting. Schurbon added that they are considering a way to have small projects approved quickly. Large projects would need to get approval from the JPE board which will meet only a few times per year. It would be advertised when partners would need to submit projects to go to the board.

There was a discussion about the title of the work plan. The FY23 fiscal year does not align with the annual plan which is planned for the calendar 2023 year. Schurbon recommended changing the front cover title to "2023 Work Plan" and then specifying in the operating budget section the WBIF funding year. Determan plans to make the recommended changes and will follow up for approval.

BWSR Grant Training

Donnay presented on BWSR Grant Training. The goal was to provide education and clarity at the start of the grant to increase knowledge on grant compliance. Donnay provided a handout that summarized the main points of the presentation: [Donnay Collaborations GrantMatch Handout Sept19 2022.pdf](#)

Anoka SWCD will be the Fiscal Agent for the Rum River Watershed. It is suggested that if the partnership is done with the grant early, they should end it early to receive the 10% reimbursement faster.

Discussion:

Maciej asked if landowner contracts would be with the JPE board or the Fiscal Agent. Schurbon answered that the decision is not set in stone. Currently, the plan is that the contract would be with the JPE board and not the fiscal agent. So JPE board would contract with the local partner and the partner would be contracted with the landowner. Maciej asked for clarification that contracts with an SWCD would need the SWCD's board approval as well as the JPE board approval if using WBIF funds. Donnay confirmed that it would be a two-step process so the SWCD board would approve the project and the JPE board would approve the funding. Determan questioned if the partnership created a route for small projects to be approved quickly if the SWCD board decision would then trump the watershed's policy. Donnay relayed that it would likely be an exception because there is WBIF funding involved so they would follow JPE board policy.

Donnay asked how the group will communicate about project funding, so the funding sources are known. Schurbon relayed that the watershed is still developing the process and policies regarding funding. It is possible there will be a voucher system where the SWCD doing the project would list the funding sources and provide documentation.

Maciej propositioned if the extra tracking could be avoided if BWSR directly worked with individual groups. Donnay replied that it is possible, but that is not the intent of WBIF funding. It is something to be decided as a group.

Schurbon reminded the group that the grant funding comes in 50%-40%-10%. Anoka SWCD, as the fiscal agent, will try to get the money distributed quickly. However, once the partnership runs out of the 50% there will be a wait to get the next 40%. The last 10%, which comes as a reimbursement from BWSR, may be dealt with in a special way. It is possible they will not pay 10% of every project, so partners may be waiting for 10% of funding reimbursement for an extended time.

Schurbon also informed the group what the plan is for passing liability if grant funds are misused. There will be

wording to pass the liability onto individual boards.

Peichel asked for clarification on who would be doing the eLink reporting. Schurbon replied that it has not yet been specified but it would likely be the Fiscal Agent. Peichel and Mayers recommended planning with eLink reporting in mind.

Maciej asked if the JPE does individual agreements with LGUs if then the LGUs could provide the fiscal agent with an electronic copy of their documents. Donnay confirmed that would work, but a shared drive would need someone to back it up regularly in case anything gets deleted. Donnay mentioned that other groups in the past have used that method. Wright SWCD is an acting fiscal agent for their watershed and could provide advice. Peichel also got clarification that invoices would not need to be uploaded to eLink if they are already saved in the shared drive, and Donnay would just need a link to access a shared portal. Partners would retain the original receipt and then pass on the copy.

Next meeting: Next meeting will be on October 17th. The group meeting schedule is the 3rd Monday of each month from 12:30 – 2:30pm. Meetings can be canceled as needed.