

Snake River Watershed – Steering Committee

Meeting MINUTES

May 5, 2025, 2:00pm-4:00 pm



Invitees:

Local SWCD & county staff, BWSR staff

Attendance:

Mary Poelman, [Zach Guttormson](#), [Jaren Peplinski](#), [Heather Donoho](#), [Nick Foss](#), [Barb Peichel](#), Paul Swanson, [Susan Shaw](#), Siena Storm, Kelly Condiff, [Erin C. Hoxsie](#)

Location:

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

Video call link: <http://meet.google.com/bam-qgik-hjw>

Or dial: (US) +1 502-667-4238 PIN: 479 537 515#

More phone numbers: <https://meet.google.com/tel/bam-qgik-hjw?pin=2761399208395&hs=1>

Purpose: Approval of 3 SOW Projects, Review of Policy recommendations to board, Schedule biannual TAC Meeting

	Topics	Assigned	Time
A	Approve Agenda/ Minutes/ Introductions <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Minutes b. Agenda c. Introductions (New Pine County Representative) 	Mary Kanabec SWCD	5-10 min
1	Budget Review <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Review of Q1 Budget Status https://drive.google.com/file/d/1sSgQFZxW0pC16jFv3Nx85_vl6Kc-b_UG/view?usp=drive_link 	Erin Pine County	5 min
2	Projects: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Tree Planting Ranking Sheet: https://docs.google.com/document/d/1GFqdzWl0BAMqf4GpORKQPLNPg2PQ4uq3eh1kdTAItU/edit?usp=drive_link SOW: https://docs.google.com/document/d/1eb7FOea8fNsAiroycro4HSuwyWVtqIKT/edit?usp=drive_link&oid=115886762896760527439&tpof=true&sd=true <p>External Voting-</p>	1. Nick Kanabec SWCD 2 and 3. Heather/Paul Pine SWCD 4 Emily Kanabec SWCD	45 min

	<p>2. CNMP (Pokegama Lake) Ranking Sheet: https://docs.google.com/document/d/1otnY7NbbQ5WA7sMWkPJOM3EmL9QfuREpO2XvrvbGSU4/edit?usp=sharing SOW: https://docs.google.com/document/d/1CMV-T6AAh--UBJaFd2UKZMlgt-Lh0Xfu/edit?usp=sharing&oid=115886762896760527439&rtpof=true&sd=true</p> <p>3. CNMP (Snake River) Ranking Sheet: https://docs.google.com/document/d/12PBZSPeEhqoLRbUstUIO25MwgAlnyWKVm8iFgRfGLSI/edit?usp=sharing</p> <p>SOW: https://docs.google.com/document/d/19XvoGEzIHXNvPHEbJU7OrpCYyoWCVKSK/edit?usp=sharing&oid=115886762896760527439&rtpof=true&sd=true</p> <p>4. Pasture Planting (Groundhouse River) Ranking Sheet: https://docs.google.com/document/d/15ACD_2u9EnYPLVuCxUmkgEtDYbdypbHunyhd2BL92x0/edit?usp=drive_link</p> <p>SOW: https://docs.google.com/document/d/1r-ft8yUhW4raSDXVQ8cGtncwQKBk9Qwl/edit?usp=drive_link&oid=115886762896760527439&rtpof=true&sd=true</p>		
3	<p>Policy Updates:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Cost-Share Pasture and Hay Plantings https://docs.google.com/document/d/1zaPVvLL4N9ID8jWLBqb-l3BAueAojjIM/edit?usp=sharing&oid=115886762896760527439&rtpof=true&sd=true 2. (Delayed) WSP Plan Policy Update (Recommend to Board) https://docs.google.com/document/d/1cYNWSfU04xK_j2e4kogTOoHsYlZlsdEJ/edit?usp=drive_link&oid=115886762896760527439&rtpof=true&sd=true -waiting on MN Legislature Final Budgets 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Jaren Kanabec SWCD 2. Mary Kanabec SWCD 	30 min
4	<p>Discussion: Presentation of the Annual Report to County Boards - requested to be discussed by the JPE board</p> <p>https://drive.google.com/file/d/14umq9BR7aVviJAH0DWXQINP7HuZ3G3JL/view?usp=sharing</p>	Discussion: All Steering Committee Members	10 min

Budget status and project funding overview

2.1 Tree Planting Project Proposal

Nick Foss (Forester) detailed a tree planting initiative on a landowner's property near Mora, which has been previously used for hay. The project aims to plant a variety of trees for privacy and ecological benefits, with a total cost of just over \$10,000, of which approximately \$8,000 is requested from the committee. The landowner has approved the species mix and is eager to proceed.

SC voted to support the project, however with a quorum not being met this project will need to receive further voting to move forward with encumbrances. Mary Poelman confirmed that a quorum was not present, noting the absence of representatives from all three counties . Voting will be conducted remotely, with a week allowed for responses. Paul Swanson (Pine SWCD) clarified that only a majority of the votes is needed for approval, and currently, three members have voted yes. (Votes Yes=Kanabec SWCD, Mille Lacs SWCD, Pine SWCD all other LGU's were absent the meeting)

- Mary Poelman (Coordinator) will send out the project for virtual voting

2.2 CNMP Pokegama Twp

Heather Donoho (Pine SWCD) discussed a CNMP plan for Pokegama twp, focusing on effective nutrient application and runoff reduction from a cattle operation near Lake Pokegama. The funding request is \$9,258, and the plan is significant due to its potential impact on water quality in the Snake River. Donoho noted that the producers are willing to provide a match if necessary, although it is not required for this planning evaluation.

Barb Peichel (BWSR) inquired about changes to grant activity categories related to both nutrient management plans. Mary Poelman noted that the project categories were amended prior to the Meeting but that the technical amendment had not been sent out prior to the meeting.

Heather Donoho (Pine SWCD) provided insights into the Comprehensive Nutrient Management Plan process, emphasizing the importance of proper nutrient application. The discussion highlighted the need to ensure that projects align with priority areas while remaining eligible for funding.

Barb Peichel (BWSR) highlighted the need for outcomes (plans vs nutrient reductions) to match the plans being developed, particularly in relation to agricultural practices.

Mary Poelman asked Heather Donoho (Pine SWCD) to confirm the distinctions between two NRCS plan codes on the cost estimates, noting that one does not require action while the other does. Heather (Pine SWCD) explained that the first plan (Code 101) focuses on structural waste management without mandatory implementation, while the second plan (Code 102) involves a nutrient distribution strategy that could require three years of implementation.

Barb Peichel (BWSR) initiated a discussion on whether Lake Pokegama should be considered part of the priority area for a project, highlighting its connection to the Snake River. Paul Swanson (Pine SWCD) agreed that the relationship

between the lake and river could justify its inclusion, while Susan Shaw (Mille Lacs SWCD) noted the importance of documenting this connection. The group agreed to vote on the project and discuss the necessary documentation later. Documentation could include switching from Action ID SWQual -28 (river and streams priority areas) to SWQual 11 (Lake priority areas) for nutrient management planning. Snake River is a priority area, Pokegama Lake is not a priority area however the two are hydrologically connected with the Snake River backing up into and flowing out of Pokegama Lake.

- A virtual vote was planned to finalize funding for the project, with several members indicating their support. (Votes Yes=Kanabec SWCD, Mille Lacs SWCD, Pine SWCD all other LGU's were absent the meeting)

Mary Poelman (Coordinator) facilitated a discussion regarding the second CNMP for sheep production, noting its favorable ranking based on location. Heather Donoho (Pine SWCD) explained the project's significance in preventing nutrient runoff into the river, identifying it as a Tier 1 priority water body.

- A virtual vote was planned to finalize funding for the project, with several members indicating their support. (Votes Yes=Kanabec SWCD, Mille Lacs SWCD, Pine SWCD all other LGU's were absent the meeting)

3.1

Jaren Peplinski (Kanabec SWCD) outlined a one-time payment program for converting fields to pasture and hay planting, which aligns with NRCS standards. Susan Shaw (Mille Lacs SWCD) questioned how this program differs from typical crop rotations, expressing concerns about potential over-enrollment. Paul Swanson (Pine SWCD) suggested that the program could serve as a pathway for producers to adopt additional best management practices. Heather Donoho (Pine SWCD) explained Pine SWCD policy referencing NRCS payment rates and the financial impact on farmers who would not be producing corn and soybeans during that time (5 years). Mary Poelman (Coordinator) confirmed that a five-year plan at \$150 would equate to \$30 per acre annually. Donoho (Pine SWCD) indicated the need to consult with Jason Rehn (NRCS) and local co-ops before finalizing any changes to align producer/policy implementation. Barb Peichel (BWSR) highlighted the need to evaluate how continuous cover aligns with the current work plan and its potential benefits for water quality, to ensure that we could implement this policy without a work plan amendment. Mary Poelman (Coordinator) expressed her support for continuous living cover, while Heather Donoho (Pine SWCD) suggested that introducing a third crop (perennial cover) into a corn/soybean rotation could enhance soil health. Paul Swanson (Pine SWCD) raised concerns about the implications of requiring permanent cover conversions, indicating that further discussion may be necessary.

- Staff agreed to postpone the discussion for further consideration at the next steering committee meeting.

3.2

Mary Poelman (Coordinator) noted that this policy was still on the radar and that we were still waiting for the final budget from the State (possibly May 19th)

4.

Discussion on JPE board chairs request that we consider presentation of the Annual Snake River Report to County Boards and SWCD Boards.

Barb Peichel (BWSR) discussed that county staff should be included in the SWCD packets, and that the coordinator should work with county staff to reach out to the county boards however they might decide is best or if they want to learn about the Snake River Watershed Plan Partnership progress. Barb (BWSR) noted the distinction between the SWCD boards for each county and the county boards that are represented in the Snake Watershed.

Susan Shaw (Mille Lacs SWCD) presented the process that she would recommend for approaching Mille Lacs County. Mary (Coordinator) noted that Mille Lacs county was not currently actively participating in the Watershed Partnership. Susan (Mille Lacs SWCD) noted that it could be a good opportunity for presenting them with the hope that they come to the table in the future. Susan (Mille Lacs SWCD) noted that she would spearhead the discussion for Mille Lacs as the SWCD manager. Paul Swanson (Pine SWCD) indicated that county staff would be the first contacts in approaching the Pine Board, possibly even Josh Mohr (Pine County) as he was on the JPE as well as the Board of Commissioners in Pine. In regards to an update to SWCD Boards, Paul (Pine SWCD) noted that he was able to handle such requests internally. Jaren Peplinski (Kanabec SWCD) indicated agreement and a similar process with Kanabec County.

- SWCD members will work with their individual boards to assess the want/needs of presenting Snake information.
- Mary Poelman (Coordinator) will speak with county staff and SWCD members regarding working with the county boards to assess want/needs of presenting snake progress information.

(Additional Discussion)

Barb Peichel (BWSR) noted that in working with the Board and Steering committee meetings it would be useful to bring up references to the plan to demonstrate the bigger picture of why each project/ action is important to the plan goals. She noted that with staff turnover and new board members many probably do not remember what is in the plan or the goals that the specific action Id's are referencing in the plan. She encouraged all members to think about this in how we are pitching projects and trying to be open and familiar with the comprehensive watershed management plan. Susan Shaw (Mille Lacs SWCD) noted that with outreach and communicating in general things need to be repeated 5-7 times before someone will remember them.

2.4

Jaren Peplinski(Kanabec SWCD) started the discussion on the Pasture Planting project, Emily Larsen(Kanabec SWCD) planned the project with Jon Stoltz (MAWQCP). Previous gully erosion was noted on the project and outreach was directed to the landowner to see if any mitigation could be done to prevent further degradation of conditions. BWSR noted that they were unable to review the project ahead of time but that the Practice would fall under Agricultural Practices rather than the Non-Structural Agriculture practices. Susan Shaw (Mille Lacs SWCD) brought up the question of if a small project >200\$ would be worth the administrative effort that it would take and the needs of the

landowner in the commitment of a 5 year binding contract. Heather (Pine SWCD) noted that pasture/ hay plantings would require soil tests and fertilizer application to repair any soil deficiencies and could be cost prohibitive at a low cost share amount, but that it would not require a prescribed grazing plan. Zach Guttormson (BWSR) noted that this project was outside of a priority area that it would potentially still be an eligible practice under the work plan but that it would count towards practices outside of the priority areas. Discussion was had that it would not meet requirements for SWQual -22 because those are non-structural practices. Possible discussion of SWQual-9 , SWQual-23, E-2 as appropriate alternative Action ID's. Consensus was it could be a good project to encourage the landowner to do on their own to prevent any requirements that might be more expensive than the cost share itself. Staff noted that this plan would work towards JAA in planning.

- A virtual vote was planned to finalize funding for the project, with several members indicating their support(Votes Yes=Kanabec SWCD, Mille Lacs SWCD, Pine SWCD all other LGU's were absent the meeting)

5.

Mary Poelman (Coordinator) noted that it was approximately the time of year we were looking to hold a biannual TAC meeting that a date would need to be decided on with time to inform partners. Barb Peichel (BWSR) questioned the need for a TAC meeting at this time and this time of year noting it is a fairly busy season. Also noted that BWSR had access to the calendars. Susan Shaw (Mille Lacs SWCD) suggested that we schedule the TAC meeting during a currently scheduled Steering Committee meeting. It was discussed that October would probably be the next best time to schedule the TAC meeting (Oct 6, 2025) Jaren Peplinski (Kanabec SWCD) noted that Kanabec was interested in meeting with MPCA to discuss the WRAPS/ TMDL's and Susan Shaw (Mille Lacs SWCD) noted that they had also reached out to Mille Lacs for a meeting.