

Snake River Watershed – Steering Committee

Meeting Minutes

June 2, 2025, 2:00pm-4:00 pm



Invitees:

Local SWCD & county staff, BWSR staff

Attendance: Mary Poelman, Susan Shaw, Heather Donoho, Erin Hoxsie, Barb Peichel, Jaren Peplinski, Krista Arne, Zach Guttormson, Siena Storm, Janet Smude, Kelly Condiff

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:

Discuss Policy recommendations, Work Planning Discussions, Review Projects for funding

	Topics	Assigned	Time
A	Approve Agenda/ Minutes/ Introductions a. Minutes b. Agenda	Mary KSWCD	5 min
1	Budget Review 1. Review of Q1 Budget Status 2. June 30 Reporting Deadline	Erin Pine County	5 min
2	Projects: 1. Manure Pit Closure SOW: https://docs.google.com/document/d/1YEyHlF9Eqm0lOwfRdvFEOruREEuRMXn5/edit?usp=drive_link&oid=115886762896760527439&rtpof=true&sd=true Ranking Sheet: https://docs.google.com/document/d/1eJFvZJqDXcaTylVeOh_3vllEZShOl0DbO-eAMB1uv9o/edit?usp=drive_link 2. WASCOB SOW: https://docs.google.com/document/d/1PbPEVW9nUpNWKciPsnRHWInS2Pv4qm7b/edit?usp=drive_link&oid=11	1. Heather Pine SWCD 2. Heather Pine SWCD 3. Jaren Kanabec SWCD	20 min

	<p>5886762896760527439&rtpof=true&sd=true</p> <p>Ranking Sheet: https://docs.google.com/document/d/1_nB9poseuxCrgb01_Dwz0tOK2V1NQbJ0Qp22-cFLtk/edit?usp=drive_link</p> <p>3. Well Sealing Advertisement (proposed funding under the active KSWCD Education/Outreach SOW)</p>		
3	<p>Policy Updates:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> (New) Deed Restriction Policy https://docs.google.com/document/d/1lkwH-KUuXXGI5TtAfHMAxrbMFHpTuWvR/edit?usp=drive_link&oid=115886762896760527439&rtpof=true&sd=true (New) Steering Committee Project Voting Structure https://docs.google.com/document/d/1YOXaH5QS2DIOK2TBV_1OA K9oMXDoqdHI/edit?usp=sharing&oid=115886762896760527439&rtpof=true&sd=true (Continued Discussion) Cost-Share Pasture and Hay Plantings https://docs.google.com/document/d/1zaPVvLL4N9ID8jWLBqb-l3BAueAojjIM/edit?usp=sharing&oid=115886762896760527439&rtpof=true&sd=true (Delayed) WSP Plan Policy Update (Recommend to Board) https://docs.google.com/document/d/1cYNWSfU04xK_j2e4kogTQoHsYlZlsdEJ/edit?usp=drive_link&oid=115886762896760527439&rtpof=true&sd=true -waiting on MN Legislature Final Budgets 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Susan Mille Lacs SWCD Paul Pine SWCD Jaren Kanabec SWCD Mary Kanabec SWCD 	60 min
4	<p>Discussion:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Progress Tracking for the Comprehensive Watershed Management Plan Specifically: Projects outside of SRWPP Funding Funding Batch projects with WBIF Biennial Work Planning (2026-2027) 	Discussion: All Steering Committee Members	30 min
6	<p>Future Meeting Times</p> <p>JPE June 23, 2025 (Kanabec County Courthouse Basement Rm 3) SC July 7, 2025 TAC TBD</p>	Mary Kanabec SWCD	1 min

1.1

Outcomes- Erin Hoxsie will send out recommendation on where to move funds for review

Erin presented the current budget with projects that were recently approved. Currently, Planning and Assessment, Forestry, and Groundwater categories are overencumbered. The partnership is considering moving funds from stream and shoreline protection or agricultural practices. Erin Hoxsie will send out recommendations on where to move funds for project development based on the discussions held during the meeting. This topic will not be added to the JPE agenda at this time.

1.2

Outcome- All participants are asked to send estimated Q2 costs to Erin Hoxsie by June 13th.

2. 1 Manure Pit closure

Outcome- Project is recommended to the JPE.

Heather Donoho addressed the environmental concerns associated with an unused manure pit close to Cross Lake, noting the risks of contamination from stored waste. She explained that as manure pits age, the liquid inside can dry out and crack the clay liner, posing hazards to human and animal health. The proposed project involves excavating contaminated material, applying it to the ground, and removing the remaining infrastructure to ensure safety and stability. Heather Donoho introduced a project proposal for \$51,308 for closure of the waste facility.

Barbie Peichel raised the possibility of including groundwater management in the project's scope, leading to a discussion about its alignment with the current work plan. Susan suggested that the current work plan Action ID be included with the SOW and the others that might be applicable in the reporting.

After deliberation, the group expressed their support for the project and proceeded to vote. Four members voted yes (Kanabec SWCD, Pine SWCD, Mille Lacs SWCD, Aitkin SWCD); the other three members were not present.

Heather Donoho will prepare the statement of work for the manure pit closure project to be presented at the JPE meeting on June 23rd.

2.2 WASCOS

Outcome- Project is recommended to the JPE

Heather Donoho highlighted a producer's struggle with gullies even after adopting no-till and cover crops. Heather Donoho detailed the approval of a project to install NRCS-designed water and sediment control basins (WASCOS) in

specific fields. These basins aim to slow down water flow, allowing for sediment and nutrient filtration, ultimately reducing phosphorus runoff.

Heather Donoho requested \$28,819 in funding for a project focused on the Cross Lake water body, which garnered support from the committee members. Four members voted yes (Kanabec SWCD, Pine SWCD, Mille Lacs SWCD, Aitkin SWCD); the other three members were not present.

2.3 Well Sealing Advertisement

Outcome- Jaren Peplinski will share the graphic for well-sealing education outreach with the group for feedback

Jaren Peplinski shared an outreach initiative aimed at promoting well sealing through a newspaper advertisement. He noted the success of similar advertisements in attracting public interest. Jaren Peplinski will share the graphic for well-sealing education outreach with the group for feedback.

3.1 Deed Restrictions

Outcome- Information, Note that every Entity has to work with their individual County to record deed restrictions and that the landowner has to be the one to record the deed restriction.

Susan Shaw discussed her prior misconceptions about deed restrictions, noting that they do not restrict property sales but instead define usage limitations for specific areas. She highlighted the advantages of using deed restrictions to ensure that agreements related to Best Management Practices (BMPs) remain enforceable even as property ownership changes. This approach allows for ongoing access and maintenance of the BMPs by the district. Mary Poelman explained the current Snake River policy that any project with a budget of \$20,000 or more must have a deed restriction, a policy that has not yet been enforced. Zach Guttormson discussed varying perspectives on deed restrictions, noting that while some districts see them as necessary to prevent project removal, others worry they may deter business. Susan Shaw recounted a past incident where a significant project was destroyed without recourse, underscoring the importance of such restrictions. Barb Peichel highlighted the diverse experiences of partners involved in the Rum River Watershed Partnership, indicating that some were more comfortable with the process than others. Susan Shaw reflected on her own experience, stressing the necessity of having a policy in place to address potential risks and responsibilities. She recounted a past situation where a lack of policy led to unresolved issues.

Mary Poelman expressed that understanding the process of deed restrictions is crucial for districts and counties, making it less daunting. Susan Shaw provided insights on the legal aspects, noting that deed restrictions must be executed by the landowner and recorded in the county where the property is located. She also mentioned the need for collaboration with attorneys to ensure proper language in the deed restriction.

3.2

Outcome- Mary will draft policy change and send around to members for virtual voting

Heather Donoho presented that Pine SWCD was concerned about the current virtual voting structure not being in alignment with other watersheds and that it seemed to be delaying projects from moving forward. Pine SWCD questioned the need for a quorum for the voting. Mary noted that this was an internal policy to the steering committee and that changes to this policy could be made within the steering committee, without the JPE board.

The committee discussed the voting structure, with Mary Poelman highlighting the importance of representation for absent members. Heather Donoho suggested that members unable to attend should appoint a representative or forfeit their vote to streamline the process. Susan Shaw expressed concerns about missing context for votes when representatives are absent, while Janet Smude agreed that moving forward without her presence would be acceptable. Jaren suggested that Option 2 in the memo was indicated as the preferred method of policy change, and suggested that prior to voting, it would help to have the draft language to be voted on written down prior to a vote. Other steering committee members indicated they would like to see this drafted into the policy before voting.

Susan noted that she would like to see the policy in place (strikethroughs and input language) before voting on it officially. A poll was taken, and partners indicated that drafting and then virtual voting would be the method to implement this change in policy.

Nick asked if this could be presented as a virtual vote outside of the normal Steering Committee meeting so that it could be voted on asap rather than at the next meeting. Jaren indicated that using virtual voting to remove the option for virtual voting was appropriate for informing all partners of the change and providing a platform for participation.

3.3 Cost Share Policy - Pasture and Hay Plantings

Outcome- Partners voted to bring this policy to the JPE meeting

Discussion was focused on the “contract Length” provision within WBIF funding vs the project implementation time of 3 or 5 years. Jaren noted that he would have to update the policy with KSWCD given new understanding through conversations with Zach. Mary will draft policy as discussed and send it around to partners for comments / any final edits. Four members voted yes (Kanabec SWCD, Pine SWCD, Mille Lacs SWCD, Aitkin SWCD); the other three members were not present.

3. 4. Nick indicated that the state has not yet reached a final budget for the SFIA funding that will inform this discussion. Tabled it to the July Steering committee meeting. It was noted that the state is in Special session.

4. 1.

Outcome- Discussion will continue

Discussion was held about how other watersheds have handled annual reporting for dollars spent outside of WBIF funds on clean water projects within the plan. Pine SWCD indicated that this type of report was completed annually with one of their watersheds. Mille Lacs mentioned that doing this type of requested reporting would be best when other reporting is being done (Jan/ Feb) such as end of the year reporting. Discussion was had about some confusion with this type of reporting about what should be included and what shouldn't be included so that there is no double counting of projects within the state reporting systems. Thought that partners like MAWQCP and Dept of Health might not be appropriate to reach out to as they have other reporting systems that this might be only applicable to members in the Snake River JPE.

4. 2 Funding Batch Projects

Outcome-if partner should bring forward one of these contracts further conversation can be had with specifics

Susan mentioned that this was a familiar way of doing things in the Rum River Partnership, and that the Rum has regular check-in meetings to ensure that the funds are being spent, or if there are any issues with spending the funds to reallocate. Erin indicated that this is the way that certain contracts are currently written up but that they are mostly for staff time (e.g. Planning/ Development, Education/Outreach). Janet brought up that we should be able to trust our members to comply with all contractual obligations under the SOW for contracting specific projects from those funds. Susan talked about the process with the Rum River Watershed and how they do a similar type of SOW where they spell out VERY clearly what the deliverables are and expectations. Consensus was that someone should bring forward one of these contracts for discussion and that further discussion would be had at that time.

4. 3

Outcomes- support for work planning discussion to be continued

Discussion to be continued. No discussion on forming a sub-committee (lack of time). Thoughts were offered that this needs to be completed 90% before sharing with partners and possibly want to just extend the current version or copy the current work plan for the time being. Clarification was sought by Pine SWCD, that Stakeholder outreach did not need to be a public meeting necessarily but it did offer a good opportunity for public outreach in what was being accomplished and what people thought they would like to see accomplished