

Rum River Watershed Partnership Board Meeting Minutes

June 27th, 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 CD
 Wade Bastian – Benton SWCD
 Al Koczur – Isanti SWCD
 Alan Duff – Isanti County
 Kim Johnson – Kanabec SWCD
 Jake Janski – Mille Lacs SWCD
 Dale Scholl – Morrison SWCD
 Bobby Kasper – Morrison County

Alternates Present:

None

Partners and Staff Present:

Jamie Schurbon – Anoka CD
 Emily Forbord – Benton SWCD (*virtual*)
 Lydia Godfrey – Isanti SWCD
 Tiffany Determan – Isanti SWCD
 Douglas Page – Isanti SWCD
 Susan Shaw – Mille Lacs SWCD
 Molly Clyne – Mille Lacs SWC

Voting Members Absent:

Bob Janzen – Aitkin SWCD
 Ed Popp – Benton County
 Andrew Hulse – Sherburne County
 Chris Jurek – Sherburne SWCD
 Kelly Applegate – Mille Lacs Band of Ojibwe

Others:

Barb Peichel— BWSR
 Michelle Jordan— BWSR

1. Meeting called to order by Janski at 4:33 pm. Introductions led by Janski.

2. Approve Agenda

Motion by Westerlund to approve the agenda; second by Duff. Affirmative: All. Opposed: None. **The Motion carried.**

3. Approval of March 21st, 2024 JPE meeting minutes

Motion by Werdien to approve the minutes; second by Johnson. Affirmative: All. Opposed: None. **The Motion carried.**

4. Administrative reports/updates

Financials:

Schurbon provided a high-level overview update.

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

Progress updates:

Shaw provided an update on the Mille Lacs projects. There is staff turnover happening, which means that project advancement will be slow, but will happen. Janski asked if the turnover will impede the ability to complete it this year, but Shaw noted that the statement of work extends it into 2025 and they will be on track to meet that.

Forbord provided an update on the Benton SWCD projects. She noted that they are hoping to have someone to work on cover crops for this fall, and that they just got a TSA bid for their water and sediment control basin project. Progress is slow but on track for this fall.

5. Education and Outreach Updates

Godfrey presented Type A outreach updates. She said they are on track to finish the education and outreach plan by the end of the year. She also noted that the JPE board will review the FY25-26 work plan for approval on the September JPE meeting. Most of the September meeting will be dedicated to a projects tour in Isanti. Additionally, she noted that there is a Soil Health Field Day on August 5th starting at 5:30pm at Braun's Market in Pease.

Discussion

For the September meeting and projects tour, Janski asked about meeting length and if it would be kept within the usual 2 hours. Determan asked if the group would be okay with it being an extended 3 hours, which partners seemed fine with, so the group was told to plan for 3 hours starting at 4:30. The meeting place is TBD but will be in Isanti.

Clyne presented Type B outreach updates. She said that she has been working on organizing teams within the Watershed. For example, she is convening a Rum Agriculture Tech Team on the 23rd of July to help facilitate connection and encourage working with Rum partners on projects, events, etc. She will also be reconvening the Rum RIM Tech Team for easements on the 16th of July. Additionally, she is continuing work on the Tree Planting Pilot funded by LCCMR and continuing to organize forestry roles.

Discussion

Janski asked about how Page's role will connect with Clyne's forestry work. Determan and Page explained that Page will be doing technical work, such as doing the backlog of easement requests and coordinating forest stewardship plans for larger acreage projects and hopefully start working on smaller acreage projects, too.

6. Approve FY23 WBIF 2nd Q 2024 Funding Requests and Statement of Work Amendments

Determan presented the amendments. The first dealt with funds for the fiscal agent and watershed coordinator. There is unencumbered money for attorney, audit, and insurance fees that we are not expecting to use this year, so the IPC proposed moving that money to Schurbon and Determan for their staff time.

Additionally, the IPC recommended a project development amendment of an additional \$6k for Isanti projects. This would be staff time to do the technical outreach to secure additional near-shore stormwater reduction BMPs on tier 1 and tier 2 lakes.

Lastly, the IPC recommends funding an amendment to add \$50k of funding and \$12 of match to Isanti's SOW to do the work on tier 1 and tier 2 lakes for near-shore stormwater reduction BMPs.

Motion by Werdien to approve the amendments; Bastian seconded. Affirmative: All. Opposed: None. **The Motion carried.**

7. Approve FY25 WBIF Work Plan

The FY25 WBIF Work Plan was presented at the last meeting, and partners' boards were asked to look it over and provide comments if necessary. Determan noted that no comments were received.

Motion by Duff to approve work plan, authorize staff to submit funding request to BWSR and submit work plan; second by Westerlund. Affirmative: All. Opposed: None. **The Motion carried.**

8. Data Practices Policy

Schurbon described that the policy shows the public how they can get data from us. We are required by law to have this policy. The State Department of Administration provides

a template which we used for ours; most state agencies have a policy identical to ours. The chance it will ever be used is low, but we must have it on file.

Motion by Johnson to approve the data practices policy as presented; second by Koczur. Affirmative: All. Opposed: None. **The Motion carried.**

9. Attorney Services Change

Schurbon described how the partnership's attorney in recent years has been Troy Gilchrist at Kennedy and Graven. Troy is splitting from the firm to form a new firm called Town Law Center. He described that we need to choose to stay with Troy Gilchrist and move to his new firm, or to stay with Kennedy and Graven. Schurbon's recommendation was to stay with Troy Gilchrist as he is an attorney for many watershed organizations and is experienced in it, whereas the others at Kennedy and Graven have some experience but not as much.

Motion by Bastian to approve staying with Troy Gilchrist at his new firm, Town Law Center; second by Duff. Affirmative: All. Opposed: None. **The Motion carried.**

10. WBIF Policy revisions

Determan described that as part of the new FY25 WBIF funds, there are some things in existing policy that need to be updated. The goal is to have 1 policy that covers all our WBIF funds so that we do not have to have separate policies for each year of funding.

Determan wanted to give a high-level overview of the policy changes being proposed. By the September meeting, she wants the policy changes ready for the board to approve so they can be used for the FY25 funding.

The first change deals with project approval. The revision would make Tier 3 waters eligible.

The second change deals with text regarding activity budget shifts. The policy aims to help answer the question of, if we wanted to shift money, at what point do we do that? The change states that we would wait for a year of the grant to pass before shifting money. Text regarding activity budget shifts:

Finally, the proposed cost-share policies. There are various rates depending on the project. For example, 75% for wetland restorations, 80% based on the DNR rate for forest stewardship plans. Plans must have a water quality benefit; text describing that is included in the policy, along with some additional required processes that the individual SWCDs will have to work through. Determan noted that the forestry team is trying to come up with some incentive rates for forestry practices, but it is a lengthier process than originally intended.

11. Open forum/member updates

Godfrey noted that the 2nd Tuesday of the month every month 8:30-9:30 am is the outreach hour.

Determan said the July IPC probably will be cancelled, but further info will come.

Page was hired as the land protection specialist.

The Kanabec SWCD district manager took the Snake Watershed Coordinator position, so the manager position is open. Currently, there are a few applicants.

12. Next Meeting Date

The September 26th short meeting and Isanti tour will be 4:30-7:30pm somewhere in Isanti. Godfrey and/or Determan will be in touch about location specifics and food.

13. Janski called the meeting to adjourn at 5:20pm.