

Snake River Watershed – Steering Committee

Meeting Minutes

Aug. 6, 2024, 1:30-3:30 pm



Attendees: Deanna Pomije, Emily Larsen, *Mara Jade, *Paul Swanson, *Mitch Gindele, *Erin Hoxsie, *Janet Smude, *Barb Peichel *remote attendees
(Voting quorum for only the first 1/3 of this meeting.)

Location: In-person meeting at Kanabec SWCD office: 2008 Mahogany St Ste 3 Mora MN 55051

With a Remote Google Meeting option – login details

Purpose: NEW: Steering member check-in on activities. Steering agreement/by-laws – discuss now or wait. Two proposed projects updates. Outreach – discuss Steering approval process as needed. Discuss cover crop – prevent plant, if allowed.

Regular scheduled meetings:

Steering – 1st Monday, 2 – 4 pm

TAC, as needed 1-2 times/yr. (2nd Thurs. 1:30-4:30 pm)

In 2024 – planning one for late summer / early fall

Partnership Board – 4th Monday, 9:30 am if no SRWMB meeting, (10:30 am, if held after the SRWMB meeting)

It was noted that our new meeting time does conflict with the Snake/Kettle RIM quarterly meetings. For this reason our meeting time was moved back to 2 pm to accommodate the RIM meeting normally from 1-3 pm.

Intro. Fun: If you had to give your car a name, what would it be?

Agenda Topics:

1. Approve Agenda, Other Items...

The group decided to review the watershed financial first as Erin had to leave the meeting early. Of the various tables Erin provided, Deanna pulled out the unencumbered project funds to view, see below.

UNENCUMBERED	
Activity	FY23 SRWP WBIF
Admin	\$0.00
Ag. Practices	\$80,131.40
Forestry Practices	\$38,286.60
Groundwater	\$1,740.30
Livestock Waste Mgmt.	\$30,701.50
Non-structural Mgmt. Practices	\$18,574.10
Outreach	\$8,100.00
Planning and Assessments (SWA)	\$40,902.00
Project Devel	\$15,000.00
SSTS (septics)	\$70,158.30
Stream/Shore Protection	\$157,922.21

8/6/2024

Projects
Projects **Need a prim**
Projects
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Projects

Tech/Eng	\$35,000.00
Urban Stormwater Practices	\$3,600.90
Wetland Restoration/Creation	\$17,403.00
Grand Total	\$517,520.31

Projects
Projects

No meeting quorum after Erin left the meeting.

Deanna announced that the Watershed Coordinator position has been filled with Mary Poelman set to start near the end of Aug. – Sept. timeframe.

Minutes from the 7/8/24 Steering Committee Meeting

A motion was made by Mara to approve the minutes from the 7/8/24 Steering Committee Meeting
Seconded by Erin. Motion passed. The group decided to start doing this as a routine.

2. Any Project Proposals

- a) Kanabec SWCD – project for pipeline/watering facility as part of a rotational grazing operation in the Lower Groundhouse River, requesting \$5,342 (revised)

Deanna reviewed this project modification request to increase the funding from \$2,309.50 to \$5,341.75 to allow for the pipeline installation using boring instead of trenching. This project is a conversion from annual row cropland to pasture, who is seeking certification with the MAWQCP.

A motion was made by Mara to approve this project cost increase to \$5,341.75 for the pipeline installation change on this grazing operation project. Seconded by Emily. Motion passed.

- b) Pine SWCD – Wetland Restoration Proposal near Cross Lake, partnering with WSFWS. Requesting \$7,200, 54% of the project cost.

Mara presented this wetland restoration proposal and explained the use of the Wetland Restoration Effectiveness Tool (WRET) used to calculate the estimated phosphorus reduction with the project. She reviewed that 31 acres of wetland restoration are planned with this project using the plan's action item SWQuan-5 in the catchment priority area.

A motion was made by Deanna to approve this wetland restoration project, partnering with the USFWS, requesting \$7,200. Seconded by Janet. Motion passed.

- c) Pine SWCD – buckthorn removal project now with replanting included, 28 acres in the Lower Snake River sub-watershed

*Proposed Forestry Practices using WBIF funds – updates

For tracking projects progress over time Barb explained what the Rum Watershed uses. They use a spreadsheet that is color coded green, orange and red to denote continued progress or delay on project work

3. Steering Members check-in:

(This is your opportunity to provide an update on any Snake WBIF project and outreach activities, including projects in development. Are things on schedule? What do you need to proceed?)

Deanna reviewed the watershed outreach activities of late. They conducted a shoreland restoration workshop on Fish Lake, creating a folder of resources that were provided to the 9 engaged participants. She agreed to upload these materials onto the Snake google shared site. They also sent out a targeted mailing to farmers explaining the flat rate soil health practice incentive payments available and materials promoting the use of cover crops. There is a Soil Health event with a livestock focus on Aug. 27 at the McVay farm just west of Mora from 4-8 pm, dinner is being provided. Extension is leading in the presentations.

Mara mentioned they have a planned outreach event at the Frechette Farm with a meal provided. The Pokegama sub-analysis has begun with consultant, Stantec. A windshield survey is needed. The Pokegama Lake Assn. (PLA) is planning for a Nanobubbles pilot project to help clean up the lake water in the north bay. They installed 4 shoreland projects last week where they used group bidding. They are planning for the main stem of the Snake River assessment this fall.

Janet mentioned that their forester has resigned and they've been working in McGrath where they have some local funds to do forest stewardship planning, postcards were sent out.

Mitch from Mille Lacs Co. mentioned they also have low-income septic funding for non-compliance septic.

4. Steering Committee – DRAFT Operating Agreements, attached (now or wait)

It was decided to wait to have a discussion on approving a steering committee operating agreement until our new Coordinator steps into the position.

5. Prevent plant cover crops – should we fund this? (Rum has not)

Deanna presented this discussion point. With more prevent plant acres (annual cropland acres not planted due to untimely spring wet weather) this year it brings up a question on whether we will fund prevent plant acres of cover crop plantings. Mara read for the group the benefits of planting cover crops to help the group understanding of cover crops. Deanna confirmed that our Snake policy as copied from the Rum Watershed does state no funding of cover crops under prevent plant conditions. It was noted that the Rum Watershed recently reversed this previous policy decision of theirs. Deanna explained after doing some research on who if anyone actually required cover crops to be planted under prevent plant conditions. FSA nor NRCS require planting of cover crops under prevent plant conditions. In discussion with a local private crop insurance provider, it was clarified that insurance providers only require that weeds be controlled in prevent plant conditions, so the specific planting of cover crops is optional in this situation. In summary the planting of cover crops under prevent plant conditions is not a requirement. Deanna's opinion was to reverse the Snake's policy of not allowing the funding of cover crops under prevent plant conditions. The group wanted more time to review and agreed to discuss this topic again at the next Steering meeting. Emily agreed to check with Willow Dean and get her take on this topic. It was suggested to have someone at the next meeting who can explain cover crops to the group.

6. Outreach Events – How to review with the Steering Committee, with proposed outreach expenses

Deanna asked the group what process we should have when WBIF funds are sought for outreach events. She explained that in discussing this with BWSR recently they provided some clarity on when WBIF funds could be used for food at outreach events. Funds may be used when the watershed is planning the event and the food costs are reasonable in nature. They had advised to consult with the grant specialists first to confirm proposed scenarios, possibly using RSVP to cut back on food costs.

7. Budget review, see the included end of Qtr. 2 budget (brainstorm ideas to increase project spending, limiting factors to progress)

- Staff capacity
- More targeted outreach
- Engineering with the private sector as needed
- Lake treatment year 2 or 3

This topic was only discussed briefly. Deanna introduced this concern over spending down the funds fast enough. She mentioned some of the above ideas to help speed up the work. This conversation is maybe premature. Other suggestions were to consult with NRCS on any unfunded projects they have in the hopper.

Someone mentioned in Brainerd that a retired farmer was hired to assist in promoting ag. conservation practices in the area.

8. Other Updates:

- a) Other Proposed Updates
- b) Check out our shared drive: the outreach file now contains many example flyers, outreach materials for us to modify and use (thanks to the Rum watershed)
- c) Request to have a Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) meeting late summer/early fall
MPCA has news – development of Total Max. Daily Load (TMDLs)
Deanna mentioned that to provide this update on TMDL's to the group they could call a TAC meeting and also provide an update on the watershed work.

9. Agenda for the next Partnership Meetings – 9/23/24 10:30 am Agenda items:

Consent agenda – how did we like this from the 7/22 P'ship meeting?

Deanna briefly asked the group how they liked the use of the consent agenda for the first time with the Partnership Board. She stated that some of the project and outreach updates are worth calling out to review with the board if the consent agenda was to continue to be used.

- a. Approve Agenda, Consent Agenda (w/logo), progress update & Meeting Outcomes
- b. Financial Update
- c. Policy Proposals, forestry practices as ready
- d. Project Proposals
- e. Contract for Services
 - Statements of Work, as needed
 - Others
- f. Others...

10. Next proposed Steering Meeting 9/2/24 (first Mon. of the month),

2 – 4 pm – agenda ideas:

Discuss when meeting warranted – every month or only when projects/agenda items

Future agenda items:

- Reporting collaboration – spreadsheet for now or spatial option later
- Sub-watershed assessment learning from others (Chisago)

11. Meeting Evaluation

What worked? What didn't? Suggestions for change?

Access to our Google Drive for sharing Snake Implementation details:

https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/OAH_uSPLSkOSqUk9PVA

Next Steering Meetings, proposed agenda items, list to tackle:

- ✓ Orientation of new members

Mara requested to be invited to part of the orientation with Mary, the new coordinator.

- ✓ Project Tracking / Reporting (excel spreadsheet)
- ✓ Others...

Partnership Board Discussion List for review over time:

- ✓ MCIT presentation, risk of new entity operations (Jan. 2025)
- ✓ Project Proposals - Contract for Services
 - Forestry practices - policy
- ✓ Etc.

