

Rum River Watershed Partnership Board Meeting Minutes

March 21st, 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:

Laurie Westerlund – Aitkin County
Colleen Werdien – Anoka Conservation District
Wade Bastian – Benton SWCD
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
Andrew Hulse – Sherburne County (*virtual attendance due to scheduled travel*)

Alternates Present:

Steve Westerberg, Isanti County (*virtual attendance, non-voting*)

Partners and Staff

Present:

Dan Cibulka – Sherburne SWCD
Francine Larson – Sherburne SWCD (*virtual attendance*)
Lydia Godfrey – Isanti SWCD (*virtual attendance*)
Tiffany Determan – Isanti SWCD
Susan Shaw – Mille Lacs SWCD
Molly Clyne – Mille Lacs SWCD
Perry Bunting – Mille Lacs Band of Ojibwe
Gerry Maciej – Benton SWCD (*virtual attendance*)
Emily Forbord – Benton SWCD (*virtual attendance*)

Voting Members

Absent:

Bob Janzen – Aitkin SWCD
Ed Popp – Benton County
Alan Duff – Isanti County
Kelly Applegate – Mille Lacs Band of Ojibwe

Scott Soderman, Isanti County
Michelle Jordon, BWSR

Others:

1. Meeting called to order by Janski at 4:30 pm. Introductions led by Janski.
2. Approve Agenda
Motion by Westerlund to approve the agenda; second by Werdien. Affirmative: All. Opposed: None. **The Motion carried.**
3. Public Hearing for ISWCD amendment to the Rum River Comprehensive Watershed Management Plan

Public hearing closed with no comments.

Motion by Koczur to adopt the minor plan amendment as presented and direct staff to incorporate the minor amendment into the RRCWMP, post it on the website, and distribute to all parties who received the initial notification; second by Johnson. Affirmative: All. Opposed: None. The Motion carried.

4. Approval of January 25th, 2024 Rum River Watershed Partnership Board meeting minutes

Johnson noted the need for a correction in section three, in which it was written that he "delinked" the nomination rather than declined.

Motion by Westerlund to approve the minutes as amended; second by Kasper. Affirmative: All. Opposed: None. **The Motion carried.**

5. Administrative reports/updates

Financials:

Determan noted that spending has been slow, but there should be a significant increase by the time the next JPE meeting as several projects have been completed or have made significant progress and will be reimbursed in the first quarter..

Motion by Werdien to approve the financial report; second by Bastian. Affirmative: All. Opposed: None. **The Motion carried.**

Progress updates:

Determan presented a spreadsheet depicting current progress of the work plan. Board members noted that they liked the color coding that shows what is on track and what is not.

2024 party-funded plans:

Determan explained that the RRCWMP and JPE requires an annual plan that depicts what members are doing to accomplish plan goals with non-WBIF funds.

Discussion:

Janski noted that looking at the WBIF 2025 budget, 68% of the money is not for putting projects on the ground. He asked if there are similar ratios on the other non-WBIF funds coming in. Determan believed the ratios would be close, but did not have that information at the moment.

6. Education and Outreach Updates

Godfrey presented Type A outreach updates. The Lakeshore Property 101 event was cancelled due to low RSVPs. She had a meeting with the Lower St. Croix watershed who are interested in being involved with this event, so next time it could be offered to a wider audience and potentially as a webinar instead of an in-person event. She also noted that Sherburne, Isanti, and Mille Lacs SWCDs hosted a conservation happy hour. A farmer attended who is interested in hosting a soil health field day on his property. She also noted that they are in the early stages of the next outreach plan for FY25. They are pulling ideas together and said that if board members have ideas, to bring them to herself or Clyne. There will be no Outreach Office Hour in April.

Clyne presented Type B outreach updates. She noted that she has been making progress on forming relationships with community groups. She created a survey for partnership members to fill out when they know of groups that may have some conservation-minded goals or members and said that she would send this to the board. Clyne mentioned that she hosted an Open House event for Tree Planting and that it went well.

7. Implementation Tracking Report

Cibulka and Godfrey have been working together to put together this report. Cibulka noted that the plan has different levels; priority issues, goals, measurable outcomes, and actions. There has been at least some progress on all levels. Four projects have been completed, 61 completed with non-WBIF funds. He said to expect WBIF-funded projects to increase in the coming year, and said that in conclusion, the partnership is off to a strong start. Discussion:

8. WBIF Policy Updates

The IPC is recommending three updates to the existing RRWP WBIF project policies.

Well Sealing-NEW

Determan explained how now that they have the supplemental funds, there is a need for a policy indicating well-sealing cost-share rates. IPC recommended a 60% cost-share rate. There would be no prioritization based on the RRCWMP.

Soil Health-Revised

The recommended language revision is specifically targeted towards cover crops. The current policy did not allow for cover crops on prevent plant acres. IPC discussed why allowing it would be beneficial, and recommended to strike this from the policy.

Deed Restriction-added language

The current policy is that for projects over \$5k, there must be a deed restriction on the land in order to protect the project as a state investment. There was a discussion at the last IPC meeting where partners wondered if they could be more restrictive. IPC recommended that any member may be more restrictive.

Motion by Bastian to approve the policy updates as presented; second by Kasper. Affirmative: All. Opposed: None. **The Motion carried.**

9. Approve 1st Quarter 2024 Funding Requests and Statement of Work Amendments

Discussion:

Janski asked if the requests include the supplemental budget funds, and Determan said yes, for well-sealing and technical engineering. Werdien asked about the funds for a new technical staff person. Determan explained that the money requested is to fund the position for approximately two years and to cover the salary of employee with several years of experience. The position would work with both Mille Lacs and Isanti, housed in Isanti. The requested funds for the position would also supply the person money to adjust or update RAQ scores.

Motion by Johnson to approve the funding requests as presented; second by Westerlund. Affirmative: All. Opposed: None. **The Motion carried.**

10. FY23 WBIF Supplemental Budget Update

Determan described how they have the supplemental funds grant executed and she will soon be updating the work plan in eLink. Determan explained that match is needed, and asked the board to approve the current match.

Motion by Westerlund to approve the match as presented; second by Werdien. Affirmative: All. Opposed: None. **The Motion carried.**

11. DRAFT FY25 WBIF Budget

Determan described how the framework for the FY25 budget was developed. She noted that she requested projects and programs and funding amounts from all members. She specifically was looking for projects that they know they're going to do, as well as wish-list items. This information was then compiled into the presented spreadsheet.

Determan requested that members take the budget back to their organization for comment prior to the June 27th meeting, where the board will decide on approval for the work plan and budget for FY25.

Discussion:

Conversation ensued on the process of getting the plan approved by members boards. Janski said that as part of the Joint Powers Agreement, each partner board can review and sign off on the budget as a courtesy. A motion does not need to be made by the partner board to approve the budget.

Motion by Kasper to approve the draft budget and allow for staff to make changes prior to the June meeting; second by Scholl. Affirmative: All. Opposed: None. **The Motion carried.**

12. Open forum/member updates

Janski mentioned that it may be beneficial for board members to attend the IPC meetings.

The Isanti project tour will happen on September 26th.

13. Next Meeting Date

June 27th, 2024 at the Mille Lacs Historic Courthouse.

14. Janski called the meeting to adjourn at 5:49pm.