

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

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Date: March 9<sup>th</sup>, 2026

Time: 12:30-2:30 PM

Location: Virtual

Meeting called by: Planning Partners

Type of meeting: Planning Meeting

Facilitator: Tiffany Determan, Isanti SWCD

Note taker: Molly Clyne, Mille Lacs SWCD

## Attendees:

### *Voting members:*

Jamie Schurbon, Anoka CD

Sam Seybold, Aitkin SWCD

Mike McMillin, Benton SWCD

Tiffany Determan, Isanti SWCD

Zoe Olson, Isanti SWCD

Robert Wall, Mille Lacs Band of Ojibwe

Molly Clyne, Mille Lacs SWCD

Susan Shaw, Mille Lacs SWCD

Dan Cibulka, Sherburne SWCD

### *Advisory Members:*

Zach Guttormson, BWSR

Aicam Laacouri, MDA

Mel McCan, NRCS

### *Other:*

Jake Janski, Mille Lacs SWCD Supervisor

Corrie Layfield, MPCA

## Meeting Minutes

### 1. Welcome and Introductions

Led by Tiffany Determan, Isanti SWCD.

### 2. MPCA Nutrient Reduction Strategy – Corrie Layfield, MPCA

- a. *Overview:* Corrie Layfield presented an update on the Minnesota Nutrient Reduction Strategy (NRS), a statewide effort to reduce excess nitrogen and phosphorus in Minnesota waters. The strategy was originally developed in 2014 at the request of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency.
- b. *Goals and Scope:* The original strategy established reduction goals for major downstream waters including Lake Superior, Lake Winnipeg, and the Mississippi River. The 2025 update expands the strategy using current monitoring data and modeling.
- c. *Monitoring and Current Conditions:* Nutrient conditions are assessed through permanent monitoring sites operated by state, regional, federal, and Canadian partners. Monitoring data is used to evaluate progress and inform watershed models.
- d. *Nutrient Sources:* Statewide analysis continues to show that agriculture is the primary source of nitrogen. The strategy examines both urban and rural nutrient contributions.
  - i. Urban sources:
    1. Wastewater phosphorus loads were reduced 76% by 2008
    2. A wastewater nitrogen reduction and implementation strategy was released in 2024
  - ii. Rural sources:
    1. Nitrogen fertilizer management
    2. Conservation drainage practices
    3. Land use change practices
    4. Septic system improvements
- e. *Implementation and Local Role:* The NRS is intended to support the One Watershed One Plan framework and other local watershed planning efforts. Appendix 2.4 of the strategy provides watershed-specific reduction goals. Implementation primarily occurs at the watershed level rather than through state-led projects, requiring cooperation across local, regional, and state partners.
- f. *Tools for Planning and Tracking:* Corrie highlighted the BEET tool

suite:

- i. *Tracker*: Records BMPs implemented using government funding
- ii. *Planner*: Assists with watershed planning, grant applications, and scenario evaluation
- iii. Upcoming updates include:
  - 1. GIS-based “suitable acres” analysis for BMP placement (expected summer 2026)
  - 2. Updated watershed models (HSPF) in summer 2026
  - 3. Training videos and a BWSR technical talk scheduled for April 6
- g. *Key Strategy Recommendations*:
  - i. Maintain and expand watershed-level implementation efforts
  - ii. Significantly increase continuous living cover practices
  - iii. Treat nutrients before they reach waterways (e.g., wastewater upgrades and edge-of-field practices)
  - iv. Scale up adoption of conservation practices statewide
- h. *Discussion*: Participants asked how the partnership could use the strategy in the upcoming midpoint evaluation. Corrie recommended utilizing the BEET tools and reviewing the stream and gully erosion appendix, noting that phosphorus from streambank erosion may be a significant challenge in the Rum River watershed.

### **3. Planning Team Updates**

- a. *Fiscal*: Schurbon presented an update on grant funding. For FY23, all funds are encumbered with approximately \$200k remaining to be spent before the end of the year. For FY25, nearly 75% of the funds are encumbered, but only 5% has been spent to date.
  - i. Discussion: Determan noted that some FY23 funds remain within current activities and asked partners to consider target timelines for spending remaining funds. If funds cannot be used as planned, they may need to be realigned to other activities. Schurbon suggested a June check-in to identify funds unlikely to be spent, with a second review in September if needed.
- b. *Administrative*: Determan requested that partners notify her of any board member changes. She also shared initial materials for developing the FY27 budget, with submissions due March 23. The

goal is to complete the process early so funding access can begin as soon as possible. The draft budget is expected to be brought to the board at the June meeting. Partners were encouraged to review the plan and identify areas where progress could be advanced.

- c. *Education and Outreach:* Determan reminded partners about the BWSR Snapshot article on the Rum River Watershed and encouraged partners to share it within their networks. She also introduced Zoe Olson as the new Type A Outreach Coordinator. For Type B Outreach, Clyne reported that the EAB webinar had 38 attendees and the upcoming DIY Shoreline webinar has about 30 registrations. Clyne also shared information about a potential forestry survey project being developed by staff from The Nature Conservancy (TNC) and researchers from the University of Minnesota. The team plans to apply for a grant and may focus the survey in the Rum River watershed, which could provide useful insight into local forestry needs. Clyne is drafting a letter of support for the project, which will be brought to the board for consideration.

#### **4. 1<sup>st</sup> Q Funding Requests:**

- a. Funding requests submitted by Isanti SWCD were reviewed and recommended to move forward to the board for funding.
- b. Aitkin SWCD submitted additional requests after the deadline. One request was for project development and the other for protection activities, both related to Round Lake shoreland project. A second request related to a tree project was later withdrawn.

#### **5. WBIF Interest Policy:**

- a. The Planning Team discussed how to strategically use over \$55,000 in accumulated interest funds to ensure the money is used transparently and in alignment with the Rum River Comprehensive Plan and Joint Powers Agreement. A draft proposal was developed for IPC consideration and possible recommendation to the board.
- b. Key points discussed:
  - i. Establishing a \$50,000 reserve fund to serve as a safety net for potential risks, such as legal expenses or repayment of ineligible grant costs.

- ii. Any interest above the \$50,000 reserve would be available for member requests supporting Comprehensive Plan goals, including projects not eligible for WBIF funding (e.g., terrestrial habitat work or aquatic invasive species projects).
- iii. Remaining funds each year could also be considered case-by-case for match funding if a strong project lacks other matching funds.
- iv. Consensus recommendation:
  - 1. Maintain a \$50,000 emergency reserve.
  - 2. Increase the reserve by \$1,000 annually to account for inflation.
  - 3. Any additional interest beyond the reserve amount may be available for member requests each year.
  - 4. The reserve policy would not require annual reconsideration, though excess accumulation should be monitored over time.
  - 5. The proposal will be reviewed by legal counsel before final adoption.

**6. 2025 Annual Reporting Preview:**

- a. The RRWP Annual Report data was pulled together by Cibulka. Clyne is working on bringing it into a report format for the board to view at the next meeting. It will be ready before Legislative Day.

**7. 2026 Board Meeting Presentations:**

- a. The partnership aims to provide a presentation or update at each board meeting, and the group discussed potential future topics, including:
  - i. MPCA WRAPS monitoring and data
  - ii. Metro-area projects in Anoka
  - iii. Conservation easements
- b. September Board Tour: The partnership aims to host a board tour every other year. Isanti SWCD hosted the previous tour in 2024. Partners will need to soon decide what to do for the 2026 tour, and the group discussed different options. Ideas shared included:
  - i. A Mille Lacs area tour, potentially incorporating a boat tour on Mille Lacs Lake
  - ii. Partnering with local resorts to help facilitate the event

**8. Announcements/Discussion:**

- a. Determan shared that a ditch improvement project funded through WBIF was successfully used to support an application for a water storage grant, which was awarded.
- b. The next board meeting is at the Mille Lacs Historic Courthouse on March 26<sup>th</sup>.
- c. A statement of work update request will be sent out from Determan to partners to do before the board meeting.