

# Snake River Watershed Plan Partnership

## Steering Committee

Meeting **MINUTES**

**Feb 2, 2026 2:00pm-4:00pm**



### Steering Committee

#### Voting Members:

*Pending Hiring*, Aitkin County

Janet Smude, Aitkin County SWCD-**Present**

Ryan Carda, Kanabec County

Jaren Peplinski, Kanabec SWCD-**Present**

Siena Storm, Mille Lacs SWCD-**Present**

Aaron Gustafson, Pine County-**Present**

Paul Swanson, Pine County SWCD-**Present**

#### Partners and Staff:

Barb Peichel, BWSR-**Present**

Zach Guttormson, BWSR

Emily Larsen, Kanabec SWCD-**Present**

Susan Shaw, Mille Lacs SWCD-**Present**

Heather Donoho, Pine County SWCD

Krista Arne, Pine County SWCD

Nick Foss, Pine County SWCD/Kanabec SWCD-**Present**

#### Fiscal:

Erin Hoxsie, Pine County SWCD-**Present**

#### Coordinator:

Mary Poelman, Kanabec SWCD-**Present**

### Location:

In-person meeting at Kanabec SWCD office: 2008 Mahogany St, Ste 3, Mora, MN 55051

**Video call link:** <https://meet.google.com/bam-qgik-hjw>

**Or dial:** (US) +1 502-667-4238 PIN: 479 537 515#

**More phone numbers:** <https://meet.google.com/tel/bam-qgik-hjw?pin=2761399208395&hs=1>

### Purpose:

Project and policy review , reporting, grant updates

Topics	Assigned	Attachments	Time
<p><b>Administrative</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>1. Approve Agenda</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Assigned: Mary</li> <li>- Attachments: <a href="#">2.02.2026 SC Agenda</a></li> </ul> </li> <li><b>2. Approve Minutes</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Assigned: Mary</li> <li>- Attachments: <a href="#">Minutes SC 1.05.2026</a></li> </ul> </li> </ol> <p>Agenda approved with the addition of the Mille Lacs Stacking Slab discussion and update of USFWS name</p> <p>Yes: 4, No: 0, Absent:3</p> <p>Minutes approved Yes: 4, No: 0, Absent:3</p>			<p>DECIDE 5 min</p>
<p><b>Fiscal/ Reporting</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>1. Final 2025 Budget</b> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Assigned: Erin</li> <li>b. Attachments: <a href="#">Q4 Financials</a></li> </ol> </li> <li><b>2. Status Work Plan Revision</b> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Assigned: Coordinator</li> </ol> </li> <li><b>3. Status FY26 Grant Application</b> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Assigned: Coordinator</li> </ol> </li> <li><b>4. Status FY25 Elink Grant Reporting</b> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Assigned: Janet</li> </ol> </li> </ol> <p>Erin Hoxsie provided a brief budget update for end of year Q4 values. Fiscal Year 25 budget overview showed a total remaining balance of approximately \$132,000 noting that approximately \$46,500 can be moved without an additional grant agreement amendment. Mary shared the Goal Tracking Snapshot showing approximately 86% of funds encumbered (45% Spent), and 85% of Match funds contracted (14% Spent)</p> <p>Mary Poelman updated the Steering Committee the FY 24 work plan revision was submitted the last week of January 2026. Mary Poelman updated the SC that the FY 26 WBIF Grant Application was submitted the last week of January, review would take place in February 2026 by BWSR. Janet Smude updated the SC on the reporting process, Mary noted that the Annual Elink report was submitted in the last week of January.</p>			<p>Information 15 min</p>

Topics	Assigned	Attachments	Time
<p><b>Projects</b></p> <p>1. KSWCD_Shoreline_Peace 30_WBIF_2026  - Attachments: <a href="#">SOW, Ranking Sheet</a>  Total Project Cost: \$ 21,183.00  Requesting: \$15,887.25  Non-State Match: \$ 5,295.75</p> <p>Emily Larsen presented this project to the Steering Committee for feedback and discussion. The group discussed ice ridge damage at the property and implications for design (rip-rap policy) and use of pollution reduction calculators in an uplift situation.  Decisions focused on:  1. Current Rip-Rap policy of partner (KSWCD) and SRWPP  2. Ice Ridge classification as a protection vs a restoration project. SC noted that Rip-Rap potentially signals protection while revegetation could signal restoration.  3. Risk of repeated Ice Heaving in future years. SC noted the High probability of repeated Ice Ridges and implications for project maintenance.  4. SC noted the potential benefits of Ice Ridges in protection of shoreline from Stormwater runoff</p> <p>It was noted that DNR is scheduled to do a site visit to refine recommendations. The Steering Committee recommended holding off funding decisions until after the DNR Hydrologist site visit and recommendations.</p> <p>2. Update on Waste Facility Closure Cost Share  a. Assigned: Jaren</p> <p>Jaren Peplinski updated the Steering Committee on landowner cost sharing on cost increase of manure pit closure. Noted that the KSWCD board had approved additional funds contingent upon approval by the JPE board. Project will be brought to JPE board 23.Feb.2026</p> <p>3. Discussion of Wetland (partnering with USFWS) Project Funding  a. Assigned: Jaren</p> <p>Jaren Peplinski updated the SC on partnership with the TNC to work on wetland projects within Kanabec County. Discussed potential cost share for access road however in discussion SC noted this project would not be eligible for WBIF cost share funding due to policy on funding of projects already under construction.</p> <p>Aaron Gustafson, Pine County joined the meeting</p>			<p>DECIDE  25 min</p>

Topics	Assigned	Attachments	Time
<p><b>Sub Committee Reports</b></p> <p>1. Ag Cost-Share Review / Subcommittee</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">a. Recommended Policy Changes for review (<a href="#">HERE</a>)</p> <p>Ag Committee (Mary) presented the recommended Policy Changes as a redlined document to the Steering Committee.</p> <p>Steering Committee discussed proposed policy changes with decisions focused on:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The purpose of the proposed policy change would allow each partner to follow their approved internal cost share policy for implementing flat rate structural and non-structural practices within the Snake River Watershed.</li> <li>2. This change is meant to reduce administrative burden for the Partnership, removing the need to update dollar values annually and reduce administrative burden for partners who are required to maintain their own cost share rates for other grants.</li> <li>3. The expressed desire of partners to unify rates across their individual counties among multiple watersheds</li> <li>4. Checks in place in policy to ensure fiscal responsibility of the partnership and shared information among partners.</li> </ol> <p>Vote to approve Recommend policy changes to the JPE for approval.</p> <p>Yes: 5, No: 0, Absent:2</p> <p>Policy recommendations will be added to the 2.23.2026 JPE Agenda</p>			<p>DECIDE 20 min</p>
<p>1. Annual Report 2026</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Staff Pictures</li> <li>- Board Pictures</li> <li>- Letters from Partners</li> </ul> <p>Mary Poelman discussed the process of producing the Annual report and asked for feedback or recommendations from the Steering Committee on format and ways to tell the story of the partnership. Barb Peichel encouraged telling stories aligning with the Clean Water Council's Strategic Plan. Mary plans to have a follow up discussion with SC members and Barb on strategy.</p>			<p>Discussion 10 min</p>
<p><b>Strategic Direction</b></p> <p>1. Reconnecting with our Mission for 2026 as a Steering Committee:</p> <p>Mary Poelman reminded SC of the SWOT/TOWS analysis that they completed at the Jan 2026 meeting. Recommending staff/ Partners to read the report. She noted the analysis could help in identifying potential directions and addressing risks and opportunities in the watershed.</p>			<p>Discussion</p>

Topics	Assigned	Attachments	Time
<p>Discussion of the Stacking Slab project in Mille Lacs SWCD.</p> <p>Siena Storm presented an update to the Steering Committee on the progress made in assessing eligibility of the Stacking Slab project on the border of the Rum River and Snake River Watersheds. Siena Storm is working with engineers and NRCS to get a cost for the non-NRCS-funded elements and clarify potential WBIF cost share before bringing the project to the Steering Committee for funding discussions. The Steering Committee recommended the project be shared with the Rum River to see if they would also be interested in providing funding. It was noted that although the project is in a Tier 2 area for the Snake it might not be in a priority area for the Rum River Watershed.</p>			Discussion
<p>Future Meeting Times</p> <p>JPE Feb 23, 2026</p> <p>SC Mar 2, 2026 <a href="#">SC Meeting Calendar 2026</a></p> <p>TAC Last: Oct 6 2025 , Next May 2026</p> <p><b>Newsletter Content Suggestions?</b> <b>Please send to Coordinator</b></p> <p>Barb noted that the steering committee meeting calendar includes a meeting scheduled for Labor Day, and Mary Poelman indicated they would update the schedule to correct that. Mary Poelman encouraged partners to share any thoughts on newsletter content, outreach, or site visit opportunities. Meeting was adjourned 3:50 pm</p>			Informational