

OUTCOMES:

Rum River Watershed Comprehensive Management Plan – Implementation Planning Committee Meeting

Date: June 12th, 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
Gerry Maciej, Benton SWCD
Tiffany Determan, Isanti SWCD
Lydia Godfrey, Isanti SWCD
Shannon Wettstein, Morrison SWCD
Susan Shaw, Mille Lacs SWCD
Lynn Gallice, Mille Lacs SWCD
Dan Cibulka, Sherburne SWCD

Ex-officio members: Barb Peichel, BWSR

Other: Jake Janski, Mille Lacs SWCD, JPE Board Representative
Kelly Applegate, MLBO, JPE Board Representative
Al Koczur, Isanti SWCD, JPE Board Representative

Welcome led by Determan.

Updates

1. Eligibility 2nd Q Project Recommendation Discussion

Partners voted to discuss Morrison SWCD's ag waste project. First, it needed to be decided if the project was eligible for funding by fulfilling an element of the implementation table. In the implementation table the project would fall under section SW-R.20 "install BMPs from scientific and prioritizing studies". It was discussed if a scientific study identified the project which sparked a follow-up discussion about what is required for a prioritization study. The group agreed that all projects in the West Branch should have some sort of prioritization study done before implementing a BMP. However, especially in these early years, there does not need to be an in-depth study. Instead, partners can use a simple comparison or survey to provide justification that their project is a priority. In the future partners in the West Branch area can work together to do a more thorough prioritization. Based on this discussion, it was decided if Morrison SWCD gathered more information about the project and the surrounding area, they could resubmit it for funding in the next round. The Benton WASCOP project will be recommended for approval to the board since there is more knowledge about the area to justify the project's prioritization.

If the Morrison SWCD ag waste project is resubmitted in the next round of funding the group will likely shift funding from urban BMPs to rural BMPs.

The conservation practice type score for "waste storage facility" will be changed on the ranking sheet, since this project type scored lower than partners believed it should. To increase the score, the multiplier will be increased from one to two.

A question will be added to the ranking sheet asking which action in the implementation table it completes to make sure future projects qualify for funding.

Discussion

Partners talked about if projects completed in the West Branch required a two-step process of completing a prioritization study and then completing a BMP. Shaw interpreted it as a two-step process, and that is how her staff have been operating. Partners agreed there needed to be a screening process to select projects. Determan recalled it could be a simple justification for selecting projects such as a cost-benefit ranking. Peichel added a simpler justification could work so long as the partners were comfortable with their decisions. Wettstein stated she could quantify the number of feedlots in the area and how this feedlot compares to them, and then resubmit the project along with a nutrient management plan. Cibulka recommended they compare a few other potential projects in either Morrison County or the West Branch area with the assistance of partners.

Shaw suggested her agriculture technician collaborates with partners to do prioritization around the West Branch. Wettstein welcomed input as this prioritization would likely serve as a model for partners in the future. Schurbon reminded the partnership that funding for prioritization studies had been exhausted in this round of funding, so partners would need to complete it on their own. Ideally, the prioritization study would look at the entire area of the West Branch although that can be achieved later.

There was a discussion if the Morrison SWCD project had sufficient information to equal a prioritization study. The Morrison project was submitted to be funded through EQIP but did not receive funding. The group decided the EQIP process was not enough to justify the project's selection as it did not have similar selection criteria.

The feedlot project scored lower than partners believed it should, so members proposed changing the conservation practice score on the ranking sheet. Shaw suggested increasing the value of the benefit to groundwater, but others pointed out the benefit was dependent on soil type. Schurbon suggested the best course of action would be to increase the multiplier from one to two, since many similar projects have two as a multiplier. Maciej suggested the partnership reviews how project types are scored when the partnership creates the next work plan and consult NRCS CPPE scores for agricultural practices.

The Morrison project targets reducing E. Coli and pathogens rather than phosphorus. Although the grant work plan targets phosphorus it does mention other water quality benefits making the project eligible. The E. Coli reduction can be a secondary benefit and does not need to be tracked. Peichel suggested looking at the TMDL to check other water quality improvements. The measurable goal for the West Branch is the number of BMPs.

Maciej asked if previously submitted projects that did not receive funding would be reconsidered. To be reconsidered the partner will need to resubmit the project.

After discussing the feedlot project, the group debated whether the Benton SWCD WASCOD project should follow the same two-step process. Since the project is also in the West Branch, it requires a prioritization study prerequisite. Peichel suggested that the group comes up with a method for prioritization now, and then do more formal prioritization in the next round of funding. Determan felt comfortable with the WASCOD project since it targets phosphorus, and Schurbon pointed out it is closer to the waterbody. Shaw added that from her knowledge there is a large erosion problem at the site, and if the landowner is ready to do the project that is a good justification.

2. Quarterly Reimbursement

Schurbon instructed the group how to fill out the reimbursement excel sheet. The project details information is for implementation tracking. When requesting reimbursement, it does not need to be at the end of a quarter, but partners do need to be mindful of the Anoka CD board meetings.

3. Member Project Updates

Mille Lacs SWCD – Shaw is hiring an agricultural technician to accomplish some of their work for the Rum River. After hiring that position, they will begin hiring a watershed coordinator. Gallice has been looking at cost estimates for the Wahkon project and has put a mailing list together for the DIY projects.

Isanti SWCD – Determan gave an update that construction should happen in the coming months on wetland projects, but it will be weather dependent. They are also working on prioritizing stormwater projects for Blue Lake and Skogman Lake.

Next meeting:

Virtual August 14th meeting if needed 12:30pm – 2:30pm.