

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
Henry Eglund, Aitkin SWCD
Gerry Maciej, Benton SWCD
Emily Forbord, Benton SWCD
Tiffany Determan, Isanti SWCD
Lydia Godfrey, Isanti SWCD
Talisha Zimmerman, Isanti County
Susan Shaw, Mille Lacs SWCD
Lynn Gallice, Mille Lacs SWCD
Dan Cibulka, Sherburne SWCD

Ex-officio members:

Barb Peichel, BWSR
Darren Mayers, BWSR
Bonnie Finnerty, Minnesota Pollution Control Agency

Other:

Lisa Fobbe, Sherburne County, JPE Board Representative

Welcome and Introductions led by Determan.

MPCA Intensive Watershed Monitoring Cycle

Finnerty provided details about the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency's next round of 10-year cycle water monitoring. The next round of monitoring will start in 2024, so they are spreading the word now. There will be a meeting January 30th to discuss it more in-depth. Proposed monitoring sites will be sent out before the meeting.

Discussion:

Determan asked if local staff would do some of the monitoring again. Finnerty confirmed there would be grants available for those interested.

Peichel wondered if people should bring to the meeting information about monitoring data gaps they discovered during the last round of monitoring. Participants can bring their data, however, the January 30th meeting will be more of an introduction. BWSR will be invited to the meeting, however their attendance is not crucial.

Updates

Determan provided the updates.

- At the JPE Board meeting they approved the work plan for submission. The target is to have the funding request and grant agreement ready at the next JPE board meeting.
- The contact list is in the agenda. Partners should inform Determan if any partner point of contact changes.
- The Education and Outreach Subcommittee met in November. Currently have a rough draft of an education and outreach plan that will get revised before being presented to partners. In the meantime, if partners have any strong thoughts, they should contact Shaw. Shaw reminded the group that page 67 of the watershed plan described outreach goals well.
- The group will continue to use OneDrive to share documents among partners.
- The subcontracts partners will use are being worked on right now but will need to go to the attorney after the watershed receives funding.
- BWSR has an LLCMR Forestry Grant. Shaw provided details that the grant is targeting three watersheds, including the Rum River. The goal is to plant one million acres of trees in the watershed. Mille Lacs SWCD will hire a forestry and outreach coordinator after funding is received who will lead the LLCR Forestry Grant for the watershed.

Updated FY2023 WBIF Policy Package

Determan reviewed the policy document to highlight larger changes and items discussed by the JPE board. Section one had some changes to it. When partners put in a funding request they should fill out the Excel Ranking sheet and also create a Statement of Work. The Statement of Work should cover the items in the ranking sheet but in words. This is what the board will see. There is still one outstanding comment that needed to be discussed asking if the price per cost removal is based on total project costs or WBIF used. After discussion, it was decided that the number should reflect the total construction cost.

The JPE board discussed deed restrictions, as outlined in section two, at length. They are in favor of deed restrictions for projects of certain criteria. It would apply for projects with a lifespan over 10 years and cost over \$5,000 that are not on publicly or tribally owned land, permanently protected land, or fee to trust land.

Section three needed more information about non-structural contracts which Determan has added. She has included the technical standards that would be followed. The JPE board also discussed contract length for non-structural projects. There is a desire to do one-year nonstructural agriculture contracts for projects such as cover crops. However, an exemption must be granted from BWSR. Determan has drafted an exemption request which includes the option for one-year contracts to be repeated for up to three years. The JPE board also discussed up-front lump sum payments for three-year contracts and seemed on board with it. BWSR said the up-front payment is allowable.

Discussion

A discussion took place surrounding the outstanding comment to define the price listed for pollutant reduction.

Peichel noted that for eLink reporting the grant dollars would be used. Determan reminded the group that the intent of the value listed is to rank projects against each other when funding becomes limited to see which has a better cost per removal. Therefore, she suggested using WBIF used on the project as the measuring tool. Maciej added this is a common discussion among his staff, and they have settled on total project cost to show which projects are best overall. Schurbon agreed it would be simpler to look at total project costs not including staff and engineering costs.

Maciej asked how funding requests for staff time would be chosen over each other. Schurbon replied it would be based on what is already in the work plan, but there is not a solid framework in place for how those requests would be ranked against each other.

It was questioned if incentive based BMPs were exempt from deed restrictions. Determan confirmed incentive-based BMPs, such as cover crops, would be exempt since they do not have a 10-year lifespan. Maciej asked for clarification from BSWR staff since in his previous work he has been required to check cover cropped fields beyond when the fields were planted. Peichel added that BWSR is still having talks about non-structural contracts which may explain the past's differing requirements.

IPC Regular Meeting Date Change

It was proposed to change the recurring meeting time for the IPC, since often the IPC meets in the same week as the JPE board which would make preparing projects for approval difficult. IPC meetings will be switched to the second Monday of the month from 12:30pm – 2:30pm.

RRWP Board Member Changes

There are a few anticipated board member changes in the new year. The IPC decided it would be beneficial to offer an orientation to new and existing board members after the January JPE meeting but before the March JPE meeting.

Discussion

There was a discussion about the timing of the new board member orientation. Fobbe noted that board members may not receive their board assignments right away, and therefore may not know who is appointed by January's JPE meeting. She also noted board members may switch their assignments. Shaw added that waiting would allow the group to receive feedback on training needs. Peichel noted BWSR can assist in board training needs.

1st Round of Funding Preparation

Funding for administration will go to the board for approval at the January meeting so those administering WBIF don't have to wait until March to be paid for their work. There is a spreadsheet that breaks down administration funding specifics that Determan can provide.

Partners need to prepare to submit projects after the January board meeting. The deadline is February 20th. Determan reminded the group the work plan is based on specific projects partners wanted to do, so they should submit those projects.

Discussion

Gallice questioned what the deadline was for using the requested WBIF. The deadline is at the end of FY23 which is December 31, 2025. However, if partners have not spent their funds and are worried, they may release it for other partners to use.

Next meeting: Next meeting will be on February 13th over Zoom. The group meeting schedule is the 2nd Monday of each month from 12:30 – 2:30pm. Meetings can be canceled as needed.