

Snake River Watershed Plan Partnership WBIF Project Policies

(Updated 2.23.2026)

- A. **Purpose:** This policy establishes an administrative process regarding how the Watershed Based Implementation Funds (WBIF) will be spent implementing the Snake River Watershed Comprehensive Watershed Management Plan (CWMP).

This document outlines:

- 1) Project selection and approval process;
- 2) Contracting and payment process and policies; and
- 3) Cost share rates and policies

This policy is intended to be reviewed annually and may be altered at any time to adjust for unforeseen projects and funding opportunities upon approval by the Snake River Watershed Plan Partnership (SRWPP) board.

Additional documents should be used in conjunction with this document: 1) Projects ranking application form, 2) MN BWSR applicable grant policy and grants administration manual.

B. Roles and Parties Definitions

Fiscal Agent: Pine County

Coordinator: Kanabec Soil and Water Conservation District

Members: Any local government that has signed the Joint Powers Entity establishing the SRWPP

Steering Committee: The Steering Committee consists of one staff member from each party of the JPE

Board: The SRWPP Board consists of one representative from each party to the JPE

Project: Any request for SRWPP WBIF funds. Projects may include requests for staff time funding, consultant(s) work services (with SRWPP Board approval) or labor and/or materials to install a best management practice.

Section 1. Project Selection And Approval Process

A. Project Eligibility

The first step in project selection is to determine whether the project is eligible for WBIF funding.

Eligibility:

The following criteria determine whether a project is eligible to be implemented with WBIF Funds:

1. Projects must meet the eligibility requirements of the Board of Water and Soil Resources WBIF.
2. Projects must be identified within an activity/category of the current fiscal year's grant's work plan.
3. Eligible projects must be within a **Priority Areas as identified in section 3.0 in the Snake River Comprehensive Watershed Management Plan (CWMP)** or for projects that maintain or enhance watershed-based ecosystems.

The Eligibility and Ranking Sheet score must be a "yes" for all eligibility questions for a project to be eligible to use WBIF. All "yes" projects are eligible to move on to the funding ranking step in the project selection process.

1. Funding Request Components

Each funding request from a member must include a completed Project Ranking Sheet and Statement of Work. The Project Ranking sheet will be located on a central database and should be filled out there. The activity statement of work can be downloaded from the database and sent to the coordinator.

2. Funding Request Ranking

All projects determined to be eligible for WBIF funds will be scored using the Eligibility and Ranking Sheet, except for projects requesting funds for plans/assessments, education/outreach purposes, staff time, and technical/engineering services. The spreadsheet must be completed by the member wishing to receive funding for a project. The sheet determines if a project's eligibility for grant funds and scores the projects against comparable criteria.

For projects that are eligible the coordinator will send the completed Eligibility and Ranking Sheet, where applicable, and any supplemental information by email to the Steering Committee for electronic review (See Funding Request Periods). Each Steering Committee member shall reply within the timeframe specified by the coordinator with their recommendation to "fund," or "do not fund,". The Steering Committee will meet to discuss proposed projects. Steering Committee meetings will typically be held the morning of the second Monday of the month. All Steering Committee approved funding requests equal to or above \$20,000 will be referred to the Board for consideration where funding approval is by majority vote.

Steering Committee and Board funding decisions may include consideration of available funding, cost effectiveness, matching funds leveraged, degree to which other funding has been pursued, and criteria as established in the SRCWMP and the accompanying WBIF work plan. If insufficient grant funds exist to fulfill current and anticipated funding requests, projects will be scored against each other. If tied, the project with a better value calculation on the dollars spent per pollutant reduced will be funded. Additionally, projects specifically mentioned in the grant work plan will receive priority over those that are not.

3. Staff Time Funding Requests

Certain WBIF activities are primarily to fund staff time but are nonetheless often referred to as “projects” in this policy. These activities include Education/Information; Administration/Coordination; Project Development (PD); Technical/Engineering Assistance (TA); and planning, assessment, and special studies. Funding requests for these activities use the same process described above. Consideration of these requests shall focus on achieving the CWMP goals consistent with the grant work plan and policies.

4. Summarized Project & Program Approval Process

Project Ranking Sheet: Member fills out form on central database and notifies Coordinator by the first Monday of the month prior to a Partnership Board meeting month (January, March, May, July, September, November).

Steering Committee Review: Coordinator notifies the Steering Committee of potential project(s). The Steering Committee meets to discuss projects and votes on projects, using board approved criteria.

5. Funding Request Periods

Funding requests must be submitted to the coordinator by the first Monday of the month with a planned Partnership Board meeting (Partnership Board meetings: January, March, May, July, September, November or as needed), one week prior to the Steering Committee meeting. The Steering Committee recommended projects equal to or over \$20,000 in requested grant costs will go to the SRWPP Board during any of the regularly scheduled meeting months (January, March, May, July, September, November). The Partnership Board may schedule meetings as needed outside of the every other month schedule.

6. Cost Share Rates and Policies

Approved funding requests must comply with the SRWPP Cost Share Rates and Policies found in Section 3.

7. Appeals

The Board will review and make a funding decision on all projects equal to or over \$20,000. Decisions of the Board are final. Projects may be re-submitted for reconsideration if changes are made in response to input from the Steering Committee or board.

8. Project Splitting or Grouping

Members may make a single funding request for a grouping of similar projects.

9. Requests for Future Funds

Requests will not be considered for future rounds of WBIF grant funding that is not yet in-hand. However, Members are encouraged to make future projects known during grant work planning.

10. Revisions to the Project Ranking Application Form

The Steering Committee may revise the Project Ranking Application Form. Grammatical, formula and other edits that do not change project eligibility may be made at the discretion of the Coordinator and Fiscal

Agent. Other edits shall be approved by the Steering Committee and notice provided to the Board.

Section 2. Contracting Process and Policies

Contracts

Upon approval of a funding request by a Member, the Member will execute an agreement and statement of work with the SRWPP. The Board may choose to authorize the Chair or Coordinator to execute the agreement.

The Member must execute a cost share contract with the landowner for any structural or non-structural best management practices. That agreement must contain operation and maintenance provisions throughout the duration of the project's anticipated life. Such agreements must contain a deed recording for projects with a grant cost equal to or greater than \$20,000. Such deed restrictions shall expire at completion of the anticipated project life, as specified in the landowner agreement. Deed recordings are not required for publicly or tribally owned land, permanently protected land, or fee to trust land.

Payments

All requests for reimbursement must be submitted to the Fiscal Agent and made on forms provided by the Fiscal Agent that include signatures of responsible parties overseeing the work. Requests for reimbursement of direct payments must be substantiated by receipts, paid invoices, or similar documentation in accordance with Grant policy and acceptable to the Fiscal Agent. Requests for staff time reimbursement must be substantiated by a log of hours worked and billing rate calculations in accordance with Grant policy and acceptable to the Fiscal Agent. All documentation must include dates of services. It is the Member's responsibility to know and comply with State grant and the Snake River Watershed Plan Partnership Policies.

Fiscal Agent authorization to issue payments: The Fiscal Agent is authorized by the Board to issue payments for approved projects and report these transactions quarterly at Board meetings.

Payment Process: The Member will pay all expenses up front. The Fiscal Agent will reimburse the Member as directed by the Fiscal Agent's board, within work plan limits, and considering recommendation of the Member.

10% Retainage: The Fiscal Agent will issue reimbursement payments, except 10% may be retained. Any retained amounts will be paid after the Board of Water and Soil Resources releases the final 10% of grant funds.

Payment as grant funds are available: The Fiscal Agent will issue reimbursement payments as grant funds are available. Grant funds are provided to the Fiscal Agent by the State in 50%-40%-10% payments with reconciliation processes that may cause delays between those payments. The Fiscal Agent's board may prioritize payments and may issue partial payments if available funds are insufficient to pay all reimbursement requests.

Progress Payments: Members may request progress payments before final completion of work on project contracts, provided they comply with grant requirements. Prior to authorization for progress payment, the Member must attest that the request for payment has merit, the payment request is equal to or less than the percent of work that is complete, and that the project will still be completed within the contract timeline

Documentation required with payment requests:

- Executed landowner contract (if applicable).
- Operation and Maintenance Plan. Typically included in the landowner contract.
- Payment voucher. Vouchers should include sign-off by the designer or technical staff with project oversight and Member administrator.
- Vendor invoices. Invoices must include the vendor name; materials, labor or equipment provided; component unit costs; invoice date; and date(s) work was performed.
- Staff time and hourly rate documentation (when applicable) consistent with grant policy.
- Pollutant reductions (for completed projects, if applicable). Calculations or models must be consistent with BWSR grant guidelines.
- Certified as-built design (for completed projects, if applicable).
- Before and after photos.
- Certifies that the project complies with any prevailing wage requirements (if applicable).

Advance payments: Advance payments of grant funds are discouraged but may be considered. Such requests will be made during the request for funds and project ranking process. If the funding request is approved, a recommendation of advance payment may be provided to the Fiscal Agent by the Board. The Fiscal Agent shall make the final decision regarding whether to issue advance payment and provide reasoning.

Invoicing frequency: Staff time payment requests may be submitted up to quarterly. Installation or other requests can be submitted up to monthly.

Project Statement of Work Amendments

A Project statement of work amendment may include (a) requests for additional Partnership funding or (b) a change to the scope and type of work that results in reduced benefits such that the Partner agreement for the project must be modified.

Changes in funding or scope will be approved as follows:

≤10% funding change and if the change of scope remains proportional to the original agreement: The Member submits a request to the Fiscal Agent. The Steering Committee will review the amendment request against approved vetting criteria and grant procedures. The Fiscal Agent can approve the amendment.

>10% funding change or if the change of scope is not proportional to the original agreement: Member must submit the request to the Fiscal Agent. The Fiscal Agent will notify the coordinator to place the item on the next scheduled Partnership Board meeting agenda. The member must present the requested change to the Partnership Board for approval/denial.

After the Fact Funding Requests Work to be paid or reimbursed must occur after a funding request is approved and associated contracts executed.

Designer Credentials

Project designs must have sign-off by a person with credentials acceptable under grant policy such as job approval authority or professional engineer. The NRCS Field Office Technical Guide, MN Stormwater Manual, BWSR Native Vegetation Establishment and Enhancement Guidelines, or other standards generally accepted by the engineering profession must be used for project design, construction, operations and maintenance.

Section 3. Cost Share Policies

Cost-share and local match

General funding rates for all project types are described in the table below. The rates below are guidelines with each Member having discretion to modify the rate based on their individual board’s policies. If Members increase the cost share rates from the listed below; they will be asked to consult with the Steering Committee to ensure plans are in place to satisfy the grant’s overall required match (WBIF 10%).

Match for the WBIF grant must be from a non-state source and comply with all grant policy. Non-state funding sources may be used to fund any project at 100% if consistent with the administrative requirements of the funding source.

Grant activity	WBIF Cost Share Funding Rate Guidance	Non-State Match Required*
Administration/Coordination	100%	0%
Education/Information	100%	0%
Project Development	100%	0%
Tech/Engineering	100%	0%
Planning, Assessment, & Special Studies	100%	0%
Ag Non-Structural	Flat-Rate Cost Share	0%
Ag Practices	75%	25%
Livestock Waste Practices	75%	25%
Shoreline Protection	75%	25%
Forestry Practices	75%	25%
Groundwater	75%	25%
Urban Practices	75%	25%
Wetland Restoration	75%	25%
SSTS	TBD	TBD

*Percentage of WBIF grant funds.

Ineligible Projects

Required projects - Cost share is not available for projects required by local, state or federal rules or ordinances.

Grant work plan & policies – Projects must be consistent with the funding source grant work plan or

grant policies.

Non-Structural Agriculture Practice Policy and Flat-Rate Cost Share Rates

Flat-Rate Cost Share rates to install or adopt non-structural best management practices (BMP's) that improve or protect water quality are eligible for use of funds.

Non-structural BMPs will be planned and implemented according to [the United States Department of Agriculture \(USDA\) Natural Resource Conservation Service \(NRCS\)](#) standards and specifications found on the Electronic Field Office Technical Guide (EFOTG). However, seeding dates for cover crops may follow Midwest Cover Crop Council seeding guide recommendations.

Each local partner's cost-share policy and payment rates/schedules will be reviewed annually by Steering Committee staff to ensure fiscal responsibility for watershed partnership-funded activities.

Eligible Practices

Local partners of the watershed will submit their list of eligible non-structural practices, which will have been reviewed and approved by their local board. These soil health practices will follow NRCS practice standards. Each practice on the list must have demonstrated water quality benefits in order to be eligible for watershed based implementation funds (WBIF). A copy of the local partner lists of non-structural practices and associated cost-share rates will be kept on file by the watershed coordinating staff and the watershed fiscal staff

Member Policies

Each Member may follow an internal cost-share policy for implementing on-the-ground non-structural practices within the following restrictions. Members must provide the Fiscal Agent with the Member's active cost-share policies, the effective dates, and submit the updated policies within a maximum of ninety (90) days from the date they took effect.

It is the Member's responsibility to ensure its proposed non-structural activities comply with the following agreements, manuals, plans, and policies. Refer to these documents often when implementing these procedures.

- SRWPP Policies
- The SRWPP Biennial Workplan(s)
- SRWPP grant workplan(s) and grant agreement(s)
- Member Subcontract Agreement(s)
- Grantor's Grant Administration Manual

NOTE: In-kind labor is non-reimbursable. This is to be used ONLY as a match for the grant.

Forestry Policy:

Woodland Stewardship Planning- Landowners within the Snake River Comprehensive Watershed Management Plan's Land Use Priority Areas may be eligible for reimbursement for the cost to develop a Woodland Stewardship Plan (according to the current DNR cost-share rate for stewardship plans). To be eligible for Snake River Watershed Plan Partnership (SRWPP) WBIF cost-share funding for a woodland stewardship plan, the landowner must agree to and sign a contract stating that they will take one of two actions:

1) The landowner will enroll all acres contained within the plan into an eligible land protection program. Eligible programs include the Sustainable Forest Incentive Act (SFIA) program, state and federal-sponsored conservation easements such as the Reinvest in Minnesota Reserve (RIM) Program, or reclassifying the land as 2C managed forest land. If the landowner is electing to reclassify the land as 2C, they must keep the land in that classification for at least 5 years (half the length of the plan). Other land protection programs may be considered eligible if agreed upon by the SRWPP Steering Committee.

AND/OR

2) The landowner will perform at least one eligible best management practice (BMP) as suggested within the plan. In scenarios where the main recommendation is “No Action” or where the main beneficiary of the action is wildlife within the extant cover types (food plots, habitat creation, etc.), then a different BMP must be chosen as the eligible practice. This practice may also be eligible for cost share through the SRWPP.

A Woodland Stewardship Plan (WSP) is eligible for cost-share with a landowner who is already enrolled in a protection program (e.g., RIM), if the WSP makes progress toward an action item in the comprehensive watershed management plan and is located in a priority area for that practice within the active work plan

Shoreline Buffer Policy:

The intent of this shoreline buffer policy is for the promotion of deep-rooted native plant establishment along shoreline properties, both lakes and rivers, for their benefits provided to water quality.

The MN Buffer Law is a separate requirement from this policy. Landowners that take advantage of this shoreline buffer policy must already comply with the MN Buffer Law ([103F.48](#)) . This policy is for enhanced buffer work that is above and beyond what is required by law.

Critical Area Planting, NRCS Practice Standard 342, will be followed in the design and implementation of shoreline buffers. Up to 25% of the parcels shoreline may be excluded from the shoreline buffer for the purpose of recreational use and/or water access and have that parcel still be eligible for cost share.

Buffer Planting Size	WBIF Cost Share Funding Rate Guidance	Non-State Match Required*
average width equal or less than 10ft	50%	50%
average width 11 to 25ft	75%	25%
average width greater than 25ft	up to 90%	10%

Version Control Table: (Most Recent changes marked in BLUE)
 (Drafted changes are marked in RED)

Status	Version	Date Approved	Author of Change	Description of Change
Approved	v. 4.5.2024	4/5/2024	Deanna Pomije	Forestry Policy added (approved by board 4.5.2024)
Approved	v.4.22.2024	4/22/2024	Deanna Pomije	Minor Text revisions formatting, Sec 2. text addition, Sec 3. Cover Crop removed "Prevent plant acres are not eligible for this program"
Approved	v. 1.6.2025	1/6/2025	Deanna Pomije	DP : Drafted: Shoreland Buffer Policy MP 1-6-2025 Added text of Shoreline Buffer Policy
Minor Revision	na	na	Mary Poelman	MP- 4.16.2025 Minor update to language from "incentive" to flat-rate cost share
Approved	v. 8.25.2025	8/25/2025	Mary Poelman	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Sec 3. Forestry Policy: Updated Woodland Stewardship Planning Policy to require enrollment in protection program or implementation of BMP 2. Sec 3. Flat-Rate Cost-Share Payment Schedule: Updated Flat-Rate Cost Share Policy to include Pasture and Hay Planting
Approved	v 12.22.2025	12.22.2025	Mary Poelman	To clarify eligibility for WSP cost share, minor formatting for reading ease
Approved	v 2.23.2026	2.23.2026	Steering Committee Agricultural Subcommittee	<p>Change Flat-Rate Cost share rates to individual partner set rates rather than a SRWPP set rate, to reduce administrative burden on partnership and partners. Changes were drafted from similar watershed policy in other Watersheds.</p> <p>-minor formatting for reading ease</p>