



Mississippi River – St. Cloud One Watershed, One Plan

Technical Advisory Committee

Date / Time:	Tuesday, November 21, 2023., 1pm – 4pm
Location:	In-Person: Stearns County History Center, Becker, MN Virtual: Zoom
Note Taker:	Kyle Weimann, Stearns SWCD
1w1p Website:	https://www.millelacsswcd.org/1w1p/mississippi-river-st-cloud-watershed-plan/
Partners and Staff Present:	Benton SWCD (Fiscal Agent) – Gerry Maciej, Emily Forbord Mille Lacs SWCD – Willow Dean Mille Lacs County – Mitch Gindele* Sherburne County – Addison Otto Sherburne SWCD (Plan Coordinator) – Dan Cibulka, Miranda Wagner* Stearns County – Kyle Blazek, Becky Schlorf* Stearns SWCD – Dennis Fuchs* Wright SWCD – Alicia O’Hare
Plan Writer (ISG)	Sarah Boser, Paul Marston
Other Attendees:	City of St. Cloud – Noah Czech, Shanna Czeck, Lisa Volbrecht*, Rocio Durkot* BWSR – Zach Guttormson MDH – Chad Anderson, Carrie Raber, Hannah Wilson* DNR – Reid Northwick* PCA – Phil Votruba* USFWS – Cody Carlstrom Policy Committee Liaison – Shelly Binsfield (Sherburne SWCD)

*Individuals joined via Zoom virtually.

The meeting was called to order at **1:10pm**. Introductions.

Project Updates

- a. **Project Status/Timeline Update.** The committee is working on targeting measurable goals, strategies-outputs, and implementation table. The next three months will be focused on the implementation programs section of the plan. ISG is continuing to work with consultant on modeling.
- b. **Watershed Boundary.** Cibulka reported that there is a discrepancy of about 2,500 acres on the watershed boundary within the City of St. Cloud where it abuts the Sauk River watershed. Czech commented that the Sauk CWMP doesn’t match the Sauk WD boundary. Schlorf requested written guidance from BWSR on the process and what would be required to change the boundaries included in the Sauk CWMP. Czech commented that there may also be an affected area within the City of Waite Park.
- c. **Landscape Stewardship Plan (LSP).** The second meeting discussed priority areas for forest management. There likely will be a third meeting in January 2024.

- d. **WRAPS/TMDL.** Votruba reported that the TMDL is out for review and requested comments on the draft TMDL by November 29. The intention is to submit the TMDL to EPA in December. Votruba intends to send out WRAPS draft for review to the project team in December.
- e. **CAC Meeting.** Scheduled for November 29th to discuss supporting programs, prioritization, implementation table format, and other items.
- f. **CRWD/Mille Lacs County.** Eligible partners that opted out of the planning process would be permitted to join the implementation agreement. Cibulka will provide an update and anticipated timeline so they can make determinations on whether to join. Capital Improvement Projects (CIP) could be of particular interest to CRWD.

Urban BMPs/Stormwater Inclusion in Plan

- a. **Steering Committee Outcomes.** Boser reported that the steering committee met and discussed the stormwater issues tied to the City of St. Cloud and aligning language with other plans (particularly Sauk CWMP). City will be invited/asked to provide guidance and input on the implementation table(s).

Maciej suggested a subcommittee to discuss City of St. Cloud issues to bring to the TAC. Volunteers from Benton, Stearns, and Sherburne SWCDs and the City to meet as a subcommittee, with an initial topic of consideration to be whether a separate management/implementation table is appropriate. O’Hare suggested that any new district be aligned with the HSPF modeled subwatersheds rather than political boundaries. ISG will provide GIS and other resources to help the subcommittee.

Supporting Programs Sub-Committee Update

- a. **Education and Outreach.** Boser reported that the group met to determine a framework that can be inserted into the plan and will guide the efforts in the implementation tables. Three program categories: 1) Community Engagement (relationships & trust); 2) Awareness & Education (knowledge & understanding); 3) Behavior-changing Programs/Project Development. Final implementation tables (BMPs) will guide the priorities for outreach and education efforts.
- b. **Data, Studies, Monitoring.** Subcommittee to review in the future (SWCDs more appropriate than counties). Subcommittee to include Cibulka, O’Hare, Blazek (and possibly others) to provide guidance to the December TAC meeting.
- c. **Policy and Regulation.** Cibulka reported that the group discussed models for evaluating policies instead of considering specific policies, since the plan doesn’t have authority to force changes. General recommendation is for partners share information for what is working well in a jurisdiction with watershed partners. Areas of policy to share could include shoreline, ditches, turf grass, septic, etc. Raber asked about policies that may impact groundwater – Cibulka said that could be an area of further discussion/study.

O’Hare expressed concern about having too specific of implementation actions, resulting in a very large number to be tracked, and recommended that they be consolidated and generalized. Boser said that combining can be done for the final plan, but the more detailed listings can be kept for internal use/tracking.

Capital Improvement Programs Update

- a. Plan are required to include a capital improvement plan but there is flexibility in how detailed that must be (watershed districts have specific requirements). ISG will send a survey for initial data collection to partners. CIPs can be funded through WBIF or other sources. Typically, CIPs cost at least \$500k, have a 25-year or longer life-expectancy, and have a regional benefit.

Multi-Benefits Analysis

- a. A subcommittee has converted issues statements to a GIS analysis to stack layers and show areas where the most benefits could be achieved by implementing BMPs. Several methods to divide the result into priority tiers were considered. O’Hare recommended that additional layers in the multi-benefit analysis (LSP, GRAPS, altered hydrology protection) should be included before determining the best approach. The layers could be weighted so that each doesn’t have the same value and can be altered based on local priorities. ISG requested that partners evaluate the maps for whether they make sense according to local knowledge/professional judgment prior to the next Steering Committee meeting.

GRAPS Presentation – Carrie Raber, MDH

- GRAPS is an inter-agency effort of state agencies managing groundwater (MDH, BWSR, PCA, DNR) to provide groundwater information to WRAPS/1W1P and support local partners.
- Content developed using existing groundwater information on a HUC8 watershed scale with timing aligned with 1W1P where possible.
- Primary aquifers in MR-SC: 71% of consumers depend on buried sand and gravel; 15% use sedimentary rocks (sandstone); 12% use surficial sand/gravel (greatest risk of contamination from land use)
 - a. Any pathway to buried will ultimately contaminate buried aquifers too.
- 18,402 wells in county well index (since 1974) in MR-SC; 18% of private wells are in highly vulnerable setting.
 - a. Only regulation is on installation, not ongoing quality/safety.
- Groundwater Protection Rule – Nitrate: Level 1 (Becker)
 - a. Levels above 3 mg/L indicate human activity (above 10 is the human safe drinking water standard)
- Data set for nitrate concentrations does not include timeframe/trends (all results since 1974). Shallower wells are more likely to have high levels of nitrate.
- Nitrate protection framework: Protection (0-4.9 mg/L), Threatened (5.0-9.9 mg/L), Treatment (10 mg/L+)
 - a. Pesticide monitoring – often strongly correlated with nitrate detection.
 - b. Arsenic – naturally occurring, not a land management issue – 6% of samples exceed 10 micrograms/L. Correlated with nitrate on deeper wells in confining layer. New wells get tested for arsenic as of 2008.
 - c. PFAS – Contaminant of Emerging Concern. Preliminary work with PWS but little done so far with private wells.
- Water Quantity – 76% of permitted use is for agricultural irrigation. Some wells show downward trend.
 - a. 26 lakes have less than 5:1 watershed ratio to lake size, indicating it is groundwater-connected feature.
- GRAPS report includes restoration and protection strategies.
- Developing StoryMap to share information with the public.

Meeting Wrap-up/Sub-Committee Assignments.

- a. City of St. Cloud subcommittee – led by Forbord
- b. Data, studies, and monitoring – led by O’Hare
- c. Citizen Advisory Committee attendance verification from Cibulka (Wright SWCD is paying per diem)

Cibulka adjourned the meeting at 4:00pm