

## Rum River Watershed Partnership Board Meeting Minutes

**January 25th, 2024 4:30PM – 6:00PM**

In-Person Meeting MLC  
Courthouse,

Lower level, Conference Room D,  
635 2nd St SE, Milaca, MN 56353



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

**Note taker:** Molly Clyne, Mille Lacs 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  
Kelly Applegate-Mille Lacs Band of Ojibwe (*virtual attendance*)  
Chris Jurek – Sherburne SWCD  
Andrew Hulse- Sherburne County (*virtual attendance*)

**Alternates Present:**

Mike Winkelman- Benton SWCD

**Partners and Staff**

**Present:**

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

**Voting Members**

**Absent:**

Bob Janzen – Aitkin SWCD

1. Meeting called to order by Janski at 4:32 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. Elections of Officers: Chair and Vice Chair

**Motion by Popp to nominate Janski for Chair;** second by Kasper. Affirmative; All. Opposed: None. **The Motion carried.**

**Motion by Koczur to nominate Johnson for Vice Chair.** Johnson declined by stating he feels someone with more stake in the watershed should be nominated.

**Motion by Duff to nominate Al Koczur;** second by Kasper. Affirmative: All. Opposed: None. **The Motion carried.**

4. Approval of September 28<sup>th</sup>, 2023 Rum River Watershed Partnership Board meeting minutes

**Motion by Westerlund to approve the September 28<sup>th</sup>, 2024 outcomes as presented;** second by Werdien. Affirmative: All. Opposed: None. **The Motion carried.**

5. Administrative reports/updates

Schurbon provided a financial update. The partnership needs an audit conducted on 2023 finances. He was reached out to by Peterson Companies with a price of \$4k to conduct an audit for 2023. He asked them to reconsider this price, but asked the board to authorize the Chair to sign a letter of engagement when they are comfortable with pricing. The partnership currently has \$3k budgeted for the audit in the work plan. They have underused attorney services which could be used to make up the difference. Peterson Companies wants to start no later than April.

**Motion by Johnson to authorize the Chair to engage Peterson Companies after negotiations, but up to \$4k;** second by Bastian. Affirmative: All. Opposed: None. **The Motion carried.**

Cibulka provided a progress update on implementation tracking for the partnership. He is working on an ArcGIS-based tracking program. He is hoping to have something to share with the staff soon. He mentioned the need to track other projects from non-WBIF funds. This will give a comprehensive view of progress towards goals.

### **Discussion**

Bastian mentioned how the reporting required by Cibulka looked very intensive and asked if anyone else has looked into the report. There is a concern about the amount of staff time it will take to get the data for the report together. Cibulka replied that most of

the information is data the staff are tracking already, so hopefully it's ready to be copy and pasted.

#### 6. Education and Outreach Updates

Janski introduced Clyne as the new Watershed Coordinator at Mille Lacs SWCD. Clyne described how she has been working to understand the role, the goals of the Rum River Watershed Partnership, and is looking into how to organize community buy-in.

Determan described how Type A Outreach Coordinator, L. Godfrey, has two watershed wide events coming up. The first is a workshop for people looking to buy lake shore property, taking place on March 19<sup>th</sup> from 6-7:30pm. The location is to be determined, but will be within the southern part of the watershed. The other event is Conservation Coffee where people can come in and ask staff members their conservation questions at the Princeton Coffee Corner on January 27<sup>th</sup>. Janski suggested that the partners attend L. Godfrey's Outreach Hours.

#### 7. Approve 2024 Budget

Johnson asked if there are any issues thin the budget currently where we are over the allocated funds, or close to being over. Determan said they are sitting great, but noted that there may be a need to move money around in the future. In that case, it will come to the board. A work plan amendment will only be needed if the amount to be moved is over \$50,000. Schurbon noted that the partnership has only used approximately 15% of the three-year grant so far, so there is a lot of money to spend down.

#### Discussion

Duff questioned if the partnership could transfer \$1k from the legal funds of the work plan to the audit during this approval of the budget, which would cover the last \$1k of the audit needed for Peterson Companies. Schurbon agreed with this idea and pointed out that it's unlikely that Peterson Companies will change their price.

**Motion by Duff to approve the 2024 budget as presented with the exception of transferring \$1k from legal to audit;** second by Bastian. Affirmative: All.

Opposed: None. **The Motion carried.**

#### 8. 2024 Meeting Schedule and Location

The proposed dates were March 28<sup>th</sup>, June 27<sup>th</sup>, September 26<sup>th</sup>, and December 26<sup>th</sup>.

#### Discussion

Janski cannot make the March 28<sup>th</sup> date in person, but could attend virtually. Determan pointed out that this would be fine as long as he makes his location available to the public prior to the meeting. Partners suggested moving this date, as well as the December 26<sup>th</sup> meeting to avoid the holidays.

**Motion by Kasper to approve the dates as March 21<sup>st</sup>, June 27<sup>th</sup>, September 26<sup>th</sup>, and December 19<sup>th</sup> and to have the meetings in the Milaca Courthouse,**

**except for the September 26<sup>th</sup> meeting which will have project tours in Isanti;** second by Westerlund. Affirmative: All. Opposed: None. **The Motion carried.**

9. Approve Q4 Funding Requests and Statement of Work Amendments

Determan described how two statements of works are being proposed to have revised scopes of work only. The first is the Mille Lacs SWCD Outreach and Education Scope of Work. This is proposed to be revised since the Watershed Coordinator, Clyne, was hired later than intended and therefore it is proposed to amend the end date of the WBIF Type B Outreach funds from December 2024 to December 2025. The second is the Isanti SWCD Scope of Work for Rural BMPs for Wetland Restoration. Revisions on the design were done which decreased the size but increased nutrient reduction. The proposed amendment is merely reflecting this change.

Determan then described the three proposed amended statements of work with additions and some edits. The first is the Mille Lacs SWCD Project Development statement of work, in which it was proposed to add funding for additional shoreland stewardship and soil health practices. Next was the Mille Lacs SWCD Technical Engineering statement of work, in which it was proposed cancelling some planned funding for a technical engineering project with Wahkon and instead adding funds for shoreline work. Lastly, there was a proposed new scope of work for the Mille Lacs SWCD soil health practices for \$18k for 200 acres of soil health practices.

**Motion by Westerlund to approve the changes and amendments;** second by Koczur. Affirmative: All. Opposed: None. **The Motion carried.**

10. Approve Rum River Comprehensive Watershed Management Plan Amendment and Set Public Hearing

Determan described how the Isanti SWCD requested a minor plan amendment in which they would be adding two actions. The proposed amendment adds to actions in the Surface Water Protection Issue within the Rum River (Princeton-Cambridge) management zone. To make this change, they'd need to set a public hearing date (probably March 21<sup>st</sup>) and if this was approved to move forward today, Determan would send an email to partners and state review to get comments on the minor plan amendment within the required 30-day comment period. If there are no comments, they can move forward with the public hearing date, get the plan updated, and post it on the website.

**Motion by Popp to approve the minor amendment as proposed and to authorize the staff to admit it for the 30-day comment period, with a public hearing date on March 19<sup>th</sup> at 4:30pm;** second by Kasper. Affirmative: All. Opposed: None. **The Motion carried.**

## 11. FY25 WBIF Supplemental Funding Request

Determan described how the IPC submitted a request from BWSR's supplemental funds. Over 7M was left over from other watersheds. The IPC decided they wanted to submit for additional funding. An email was sent out letting the board know since the due dates for requesting the funds was January 8<sup>th</sup> and was before the next board meeting. Determan described how the partnership is indeed eligible to receive the full amount requested, which was \$268,721. Today, they needed a motion so that the Chair can sign the BWSR grant agreement amendment and update the eLink work plan.

### **Discussion**

Partners asked what the money would be used for. Determan described how \$30k would be used for the sealing of up to 20 wells within the watershed. Partnership will have to come up with cost-share rules. The IPC will draft the policies and then they will be presented to the board. Outreach for the well sealing will be \$20k. The remaining \$218,721 will be used for the hiring or contracting of a land protection person for conservation easements, forestry, and some wetland restoration in Isanti and Mille Lacs counties. Determan described how there is a huge lack of capacity to implement programs where there's a lot of money coming in, like conservation easements and forestry, but there just hasn't been enough staff capacity. This money would fund a little over a year and a half of a staff person. The funding will hopefully bring in more money to fund this staff person in the future as this position helps meet long-term goals. An example of another place of funding would be from future WBIF. Determan and Shaw describe how they want to hire someone with experience in forestry so they can hit the ground running. This position also relates to LCCMR, which is a pilot for planting trees on permanently protected lands. Johnson asked if this would be a permanent position, to which Shaw responded that it would depend on sourcing funds in the future.

**Motion by Scholl to approve the Chair to sign the BWSR grant agreement for supplemental funds;** second by Werdien. Affirmative: All. Opposed: None. **The Motion carried.**

## 12. 2024 Work Plan: non-Watershed Based Implementation Funding

Determan described how there is an obligation to have an annual work plan and section that describes the work that partners are doing to accomplish goals with funds other than from WBIF. Determan describes how partners are leveraging a lot of money to accomplish plan goals, and that partners are very busy. She will send out a draft of non-WBIF funded projects to the board to be approved at the March meeting. With just what the members reported to her there's over 4.5 million dollars funded to implement plan goals in 2024. Determan described how there are a number of state-led initiatives for this watershed, one of which is the LCCMR grant. There is also considerable conservation easement money dedicated to the Rum River Watershed. She described how the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency is kicking off their intensive watershed monitoring that happens every 10 years to see conditions of surface water. Locals are able to leverage a grant to do the monitoring on their own. Other examples of funds the

partners are utilizing are Outdoor Heritage Funds, Department of Health, US Fish and Wildlife, MN Ag Quality Certification, BWSR Soil Health, and Federal 319 grants.

13. Liaison: March 11<sup>th</sup> IPC Meeting, 12:30-2:30pm

The next IPC meeting will be March 11<sup>th</sup> from 12:30-2:30pm at the Mille Lacs Courthouse.

14. Next Steps

The FY2025 WBIF Work Plan draft will be presented during the March 11<sup>th</sup> IPC meeting.

**15.Next Meeting Date**

March 21<sup>st</sup>, 2024 starting 4:30pm at the Mille Lacs Historic Courthouse.

**16.Janski called the meeting to adjourn at 5:54pm.**