

# Rum River Watershed Comprehensive Management Plan – Implementation Planning Committee Meeting Minutes

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Date: June 9<sup>th</sup>, 2025

Time: 12:30-2:30 PM

Location: Virtual

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:*

Sam Seybold, Aitkin SWCD  
Jamie Schurbon, Anoka CD  
Emily Forbord, Benton SWCD  
Jaren Peplinski, Kanabec SWCD  
Lydia Godfrey, Isanti SWCD  
Matt Olson, Isanti SWCD  
Scott Soderman, Isanti County  
Tiffany Determan, Isanti SWCD  
Molly Clyne, Mille Lacs SWCD  
Susan Shaw, Mille Lacs SWCD  
Robert Wall, MLBO DNR  
Dan Cibulka, Sherburne SWCD

### *Advisory Members:*

Zach Guttormson, BWSR  
Barb Peichel, BWSR

### *Other:*

Jake Janski, Mille Lacs SWCD Supervisor  
Kelly Applegate, MLBO DNR Commissioner  
Brad Schumacher, Sherburne County Commissioner  
Bonnie Goshey, MPCA

## 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 the year. We have spent approximately 54% of the grant, though there is some Q2 work that has been done but not invoiced yet. A small amount of money, about 9k, is not encumbered, spread out amongst a few activities. We are doing well on match.

**2025 WBIF Grant:** We've only spent 33k so far, which is about 2.5%, with approximately 32% encumbered. A large part of this is for staff time. Match encumbered so far is only 7%, but it is early in the grant.

All funding requests were recommended at the last IPC meeting, so none are on this agenda. At the March IPC meeting, there was discussion about organizing a JPE tour. Godfrey reminded the group that tours are held every other year, which allows more time for projects to develop. Determann shared that WBIF funding for the next biennium is expected to remain at the same level. Partners are encouraged to stay proactive in identifying and advancing priority projects and actions in the plan. Implementation tracking has begun, with notes being made on committed actions—any notable findings will be brought back to the group. Counties interested in participating in septic system work are encouraged to reach out. Schurbon noted that technical and engineering funds are available and can be used for project design now, with implementation planned for a future funding round.

#### B. Outreach

**Type A Outreach:** Two upcoming forestry events: the Protecting Your Woods workshop on June 14<sup>th</sup>, featuring speakers on topics such as emerald ash borer (EAB), buckthorn, and general woodland management; and a forestry open house on July 10<sup>th</sup> at Sunken Ship Brewery, where attendees can stop in to ask questions and connect informally. Additionally, a staff workshop is planned during the August

IPC meeting to cover the connection between surface water and groundwater. The comprehensive plan calls for three such staff workshops, and this will be the first.

**Type B Outreach:** The Agricultural Technical Meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, June 17<sup>th</sup>, from 10:00–11:00 a.m. Sabrina Florentino from University of Minnesota Extension will present on grazing cover crops. The Local Forestry Team met on May 29<sup>th</sup> and had strong attendance.

### C. Other

**Implementation tracking:** Cibulka added several new education and outreach actions to the tracking system as discussed at a previous meeting. He is also updating the system to improve data formatting and usability based on what he's recently learned.

### 3. FY23 WBIF Spending and SOW Adjustments

Partners are encouraged to review their current Statements of Work (SOWs) ahead of the June JPE meeting to identify any needed adjustments—particularly if all allocated funds will not be spent or if significant scope changes are anticipated. The June meeting will be a good opportunity to process larger revisions, and partners should expect related communication and paperwork soon.

Under current policy, SOW changes that exceed a 10% funding adjustment or involve substantial shifts in project scope must be approved by the JPE. Determan shared a proposal to allow the fiscal agent and coordinator to approve such changes.

Additionally, if significant unspent funds are returned, a funding pool could be created for project requests under \$30,000. These could be approved by IPC staff using the existing voting process—pending JPE authorization. These proposed changes aim to maintain momentum and reduce administrative bottlenecks.

The group voted yes to bringing these proposals to the board.

*Discussion:* Cibulka expressed concern about delegating approval authority for the proposed changes, noting that similar ideas were previously viewed as a legal delegation of authority and were rejected following input from multiple county attorneys. Partners suggested the proposal might be more acceptable as a one-time exception or if limited to a specific timeframe, such as the final six months of the grant. Determan will consult with the Isanti SWCD attorney to

determine if there are any legal issues with the proposal.

#### **4. Policy Updates**

At the last IPC meeting, a project from Morrison SWCD prompted a broader discussion about the current forestry policy. Partners noted that the existing approach is confusing, time-consuming, and doesn't provide landowners with competitive rates. A clear need emerged for a simpler, more effective policy. The proposed solution is to adopt a 75% cost-share model and allow districts to request lump-sum funding for general forestry projects—reducing the need to bring small projects back to the IPC and JPE for approval. Clyne read the draft policy aloud for review.

Determan shared a comment she received about preventing inappropriate wetland plantings. The group agreed that it's difficult to address every possible issue in policy language and emphasized that technicians are expected to implement projects correctly and within policy, with any concerns to be brought to IPC meetings. Partners were reminded to track receipts and in-kind time—especially if moving away from a flat-rate system, which doesn't require receipts. They were also reminded that this funding is intended for larger-scale reforestation projects, not small-scale landscaping. These types of implementation details can continue to be discussed at IPC meetings.

The group voted to move the revised forestry policy forward to the JPE for approval.

Determan also reminded partners that cost-share for Woodland Stewardship Plans is already available through Isanti and Mille Lacs SWCDs. Interested partners can contact Molly Clyne or Doug Page for more information and to avoid submitting separate funding requests.

#### **5. MPCA Stressor ID**

Bonnie shared that MPCA is currently conducting watershed monitoring as part of the second 10-year cycle, which began in 2024. Initial data flagged nine sites as potentially problematic, and those locations will be re-examined this summer. Data collection will continue through 2025, with results and potential impairments to be discussed in meetings starting around March 2026. If any TMDLs are needed, that process will begin at that time, along with an update to the WRAPS report.

The WRAPS update will follow a streamlined template compared to the first cycle. Bonnie requested feedback from partners on what the WRAPS update should include—some watersheds have only asked for the monitoring

data, but others may want more detail. She encouraged partners to reach out with input on problem areas, unique monitoring needs, or special focus projects.

## **6. Issue Statement/ Goal Progress – NR Invasive Species**

Cibulka led a discussion on several of the plan’s measurable goals. Some are straightforward—such as tracking linear feet or acres impacted—while others are more complex and may require further clarification or refinement. As the planning team reviewed the goals, it became clear that we need to revisit our currently listed *natural resource priority issues* to determine whether they are still relevant. Should we continue focusing on these issues, or do other goals better reflect current priorities?

There are currently two invasive species goals included in the plan:

### **1. Reduction of acres and population size of current invasive species**

Measurable outcome: One invasive species management plan completed and presented to weed management authorities for consideration.

#### *Discussion:*

Partners confirmed that this goal was intended as a *watershed-wide* effort. Some county ag inspectors are already doing similar work at the county level, so relevant information may already exist. The main task may simply involve consolidating that work and presenting it to the appropriate authorities.

### **2. Reduce new infestations of invasive species**

Measurable outcome: Early detection and rapid response (EDRR) plans for new terrestrial and aquatic invasive species are developed—*nine total plans completed* (one per county).

#### *Discussion:*

Several counties already have EDRR plans in place. The group noted this could be a relatively straightforward task: compile existing plans, compare them, and generate recommendations for improved coordination across the watershed.

The group discussed whether addressing invasive species is required in the plan. Peichel noted that invasive species prevention and/or management is listed as an optional topic in BWSR’s guidance. Therefore, we are not obligated to include these goals. However, she also pointed out that having these goals in the plan may benefit counties in future grant applications or funding

opportunities. Ultimately, this decision should be made in consultation with county partners.

The group agreed to check in with local partners to gauge interest and relevance of these goals. Determan will follow up with ag inspectors and AIS staff. Clyne will reach out to forestry contacts.

## **7. Announcements/Discussion**

Peichel revisited the earlier discussion about whether projects submitted near the end of the grant period could be approved by the fiscal coordinator and watershed coordinator without going through JPE approval. She noted that implementing such a change would likely require a formal policy amendment.

If the group wishes to apply this change more broadly to future grants, it may be most efficient to incorporate the revision now, while the policy is already under review. As currently written, the policy states that all projects must receive JPE approval.

Determan will review the current policy language and draft potential revisions for consideration. Determan also shared that the Minnesota Land Trust has submitted an Outdoor Heritage Fund grant application focused on protecting forested areas. If funded, the grant would support expanding conservation easement opportunities in Mille Lacs County.

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

The next JPE meeting is scheduled for June 26th. A reminder will be sent out in advance, along with a request to update your Scope of Work (SOW) status on the funding request spreadsheet. The July IPC meeting is expected to be canceled, but there will be a staff workshop in conjunction with the August IPC meeting, focused on surface water–groundwater interaction.