

Minutes

Rum River Watershed Comprehensive  
Management Plan – Implementation  
Planning Committee Meeting

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Date: March 10<sup>th</sup>, 2025

Time: 12:30-2:30 PM

Location: In Person

Meeting called by: Planning Partners

Type of meeting: Work Planning Meeting

Facilitator: Tiffany Determan, Isanti SWCD

Note taker: Molly Clyne, Mille Lacs SWCD

Attendees:

*Voting members:*

Ellie Joing, Aitkin County SWCD

Sam Seybold, Aitkin County SWCD

Jamie Schurbon, Anoka CD

Emily Forbord, Benton SWCD

Mike McMillin, Benton SWCD

Scott Soderman, Isanti County

Tiffany Determan, Isanti SWCD

Emily Larsen, Kanabec SWCD

Jaren Peplinski, Kanabec SWCD

Mary Poelman, Kanabec SWCD

Molly Clyne, Mille Lacs SWCD

Siena Storm, Mille Lacs SWCD

Lew Noska, Morrison SWCD

Matt Danzl, Sherburne County

Dan Cibulka, Sherburne SWCD

*Advisory Members:*

Zach Guttormson, BWSR

Barb Peichel, BWSR

Brian Steffen, NRCS

*Other:*

Al Koczur, Isanti SWCD Supervisor  
Jake Janski, Mille Lacs SWCD Supervisor  
Chris Jurek, Sherburne SWCD Supervisor

## **Meeting Minutes**

### **1. Welcome and Introductions**

Led by Tiffany Determan , Isanti SWCD.

### **2. Planning Team Updates (Information)**

#### **A. Administration**

*Budget Update:* Schurbon presented an update on two Watershed-Based Implementation Fund (WBIF) grants from 2023 and 2025.

- **2023 WBIF Grant:** Set to expire at the end of this year. Nearly all funds are already encumbered, with significant allocations for projects in Isanti and Mille Lacs.
- **2025 WBIF Grant:** Approximately \$1.3 million remains unspent. These funds are available for request as needed.

#### **B. Outreach**

*Type A Outreach:*

- *Webinar on Tree Selection: **Selecting the Best Trees for Your Property and Goals*** took place at the end of February. The recorded webinar is available on the Isanti SWCD YouTube page. Efforts are underway to upload all Rum River Watershed Partnership (RRWP) webinars to the watershed's website.
- *Watershed Nitrate Well Screening Clinic:* Scheduled for the week of April 7th-11th across multiple SWCD offices, including Benton, Mille Lacs, Isanti, and Sherburne counties. The clinic is being widely advertised, and residents can visit the most convenient office location for testing.

*Type B Outreach:*

- *Agricultural Technical Meeting:* The next meeting is on Monday the 17th from 10 AM to 11 AM, featuring Mike McMillin from Benton SWCD speaking on nutrient management. Open to all interested participants—reach out to be added to the list.
- *Local Forestry Team:* Currently engaging forestry partners to gather input and preferences before scheduling the next meeting. The goal is to assess interest and refine plans before regrouping.

#### **C. Updates**

*Benton SWCD Update:* The Schafer project's initial bid was \$100,000 but has been revised to \$50,000. The project has secured \$75,000 in cost-share funding, which may leave additional funds available. Construction is planned for spring, though the landowner is considering postponing to fall. May discussions will focus on modifying the contract for board approval in June. Securing a contractor agreement in advance will provide a clearer cost estimate. Additional technical assistance funding may be needed, and options for reallocating funds within the \$50,000 adjustment limit (without requiring a work plan revision) will be explored once more details are available.

*Well Sealing Cost-Share:* Determan noted that if any partners have landowners in need of well-sealing cost-share, Isanti SWCD has available funds and is open to supporting projects within the Rum River Watershed, even across county lines.

### **3. 1<sup>st</sup> Q 2025 Funding Requests**

#### **A. Funding Request 1: Morrison SWCD**

Noska presented a proposal for planting 200 Black Hills spruce, estimating a phosphorus reduction of 7.5 lbs/year at maturity. He acknowledged the difficulty in calculating forestry BMP benefits due to limited available tools. The project is in the West Branch, with a county ditch likely draining into the Rum River. Morrison SWCD plans to fund the project regardless of this meeting's outcome.

During the discussion, Peichel noted that other watersheds justify forestry projects by linking them to water quality benefits in a written narrative. Partners debated which Action ID best fit the project, with SWP.13 and SWP.25 suggested based on measurable goals. The group also discussed whether "plans" referred to planting plans, forest stewardship plans, or another category.

While partners agreed the project provides a water quality benefit, the proposal did not fully align with policy guidelines, reducing the amount the Partnership could allocate. Schurbon emphasized that future projects should be tied to riparian or drainage areas, have a measurable water quality benefit, and meet a minimum threshold. After adjusting the request to follow policy, the Partnership voted to FUND the project.

Based off this discussion, the group felt that the forestry policies need to be

revisited. A forest technical group was formed to meet at a later date and provide recommendations on policy.

#### **B. Funding Request 2: Benton SWCD**

Partners reviewed the request and determined that SWR.19 was a better fit as an Action ID. With this revision, the Partnership voted to FUND the request.

#### **C. Funding Request 3: Isanti SWCD**

Isanti SWCD proposed a study on direct erosion risks along the Rum River in the Cambridge and St. Francis management zones. The study would use aerial photography and LiDAR to identify erosion sites and determine potential BMPs, with findings supporting future funding applications.

#### **4. 2025 Work Plan**

An annual work plan is required, including a budget, a non-WBIF-funded work plan, a WBIF work plan (updated every other year), and implementation tracking. The budget and non-WBIF-funded work plan will first be reviewed here before being presented to the board.

##### *Non-WBIF-funded work plan:*

This provides the board with a broader understanding of ongoing efforts beyond just WBIF-funded activities. Determan presented a non-party funds sheet outlining additional funding sources and projects outside of WBIF and there were no questions/comments.

##### *Budget (WBIF Only):*

The budget includes two tabs: a simple budget and a detailed budget. While the 2024 approved budget and actual spending are available for reference, the focus remains on the 2025 budget, as it requires approval. The deadline to determine whether FY23 funds will be fully spent is in June. Once finalized, the budget will be presented to the JPE Board. No present board members had questions.

##### *Action IDs and Tracking for Outreach Items:*

For Outreach and Education, there are four key outcomes outlined in the comprehensive plan. There are not currently action IDs for these four outcomes like other implementation tables, and the group agreed that we can assign them Action IDs like EO1, EO2, etc. A single document compiling the education and outreach guidelines will be distributed. Peichel emphasized that this alignment

will be beneficial for PRAP, streamlining the process and improving reporting efficiency.

## **6. 2025 Annual Report**

Clyne briefly reviewed the 2025 Annual Report and its contents, explaining its purpose and how it complements the online database that Dan created. The physical report serves as a tangible way to showcase progress, which can be taken to meetings, shared with legislators, and provided to partners.

In general, the physical report mirrors much of the information available on the online tracker but offers a different perspective on progress. While the tracker allows for deeper analysis of specific details, the report provides a comprehensive overview of the previous year's progress and features additional photos of the work completed.

### *Discussion*

There was a question about whether funding for water storage and protected land is still available since these were already completed. The answer was yes, as there was still some unspent funding allocated for these areas, and the funding levels were set too low initially.

## **7. Annual Tour**

There was a discussion about planning the September board tour. Suggestions included organizing the tour around a lake, with Clyne agreeing to discuss this further with Shaw. Schurbon proposed the St. Francis area as another potential location. No final decisions were made, and further discussion will take place to finalize the details.

## **8. Announcements/Discussion**

### **A. BWSR**

The LCCMR has been extended, providing the potential for funds to be moved around for easements. The group is still awaiting more information on this. Regarding the RCCP (Regional Conservation Partnership Program), specifically for soil health, all agreements have been signed, so everything is expected to be on track.

### **B. NRCS**

The federal budget has taken a hit, significantly reducing the funding for 5 counties from \$2.3 million to \$200,000. Many funds remain frozen, and it's unclear whether they will be released. More clarity should come once the

federal budget is passed. Local offices may approach the districts to see if funding from the Rum River can support projects.

#### **C. DNR**

Reed Northwick and Jeff Weiss from the DNR want to be copied on meetings and expressed interest in contributing. They are available to assist with consultations, provide advice, help find funding, and assist with grant writing. However, they rely on local entities for coordination and outreach. For this watershed, there is some planned survey work in Cedar Creek, which could lead to future projects. Additionally, they are interested in Stanchfield Creek and potential remandering. The Rum River is also of interest for future work.

#### **D. MPCA**

The MPCA is awaiting the second monitoring season for the Cycle 2 watershed assessment.

### **9. Wrap-up & Next Meeting**

A reminder to update project progress in preparation for the next Board meeting on March 27th at 4:30 PM. The next IPC meeting in April will likely be canceled unless there is a specific reason to hold it.

### **10. Adjourn**