

OUTCOMES:

Rum River Watershed Comprehensive Management Plan – Implementation Planning Committee Meeting

Date: November 20th, 2023

Time: 9:00-11:00 AM

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:

Henry Eglund, Aitkin County
Jamie Schurbon, Anoka SWCD
Emily Forbord, Benton SWCD
Tiffany Determan, Isanti SWCD
Lydia Godfrey, Isanti SWCD
Scott Soderman, Isanti County
Susan Shaw, Mille Lacs SWCD
Willow Dean, Mille Lacs SWCD
Dan Cibulka, Sherburne SWCD

Other:

Barb Peichel, BWSR
Michelle Jordan, BWSR
Al Koczur, Isanti SWCD, JPE Board Representative

Welcome led by Determan.

Updates

Schurbon provided a fiscal update for the watershed. Just a few funding categories have funding left as 95% of funds have been encumbered. Determan reminded members there is a contact list in the members lounge folder and partners should regularly check the list is up to date. The Morrison SWCD's feedlot project from the last quarter ended up

not being eligible for funding due to BWSR policy.

Cibulka provided an update on implementation tracking. He has been working with Stearns SWCD on an online tracking system where projects can be added to a map. Cibulka is working with Stearns SWCD to get it running quickly. Different tracking methods will be used for different audiences.

Shaw reported that an offer has been made to fill the forestry and type B outreach position. If accepted, they are hoping to have them start in early December. Godfrey reported the first outreach office hours meeting took place last week and generated a useful discussion. An email will be sent out with summary notes and an agenda for next time.

Minor RRWCP Amendment

The minor change the Isanti SWCD is making to the comprehensive plan will go to the board in January. There is still time for partners to make minor amendments, but none have been suggested yet. There is a process for minor amendments that includes editing the comprehensive plan document to show the proposed change. The JPE board will see the suggested change in their board packet. All IPC members voted to recommend the RRWCP Amendment to the JPE board.

Discussion

Sherburne SWCD will check if they have an inDesign license to make the edits to the comprehensive plan. Peichel reminded the group that the plan should be consistent in grammar and references. She also added the minor amendment process is still pretty new.

WBIF Supplemental Funds

WBIF is not competitive, but there are supplemental funds from the last round of funding. The extra funding is available for watersheds to apply. However, the JPE board meets after the application deadline. It was decided that the RRWP would apply for supplemental funding, and then bring it to the board at the next JPE meeting. If the board does not approve it the application can be pulled. Partners should talk about it with their board members.

Proposed for the additional funding is a shared land protection employee that would be housed in Mille Lacs or Isanti SWCD. The role would cover easements, wetlands, forestry and agroforestry. Additional funding would be for well sealing that would be focused in Mille Lacs and Isanti counties with a goal of sealing 20 wells throughout the watershed. The final funding request would be for Mille Lacs to make progress completing the Geologic Atlas. All IPC members voted to send additional funding requests to the JPE board for recommendation.

Discussion

Peichel told the group to keep in mind the goal the protection employee would support. The land protection employee would work towards the water quality goal. Another discussion will need to be had to figure out the match for the position. Ideas were suggested, such as approaching a group with similar goals or using some district funds.

There was a discussion about the requested well sealing dollar amount and the goal for number of wells sealed. Most of the well sealing would take place in Mille Lacs and Isanti counties, since other partners do not have a high demand in their portion of the watershed and Anoka SWCD has other funding. Therefore, the goal was reduced from 30 to 20 wells.

A discussion took place about what the priority areas were for well sealing. Schurbon suggested having a ranking with a variety of criteria such as needed staff time and benefit.

BWSR Soil Health Capacity and Delivery

There is funding available to cover a staff person for four years of work. Determan asked partners if there is interest to hire a shared soil health person for the RRWP. Mille Lacs and Anoka SWCDs expressed interest. Sherburne SWCD would be interested but they have a greater need in the county outside the watershed. The partnership could explore apply with entire counties. Determan will send out a link for a meeting to discuss it further.

MPCA Swag Follow-up

The partnership previously agreed each agency would apply individually, and they still plan to do so.

2024 Work Plan

Determan discussed the timeline and components of the work plan. The work plan needs to include a budget, description of work planned for shared funds, how the plan will be implemented with individual funds and implementation tracking. Last time all the components were combined, but now there will be individual parts so they can be completed at different times. The budget would first be completed. It will go to the board at an upcoming meeting.

The earliest the partnership could receive the next round of funding is July 2024. Work planning would need to start in early 2024 so it could go to the board in March, then individual boards, and then return to the JPE in June for final approval. The annual report will also go to the board in March.

Discussion

There was a discussion on when ex-officio members should be included in the work plan process. Peichel suggested giving agency people a quick ask, such as giving them something mostly completed or having them only attend part of the meeting. Shaw suggested inquiring if the agencies have other funding that will be available. Determan will reach out to ex-officio members.

Member Project Updates

Members gave verbal updates about their projects.

Aitkin– Egland shared that the SWCD completed another forest stewardship plan, and there is a possible water storage project in the works.

Benton SWCD – Forbord updated that they lost a staff member working on one of their projects. It is on hold until it is reassigned to a new staff member. There are a few people interested in cover crops.

Isanti SWCD – They will be requesting reimbursement for their soil health money funding soon. There's about \$7,000 left from one landowner backing out. There are other landowners interested that need to be prioritized. There is one that will interseed cover crops with corn and he will host a field day in 2024.

Mille Lacs SWCD – Shaw reported the Wakhon project fell through. The city council decided not to go through with it at this time. The funding was reserved for Urban BMPs and will be available again.

Sherburne SWCD – Cibulka shared they have funding in the Blue Lake subwatershed and have done some outreach. There have been responses with interest in forestry but not a ton for agriculture. Sherburne SWCD will do additional outreach and may plan an in person event.

Next meeting:

Virtual December 12th meeting if needed 9:30pm – 11:30pm. The meeting time was changed due to the MASWCD convention.