

OUTCOMES:

Rum River Watershed Comprehensive Management Plan – Implementation Planning Committee Meeting

Date: September 11th, 2023

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:

Sam Seybold, Aitkins SWCD
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
Willow Dean, Mille Lacs SWCD
Perry Bunting, MLBO
Dan Cibulka, Sherburne SWCD

Other: Jake Janski, Mille Lacs SWCD, JPE Board Representative

Welcome led by Determan.

Updates

Schurbon provided a financial update. About 80% of the funds have been encumbered. While a lot of funding has been claimed not a lot has been spent, and the majority spent has been staff time.

Cibulka gave insights into the implementation tracking that will track all goals in the watershed. The goals are measured in

a variety of ways, so a tracking method must be used that combines all of them. Cibulka is interested in using an online tracking system Stearns SWCD has developed.

Shaw updated the group about hiring for the Outreach and Forestry Technician. A draft job description has been created and it will be listed before the JPE meeting. Godfrey and Schurbon described type A outreach that has been completed. There are resources added to the OneDrive for lakeshore education, general education, LCCMR outreach, and a wetland factsheet. This sparked a discussion about adding resources for public use to the watershed webpage which will happen as things are updated. Godfrey asks that partners use #RumRiverWatershed on relevant social media posts and share their Outstanding Conservationist and Conservation Tour information with the watershed's outreach staff.

Ranking Sheet Changes

A column was added for partners to list the implementation table activity their project falls under in the comprehensive plan. Adding this information will ensure selected projects meet plan goals. Another column was added called "professional opinion score". The addition was inspired by the discussion at the last IPC meeting about projects that are located in areas that don't have formal prioritized studies but are still good projects. The column will be filled at the IPC meeting by members through a majority vote of each agency present on whether to "fund" or "not fund". Only one member from each agency may vote. This column will be used when the IPC votes to meet and discuss a project, so for example it could be used on projects that aren't prioritized in the work plan, or prioritized projects where other factors are preventing it from scoring high.

Discussion

Dean asked how the partnership can prevent favoritism when voting on funding a project. Schurbon replied it is a large group voting to reduce bias and there are guidelines in place for recommending projects that hold staff accountable.

There was a discussion about when the professional opinion score column should be used. Initially, it was thought the column would only be used for non-prioritized projects, but after a discussion of how the column could be well utilized for prioritized projects too, it was decided the column could be used for any project the IPC deems necessary.

3rd Q Project Recommendation Discussion

Morrison SWCD re-submitted the feedlot project discussed at the last meeting. In the last round of funding, the project could not be approved for funding without additional data to prioritize the area. Wettstein presented the prioritization method she used. She made a map of feed lots in the Rum River Watershed portion of Morrison County. Most of the feedlots are smaller beef feedlots. The proposed project would be for a poultry feedlot that is located on a public water ditch. The site sits on a perched water table, so the manure leaches in the ground water. Wettstein ranked the project on a number of factors, including landowner readiness and multiple benefits.

Before voting on the project Determan reminded the group funding the project would require a funding revision with BWSR which would pull funding from the Urban BMPs section. The JPE Board would first need to approve the funding revision, and then BWSR would need to give approval before the project receives funding.

The IPC voted to fund the Morrison SWCD feedlot project.

Discussion

Schurbon noted the prioritizing work Morrison SWCD did is an example of how an agency can do prioritizing without a proper study.

There was a brief discussion about funding the feedlot project with the majority of members voicing support for it since it is a willing landowner, it is a big feedlot, and it is close to a waterbody.

Call for minor plan amendments

Determan explained that some wording in the Comprehensive Plans' implementation table limits what staff can do. In the Princeton-Cambridge subwatershed the implementation table calls for projects identified in an MDM to be installed. However, Determan has already completed 2 SWAs in the area that identifies good projects, but those projects are excluded since they aren't identified in the plan. Changing the language in that section of the implementation table is considered a minor amendment which is an easy process Determan plans to pursue. She asks if partners have minor amendments they would like to propose so the changes can be made at once.

Partners should submit proposed minor amendments to Determan in time for approval at the December Board meeting.

Discussion

After questions about what would be impacted by the proposed amendment change Determan clarified her desired change would only impact the Princeton-Cambridge area. Members voiced support for that change to be made.

Members discussed when the proposed amendments should go to the board. If the JPE board does not approve them at the December meeting the next work plan will need to be made under the current implementation table guidelines. Many members have not looked for amendments yet and asked for amendments to be presented to the board at the December meeting.

Janski suggested the board is warned at the September meeting that they will be voting on minor amendments at the December meeting.

Member Project Updates

Members gave verbal updates about their projects. To update the JPE Board about project progress Determan has created a condensed version of the project spreadsheet that is color coded to visually show progress. Partners should add their project information to the document.

Aitkin SWCD – Seybold shared that two forest stewardship plans have been created and they are now working on a 3rd. The Mille Lacs prioritizing study is on track to be completed on time.

Benton SWCD – Maciej updated that Benton SWCD has been promoting non-structural BMPs and approved a contract at their last board meeting for cover crops.

Isanti SWCD – Determan shared that the Isanti SWCD has an updated SWA that will be done by the next WBIF planning round, and two MDM plans are in progress. There is a wetland restoration plan complete that is waiting for installation in the winter. They also have 105 acres of cover crops signed and did outreach for a soil health field day. One project was installed last Sunday for their BMP project.

Mille Lacs SWCD – Shaw assured that things are moving forward. Two projects have been identified and are ready to be installed around the lake. They have done some outreach for the DIY projects around the lake. The City of Wahkon project has the city and the design is ready to move forward.

Morrison SWCD – Wettstein informed the group they plan to write their forestry stewardship plans this winter.

Sherburne SWCD – Cibulka shared they have completed an assessment of potential parcels for ag and forestry lands and have sent out mailings. They have staff now following up and have had people interested in forestry work.

Discussion:

Schurbon asked that a column about when partners plan to invoice money is added to the project update spreadsheet.

Janski asked that a column is added to say the project progress for colorblind people.

Janski asked if a project ends up not being installed what the process was to return the funds to the pool. Schurbon clarified it would be a simple process, and they would just edit their spreadsheets and then notify the board.

Cibulka shared with the group that another watershed is going through the 1W1P process and the attorneys representing the group admire the RRWP's agreement and process.

Determan noted that the group needs to keep its partnership with the counties strong, since they are absent from today's IPC meeting. However, some members provided clarity it may be due to staffing issues.

Next meeting:

Virtual October 9th meeting if needed 12:30pm – 2:30pm.