

OUTCOMES:

Rum River Watershed Comprehensive Management Plan – Implementation Planning Committee Meeting

Date: May 8th, 2023

Time: 12:30-2:30 PM

Location: Hybrid Virtual Meeting **Zoom Meeting** and in-person at Mille Lacs Courthouse

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
Gerry Maciej, Benton SWCD
Tiffany Determan, Isanti SWCD
Lydia Godfrey, Isanti SWCD
Matthew Remer, Isanti SWCD
Todd Kulaf, Isanti SWCD
Deanna Pomije, Kanabec SWCD
Shannon Wettstein, Morrison SWCD
Susan Shaw, Mille Lacs SWCD
Kelly Applegate, MLBO
Dan Cibulka, Sherburne SWCD

Ex-officio members: Darren Mayers, BWSR
Michelle Jordan, BWSR
Barb Peichel, BWSR

Other: Jake Janski, Mille Lacs SWCD, JPE Board Representative
Al Koczur, Isanti SWCD, JPE Board Representative
Val Anderson, Isanti SWCD (alternate), JPE Board Representative

Welcome and Introductions led by Determan.

Updates

1. Eligibility and Ranking form

A few items were changed on the Eligibility and Ranking form that Determan pointed out. She also reminded the group that parts of the ranking form will be copied and pasted into the statement of work so the text in it should be neat. In the "Funding Round" column partners will now write "2023-3" since we have entered the third round of funding for this year. The ranking sheet will be a running list of all projects submitted and the red line will separate the newest funding round from the rest. The "Request ID" has changed to be the year, a partner's acronym, and their request number. Header boxes have comments to remind people what should go in each column. The "project name" should be common language and include the benefiting waterbody. If a person requests project funds and technical assistance the two should have the same name. "Project Deliverables" will be included in partner contracts so say exactly what will be delivered using watershed funds. In "WBIF Grant Match Commitment" partners can document the match for anything, not just projects, but they will need to track it. Previously, "Pollutant TP Reduction" was not required to be submitted for non-structural projects but now partners should include their best estimate. Determan pointed out there is a tab on the bottom of the Excel sheet for called "SOW" which creates a summary table will be copied and pasted into the Statement of Work.

2. Statement of Work

Anoka CD has modified the Statement of Work sheet so it is easier to complete. There is an example on the shared drive. The front page has definitions and instructions. Items will be copied in from the Excel Ranking Sheet. Table 1 is the main table someone will need to spend time summarizing. If there are a few projects that fit under one activity, they may be combined here. List the names of each project and combine their funding and match amounts. Partners are now asked to make and include their own project maps. There is also a place to include project location photos. Any image boxes that aren't used can be deleted or more can be added. The activities and project detail section is where info from the Ranking Sheet will be copied. Make sure everything fits into one page.

3. Implementation Tracking

Cibulka gave an update about planning for implementation tracking. He is planning for both a database and a visual map to track projects. Cibulka asked if any partners used a map to track project implementation already. Schurbon replied that Anoka CD uses a GIS map and a story map. Determan shared the Isanti SWCD uses a story map.

4. Education and Outreach

Godfrey gave an update about Type A outreach. The Rum River Watershed Partnership Orientation handout has been completed and will be sent out to partners once the logo is added to it. Next, a database of education materials will be created for staff to use and social media pages for watershed farmers will be created. There will be regular email updates to partners about watershed wide outreach. Godfrey asked for input if the group would prefer a watershed specific soil health field day or help promoting pre-existing soil health field days watershed wide. In the discussion it arose that there were a few opportunities partners were planning for this summer. Partners determined it would work well if those events were more heavily promoted watershed wide instead of a separate field day.

Schurbon also provided an update about Type A outreach and the logo for the partnership that has been created so far. He shared the current draft of the logo which received high praise from the partners. Janski asked if the plant in the logo could be changed to something besides a cattail which Schurbon will look into. It will go to the board in June for their input.

Shaw gave a small update on the hiring process for the Type B outreach employee. They are still putting together a position description. The process is delayed but will happen as soon as possible.

Member project updates

Each member gave an update on the projects they have received funding for.

Aitkin SWCD – Seybold mentioned that they are working on two stewardship plans for their forestry projects. They

are still in the planning stage of the priority lake study, and the rural BMP project is delayed due to an issue with a landowner.

Anoka CD - Schurbon gave his update about the watershed logo which is what they have completed for education and outreach.

Benton SWCD - Maciej shared his technicians are busy working on the projects. There are three landowners they are working with and will likely have contracts later this summer for cover crops or conservation tillage.

Isanti SWCD - Determan described that in isanti they have updated the Skogman Lake Watershed Assessment and will next identify project locations and apply for a Clean Water Fund Grant. They hope to get drone footage soon of ditches. A wetland restoration design on Green Lake is mostly completed and they plan to identify willing landowners for other wetland restorations. They will soon look at fields for non-structural soil health projects in both Isanti and Anoka and then rank and contact them. There will likely be two projects this summer on both Blue Lake and Skogman Lake. Godfrey also provided the update about outreach and education.

Mille Lacs SWCD – Shaw mentioned they are hiring the watershed wide outreach and forestry position. They will also hire a resource conservationist to work on the agricultural projects. They are planning outreach for the DIY projects around the lake and are finishing up the design for the City of Wahkon project.

Sherburne SWCD – Cibulka mentioned they have begun working on the outreach for the non-structural agriculture projects.

Deed restriction process

Schurbon gave an overview of the deed restriction process as many partners have not done one before. Deed restrictions can make landowners nervous, but it is important to remind them that it does not impact them. There is a template deed restriction that partners can use. Schurbon recommends that partners take it to their county attorney's office and have them look at it and after each one is filled out take it to the assessor's office so they can point out any mistakes. It should be signed and notarized when the landowner agreement is signed. A common mistake is forgetting to include marital status in the document. The person filling it out must list a term limit of the easement so they should estimate when it will be installed and then add a few months.

Discussion

Kulaf asked what a Torrens title is. Schurbon replied it is legal terms and if it is a Torrens property, they will be more strict about the document. Determan asked if the deed restriction's cost gets included into the project cost. Schurbon does include it in the project cost. Peichel asked how this would affect a landowner selling the property to which Schurbon replied they would need to disclose the restriction when selling.

MPCA Surface Water Assessment Grant

Determan asked if the group wanted to apply for a Water Assessment Grant (WAG) separately or together through the partnership. After a discussion it was decided it would be easier for partners to apply individually. Determan reminded the group that if they see a grant opportunity open to the partnership they should bring it to the group.

Discussion

Schurbon shared he did something similar with a neighboring county but it ended up being just as much work for those involved. Sam added it seemed more difficult to do as a partnership. Schurbon added it may be beneficial if it were two neighboring counties that applied together and just one did all the work, but this would not be the case for the partnership.

Next Steps

Submit projects for funding and vote on funding.

Next meeting:

Virtual June 12th meeting if needed 12:30pm – 2:30pm.