

Snake Watershed Partnership Meeting Outcomes –February 26, 2024, 10:00am-12:00pm

Location: Kanabec Co. Courthouse or Remote Google Meeting

Board: Travis Leiviska (Aitkin Co); Kurt Beckstrom, Jon Sanford (Kanabec SWCD); Tom Roeschlein (Kanabec Co); Terry Lovgren (Pine Co); *Michael Cummins (Pine SWCD), Dan Gravely (Atkin SWCD)

*remote attendees

Staff:

Kanabec SWCD: Deanna Pomije, Emily Larsen; Pine SWCD: Mara Jade; Pine Co: Erin Hoxie, Mike Gainor, David Minke; Aitkin SWCD: *Janet Smude; Mille Lacs SWCD: Willow Dean, Mille Lacs Co: *Mitch Gindele; BWSR: Barb Peichel, Zach Guttormson
Cross Lake: Don Duetsch

Purpose for the meeting

Approve Service Contracts. Seek comments on project vetting and project policies.

10:10 Roll Call – Beckstrom chairing

Beckstrom led the group in a round robin with everyone introducing themselves by answering an ice breaker question on a famous person they've met.

*Approval of Agenda

Motion by Lovgren, second by Gravely to approve the agenda as presented.

Affirmative: Beckstrom, Roeschlein, Sanford, Leiviska, Lovgren, Gravely

Opposed: None

Abstain: None

Motion Passed.

*Approval of the 1/22/24 Outcomes

Motion by Leiviska, second by Sanford to approve the 1/22/24 outcomes as presented

Affirmative: Beckstrom, Roeschlein, Sanford, Leiviska, Lovgren, Gravely

Opposed: None

Abstain: None

Motion Passed.

Project Policies (process, cost share rates)

Prior to delving into the policy, she the project vetting flow chart; showing how the Partnership board and Steering Committee are involved in the process and when. The chart was revised as requested to include the contract signing with the partner member and the landowner. Pomije reviewed with the board the draft Watershed Based Implementation Funds (WBIF) Project Policies.

Motion by Gravely, second by Leiviska to approve Section 1 - project selection and approval process of the WBIF project policies

Affirmative: Beckstrom, Roeschlein, Sanford, Leiviska, Lovgren, Gravely

Opposed: None

Abstain: None

Motion Passed.

In section 2 the grant funding process was mentioned coming in batches (50%, 40% & 10%) with the fiscal agent able to retain the last 10% on partner member's payment vouchers as needed. On the work plan amendments; it was requested to add in language to show the Steering Committee technical review on any proposed amendments. Questions arose on who is responsible for project cost overruns. Jade mentioned that it is the partner member's responsibility, as per their Master Contract. Another question came up on what is the required project bidding process and who is required to follow it. The MN statute on municipal bidding was mentioned but staff will look into this further.

Motion by Sanford, second by Lovgren to approve Section 2 – contracting process and policies of the WBIF project policies

Affirmative: Beckstrom, Roeschlein, Sanford, Leiviska, Lovgren, Gravely

Opposed: None

Abstain: None

Motion Passed.

Section 3 – cost share policies were reviewed. Beckstrom inquired about increasing the funding percent for landowners in need. Pomije explained that this was discussed in the committee and it was agreed to allow increasing the rates at the discretion of the individual partner boards and using a form (rural development) to verify landowner’s income levels.

Motion by Lovgren, second by Leiviska to approve Section 3 pg. 1 (cost share % graph) of the project policies

Affirmative: Beckstrom, Roeschlein, Sanford, Leiviska, Lovgren, Gravely

Opposed: None

Abstain: None

Motion Passed.

Pomije reviewed the proposed non-structural agriculture management practice incentive payment rates. These payments are meant to incentivize and promote good conservation practices (cover crops, reduced tillage) that are not universally in practice. It was mentioned that Aitkin SWCD has a drone available for seeding of cover crops. These rates are similar to what the Lower St. Croix and Rum Watersheds are using. Consistency across watershed lines helps in outreach and project development. The rates listed are generally slightly higher than what our federal partner (Natural Resources Conservation Service) provides.

Motion by Leiviska, second by Sanford to approve Section 3 pg. 2 (non-structural projects) of the project policies

Affirmative: Beckstrom, Roeschlein, Sanford, Leiviska, Lovgren, Gravely

Opposed: None

Abstain: None

Motion Passed.

The proposal from Pine SWCD for a Snake River assessment has been placed on hold until our planned March meeting.

+Partnership Insurance with MCIT – Pomije reviewed with the board the requirements to join MCIT. We need a sponsor, seeking out Pine Co. as our sponsor. BWSR commented that we may need a tax ID number – they will check with another watershed to confirm.

Motion by Lovgren, second by Gravely to approve joining MCIT

Affirmative: Beckstrom, Roeschlein, Sanford, Leiviska, Lovgren, Gravely

Opposed: None

Abstain: None

Motion Passed.

Motion by Lovgren, second by Leiviska to approve the denial of workman’s compensation

Affirmative: Beckstrom, Roeschlein, Sanford, Leiviska, Lovgren, Gravely

Opposed: None

Abstain: None

Motion Passed.

+Contract approval authority request and date authorized: Pomije explained the request for the Watershed Coordinator to have the authority to sign statement of work (SOW) contracts in lieu of the board chair on all board approved contracted work. Also requesting the contract approval date to be the date the board approved the contracted work.

Motion by Lovgren, second by Leiviska to appoint signing authority on SOW contracts to the Watershed Coordinator and have the SOW contracts be effective the date the board approved the contracted work.

Affirmative: Beckstrom, Roeschlein, Sanford, Leiviska, Lovgren, Gravely

Opposed: Hoefert, Roeschlein

Abstain: None

Motion passed.

Public Input: none

Update on new Watershed Hire by Kanabec SWCD

The Watershed Program Coordinator position closed 1/10/24 with 5 applicants. The selection committee (2 Kanabec SWCD Supervisors; Paul Swanson, staff Pine SWCD) decided the applicants lacked the experience they were seeking, so no interviews were called. They have decided to repost a new position description, increasing the experience required.

*Adjourn Meeting at 11:30am

Motion by Lovgren, second by Gravely to adjourn meeting at 11:30am

Affirmative: Beckstrom, Roeschlein, Sanford, Leiviska, Lovgren, Gravely

Opposed: None

Abstain: None

Motion Passed.

Next Meeting:

March 25, 2024, 9:30 am start

Future Agenda Items:

Review / approve forestry and buffer policies

Snake project assessment proposal from Pine SWCD

The board has requested the forester to come and explain the watershed's forestry planned work.