

# Rum River Watershed Partnership Board Meeting Minutes

**January 23rd, 2025 4:30PM – 6:30PM**

In-Person Meeting

Mille Lacs Historic Courthouse  
Lower Level, Conference Room D

**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  
Bob Janzen, Aitkin SWCD  
Danielle Holder, Anoka CD (virtual)  
Ed Popp, Benton County  
Alan Duff, Isanti County  
Al Koczur, Isanti SWCD  
Jake Janski, Mille Lacs SWCD  
Bobby Kasper, Morrison County  
Chris Jurek, Sherburne SWCD  
Brad Schumacher, Sherburne County (virtual)  
Kelly Applegate, MLBO  
Dale Scholl, Morrison SWCD

**Alternates Present:**

Mike Winkelman, Benton SWCD  
Jon Sanford, Kanabec SWCD

**Partners and Staff Present:**

Jamie Schurbon, Anoka CD  
Michael McMillin, Benton SWCD (virtual)  
Tiffany Determan, Isanti SWCD  
Lydia Godfrey, Isanti SWCD (virtual)  
Susan Shaw, Mille Lacs SWCD  
Molly Clyne, Mille Lacs SWCD  
Perry Bunting, MLBO (virtual)

**Voting Members Absent:**

Wade Bastian, Benton SWCD  
Kim Johnson, Kanabec SWCD

**Others:**

Zach Guttormson, BWSR  
Barb Peichel, BWSR

1. Meeting called to order by Janski at 4:30pm. Introductions led by Janski.
2. Approve Agenda

One additional SOW to be added to item nine of the agenda.

**Motion by Duff to approve the agenda as presented with the addition;** second by Kasper. Affirmative: All. Opposed: None. **The Motion carried.**

3. Election of Officers: Chair, Vice Chair

**Motion by Westerlund to nominate Jake Janski as Chair;** second by Scholl. Affirmative: All. Opposed: None. **The Motion carried.**

**Motion by Duff to nominate Al Koczur as Vice Chair;** second by Westerlund. Affirmative: All. Opposed: None. **The Motion Carried.**

4. Approve September 26th, 2024 Minutes:

**Motion by Popp to approve the minutes as presented;** second by Koczur. Affirmative: All. Opposed: None. **The Motion carried.**

5. 2025 Meeting Schedule and Location:

*Discussion:* Determan presented the proposed 2025 meeting schedule (March 27<sup>th</sup>, June 26<sup>th</sup>, September 25<sup>th</sup>, December 18<sup>th</sup>). It will be kept quarterly, hosted at the Mille Lacs County Historic Courthouse, beginning at 4:30pm. Shaw mentioned that the Courthouse will be undergoing construction that may impact accessibility, but there will be a path to the conference room.

**Motion by Westerlund to approve the dates, times, and locations for the 2025 meetings;** second by Koczur. Affirmative: All. Opposed: None. **The Motion carried.**

6. Administrative reports/updates

*Financials:* Schurbon presented the financial report, which was created mid-January so includes end of 2024 imbursements, meaning it will differ from the end of year 2024 bank statements. Looking at the FY23 money, we are doing well on match funds—we've encumbered more than the grant requires. All of the funds are encumbered, 42% are spent, leaving 58% to spend before the end of this year where it will expire. For the FY25 grant, we've only encumbered 15% so far. Most funds do not have a project home yet, and none has been spent.

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

*Progress Updates:* Shaw noted that Mille Lacs SWCD has a full staff and is ready to make further progress. On the chart depicting progress status, Janski asked the group if they liked how the information is presented, and the response was positive.

## 7. Education/Outreach Updates

*Website Updates:* Clyne reviewed the 2024 updates made to the Rum River Watershed webpage, available on the Mille Lacs SWCD website under the 'Watersheds' tab. The page is organized into separate tabs for easy navigation. She encouraged staff and board members to explore the page when possible. Additionally, she and Godfrey developed a Resources Page covering a variety of topics, intended to support partners, community groups, and individuals.

*Type B and Forestry programs updates:* Clyne provided updates on forestry initiatives, starting with the tree planting pilot program in the Rum River Watershed, which has been extended to promote reforestation on permanently protected lands (20- and 50-year SFIA or conservation easements). She also mentioned a recently awarded federal grant aimed at incentivizing tree planting, with more details to be shared soon. This grant represents a significant influx of funding for forestry efforts in the state and watershed, enabling impactful reforestation work.

Shifting to Type B outreach, Clyne presented her FY23 report, explaining that Type B differs from traditional outreach by fostering active citizen participation in implementing the watershed plan. She highlighted examples of recent activities supporting this approach, including a soil health field day, the agricultural tech team, the Mille Lacs farmer-led group, a plan writer workshop, and the local forestry team.

*Type A updates:* Godfrey shared updates on Type A outreach activities, noting that the first webinar of the year is scheduled for February 27th. The webinar, focused on tree selection to complement SWCD tree sales, will feature speakers from the DNR and UMN Extension. Topics will include selecting trees for specific property goals, planting along shorelines, reducing erosion, and creating climate-ready woodlands. Additionally, the outreach team is in the early stages of planning a well screening clinic and a forestry field day for spring.

*Discussion:* Janski asked if the webinar would be recorded and whether it could be shared on SWCD tree sale websites. Godfrey confirmed that the webinar would be recorded and noted that its content is general enough to remain relevant beyond this season.

## 8. RRWP Tag Line/Branding

Godfrey discussed the plan to create signs for placement at partnership project locations. These signs will include a slogan, consistent branding, and be designed to be easily readable from the road. Godfrey presented a few slogan options and invited the group to share their opinions.

After discussion, the group expressed support for the slogan "**Protecting Our Watershed,**" highlighting its emphasis on community ownership through the use of the word "our." The possibility of replacing "watershed" with an alternative word, such as "water," was also considered. The draft will be at the next meeting for the members to vote on.

**Motion by Duff to adopt the slogan "Protecting Our Watershed" with the flexibility to substitute "watershed" with "water" or another word if deemed more suitable by staff working on the project;** second by Popp. Affirmative: All. Opposed: None. **The Motion carried.**

9. Approve 4<sup>th</sup> Quarter Agreements and Statement of Work(s):

**Motion by Westerlund to approve the Anoka CD's FY23 WBIF Outreach extension;** second by Koczur. Affirmative: All. Opposed: None. **The Motion carried.**

**Motion by Popp to approve the Mille Lacs SWCD's FY23 WBIF Communications SOW extension;** second by Westerlund. Affirmative: All. Opposed: None. **The Motion carried.**

**Motion by Westerlund to approve adjusting the Sherburne SWCD's FY23 SOW to reduce the funding amount for Implementation Tracking;** second by Applegate. Affirmative: All. Opposed: None. **The Motion carried.**

**Motion by Koczur to approve the renewal of the watershed coordinator agreement for Isanti SWCD;** second by Duff. Affirmative: All. Opposed: None. **The Motion carried.**

**Motion by Popp to approve the renewal of the fiscal agent agreement for Anoka CD;** second by Westerlund. Affirmative: All. Opposed: None. **The Motion carried.**

**Motion by Westerlund to approve the Aitkin SWCD's FY25 SOW;** second by Janzen. Affirmative: All. Opposed: None. **The Motion carried.**

**Motion by Koczur to approve the SOW for Isanti SWCD's FY25 WBIF Type A outreach and drainage study;** second by Westerlund. Affirmative: All. Opposed: None. **The Motion carried.**

**Motion by Westerlund to approve the SOW for Sherburne SWCD for implementation tracking for FY25-26;** second by Koczur. Affirmative: All. Opposed: None.

**Motion by Popp to approve the Benton SWCD's reduction of FY23 WBIF funds;** second by Winkelman. Affirmative: All. Opposed: None. **The Motion carried.**

10. Reflections:

Staff shared several tips for new and established partners to stay informed and engaged. Board members were encouraged to reach out to staff with any questions or to learn more about specific topics. Attending IPC meetings was suggested as a way to gain insight into behind-the-scenes work, while participating in monthly outreach meetings provides updates on ongoing efforts. Additionally, partners were invited to share topic suggestions with Determan for areas they would like to learn more about.

11. Communications & Announcements:

Janski noted that some agencies within the watershed initially opted out of joining the partnership. He asked if there is a process or a reasonable timeframe for checking back with them to see if they are now interested in participating and how that might be facilitated. Shaw responded that she will be collaborating with Mille Lacs County staff to inform the new Mille Lacs County commissioners about the partnership's activities. If the commissioners express interest in joining, the partnership can work on determining the necessary logistics to include them.

12. Next Meeting Date: March 27<sup>th</sup> 2025

13. Janski called the meeting to adjourn at 5:36pm.