

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

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Date: September 8<sup>th</sup>, 2025

Time: 12:30-2:30 PM

Location: Virtual

Meeting called by: Planning Partners

Type of meeting: Workshop

Facilitator: Samrah Khan, Isanti SWCD

Note taker: Molly Clyne, Mille Lacs SWCD

## Attendees:

### *Voting members:*

Sam Seybold, Aitkin SWCD

Jamie Schurbon, Anoka CD

Scott Soderman, Isanti County

Tiffany Determan, Isanti SWCD

Samrah Khan, Isanti SWCD

Mary Poelman, Kanabec SWCD

Molly Clyne, Mille Lacs SWCD

Susan Shaw, Mille Lacs SWCD

Mike McMillin, Morrison SWCD

### *Advisory Members:*

Zach Guttormson, BWSR

### *Other:*

Kelly Applegate, MLBO DNR

Gary Michael, DNR

## **Meeting Minutes**

### **1. Welcome and Introductions**

Led by Samrah Khan, Isanti SWCD.

### **2. DNR Field to Forest Grant**

## **Overview**

- Grant awarded in 2025 through NOFO 3 for the *Minnesota Climate Mitigation Forest Resilience Project* (“Field to Forest”).
- Purpose: encourage tree planting on open lands, minimum of 3 acres per project.
- Funding: \$4 million federal + \$4 million state, with participation from local SWCDs and NGOs.
- Goal: reforestation/afforestation on 5,800 acres statewide, focused on transitional zone regions.

## **Partnership and Match**

- From our watershed partnership, Isanti, Sherburne, and Mille Lacs SWCDs are contributing match.
- Match can be in-kind (countable since Jan 1, 2025).

## **Outreach Efforts**

- Print and digital ads through the MN Newspaper Association (reaches 50 MN newspaper websites + 210 MN newspapers).
- Paid social media campaign planned in the next few weeks.
- Advertised in Outdoor News.
- Will be promoted alongside SWCD tree sales.
- Flyer created for PFM foresters to distribute (to also reach SWCDs).
- Already receiving some media hits.

## **Cost-Share Details**

- Landowners are eligible for 75% cost-share plus an incentive payment after planting.
- DNR will rely on SWCDs when they receive high call volumes; technical assistance funds available for planting plan development.
- Landowners must maintain plantings for 10 years.

## **Eligibility Questions**

- SFIA-enrolled lands: Yes, eligible.
- Focus is on converting pasture, agricultural land, and brome grass into forest.
- Replanting following oak wilt is not a priority—project is targeted at open land.

## **Sign-Up Periods**

1. Aug 15–Dec 1, 2025 → Planting Spring 2026
2. Feb 1–Apr 15, 2026 → Planting Fall 2026 & Spring 2027
3. Feb 1–Apr 15, 2027 → Planting Fall 2027 & Spring 2028
4. Feb 1–Apr 15, 2028 → Planting Fall 2028 & Spring 2029

## **Discussion Notes**

- Sam Seybold: asked about follow-up → must maintain for 10 years.
- Sam: asked about SFIA eligibility → Gary confirmed yes.
- Tiffany: believes Isanti's match is outreach-related; will confirm with Gary.
- Landowner interest will be referred to local foresters.

## **Additional Project: NOFO 3 – Spruce Budworm**

- Separate project (also under NOFO 3) with a northeastern MN focus.
- Target: 950 acres impacted by spruce budworm.
- Provides payments to landowners to remove standing trees and replant with a more appropriate species mix.
- Compliments and expands funding for the Arrowhead Forest Partnership project.

## **Other Notes**

- Devon Wenthe is no longer serving as the nursery liaison.

## **2. Planning Team Updates**

### **Administration**

- FY23: Fully encumbered. \$6,000 remains unencumbered, but a Benton request will use it. Funds will be spent down to the penny, prioritizing FY23 before FY25. About 35% of FY23 remains to be spent.
- FY25: 70% of funds are still unencumbered. Significant progress is still needed on match.
- FY27 allocation amounts were released—similar to FY25. Approximately \$1.3 million available in the next round, eligible next year.
  - Members are encouraged to revisit past plans and consider specific projects for inclusion in upcoming work plans.
- Mille Lacs County is now officially a JPE member.
- There will be a change in policy on cover crop cost-share; upfront payments were allowed in FY23 for 3-year contracts and not allowed under BWSR GAM rules for FY25.

### **Education and Outreach**

- Members were reminded about the next outreach hour meeting and encouraged to attend if the agenda pertained to/interested them, as well as to coordinate with Clyne for project sign pick-up.

## **3. 2025-3 Funding Request Discussion Items**

### **Project 1: Non-Structural Agriculture – Mille Lacs SWCD**

- Original request was \$15,000, but only \$7,500 was available.
- Project focus: Nutrient Management Planning (Practice 590).
- Plan is to secure a 3-year contract beginning next spring; funds will be used to identify participating landowners.
- Several projects are already in development—this request ensures funds are available to move forward.
- This allocation will use the last of the FY25 soil health funds.
- Outcome: **Approved**.

### **Project 2: Streambank and Shoreline Protection – Aitkin SWCD**

- Proposed project located ~7,000 feet upstream of Round Lake (about one mile away), which feeds directly into Big Pine Lake.
- Considered a “Protect” lake in the comprehensive plan.
- Big Pine Lake was not originally prioritized because of the absence of an active lake group and difficulty initiating projects.
- Project relevance: aligns with SWP10 goal to reduce phosphorus loading to Round Lake. If phosphorus reduction can be demonstrated, the partnership could move it forward.
- Discussion: Group debated whether to fund now or wait until Big Pine Lake could be added to the list of priority waterbodies during the midpoint review. Considerations included shoreline funds already committed and whether partial funding could be provided.
- Outcome: Aitkin SWCD **withdrew** the request for now but will continue exploring options and update the group on progress.

### **4. September 25 Board meeting presentation ideas**

- Date/Time: September 25<sup>th</sup>, 4:30-6:30pm
- Have been incorporating short informational presentations into the meetings, Determan looking for ideas for future topics.
- Ideas discussed: sharing district/staff updates on what they’re doing with WBIF funds, specific programs
- Future meeting topics: October will be a highlight from Isanti SWCD and December will be a Groundwater presentation, covered by Lynn from Mille Lacs SWCD

### **5. Announcements/updates**

- **Financials**
  - Schurbon reported that instead of CDs to generate interest on WBIF funds, ACD will recommend the use of the 4M Fund. This option keeps funds liquid while still offering competitive interest rates.
- **Well-sealing funds**
  - Isanti SWCD still has funding available for well-sealing. These funds can be used across boundaries if other members have projects but lack funding. The funds will remain available until winter or spring, after which they may be allocated to other projects.
- **Invasive species coordination**
  - At the June IPC meeting, the group discussed exploring natural resource invasive species work in the comprehensive plan. Determan and Shaw will work together to investigate how to coordinate ag inspectors to compare plans and identify opportunities for collaboration.
- **Staffing changes**
  - Scott Soderman will be retiring from Isanti County in November
- **Project Tracking**
  - Members should update project requests and existing SOWs for the September board meeting.