



# Mississippi River – St. Cloud One Watershed, One Plan

## Technical Advisory Committee

<b>Date / Time:</b>	Tuesday, January 17, 2023., 1pm – 4pm
<b>Location:</b>	In-Person: Stearns County History Center, Becker, MN Virtual: Zoom
<b>Note Taker:</b>	Kyle Weimann, Stearns SWCD
<b>1w1p Website:</b>	<a href="https://www.millelacsswcd.org/1w1p/mississippi-river-st-cloud-watershed-plan/">https://www.millelacsswcd.org/1w1p/mississippi-river-st-cloud-watershed-plan/</a>
<b>Partners and Staff Present:</b>	Benton SWCD (Fiscal Agent) – Gerry Maciej, Emily Forebord Meeker SWCD – Joe Norman* Mille Lacs SWCD – Susan Shaw* Sherburne County – Zach Guttormson Sherburne SWCD (Plan Coordinator) – Dan Cibulka Stearns County – Cole Loewen Stearns SWCD – Dennis Fuchs Wright County – Barry Rhineberger Wright SWCD – Alicia O’Hare
<b>Plan Writer (ISG)</b>	Sarah Boser, Jacob Rischmueller
<b>Other Attendees:</b>	BWSR – Darren Mayers, Brad Wozney, Lindberg Ekola* MDA – Casey Field MDH – Chad Anderson DNR – James Bedell PCA – Phil Votruba* USFWS – Cody Carlstrom (Sherburne NWR) NRCS – Chris Hogge TNC – Kayli Overland*

\*Individuals joined via Zoom virtually.

Cibulka called meeting to order at **1:05pm**.

**Introductions.** Attendees introduced themselves, including agency affiliation and experience with the 1W1P processes.

**Partner Resource Presentations.**

- a. **MN Department of Health.** Chad Anderson provided a summary of MDH’s priority concerns. MDH is the regulatory authority for drinking water (public water supply, sourcewater protection, private well construction/sealing). 1) Delineation and vulnerability assessment; 2) Identification of potential contaminant sources and management strategies to reduce sources of contamination.
  - a. **Priority Concern 1:** Prioritize Drinking Water Supply Management Areas (DWSMAs). Areas often extend beyond city/service area jurisdiction.
    - i. Within the MRSC there are 308 public wells with 60 community public water supply wells and 248 noncommunity wells.
    - ii. Consideration: Communities partially within watershed or DWSMAs that overlap multiple.

- b. **Priority Concern 2:** Seal abandoned wells, a direct conduit to the aquifer.
  - c. **Priority Concern 3:** Protection of private wells. 18,402 with known location with MRSC.
    - i. **Nitrate:** 2.1% of tested wells showed higher than 10 ppm (safe drinking water standard)
    - ii. **Arsenic:** 6.4% of wells tested showed higher than 10 ppm (safe drinking water standard)
  - d. **Priority Concern 4:** Surface water protection for drinking water (City of St. Cloud, Minneapolis/St. Paul).
- b. **Natural Resources Conservation Service.** Chris Hogge provided an overview of the USDA-NRCS role in conservation. The Local Work Group is an annual effort to prioritize use of NRCS funds, where partners can provide input on funding priorities.
- a. **Technical resources:** conservation planning, cost-benefit analysis, Field Office Technical Guide, soils mapping
  - b. **Conservation programs:** financial assistance to implement best management practices (EQIP—single practice, RCPP—targeted areas, CIG—innovation, CSP—whole farm, CRP)
  - c. **Watershed programs:** water storage, flood issues, and wetland restoration
  - d. **Initiatives:** special efforts
  - e. **Partnerships:** developing educational, financial, and technical assistance opportunities
- c. **MN Department of Natural Resources.** James Bedell demonstrated data tools provided by the DNR.
- a. Cooperative Groundwater Monitoring
  - b. Watershed Health Assessment Framework
  - c. Lake and Flood Elevations Online
  - d. Evaluation of Hydrologic Change (EHC) to be covered at upcoming WRAPS/TMDL meeting.
- d. **MN Department of Agriculture.** Casey Field highlighted MDA's role related to groundwater and drinking water. MDA did township well testing on 15 townships within the MRSC; two townships had high levels of private wells with over 10 ppm nitrates. Other related efforts:
- a. MN Agricultural Water Quality Certification Program (MAWQCP), including a RCPP fund pool.
  - b. Seed sampling and invasive species.
  - c. Vulnerable soils map where fall nitrogen application is restricted.
  - d. Local Advisory Team process in DWSMAs with high nitrates.
- e. **US Fish and Wildlife Service.** Cody Carlstrom presented on water level management within the Sherburne National Wildlife Refuge. USFWS built the large-scale impoundment system starting in 1970s resulting in 6,300 acres inundated. Annual water management plan that is tied to other management actions, such as grazing and prescribed burning. In recent years, water level has been lowered to encourage native plant (including wild rice) regrowth. Concerns include invasive species (carp, hybrid cattail) and funding for management activities. Discussion of water flow into refuge and concerns about drought and flooding and effect on waterfowl and wildlife.
- f. **MN Pollution Control Agency.** Phil Votruba mentioned MPCA provides water quality monitoring and reports, including Watershed Restoration and Protection Strategies (WRAPS) and Total Maximum Daily Loads (TMDL). Across the watershed there are both many impaired lakes and streams that require restoration as well as high-quality ones that should be protected. The second cycle of WRAPS is about 2/3 complete and work will be addressing 17 impairments (stream bacteria and lake nutrients) with new TMDLs.
- a. Works with partners to obtain water quality data and manages the state water quality database and Impaired Waters list.
  - b. Provides modelling of resource concerns and implementation strategies (HSPF, SAM).

- c. Administers fundings opportunities, including EPA 319 and Clean Water Partnership loans.
  - d. Responsible for wastewater treatment and feedlot (directly in non-delegated counties) regulation and technical assistance.
- g. The Nature Conservancy.** Kayli Overland of the Minnesota-South Dakota-North Dakota chapter of TNC presented information. Priorities include protecting land and water (contiguous habitat complexes), tackle climate change, and provide food and water sustainably. Science-based resources for planning and prioritization:
- a. Multiple Benefits modelling for protection (Fish and wildlife habitat; surface & groundwater quality; flooding & erosion control; groundwater quantity).
  - b. Multiple Benefits modelling for restoration (using water retention, restoring hydrology, soil health: In-field BMPs; edge-of-field BMPs; downstream projects).
- h. MN Board of Water & Soil Resources.** Lindberg Ekola discussed BWSR's role in landscape stewardship, an all-lands approach to forest conservation that works across multiple ownerships to address issues and opportunities in the state's forestry plan, including goal to reforest 1 million acres. Once landscape is more than 25% disturbed cover, see significant increase in nutrient flows into water.
- a. Prioritize by water (Tool: Minor Watershed Assessment)
  - b. Target by land (Tool: Riparian, Adjacency, Quality [RAQ])
  - c. Measure by implementation.

Landscape Stewardship Plan (LSP) to guide protection and restoration of forestry resources.

- a. Can be completed before, during, or after 1W1P process, but the partners would need to commit funding to the process to get started.
- b. LSPs typically cost roughly \$25,000 (and DNR will match 50-50 on the cost) and are completed in about 6 months.
- c. Landowner tables to support targeted outreach.

Brad Wozney noted that Zonation is an optional tool to assist with prioritization efforts during planning. DNR is no longer supporting the tool.

#### **Data Aggregation Update.**

- a. Sarah Boser provided an update on data aggregation. ISG has reviewed plans from the state and partners and identified common priorities for action. Once aggregation is complete, prioritization process will begin based on tools determined by the partnership.
- b. Add determination of prioritization approach (whether that be LSP, zonation, or other) to agenda for discussion at the next TAC meeting.

#### **Kick-Off Meeting Details.**

- a. Kick-off meeting will be Tuesday, January 31<sup>st</sup> at 5:30pm at the Sherburne History Center
  - a. Open house format with opening remarks, including 10-15 minutes from BWSR (Julie Westerlund) and then informal discussion and opportunity to provide input.
  - b. Staffing: partners sign-up via Google Drive. ISG will also be there to assist with any technological issues
  - c. ISG to shoot videos/photography for promotional purposes
    - i. Include disclaimer to attendees
- b. Virtual open house will be live by January 31<sup>st</sup> and open for several weeks <https://tourmkr.com/F1GRBGsnEK>
  - a. Partners should promote and share link
- c. Group discussion of content:
  - a. Investment Prioritization:

- i. Wozney stated that priorities listed as #4 and #5 may not be appropriate. Policy/regulation is a tool to address a resource and that average citizens will not know about data gaps.
  - ii. Discussion of appropriate types of priority issues and public understanding
  - iii. Other potential issues: agriculture, development/land use, water quantity/flooding
  - iv. Group consensus: replace Policy/Regulation (#4) with Land Use/Management
    - 1. Keep Top 3 concerns from Policy + Regulation board and add land use map
    - 2. Remove Data, Studies, & Monitoring (#5)
- b. Where are YOU from?
  - i. Use same map from postcard (below)
- c. Postcard
  - i. Add link directly to virtual open house
  - ii. Remove elevation shading from watershed map
- d. Provide any additional feedback on the content to ISG by Friday, January 20<sup>th</sup>
- d. Social media/promotion by each partner**
  - a. Preliminary drafts sent by Sarah Boser on January 13
  - b. Edit suggested language for shorter social media post (2 sentences)
  - c. Longer/full version for press release
  - d. Use hashtag #MRSCwatershed
  - e. ISG to send updated imagery for social media posting based on discussed changes
- e. Refreshments & food
  - a. Anticipated attendance/goal: 75
  - b. Hors d'oeuvres (include 'light' refreshments on promotional materials)
  - c. \$2,000 in planning grant budget for meeting expenses
  - d. Catering: received two quotes. Benton SWCD (Emily) to select options and pick-up from Blue Ribbon in Foley. Will check if they provide plates and utensils.
  - e. Beverages: Wright SWCD (Alicia) to purchase (to be reimbursed) water and other beverages. Other partners may bring coolers.
- f. Set-up to begin at 4:00pm

**Future Meeting Details and Expectations.**

- a. Schedule reoccurring meetings via an upcoming partnership poll
- b. Policy committee meeting schedule – many conflicts with standing partner board and 1W1P meetings
  - a. Dan will circulate possible options to Steering Committee for feedback and then provide to PC
  - b. PC to finalize standing meeting schedule at the next PC meeting

*Cibulka adjourned the meeting at 4:40pm*