

Rum River Watershed Partnership Board Meeting Minutes

March 27th, 2025 4:30PM – 6:30PM

In-Person & Virtual Meeting

Mille Lacs Historic Courthouse
Lower Level, Conference Room D



Coming together to identify shared goals.
Planning together to leverage unique capacity. **Working together** to achieve results.

Note taker: Molly Clyne, Mille Lacs SWCD

Voting Members Present:

Kim Johnson, Kanabec SWCD
Brad Schmacher, Sherburne County
Bob Janzen, Aitkin SWCD
Danielle Holder, Anoka Conservation District
Alan Duff, Isanti County
Dale Scholl, Morrison SWCD
Chris Jurek, Sherburne SWCD
Al Koczur, Isanti SWCD
Mike Winkelman, Benton SWCD

Alternates Present:

Bruce Brenny, Benton SWCD
Tim Braun, Mille Lacs SWCD

Partners and Staff Present:

Sam Seybold, Aitkin SWCD
Jamie Schurbon, Anoka CD
Emily Forbord, Benton SWCD (virtual)
Tiffany Determan, Isanti SWCD
Lydia Godfrey, Isanti SWCD
Susan Shaw, Mille Lacs SWCD
Molly Clyne, Mille Lacs SWCD
Perry Bunting, MLBO (virtual)
Dan Cibulka, Sherburne SWCD

Voting Members Absent:

Laurie Westerlund, Aitkin SWCD
Ed Popp, Benton County
Jake Janski, Mille Lacs SWCD
Bobby Kasper, Morrison County

Others:

Zach Guttormson, BWSR

1. Meeting called to order by Koczur 4:31pm.
2. Approve Agenda

Request by Johnson for additional discussion of the online tool's privacy, CoCoRaHS, and the waste/fraud/abuse order.

Motion by Duff to approve the agenda with the requested additions; second by Scholl. Affirmative: All. Opposed: None. **The Motion passed.**

3. Approve January 23rd, 2025 minutes

Motion by Holder to approve the January 23rd, 2025 minutes; second by Janzen. Affirmative: All. Opposed: None. **The Motion passed.**

4. Administrative reports/updates

Financials: Schurbon noted that the financial report in the meeting packet assumes that the funding requests from this agenda are approved. Otherwise, he noted there's not a lot of changes since the last meeting because quarter 1 reimbursements have not been requested yet. For FY23, we are still overmatched and fully encumbered. For FY25, we are 15.9% encumbered which brings in 7.2% of the required match. No money has been spent out of FY25 yet.

Progress updates: The meeting packet included existing SOW updates. No comments or questions were raised.

5. Education/Outreach

Project sign design/tag line: Godfrey presented the final project sign design, based off previous discussions with the board and staff. She additionally created a partner sign template to go along with the watershed project sign. It is up to the partners whether or not to use the signs or if they want to put additional information on the partner sign.

Motion by Winkleman to approve the project and partner signs as presented; second by Johnson. Affirmative: All. Opposed: None. **The Motion passed.**

Type A outreach: Godfrey described the recent selecting the right trees webinar hosted by the partnership. Though attendance was low, it is continuing to be promoted by partners and is collecting views on YouTube. Godfrey also noted that

there will be an upcoming nitrate testing clinic from April 7-11th, with Benton, Sherburne, Isanti, and Mille Lacs SWCDs participating.

Type B outreach: Clyne noted that discussions are being had with the Local Forestry Team on policy changes, which will be described in a later agenda item. Also updated the group on the request to add photos to the Resources Page on the RRWP webpage by mentioning that local government websites must be in ADA compliance by 2027. So, until she looks into what is required for photos, she will not upload photos so as not to double up on work.

6. Approve 1st Quarter Agreements and Statements of Work(s)

Determan presented 1st quarter project funding requests and amended SOWs, all of which were recommended to fund by the IPC.

FY23 WBIF MLSWCD 2023-UBMP-3: This SOW amendment reduces required match commitments for projects planned.

WBIF FY25-Morrison SWCD: This SOW dedicates funds from the Forest practices activity for tree and shrub establishment in Morrison County along a ditch that drains to the West Branch of the Rum River.

WBIF FY25-Isanti SWCD: This SOW dedicates funding for an inventory of erosion locations along the Rum River in Isanti County. The study will be utilized to identify and prioritize projects to apply for future WBIF funding.

WBIF FY25-Benton SWCD: This SOW dedicates funding for the development of a conservation plan for a feedlot in the West Branch of the Rum River in Benton County. The intent of the plan is to identify projects for future funding requests

Motion by Holder to approve the 1st quarter project funding requests and amended SOWs as presented; second by Winkleman. Affirmative: All. Opposed: None. **The Motion passed.**

7. 2025 Budget and Party-funded work plan.

The budget reflects what the board has been seeing through Schurbon's previous financial reports, but this provides another way of looking at it. FY23 expires at the end of this year, and Determan explained that we can assume that will be all revenue at the end. The provided revenue for 2025 is a rough estimate.

Discussion ensued about reserve money. Partners clarified that this is a state grant, so it is not considered a reserve—what we grow in CDs would be the reserve. Guttormson reminded the group that the grant is dispersed in increments of 50, 40, 10.

Partners also discussed the outreach budget and how we can expect the allocated amount to shift during the progression of the plan. Determan explained that the

outreach money covers staff positions and would not expect the outreach budget to drop as it is a necessary component of the plan's sustainability. Shaw echoed this sentiment and noted that it is important to continuously evaluate outreach efforts.

Motion by Scholl to approve the budget as presented; second by Holder. Affirmative: All. Opposed: None. **The Motion passed.**

8. Proposed Forest Practice Policy Updates.

Clyne provided an overview of the forestry policy update that is being worked on. At the previous IPC meeting, Morrison SWCD submitted a request for tree planting support. Their initial proposal was based on their SWCD's standard practice of offering 75% cost coverage for the landowner. However, according to the current forestry practices policy, their request was significantly reduced. While Morrison SWCD will cover the remaining costs for the landowner, the compensation they receive from the partnership only accounts for a small portion of the time spent preparing the request, attending the meeting, and engaging in discussions. This prompted a discussion among forestry technicians regarding potential improvements to the policy, with the aim of better aligning it with the overall plan goals. The primary objective is to establish a 75% cost-share, like other practices, and to revise individual project requests into lump-sum requests for forestry best management practices (BMPs). Following IPC approval, the proposal will be brought to the JPE meeting in June for consideration.

9. 2024 Review

Implementation tracking tool: Cibulka showcased the Implementation tracking tool, which is accessible to both staff and the general public. The tool provides an overview of the partnership's activities while ensuring sensitive information is not exposed. It was developed using data submitted through a form and ArcGIS. Cibulka guided the group through the tool, highlighting key features such as action IDs, completed tasks, pollutant reductions, and other relevant data. He also mentioned that while the tool is not yet optimized for mobile devices or smaller screens, this update is planned for the near future.

Discussion:

Johnson raised a concern about certain projects containing landowner names. Cibulka clarified that if a landowner's name appears, it is because the respective SWCD included it when submitting the data, but that the map itself does a good job at not revealing identifiable land or road features.

Annual report: Godfrey presented the annual report, which is a physical document designed for partners to bring to meetings and discussions. The report consolidates much of the data from the online tracker but focuses specifically on the progress

made in 2024, providing a high-level overview of the current status. Godfrey walked the group through the contents of the report, detailing the information included on each page.

10. Mille Lacs Drone Survey: Aitkin SWCD

Seybold provided an update on the Mille Lacs Drone Survey. Given the size of Mille Lacs Lake, the traditional method of using boats and photos is slow and inefficient. To expedite the process, drones were introduced, with two different models being used: the Mavic 2 Pro and the Phantom. The goal of the project is to identify areas of concern for outreach and project prioritization. The software used maps the locations on the lake, allowing for better targeting. The survey focuses on several metrics, including erosion, mowing, woody vegetation, rock status, impervious surfaces, sand, and landings, with each metric rated on a scale of 1-3, three being highest improvement potential. The next steps include engaging with the prioritized landowners, finalizing project plans, offering cost-share opportunities, providing continued assistance, and conducting site checks as the project progresses. In the past two weeks, 16 landowners have expressed interest in participating. The data was entered manually in the spreadsheet, with each timestamp and parcel being recorded for accuracy and review ability.

11. Communication & announcements

The group revisited Johnson's request to discuss additional items of the online tool's privacy, CoCoRaHS, and the waste/fraud/abuse order. Johnson felt the privacy part was adequately explained earlier. On the topic of CoCoRaHS, he explained that it is a organization that collects rain water data through volunteer rain monitoring. He mentioned that they are looking for more volunteers. Next, he discussed the waste/fraud/abuse order and said that Kanabec SWCD put together a statement defending the efficiency of their use of funds, asking for people who have questions to come in and see what they do. This statement was published to a local paper, and he is happy to share the statement with anyone else who may want to do the same.

12. Next Meeting Date:

June 26th from 4:30 -6:30pm at the Mille Lacs Historic Courthouse, lower level conference room D.

13. Adjourn:

Motion by Winkleman to adjourn; second by Holder. Affirmative: All. Opposed: none. **The Motion carried.** The meeting was adjourned at 5:33pm.

