

Rum River Watershed Partnership

**Rum River Watershed Partnership
JPE Board Meeting Minutes**

Coming together to identify shared goals.
Planning together to leverage unique capacity.
Working together to achieve results.

**January 26, 2023
4:30PM – 6:30PM**

Vision Statement

- Clean, abundant water for consumption, recreation and habitat
- Collaborative partnership among communities working towards a common goal
- Community members and decision makers understand the challenges and opportunities facing the watershed
- Innovative strategies to meet our goals

In-Person Meeting
 MLC Courthouse,
 lower level, Conf rm D, 635 2nd St SE,
 Milaca, MN 56353

Note taker: Lydia Godfrey, Isanti SWCD

**Voting
Members
Present:**

Laurie Westerlund – Aitkin County
 Bob Janzen – Aitkin SWCD
 Colleen Werdien - Anoka Conservation District
 Alan Duff – Isanti County
 Al Koczur – Isanti SWCD
 Kim Johnson – Kanabec SWCD
 Kelly Applegate-Mille Lacs Band of Ojibwe
 Jake Janski – Mille Lacs SWCD
 Dale Scholl – Morrison SWCD
 Lisa Fobbe – Sherburne County
 Chris Jurek – Sherburne SWCD

**Alternates
Present:**

Steve Westerberg – Isanti County – (*virtual attendance*)

**Partners and
Staff Present:**

Tiffany Determan – Isanti SWCD - (*virtual attendance*)
 Lydia Godfrey- Isanti SWCD
 Perry Bunting – Mille Lacs Band of Ojibwe - (*virtual attendance*)
 Susan Shaw – Mille Lacs SWCD
 Francine Larson – Sherburne SWCD - (*virtual attendance*)
 Dan Cibulka – Sherburne SWCD
 Barb Peichel –BWSR - (*virtual attendance*)
 Gerry Maciej – Benton SWCD - (*virtual attendance*)

**Voting
Members
Absent:**

Ed Popp – Benton County
 Wade Bastian – Benton SWCD
 Bobby Kasper – Morrison County

1. Meeting called to order by Shaw at 4:30 pm. Only members present in-person may vote.

2. Approve Agenda

K. Johnson proposed an addition to the agenda to provide an update about the Snake River Watershed. The update will take place at the end.

Janski noted there are 2 IPC meetings before the next JPE meeting, so the board should appoint liaisons for both meetings.

Motion by Koczur to approve the agenda with the proposed additions; second by Janzen. Affirmative: All. Opposed: None. **The Motion Carried.**

3. **Election of Officers: Chair, Vice Chair**

Motion by Fobbe to nominate Janski for Chair; second by Scholl. Affirmative: All. Opposed: None. **The Motion Carried.**

Motion by Koczur to nominate Fobbe for Vice Chair; second by Westerlund. Affirmative: All. Opposed: None. **The Motion Carried.**

4. Approve November 30, 2022 Rum River Watershed Partnership Board meeting minutes

Motion by Westerlund to approve the November 30th, 2022 outcomes; second by Koczur. Affirmative: All. Opposed: None. **The Motion Carried.**

5. Progress Report/ Updates

Determan provided updates for the board. MCIT approved the JPE for insurance. The effective date is February 1, 2023. Last time the JPE board met, the 2023 Work Plan was approved for submission to BWSR. BWSR has approved the work plan. In December, lots of administration took place. The partnership drafted the Fiscal Agent and Watershed Coordinator agreements, they updated policies, and reviewed policies with the IPC. The education and outreach subcommittee met a few times and created a draft education and outreach plan that will be presented to the IPC in February. Werdien and V. Anderson were liaisons for the education and outreach subcommittee.

6. Approve FY 2023 BWSR WBIF Grant Agreement

Fobbe recognized the efforts of the staff and board over the past few years.

Motion by Fobbe to approve Fiscal Year 2023 Watershed Based Implementation Fund (WBIF) grant agreement with the Board of Water and Soil Resources (BWSR); second by Werdien. Affirmative: All. Opposed: None. **The Motion Carried.**

7. Approve WBIF Policies

Determan gave an overview of the policies the board discussed at the last meeting and the final changes made. In the first section, the board discussed requiring deed restrictions and easement agreements. A decision was made to keep language about needing restrictions for projects over \$5,000 with some exempt properties such as tribal land. In section 3, the board also discussed one-year contracts for cover crops and up-front payments. The partnership will offer one-year contracts, so farmers are able to try cover crops with little commitment. Three-year contracts will be paid upfront after one year of implementation to prevent running out of WBIF. BWSR does allow up-front payments.

Motion by K. Johnson to approve WBIF Project Policies; second by Koczur. Affirmative: All. Opposed: None. **The Motion Carried.**

Discussion

K. Johnson questioned if landowners would need to pay back WBIF if they opted out of their 3-year cover crop contract early. Determan assured landowners likely would need to return funding if they did not fulfill the three-year contract, however it would largely be based on BWSR policy. Shaw reminded the group that partners will want to have clarity about BWSR rules before signing contracts.

Janski inquired if there was clarification about the funding percentage a landowner would be required to pay back if they did not complete their 3-year contract since the value of benefits goes up each year. Determan replied that would be a BWSR policy, but the landowner could be required to repay up to 150%. K. Johnson stressed the need for leniency for non-structural projects.

8. Approve Fiscal Agent and Watershed Coordinator Agreements

Janski proposed an amendment in Section XXII of the Fiscal Agent and Watershed Coordinator Agreements. He proposed email is removed as a possible delivery method for providing notice.

K. Johnson proposed an amendment to the Fiscal Agent Agreement to spell out the Anoka Conservation District acronym at the start of Exhibit A to improve clarity.

Motion by Westerlund to approve the Fiscal Agent Agreement with email removed as a possible notice delivery method and adding an Anoka Conservation District acronym explanation in Exhibit A; second by K. Johnson. Affirmative: All. Opposed: None. **The Motion Carried.**

Janski noticed a typo at the beginning of the Watershed Coordinator Agreement where Anoka CD is listed instead of Isanti SWCD.

Motion by Werdien to approve the Watershed Coordinator Agreement with the amended typo, email removed as a possible notice delivery method, and adding an Isanti SWCD acronym explanation in Exhibit A; second by Koczur. Affirmative: All. Opposed: None. **The Motion Carried.**

Discussion

The budgeted amounts for both the Fiscal Agent and Watershed Coordinator role is the same. K. Johnson questioned if that was a starting estimate since the board is uncertain how much each role would cost. Werdien provided details that the costs would likely exceed what is budgeted for, but Anoka CD is prepared for that and wants to help support the partnership. Shaw added the estimated cost could change for the next round of funding. The Fiscal Agent and Watershed Coordinator will be tracking their time spent in these roles even if it exceeds the estimated cost, so those numbers can inform budgeting for the future.

There is not yet a contract with Sherburne SWCD for their work tracking projects, since no projects have been implemented yet.

9. 2023 Meeting Schedule

The JPE will continue to meet the fourth Thursday of the month at 4:30pm in the Mille Lacs County Courthouse's conference room. The meetings will take place at the end of the quarter. Dates are allowed to be changed in the future if notice is given.

Motion by Fobbe to approve the meeting schedule; second by Duff. Affirmative: All. Opposed: None. **The Motion Carried.**

10. Liaison

Janski will go to the February 13th meeting. Jurek and Westerlund may attend the February meeting as well and will check their calendars for attending the March meeting. Janski encouraged members to attend IPC meetings if they are able.

11. Next Steps

The next JPE meeting will be used to approve projects. Determan reminded the board the IPC is trying to make reviewing projects easy for the board, so they will see the projects recommended by the IPC for approval. The projects presented to the board will be formatted so they are easy to understand.

12. Snake river update

K. Johnson provided an update about the Snake River Watershed. Their plan was recently approved by BWSR. Now, the Snake River Watershed is deciding governance. There are some members that wish for the governance to only include county commissioners. K. Johnson would like suggestions on how to bring the strengths of the Rum River Watershed Partnership board's governance to the Snake River Watershed. Those with ideas may contact K. Johnson.

Discussion

Many members expressed gratitude for how the Rum River Watershed has acted as a partnership and has involved all their partners in the decision-making process. K. Johnson added SWCDs are a valuable member of the partnership since the watershed plan is based on the SWCD's work of voluntary conservation.

13. **Next Meeting Date:**

March 23, 2023, at 4:30 pm at the Mille Lacs County Courthouse.

14. **Motion by Westerlund to adjourn the meeting at 5:30pm;** second by Fobbe. Affirmative: All. Opposed: None. **The Motion Carried**