

# Snake River Watershed – Steering Committee

Meeting Minutes

July 7, 2025, 2:00pm-4:00 pm



Invitees:

Local SWCD & county staff, BWSR staff

Attendance: Jaren Peplinski(KSWCD), Mary Poelman (Coordinator) , Emily Larsen(KSWCD), Nick Foss(PSWCD), Paul Swanson(PSWCD), Janet Smude(ASWCD), Susan Shaw(MLSWCD), Siena Storm(MLSWCD), Barb Peichel (BWSR), Kim Johnson (KSWCD), Erin Hoxsie (Fiscal)

Location:

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

**Video call link:** <https://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:

Review Progress towards Watershed Workplan goals and set goals for Q3, Policy Discussions, Grant Compliance Discussions

	Topics	Assigned	Time
A	Approve Agenda/ Minutes/ Introductions a. Minutes- <b>Approved</b> b. Agenda- <b>Addition of Section 4.4, Approved</b>	Coordinator	5 min
1	Budget Review 1. Review of Q1 Budget 2. Q2 Invoicing - <b>Due by July 18th</b> 3. June 30 Reporting Update- <b>completed 6/24/2025</b>	Fiscal- <b>Erin</b>	10 min
2	Projects 1. PSWCD- Ag Tech Staff <b>Contract Number: SR-WBIF-16 STAFF-PSWCD-2025</b> <b>Amount: \$20,000</b> <b>Source: Project Development- WBIF</b> <b>Type of Project: Funding for staff who support project development</b> <b>Intent: Recommended by Steering Committee to JPE for full funding</b>	1. PSWCD 2. PSWCD 3. Coordinator 4. KSWCD	30 min

	<p><a href="https://docs.google.com/document/d/1r2VPhl_gp7rq6AwmjYmw5zwwq0b_ef9Hz/edit?usp=drive_link&amp;oid=115886762896760527439&amp;rtpof=true&amp;sd=true">https://docs.google.com/document/d/1r2VPhl_gp7rq6AwmjYmw5zwwq0b_ef9Hz/edit?usp=drive_link&amp;oid=115886762896760527439&amp;rtpof=true&amp;sd=true</a></p> <p>2. PSWCD- Water Tech Staff  20,000 Recommended to JPE  Contract Number: SR-WBIF-17 STAFF-PSWCD-2025  Amount: \$20,000  Source: Project Development- WBIF  Type of Project: Funding for staff who support project development  Intent: Recommended by Steering Committee to JPE for full funding</p> <p><a href="https://docs.google.com/document/d/1ZWL5tVYCrHdqzVGvCxcgDjXBOFNetYNEB/edit?usp=drive_link&amp;oid=115886762896760527439&amp;rtpof=true&amp;sd=true">https://docs.google.com/document/d/1ZWL5tVYCrHdqzVGvCxcgDjXBOFNetYNEB/edit?usp=drive_link&amp;oid=115886762896760527439&amp;rtpof=true&amp;sd=true</a></p> <p>3. Main Stem Geology project (update) and expansion to northern areas discussion- brief discussion of Northern Counties to be the lead on further exploration (Aitkin?). Note Freshwater Society would be interested in further working with Snake.</p> <p>4. (Postponed to 8/4/2025)- Livestock Pipeline- BWSR needs more time on compliance check. The committee agreed to check on eligibility before proceeding and voted on whether to postpone the decision. It was decided to delay the vote until the August meeting.</p> <p><a href="https://drive.google.com/file/d/1Am8sZ8jTyg4fHCMgW1_qWGIIRWvyCMdJ/view?usp=drive_link">https://drive.google.com/file/d/1Am8sZ8jTyg4fHCMgW1_qWGIIRWvyCMdJ/view?usp=drive_link</a></p> <p><a href="https://drive.google.com/file/d/1xJSe0atqjhr1Fi8yMQWTIfHdAQuCkh_8/view?usp=drive_link">https://drive.google.com/file/d/1xJSe0atqjhr1Fi8yMQWTIfHdAQuCkh_8/view?usp=drive_link</a></p>		
3	<p><b>Policy</b></p> <p>1. <b>(Outcomes) Steering Committee Project Voting Structure</b>  <a href="https://docs.google.com/document/d/1YOXaH5QS2DIOK2TBV_1OAK9oMXDoqdHI/edit?usp=sharing&amp;oid=115886762896760527439&amp;rtpof=true&amp;sd=true">https://docs.google.com/document/d/1YOXaH5QS2DIOK2TBV_1OAK9oMXDoqdHI/edit?usp=sharing&amp;oid=115886762896760527439&amp;rtpof=true&amp;sd=true</a>  Passed- new working agreement distributed to staff on 6.26.2025</p> <p>2. <b>(New) Steps to address Landowner Concerns and Communication during Board Meetings</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- For group learning. Concerning JPE Meeting June 23, 2025 Amended Agenda Section 3.1 Landowner in MilleLacs County</li> </ul>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Coordinator</li> <li>2. ML SWCD</li> <li>3. KSWCD</li> <li>4. PSWCD</li> </ol>	<p>1- 5 min  2-15 min  3- 10 min  4- 10 min</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- How this came about, the complexity, the simplicity, and the politics <b>Discussion and possible solutions were explored</b></li> </ul> <p>3. <b>(Continued Discussion)</b> Cost-Share Pasture and Hay Plantings  <a href="https://docs.google.com/document/d/1zaPVvLL4N9ID8jWLBqb-l3BAueAojjIM/edit?usp=sharing&amp;oid=115886762896760527439&amp;rtpof=true&amp;sd=true">https://docs.google.com/document/d/1zaPVvLL4N9ID8jWLBqb-l3BAueAojjIM/edit?usp=sharing&amp;oid=115886762896760527439&amp;rtpof=true&amp;sd=true</a>  <b>Recommendation Postponed to 8/4/2025 meeting</b></p> <p>4. <b>(Continued Discussion)</b> WSP Plan Policy Update (Recommend to Board)  <a href="https://docs.google.com/document/d/1cYNWSfU04xK_j2e4kogTQoHsYlZlsdEJ/edit?usp=drive_link&amp;oid=115886762896760527439&amp;rtpof=true&amp;sd=true">https://docs.google.com/document/d/1cYNWSfU04xK_j2e4kogTQoHsYlZlsdEJ/edit?usp=drive_link&amp;oid=115886762896760527439&amp;rtpof=true&amp;sd=true</a>  <b>Recommendation Postponed to 8/4/2025 meeting</b></p>		
4	<p>Discussion:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Review of Work plan progress to date        Make Goals for the next Quarter  <a href="https://docs.google.com/document/d/10FhpUFYnFI8LrRZ_wJoapPPVulGRjnHs/edit?usp=sharing&amp;oid=115886762896760527439&amp;rtpof=true&amp;sd=true">https://docs.google.com/document/d/10FhpUFYnFI8LrRZ_wJoapPPVulGRjnHs/edit?usp=sharing&amp;oid=115886762896760527439&amp;rtpof=true&amp;sd=true</a>  <b>No further goals developed for Q3 due to time constraints. The coordinator will follow up with staff.</b></li> <li>2. Grant Contracting Requirements - % Based, Incentive, Flat-Rate Cost Share  <a href="https://docs.google.com/document/d/1BT1Z5vD1_u6Pt7vBdiajb9vAHqiw2GUK/edit?usp=sharing&amp;oid=115886762896760527439&amp;rtpof=true&amp;sd=true">https://docs.google.com/document/d/1BT1Z5vD1_u6Pt7vBdiajb9vAHqiw2GUK/edit?usp=sharing&amp;oid=115886762896760527439&amp;rtpof=true&amp;sd=true</a>  <b>Brief Discussion to share links and recommendations</b></li> <li>3. Signage Requirements for Projects- Grant Agreement Signage on construction sites and implemented projects  <a href="https://docs.google.com/document/d/1NVYK2qC5N5FRhF2pU_fGUS9uhSI5M7Gs/edit?usp=sharing&amp;oid=115886762896760527439&amp;rtpof=true&amp;sd=true">https://docs.google.com/document/d/1NVYK2qC5N5FRhF2pU_fGUS9uhSI5M7Gs/edit?usp=sharing&amp;oid=115886762896760527439&amp;rtpof=true&amp;sd=true</a></li> </ol>	<p>Discussion: All Steering Committee Members</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. 20 min</li> <li>2. 10 min</li> <li>3. 5 min</li> </ol>

	<p>Brief reminder of Logo policy and ability to fund signage through grant agreement.</p> <p>4. Private well and drinking water focus group opportunity for stakeholders in the area - request to participate in a focus group led by a University of Minnesota research team. Discussion - (insufficient time for discussion) Jaren to follow up with more information</p>		
5	<p>Future Meeting Times</p> <p>JPE Do we want a July 28 Meeting? Yes; Aug 25, 2025</p> <p>SC Aug 4, 2025; Sept 1, 2025 (possibly holiday? will need to move)</p> <p>TAC TBD October tentatively</p>	Coordinator	5 min

Notes:

- A. Minutes for 5.5.2025 meeting were approved
- B. Agenda was approved with the addition of section 4.4 Jaren Peplinski introduced a potential partnership with the University of Minnesota Center for Changing Landscapes, focusing on private well use and safe drinking water and encouraged partners to share the information with other partners. Details: University of Minnesota Center for Changing Landscapes partnering with the Department of Health conducted a statewide survey and now they're looking for 15 to 20 participants to attend a 1.5 to 2 hour session, ideally later this summer or early fall. It's a good fit for folks in leadership roles or connected to water, so SWCD counts city, public health, education, or community-based groups. And they are looking to share preliminary findings about private well use, safe drinking water, and Minnesota policies, education, and outreach programming. The aim would be to identify and prioritize actions with partners.

1.2 Invoicing for Q2 due July 18th

2.1 and 2.2 Pine SWCD: We are noticing that there is a lot of additional workload happening in our part of the watershed that our staff are taking on and we're not getting we're not being paid for it. With four other watersheds, we have to manage our time. I guess in our point of view, if this additional workload is there, we should be getting compensated for it. So we're requesting some money to pay our staff to develop these projects that we've been working on. Discussion continued with notes on matching fund levels, and the need to bring the projects to the JPE for approval

at \$20,000. Discussion that this amount would probably not be sufficient to cover staff time to the end of the grant and that there might need to be some flexibility. It was noted that funds would need to be moved to be able to be put into the planning and development category, and the idea was raised about eligibility of using Technical/Engineering funds. It was noted that Local Staff funding on Watershed projects could be counted as a match for the project dollars.

Both projects were voted on and passed to be recommended to the JPE for funding with a request to the board that the funds would be retroactive to July 7, 2025. The group acknowledged the necessity of documenting matching funds for staff time and project development, with suggestions to consult with Erin for further details on match tracking.

2.3 Discussion on the Snake River project and misconceptions about the project by the board. Discussion of Mara Jade (formerly with Pine SWCD) focusing on projects in the lower snake for Pine SWCD. Discussion on if the northern portion had reason for assessment, it might be led by some of the northern Partners (Aitkin?). Noted that staff would send around the finished report. Mary Poelman, the coordinator, noted that Freshwater Society would be interested in discussing contracting the northern portion if we reached out and wanted to complete that section.

#### 2.4. Livestock Pipeline Project Overview

KSWCD discussed the livestock pipeline project, emphasizing its role in managing livestock waste to improve water quality in the Mud Creek area. The project features several components, including fencing and pipelines, and aims to reduce E. Coli runoff. Feedback from Zach Guttormson (BWSR) was incorporated into the project plan, which highlights the importance of maintaining vegetated grazing areas. Coordinator noted that the Livestock Category is out of funding, addressed the lack of remaining funds and confirmed that the project in question has a negative balance. Mary emphasized the project's high ranking due to its water quality benefits and noted that it involves a total cost of just under \$20,000, with a request for just over \$14,000 and a 25% match from the landowner. The project aims to address fecal coliform bacteria impairment. BWSR Barbie Peichel expressed confusion over the funding for new watering facilities, given that there is already an existing facility and concerns about the implications of expanding livestock numbers. KSWCD clarified that the additional watering points are part of a strategy to implement rotational grazing, which would improve pasture management while keeping the total animal units below the feedlot threshold. Jaren emphasized the importance of strategically siting these facilities to prevent runoff. Susan Shaw shared her struggles with the implications of using tax money for agricultural expansion, questioning whether it undermines water quality efforts. Janet Smude supported the idea of proactive measures, with Janet highlighting the benefits of NRCS partnership in managing livestock impacts. This project is in a gray zone and staff suggested postponing the vote until the next meeting for further discussion. The committee agreed to check on eligibility before proceeding and voted on whether to postpone the decision. Ultimately, it was decided to delay the vote until the August meeting.

3.1 Passed- new working agreement distributed to staff on 6.26.2025

3.2 Brief discussion about finding a better way to have landowners able to speak at JPE meetings. Coordinator indicated she would work with the Board Chair to possibly implement a section in the meetings dedicated to public input with guidelines such as 5/ 10 min or something similar.

3.3 Discussion of a 5 year contract and interaction with BWSR Board Conservationist on making sure policy of SWCD and grant are in alignment. Voting postponed. Staff would like a final “strike through copy” of policy recommendation for voting.

3.4 Discussion of changes to the SFIA policy. Staff noted that it appeared that the Memo was lacking updated language. Staff recommended postponing voting to recommend the policy. Staff would like a final “strike through copy” of the policy recommendation for voting. Paul Swanson noted he would work to develop a list of “approved programs” to have available for consideration at the august meeting.

4.1 Coordinator briefly talked about the achievements of Q2 for the Snake. The committee discussed the question brought by Jaren, “Are we headed in the right direction, at the right pace?” Barb BWSR provided feedback. Noting that the first biennium seemed to be an experimental time for most watersheds in the State as staff and partners were working out the process to varying degrees. It was noted by staff that generally the Snake seems to be in a good position. That rollout might be a little slow due to no backlog of projects. Generally hopeful and positive feedback. Due to time constraints there was insufficient time to discuss new Q3 goals. The coordinator indicated that she would follow up with staff.

4.2 Coordinator presented a brief discussion about the training that BWSR conducted on grants compliance and encouraged staff partners to use the links provided to delve deeper into ensuring compliance of contracts. Noted a recommendation by BWSR to have watershed coordinator review contracts for compliance. Coordinator also emphasized the importance of having contracts on file with the snake for future audit needs.

4.3 Brief reminder of Logo policy and ability to fund signage through grant agreement.

4.4 Discussion on private well and drinking water focus group opportunity request from UMN research team - (insufficient time for discussion) Jaren to follow up with more information Jaren Peplinski introduced a potential partnership with the University of Minnesota Center for Changing Landscapes, focusing on private well use and safe drinking water and encouraged partners to share the information with other partners. Details: University of Minnesota

Center for Changing Landscapes partnering with the Department of Health conducting a statewide survey and now they're looking for 15 to 20 participants to attend a 1.5 to 2 hour session, ideally later this summer or early fall. It's a good fit for folks in leadership roles or connected to water, so SWCD counts city, public health, education, or community-based groups. They are looking to share preliminary findings with folks and have a conversation about private well use, safe drinking water, and Minnesota policies, education, and outreach programming. The aim would be to identify and prioritize actions.

5.1 Noted that next JPE meeting would proceed as scheduled on July 28, 2025