



**Steering Committee Meeting  
Zoom  
Wednesday, March 27<sup>th</sup>, 2024  
1:00PM**

**Attending:** Craig Mell – Chisago SWCD, Jessica Collin-Pilarski – Washington County, Emily Heinz and Mike Kinney – CLFLWD, Michelle Jordan – BWSR, Becca Oldenburg-Downing – WCD, Kyle Axtell – SWWD, Laura Jester – Keystone Waters LLC, Mike Isensee – CMSCWD, Karen Kill – BCWD, Matt Oldenburg-Downing – MSCWMO, Todd Kulaf – Isanti SWCD, Jay Riggs and Angela Defenbaugh – WCD, Scott Soderman – Isanti County, Mike Gainor – Pine County, Jamie Schurbon – ACD, Barbara Heitkamp – EMWREP/LSC, John Hanson – VBWD, Joel Larson – U of M Extension, Susanna Wilson Witkowski – Chisago County

**Call to Order – 1:00PM**

Becca Oldenburg-Downing started the meeting at 1:04PM.

**Approval of Minutes**

No changes were made to the February 28<sup>th</sup>, 2024 minutes. Craig Mell motioned to approve the February 28<sup>th</sup> minutes and Jay Riggs seconded. The motion carried with all those voting in favor (ACD, CSWCD, CMSCWD, CLFLWD, Isanti SWCD, Isanti County, MSCWMO, SWWD, WCD, and Washington County).

**Administrative updates**

Jay Riggs provided an updated about the Agronomist position and stated that more would be shared later in the meeting. He also shared with the education position being filled and starting soon Barbara Heitkamp will be part-time and still working for the Lower St. Croix Watershed Partnership (LSC WP).

**FY21 WBIF Review**

100% of this grant has been encumbered, with 90% spent. The remainder is pending the completion of South Washington Watershed District's (SWWD) Trout Brook project. All other payments have been made.

**FY23 WBIF Review**

The FY23 grant is 77% encumbered without the addition of the awarded supplemental funds. This grant is 25% spent.

**2023 Reporting WBIF and Non-WBIF**

Laura Jester said she has received material from all partners except Isanti County, Isanti SWCD, Pine County, and VBWD. Todd Kulaf said that he would reach out to Isanti County and get back to Laura. Laura ask if the Chisago Lakes LID's numbers were included with Chisago SWCD and Craig Mell shared

Anoka Soil and Water Conservation District - Brown's Creek Watershed District - Chisago County  
Carnelian-Marine-St. Croix Watershed District - Chisago Soil and Water Conservation District  
Comfort Lake-Forest Lake Watershed District - Isanti County - Isanti Soil and Water Conservation District  
Middle St. Croix Watershed Management Organization - Pine County - Pine Soil and Water Conservation District  
South Washington Watershed District - Valley Branch Watershed District - Washington County  
Washington Conservation District

that at least partially they would be. Laura will be following up with Craig and Emily Heinz and plans to share a draft by April 8<sup>th</sup>.

### **FY23 WBIF Grant**

#### **A1 Subcommittee Recommendation**

Jay Riggs gave an update on the A1 Subcommittee's recommendation. He summarized the changes from the current position and work plan. The budget will be reduced by \$100,000 due to the position being vacant for an extended period of it, the co-leads for the agronomist will be WCD and Chisago SWCD, and the partnership with the UMN extension will be ended. Ending the partnership with the UMN Extension will allow for changes to be made to the job posting including offering more flexibility in for the salary range and educational requirements. He thanked Joel Larson and the UMN Extension for the partnership. Joel Larson said he was glad to have worked with the LSC WP and wanted to ensure that the position was filled and met the LSC WP's needs. Craig Mell made a motion to accept the recommendation and make attachment A consistent with the work plan and Kyle Axtell seconded. The motion carried with all those voting in favor (ACD, BCWD, CMSCWD, Chisago County, CSWCD, CLFLWD, Isanti SWCD, MSCWMO, SWWD, VBWD, WCD, and Washington County). Michelle Jordan inquired if one person is intended to fill this position, if they will be new or existing staff, and where will this person be located. Craig Mell clarified that it is one FTE but could be more than one person. Jay Riggs shared that it will be a new staff person and that they will be housed at WCD or CSCWD or another partner's office. Craig Mell stated that he would work with Becca Oldenburg-Downing to get the recommendation to the Policy Committee.

#### **WBIF Supplemental Funds**

Craig Mell shared that the LSC WP was awarded \$167,615 in supplemental funding and suggested waiting to assign that money to activities in the work plan until after the project proposal discussion. Matt Oldenburg-Downing stated that MSCWMO submitted a project proposal to be included with the supplemental funds request but has since withdrawn this project for consideration of the supplemental funds. Since the supplemental funds are being incorporated into the work plan and therefore following the same procedures as all other project requests, the MSCWMO concluded they were no longer eligible because of self-evaluating and not meeting the gatekeeper clause requirements, specifically items three and five.

#### **Project Proposals & Reports**

Becca Oldenburg-Downing gave a brief summary of the two project proposals. Emily Heinz shared some additional information about CLFLWD's project proposal for the Health Ave IESF Feasibility study. This study is needed to close on a property that is being subdivided. If the project is feasible CLFLWD can move forward with the purchase and then subsequent project and construction. The project would likely be paid for with a Clean Water Fund (CWF) grant. A discussion was held around the gatekeeper criteria and if this proposal met those requirements. Karen Kill and Matt Oldenburg-Downing asked if specifically, this feasibility study meets the requirements, not the final project proposal. Jessica Collin-Pilarski asked if a feasibility study has been approved in the past. Craig Mell shared that it has not and that there is \$27,000 left in the A7 category. Karen Kill and Jay Riggs brought up concerns for the funding being available for northern partners since the A7 category was added that their request. Matt Oldenburg-Downing shared that the exceptions to policies and procedures can be inhibitive and frustrating and doing a self-evaluation is why MSCWMO didn't submit a project proposal seeing that it didn't meet the policies. Mike Kinney stated that it's hard to decipher what the LSC WP wants and shared that CLFLWD has a number of large loans out at the moment and cannot undertake this feasibility study without another funding source. John Hanson pointed out that if this is a high priority

under the gatekeeper criteria it needs to be an A or B for implementation actions and this falls under C. Jamie Schurbon shared concerns about shifting funds over the 10% threshold as that would require a work plan amendment. It was decided to wait to take any action on this project proposal until after hearing the second project proposal.

Kyle Axtell shared background on the Washington County and SWWD project proposal, St. Croix Bluffs Regional Park Ravine Stabilization Phase 1. Craig Mell asked if this project would be under the A1 category instead of A2 and Kyle Axtell agreed to amendment that on the project proposal request. Michelle Jordan shared that because this is not routine maintenance the project is eligible for WBIF. Kyle Axtell said that this is old railroad infrastructure and that without this project the pipe will fail on its own, by doing the project sedimentation is reduced to the St. Croix River. John Hanson stated that the St. Croix River is not a priority waterbody listed in table 5.2. Craig Mell motioned to approve the Washington County's project for Lower St. Croix Watershed Based Implementation Funding in the amount of \$120,000 for Phase 1 of the St. Croix Bluffs Regional Park Ravine Stabilization Project. This funding will come from the awarded WBIF Supplemental funds and be added to the A1 category. SWWD made an amendment that this project is for category A1. Mike Isensee seconded this motion. The motion carried with all those voting in favor (ACD, BCWD, CMSCWD, CSWCD, CLFLWD, Isanti SWCD, MSCWMO, SWWD, VBWD, WCD, and Washington County).

Kyle Axtell made a motion to recommend Comfort Lake-Forest Lake WD project for Lower St. Croix Watershed Based Implementation Funding in the amount of \$49,000 for the Heath Ave Iron Enhanced Sand Filter Feasibility. \$47,615 will come from the award WBIF Supplemental Funds and be added to A7, the remaining \$1,385 will come from the existing A7 category available funds. Craig Mell seconded this motion. The motion carried with seven partners voting in favor (CSWCD, CLFLWD, Isanti SWCD, SWWD, VBWD, WCD, and Washington County) and two opposed (BCWD and MSCWMO).

Craig Mell stated that the approved project proposals utilizing the supplemental funds will need to go to BWSR for approval.

#### LSC Implementation Tracking Tool

The LSC currently doesn't have an implementation tracking tool. A tracking tool would be beneficial for reporting purposes and WBIF dollars can pay one. Kyle Axtell shared that based on the memo up to \$18,000 would potentially be needed to pay for a tracking tool. Karen Kill inquired about the need for this and expressed concern if there is enough money left for agronomy outreach to cover material costs and possible stipends to farmers to attend trainings. Craig Mell shared that there is enough to cover this and funds being shifted from the A5 category still leave plenty of room for funding the position when looking at the past monthly billings. Barbara Heitkamp agreed and stated that there is enough in the budget for materials, what is really needed is capacity which will happen when the position is filled. The decision on shifting funds for an implementation tracking tool was held off until the FY23 work plan and budget revision topic.

#### Future Partner Projects

A brief update on future partner projects was given including: CMSCWD having two upcoming projects with likely project proposal requests for \$30,000 and \$150,000 respectively, CSWCD shared that they will have two projects coming with a requests for \$20,000, and SWWD shared that they will have a phase 2 project proposal for around \$200,000 but this request would be under the FY25 grant.

#### FY23 Work Plan & Budget Revision

A discussion was held around how to shift the \$100,000 from the A5 category to other activity categories based on the needs of partners and upcoming projects. Craig Mell motioned to adjust the FY23 budget, with the \$100,000 approved to move from the A5 category, shifting \$30,000 to the A2 category, \$35,000 to A4, \$25,000 to A7, and \$10,000 to the A10. Kyle Axtell seconded. The motion carried with all those voting in favor (ACD, BCWD, CMSCWD, CSWCD, CLFLWD, SWWD, VBWD, WCD, and Washington County).

#### **FY25 WBIF Grant**

##### **Metro Convening Group Meeting**

Kyle Axtell shared and update about the metro convening group meeting. The original second meeting date needed to be rescheduled. He shared that an agenda would be sent to partners next the following week and that the meeting is now April 23<sup>rd</sup> from 10-11am and will be in a hybrid format with a Teams invite sent out with the agenda.

##### **Work Plan & Budget Development Timeline**

Craig Mell stated that after the metro convening group meeting takes places there should be a better idea of how much funding will be available for FY25. This will be a topic at the May Steering Committee meeting.

#### **Other**

There were no other items.

#### **Adjourn**

Becca Oldenburg-Downing called to adjourn at 3:20PM.