

Rum River "One Watershed, One Plan"

Rum River Watershed Partnership Board Meeting Minutes

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

September 28, 2023
4:30PM – 6:00PM

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:

Colleen Werdien - Anoka Conservation District
 Laurie Westerlund – Aitkin County
 Ed Popp – Benton County
 Wade Bastian – Benton SWCD
 Alan Duff – Isanti County
 Al Koczur – Isanti SWCD
 Kim Johnson – Kanabec SWCD
 Jake Janski – Mille Lacs SWCD
 Dale Scholl – Morrison SWCD
 Bobby Kasper – Morrison County
 Chris Jurek – Sherburne SWCD

Alternates Present:

Partners and Staff Present:

Jamie Schurbon – Anoka Conservation District
 Tiffany Determan – Isanti SWCD
 Lydia Godfrey- Isanti SWCD
 Susan Shaw – Mille Lacs SWCD
 Dan Cibulka – Sherburne SWCD - (*virtual attendance*)
 Barb Peichel – BWSR
 Michelle Jordan – BWSR - (*virtual attendance*)
 Emily Forbord– Benton SWCD - (*virtual attendance*)

Voting Members Absent:

Bob Janzen – Aitkin SWCD
 Kelly Applegate-Mille Lacs Band of Ojibwe
 Lisa Fobbe – Sherburne County

1. Meeting called to order by Janski at 4:31 pm. Introductions led by Janski. Only members present in-person may vote.
2. Approve Agenda

Motion by Duff to approve the agenda; second by Kasper. Affirmative: All. Opposed: None.
The Motion Carried.

3. Approve June 22, 2023 Rum River Watershed Partnership Board meeting minutes

Motion by Westerlund to approve the June 22nd, 2023 outcomes as presented; second by Koczur. Affirmative: All. Opposed: None. **The Motion Carried.**

4. Administrative reports/ updates

Schurbon provided a financial update. About \$36,000 has been spent so far to SWCDs for their work under contract. The CD has earned about \$4,000 and will mature in about one month. Schurbon will reassess then how much funding should be put in a CD.

Determan informed the board there is a change to the project ranking sheet. A new column was added called "professional score" where staff could recognize a good project that has extenuating circumstances preventing it from scoring high on the ranking sheet. Determan also shared the IPC is planning to do a minor amendment to the comprehensive plan. The Isanti SWCD would like to change wording in an implementation table to pursue more projects, and other partners are also looking for changes they would like. The board will receive more information at the next meeting.

Discussion

K. Johnson asked for clarification on the overall budget and if funds will be available when partners need them. Schurbon clarified partners are communicating about when they will need funding so he can plan the CDs, and approved projects have funds set aside.

Koczur questioned how a project would be chosen if one project received a passing score on the ranking sheet and then another competing project received a passing score due to the "professional opinion" column. Determan replied that if there was limited funding the projected that initially scored higher would likely be chosen. Janski noted that the board would get to make the final decision.

5. Education and Outreach Updates

Shaw updated on the progress hiring the Type B outreach coordinator and forestry position. A job description was created and the outreach sub-committee met and gave comments on it. The job description needed to follow a certain template and then was sent to a consultant to be placed on the pay scale. The next step will be creating a position announcement that can better describe what the position will look like. It will be completed and posted in the coming weeks.

If board members would like to be involved in the hiring process they can help go through resumes, however they must attend in-person for data privacy reasons. An open invite can be sent when Mille Lacs SWCD will go through resumes. There will also be multiple opportunities for the board to provide comments to the new hire.

Discussion

Board members asked what requirements there were for the position. Shaw clarified it requires a total of 5 years of experience which can be a combination of job experience and schooling. They can also have a degree related to natural sciences or in a field such as communications, so long as they can

demonstrate in the interview how they can accomplish the job.

A discussion took place about the interview process. Kasper asked who is conducting interviews. It would be Shaw, Janski and an HR person to take notes. Staff asked if board members would like to have a representative sitting in on the interviews. Many members felt comfortable that Janski was already sitting in on the interviews.

Jurek asked if it is a permanent position to which Shaw replied that would be dependent on if the board continues funding the position.

6. 3rd Q Project Approval

One project from Morrison SWCD is up for approval this quarter. It is recommended by the IPC even though it did not meet the requirements of the ranking sheet, so the "professional score" was used. However, staff recently learned it may not meet the criteria by BWSR to receive funding. Determan shared that a work plan revision would need to be done regardless if the project is funded due to BWSR policy about moving funds around.

There was a discussion on if the board should approve the project now or wait until BWSR confirms if it is eligible for funding. It was decided the board would vote on the project now and it would be funded contingent on it being approved by BWSR.

Approve 3rd Quarter project funding request and Statement of Work for Morrison SWCD pending BWSR approval.

Motion by K. Johnson to approve 3rd quarter project funding request and Statement of Work for Morrison SWCD pending BWSR approval; second by Bastian. Opposed: Werdien.
Affirmative: All other present board members. **The Motion Carried.**

Discussion

The board discussed if they should vote on the project before it receives BWSR approval. Scholl voiced his support for waiting. Peichel added that BWSR could approve the project for funding within a week, so waiting to vote on the project would delay it months. Popp questioned if delaying the vote would prevent BWSR from considering the project's eligibility and Peichel confirmed it would not. Janski encouraged board members to vote on it now to avoid delays.

Werdien asked how the manure would be spread and reminded the group manure carries both bacteria and nutrients that damage water quality. Determan clarified a manure management plan is being developed separate from the proposed project. Werdien also questioned if the manure was being spread onto the soil or incorporated into it. Kasper assured the manure needs to be incorporated into the soil within 24 hours, and Popp added that the rules are very stringent in manure management plans. Jurek asked why BWSR did not approve the project for funding. It is due to a rule they have about funding feedlot projects that are established after the year 2000.

K. Johnson warned that approving the project may set a precedent for IPC members overriding the project ranking sheet when recommending projects for funding. Janski reminded that it is up to the JPE board to approve or deny projects regardless of the recommendations of the IPC.

The project's budget was questioned. Many board members reassured the funding amount is in line with this type of project. Schurbon added board members should consider if the benefit is worth the cost.

7. FY23 Watershed Based Implementation Funding Work Plan Revision

Determan explained that a work plan revision needs to be done since the RRWP has moved money around to fund projects. BWSR requires a work plan revision if more than \$50,000 is shifted. There are options to shift money around, and approval of the Morrison SWCD project would require a greater shift.

Motion by Westerlund to approve FY23 Watershed Based Implementation Fund work plan revision; second by Duff. Affirmative: All. Opposed: None. **The Motion Carried.**

Discussion

Bastian asked how the division of funding was decided. The numbers came from the projects partners were planning to do, so there will be an opportunity to change the division of funds when the next work plan is made. Determan also clarified that the current funding will expire in December 2025.

8. FY25 Watershed Based Implementation Funds

Determan shared that the next grant allocation will be \$300,000 higher. That funding will be available to start using in July so staff will begin planning soon.

9. **Next Meeting Date:**

January 25th, 2024 starting at 4:30pm.

To avoid a meeting between Christmas and New Years the meeting was pushed back a month.

10. **Other Updates**

Janski pointed out the project update sheet was included in the packet. There were no other updates.

11. **Janski called the meeting to adjourn at 5:46pm.**