

# Rum River Watershed Partnership Board Meeting Minutes

**September 25<sup>th</sup>, 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:**

Laurie Westerlund, Aitkin County  
Bob Janzen, Aitkin SWCD  
Danielle Holder, Anoka CD  
Al Koczur, Isanti SWCD  
Kim Johnson, Kanabec SWCD  
Jake Janksi, Mille Lacs SWCD  
Kelly Applegate, MLBO  
Bobby Kasper, Morrison County  
Dale Scholl, Morrison SWCD  
Brad Schmacher, Sherburne County  
Chris Jurek, Sherburne SWCD

**Alternates Present:**

Bruce Benny, Benton SWCD  
Steve Westberg, Isanti County (*virtual*)

**Partners and Staff Present:**

Jamie Schurbon, Anoka CD  
Mike McMillin, Benton SWCD  
Tiffany Determan, Isanti SWCD  
Jaren Peplinski, Kanabec SWCD  
Mary Poelman, Kanabec SWCD  
Molly Clyne, Mille Lacs SWCD  
Susan Shaw, Mille Lacs SWCD  
Dan Cibulka, Sherburne SWCD

**Voting Members Absent:**

Ed Popp, Benton County  
Mike Winkleman, Benton SWCD  
Alan Duff, Isanti County  
Dan Whitcomb, Mille Lacs County

**Others:**

Barb Peichel, BWSR

1. Meeting called to order by Janski 4:30pm.
2. Approve Agenda

**Motion by Westerlund to approve the agenda;** second by Koczur. Affirmative: All. Opposed: None. **The Motion passed.**

3. Approve June 26<sup>th</sup>, 2025 minutes

**Motion by Johnson to approve the June 26<sup>th</sup>, 2025 minutes;** second by Janzen. Affirmative: All. Opposed: None. **The Motion passed.**

4. Administrative reports/updates

Financials: Schurbon presented a bank account update with the current standings. He noted that the current balance for unrestricted funds is \$31,945. The FY23 grant is fully encumbered with 65% spent, and we are over match. There were no further discussions or questions raised on the FY25 grant.

**Motion by Koczur to approve the financial report;** second by Schmacher. Affirmative: All. Opposed: None. **The Motion passed.**

4M: Schurbon also noted that the board had previously authorized the financial coordinator to move funds into the best available option. Until recently, funds were held in CDs. 4M investments are Minnesota municipal money market accounts available to certain entities (e.g. SWCDs, counties). These are not traditional bank accounts, but rather safe investment options authorized by state statute for government entities. The advantages are that the funds remain liquid and can be accessed immediately for large projects, and interest rates are 3.5-4%. Since the Partnership does not have its own tax identification number, the account exists as a subaccount under Anoka CD, but funds are fully segregated. Some funds will remain in CDs for about six more months before being transitioned.

*Discussion:* A question was raised about if there is a risk in having funds in the 4M. They are not FDIC insured, but the 4M fund has never lost money in decades of operation. It also complies with state statutes. Audit implications were also discussed, but uncertainty current remains about what auditors may request.

**Motion by Westerlund to continue with the management of the funds as presented;** second by Kasper. Affirmative: All. Opposed: None. **The Motion passed.**

Audits: The organization may be required to conduct its own audit, separate from Anoka CD. In the past, the Rum River Watershed Partnership (RRWP) was treated as a special

fund within Anoka CD, which the State Auditor accepted. Recently, conversations with Michael Peterson (auditor for many SWCDs) and the Office of the State Auditor suggest they may be stepping back from allowing this arrangement. Partnerships like RRWP are considered unusual by the State Auditor. If a separate audit is required, the organization would need to obtain federal and state tax identification numbers and possibly a bank account in its own name, triggering several new administrative requirements. Michael Peterson has reached out to the State Auditor's Office to request that the 2024 audit be allowed under the prior arrangement. However, deadlines may have been missed (July and October), so the outcome is uncertain. Audit expenses will likely be higher than expected. The board discussed whether unrestricted funds could be used to cover costs.

*Discussion:* Partners raised the question of what other Watersheds are doing. Schurbon noted that while unsure about their approach, most are collaborative bodies whereas we are an entity.

**Motion by Johnson to authorize the fiscal coordinator to enter into an audit agreement with Michael Peterson for 2024 if necessary;** second by Koczur.

Affirmative: All. Opposed: None. The Motion passed.

*Discussion:* Partners discussed some of the administrative requirements that Schurbon might need to take as the fiscal coordinator to complete an audit.

**Motion by Westerlund to authorize the Chair to execute documents to complete the audit as needed;** second by Holder. Affirmative: All. Opposed: None. **The Motion passed.**

Progress updates: The board reviewed progress update tables. Determan noted that an extension for FY23 has been granted through the end of 2026. Shaw reported some delays and changes with Mille Lacs projects. No questions were raised.

Other: Determan presented some other updates. Mille Lacs County is now a member of the Partnership. The policy discussed earlier this year allows for the IPC to approve projects during the last six months of the grant period, if necessary. Determan also noted that although we are not far into FY25, planning for FY27 should start now. The Partnership is eligible for funds of July 1, 2026. For FY27, we are allocated \$1,399,969, approximately \$8,000 more than previously. Accessing the grant right away will allow more time for implementation. Additionally, everyone is encouraged to share priorities or gaps they feel should be addressed in the FY27 plan.

## 5. Education/Outreach

Type A outreach: Determan noted that Samrah, the new Type A Coordinator, will attend the next meeting. Some of what Samrah is working on is: developing a program for

elected officials and decision makers on groundwater, a workshop on Part B of the Isanti County Geological Atlas, promoting the atlas and general groundwater knowledge, planning DIY shoreline webinars, and compiling and sharing success stories.

Type B outreach: Clyne noted that in July, Isanti and Mille Lacs co-hosted a forestry open house with DNR forester Jeff Wilder. This provided a valuable opportunity to connect with landowners and share resources. Her ongoing work with private foresters continues, ensuring landowners have strong support when ready to plan or plant trees. Other coordination efforts include the Local Forestry Team, which recently is working on our forestry policies, the ag tech team, and outreach hours and updates.

The partners also viewed the project signs. Please coordinate with Clyne when you want to pick them up for your office.

## 6. Partner Master Agreement Renewals

Schurbon explained that contracts with local partners include: a Master Agreement (3-year term) covering general requirements such as compliance with grant policy and a Statement of Work, approved by the board, which outlines specific funded activities. The Master Agreement can be renewed by amendment. Since it has been three years, agreements for all partners currently receiving funds expire at the end of the year and need renewal. Partners who have not yet received funding do not have agreements in place; those will be executed as needed along with their Statements of Work.

Motion by Applegate to approve partner master agreement renewals; second by Holder. Affirmative: All. Opposed: None. **The Motion passed.**

## 7. 3<sup>rd</sup> Quarter Statements of Work(s):

Benton SWCD FY23: This amendment is to add \$6,000 to Technical/Engineering for design of a rural BMP. Additional assistance is needed due to wetlands and updated wetland rules, requiring some TSA modifications. This includes a second project on an adjoining field that drains directly into the Rum River. Benton SWCD is implementing the work, but Mille Lacs SWCD holds the contract because the project is in Mille Lacs County, and the deed restriction must be tied to the county.

Isanti FY25 SWCD: Amended to add \$15,00 grant/\$15,000 match for a livestock crossing. This is already in design phase and nearly ready for implementation. Also amended to add \$145,000 grant/ \$85,000 match for wetland restorations. The designs are ready, and the projects are tied to the ditch system.

*Discussion:* The question was raised whether these are connected to the wetland the Partnership visited during last September's tour. Determan confirmed that they're tied to the same ditch system.

Mille Lacs SWCD FY23: Cancelled the Onamia stormwater project (\$23,913.75 grant / \$5,978.44 match). Staff from the County and TSA engineers could not agree on an approach within the grant timeline. The County will pursue a different project outside of this funding.

Mille Lacs SWCD FY25: Amended to add: \$5,000 for agricultural project development, \$12,600 to administration/coordination (includes notetaking and website updates), \$7,500 for ag non-structural soil health practices, \$5,000 for groundwater outreach (two workshops: one north, one south), and \$267,400 for type b outreach and forest program coordination.

*Discussion*: Johnson questioned the size of the outreach budget, noting that while outreach was critical at the beginning, it is unclear whether it remains needed at the same level. Shaw clarified the distinction between Type A and Type B outreach: Type A focuses on information sharing. Type B builds long-term partnerships and community buy-in across the watershed. This work is less visible—harder to show with signage or brochures—but is essential for creating trusted relationships. Board members emphasized the importance of demonstrating how Type B outreach translates into partnerships, engagement, and eventual projects. Staff will bring examples to the board (e.g., before/after photos, facilitated partnerships, evidence of connections made) to help illustrate progress. Success will be reflected in the tracking of plan actions and in stories that show genuine community buy-in.

**Motion by Johnson to approve 3<sup>rd</sup> quarter statements of works as presented;** second by Koczur. Affirmative: All. Opposed: None. **The Motion passed.**

#### 8. Proposed Policy Updates

Determan noted that policy previously allowed for up-front payments for non-structural practices in FY23. With the FY25 GAM updates, annual certification is now required. For example, a 3-year cover crop contract will require payment after each year's certification rather than all up front. The update simply clarifies the distinction between years and aligns FY25 with new requirements.

Motion by Westerlund to approve the proposed policy updates; second by Holder. Affirmative: All. Opposed: None. **The Motion passed.**

#### 9. Board Training: Isanti SWCD Project Highlights

Determan highlighted some of the projects that the Isanti SWCD has done to demonstrate how actions moved from board approval into implementation.

Wetland Restorations: The Isanti SWCD office requested funding for wetland restorations as tied to plan goals. The Olson project saw a 77.98 lbs/year phosphorus reduction reaching Green Lake. Landowners are responsible for ongoing maintenance, which is typically not fundable.

Cover Crops: The board approved \$18,000 in March 2023 to target Tier 1 waters with a goal of 100 acres. The Foster Project resulted in 320 acres under cover crops with no-till practices. The estimated reduction is 36.6 lbs phosphorus/year over the 3-year contract.

Stormwater/Runoff Management: Board approved a \$50,000 lump sum for stormwater run off. The goal is 6.1 lbs phosphorus reduction, and 4 lbs have been achieved to date. The Hasler Project, a raingarden on Skogman lake, has produced 0.71 lbs reduction.

Well Sealing: The Board had approved \$15,000 with a goal of sealing 10 wells. To date, 2 have been completed. For example, the Renfield well project was 77 ft deep, water level at 42 ft, and located near the Rum River. Determan reported significant outreach efforts, but challenges remain in moving landowners through implementation. Some drop out before obtaining quotes, while others struggle to get contractors to provide quotes. If funds are not utilized, they may eventually shift to another program pot.

Discussion: The Board briefly discussed whether the cost-share rate should be increased beyond the current 60%. Shaw noted that Mille Lacs SWCD has also experienced challenges with contractor availability and responsiveness. Before considering a change in rate, the group agreed that more outreach is needed to determine whether cost is a primary barrier. It was noted that sealing typically occurs at residential homes, where wells may have been unused for years, with need for sealing often triggered by property sales. McMillin observed that contractor pricing has increased and added that projects tend to move forward more successfully when landowners are willing to take on some of the physical work themselves.

Land Specialist: Determan reported that the WBIF has funded the Land Protection Specialist position, housed at Isanti SWCD and filled by Douglas Page. In Isanti, 1 easement has been recorded, 4 are under agreement, and 3 are in application. In Mille Lacs, 1 easement has been recorded, 2 are under agreement, 1 is under review, and 1 application was submitted to the Forest Legacy Program. There are also 110 acres under active Woodland Stewardship Plans. Determan noted that at least 60 landowners have expressed interest in forestry-related work. Doug's role will be expanding to incorporate additional forestry activities that support the watershed plan.

#### 10. Communications & announcements

Peplinski noted that Kanabec and Isanti are sharing a tree planter received from the LCCMR Tree Planting Pilot grant.

11. Next Meeting Date: December 18<sup>th</sup>, 2025

12. Adjourn: **Janski adjourned the meeting at 5:53PM.**