

# OUTCOMES:

## Rum River Watershed Comprehensive Management Plan – Implementation Planning Committee Meeting

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Date: March 11, 2024

Time: 12:30-2:30 PM

Location: In-Person, Mille Lacs Historic Courthouse, lower-level D

Meeting called by: Planning  
Partners

Type of meeting: Work  
Planning Meeting

Facilitator: Tiffany Determan

Note taker: Molly Clyne, Mille Lacs SWCD

### Attendees:

#### Voting members:

Tiffany Determan, Isanti SWCD  
Lydia Godfrey, Isanti SWCD  
Scott Soderman, Isanti County  
Dan Cibulka, Sherburne SWCD  
Susan Shaw, Mille Lacs SWCD  
Willow Dean, Mille Lacs SWCD  
Lynn Gallice, Mille Lacs SWCD  
Molly Clyne, Mille Lacs SWCD  
Sam Seybold, Aitkin SWCD  
Emily Forbord, Benton SWCD  
Chad Weiss, Mille Lacs Band of Ojibwe

#### Advisory Members:

Brian Steffen, NRCS  
Michelle Jordan, BWSR

Other:

Barb Peichel, BWSR

Jake Janski, Mille Lacs SWCD, JPE Board Representative

Mitch Gindele, Mille Lacs County

Will Rice, NRCS

**1. Welcome and Introductions** led by Tiffany Determan, Isanti SWCD

**2. Planning Team Updates**

**a. Administration**

- i. Determan presented the budget that Jamie Schurbon (Anoka CD) put together. A majority of the current funds are encumbered but have not been spent, while approximately \$202,000 are not encumbered. Determan reminded the group that the current grant funds expire December 31<sup>st</sup> of 2025.
- ii. Determan reminded the group that the public hearing for the work plan amendment will take place on March 21<sup>st</sup>, which is the date of the next JPE meeting. Per requirements of a comment period, Determan sent out about 75 emails and received no negative comments.
- iii. Determan noted that a grant amendment has not yet come in, but the Board Chair (Janski) will sign when it does. It is believed that the money will be in hand by March 21<sup>st</sup>, so requests made from today's meeting will be approved pending the funds being received.
- iv. The final version of the non-WBIF funded projects was sent out. Approximately \$4 million non-WBIF funds are being used to implement plan goals. Advisory members were provided with the document and no comments were received.

**b. Implementation Tracking**

- i. The planning team met with Michelle Jordan, Julie Westerlund, and Don Bajumpa from BWSR to discuss what information should be gathered when implementation tracking in preparation for the 5-yr Performance Review assessment. It was noted that the team is off to a great start with Cibulka and Godfrey's recent work with implementation tracking. Determan stressed that it is important for the group to keep up with this tracking so we do not have to compile 5 years' worth of information when the review happens.
- ii. Cibulka handed out the 2023 accomplishments draft. He described how each action has their own specific ID, and there are currently 148. Cibulka noted that some of the 148 are duplicates and can apply to more than one issue. Godfrey will be coming up with something to show the JPE board at the next meeting to demonstrate the accomplishments.

**c. Education and Outreach**

- i. Type A: Godfrey reminded the group of the monthly Outreach Hour on 3/12/2024 and subsequent months. April's will be cancelled. She described a few of the recent events that have been happening or are soon to happen in the

Watershed, such as the recent Conservation Happy Hour, a Lakeshore Property 101 event, and an Agricultural Lunch and Learn. She is also working on putting together the annual outreach report and reminds partners to have it in the back of their mind.

- ii. Type B: Clyne described an upcoming Tree Planting Open House for the LCCMR Tree Planting Pilot. She also described the first round of outreach that recently went out for the LCCMR project. She has been working on researching community groups and organizations and forming relationships with them.

**3. 1<sup>st</sup> Quarter Funding Requests (DECIDE)**

- a. Prior to the meeting, partners chose either fund/do not fund for 2025 project requests. They were all voted to fund, and no comments were made.

**4. FY23 WBIF Policy Updates (DECIDE)**

**a. Well sealing**

- i. The policy will be at a 60% cost-share rate. The normal rate is usually 50% or \$500, whichever is less, but Determan noted the need to give people more of an incentive and to take into consideration that some will cost more. Shaw also described how they wanted to find a way to get at the wells that are unknown and undisclosed. The language for this policy update was included in the packet sent by Determan. Boards have the option to choose between reimbursing landowners, which is most typical for cost-share, or reimbursing the contractor directly. Determan noted that Isanti will do it the standard way.
- ii. Cibulka asked about the process of approval. Determan clarified that the district would submit for project funding, it would get recommended for approval by the IPC, and then approved by the JPE (the standard project approval process).

**b. Soil Health (cover crops)**

- i. Determan describes how current soil health policy focuses heavily on cover crops. One of the current cover crop policies say that the partnership will not incentivize cover crops for prevent planting. Dean states how she has been looking into this policy and traced its origination to Chisago SWCD, where it has since been removed from policy. Debate ensued on whether or not it should also be struck from our policy. After conversation, it was recommended for the JPE board to strike the prevent plant policy while leaving the current rates for the 1- and 3-year cover crop contracts.

**c. Change threshold for Deed restrictions-currently \$5,000**

- i. Determan described how currently, any project over \$5k has to have a deed restriction, if it is not already on permanently protected or tribal lands. The purpose of the restriction is to prevent people from destroying or taking apart the projects before the end of the project term. Determan mentioned how in her experience, most projects will be over \$5k and therefore this might restrict people wanting to pursue the projects, but it also protects state funded projects. The question posed was, should this minimum for deed restriction be raised? Partners discussed what happens when/if a situation occurs where a landowner does take apart/destroy the project. It would be the responsibility of the district partner to either go after the landowner for the money, or repay it themselves

to the partnership. The repayment rate is 150% of the original cost. The group decided to recommend to the JPE board to keep the rate at 5k.

**d. Update on forestry policy-under development**

- i. Kyle Fredrickson (Aitkin) and Dave Wick (Sherburne) are working on forestry project cost-share policies. They will be ready for review in the coming months and will be used for the FY25 WBIF. projects

**5. FY25 WBIF Discussion (DISCUSS/DECIDE)**

- a. Determan previously sent a draft framework of the budget which was built from project lists that several partners sent. The amount of money the partnership is set to receive for FY25, funds available in July, is \$1.3 million. The draft budget currently stands at close to \$1.6, so there is need for refinement. Determan reminded the group that WBIF funds are to be used for water-quality projects (surface or ground water). Unless it can be shown to have a water quality benefit, the project will not be eligible for WBIF money. Determan said that if there is a project you know you are going to do it should be included specifically in the work plan. Otherwise, the activities should be left general so members can apply for funding as needs/projects come up. The group went through each line of the draft budget and revised, edited, and noted some changes or things to look into before the March JPE meeting. Determan reduced several categories by 10% and knocked off the Onamia MLBO project after input from Weiss that he and Perry Bunting (MLBO) may have alternate funding sources for that project. 31.3k was also taken from Tech and Engineering. Funding for well sealing was reduced to \$5K and the group concurred that a grant for well sealing should be sought. After adjustments, it is still over budget, so Determan will send a follow up about further revisions within the week..
- b. Cibulka questioned if more supplementary WBIF funds will come in. Jordan and Peichel said that if there is, it will likely be a smaller amount than the previous supplement funds.

**6. Member Project Updates**

- a. Determan reminded members to go into the Members Lounge, Funding requests form and submit project updates in the SOW tab. She noted that she will send out a reminder as it should be done in time to send out with board packets.

**7. Other**

**8. Wrap-up & Next Meeting**

- a. JPE meeting is on March 21<sup>st</sup>, 2024. The next IPC meeting is on April 8<sup>th</sup>, 2024.