**Lower St. Croix Watershed Partnership
Policy Committee Meeting
October 25th, 2021, 4-6 pm via zoom**

**MINUTES - Approved**

1. **The meeting was called to order at 4pm by Chair Fran Miron.**
	1. Roll call.

**Policy Committee members in attendance:**

* Anoka SWCD: Sharon LeMay
* Carnelian Marine St. Croix WD: Wade Johnson
* Chisago County: Chris DuBose (vice chair), Lance Petersen, Mike Mergens
* Chisago SWCD: Jim Birkholz
* Comfort Lake - Forest Lake WD: Jackie Anderson
* Isanti County: Susan Morris (secretary)
* Pine County: Steve Hallan
* Pine SWCD: Doug Odegard
* South Washington WD: Kevin ChapdeLaine
* Sunrise River JP WMO: Janet Hegland
* Washington County: Fran Miron (chair)
* Washington SWCD: Diane Blake

**Not present:**

* Browns Creek WD: Klayton Eckles
* Isanti SWCD: Jerry Schaubach
* Middle St. Croix WMO: John Fellegy
* Valley Branch WD: Ed Marchan

**Other Attendees:** Jay Riggs (WCD), Tiffany Determan (Isanti SWCD), Craig Mell (Chisago SWCD), Emily Heinz (CLFLWD), Jamie Schurbon (Anoka SWCD/Sunrise River WMO), Becky Wozney (Anoka SWCD), Susanna Wilson-Witkowski (Chisago County), Maureen Hoffman (Washington County), Melissa King (BWSR), Barb Peichel (BWSR), Joel Larson (UMN Extension), Dawn White (Chisago County alternate), Steve Schmaltz (CLFLWD alternate), Angie Hong (EMWREP), Barbara Heitkamp (EMWREP/Lower St. Croix Watershed Partnership)

1. **Approval of agenda**
	1. Jackie Anderson requested to add two agenda items:
		* Progress on emergency project evaluation/policy
		* Clarification of policy committee role in WBIF project application process
	2. Susan Morris moved to approve amended agenda, Jackie Anderson seconded. Motion was carried with no objections.
2. **Approval of July 26, 2021 meeting minutes**
	1. Fran Miron requested that the minutes be updated to note that motions to approve the 7-26-21 agenda and 5-24-21 minutes were carried.
	2. Jackie Andersen requested that minutes be amended to better explain Mike Mergens question related to negative match amounts shown in the grant budget table. Craig Mell and Angie Hong clarified that the education match funds are coming from local partners, through the EMWREP program, for education activities that support goals in the Lower St. Croix plan.
	3. Motion by Chris DeBose to approve the 7-26-21 minutes, with requested changes. Steve Hallan seconds. Motion carried with no objections.
3. **Financial Update – Craig Mell and Emily Heinz**
	1. Emily – See packet document with financial summary. 47% of the initial $1.2 million has been encumbered, 3% has been actually spent.
		* We have achieved 24% of our two-year phosphorus reduction goal.
		* At our current rate of progress, it will take us 100 years to achieve the phosphorus-reduction goals of the St. Croix TMDL. However, this progress chart does not include locally-led partner projects that are not funded through the WBIF grant.
	2. Craig – see budget spreadsheet. 5 of the 10 activities have funds encumbered toward them.
		* Jackie Andersen and Fran Miron requested that a notation be added to the spreadsheet to clarify the source of match funds for the listed grant activities.
	3. Craig – Also in the packet is a memo related to LSC WBIF Grant Agreement Amendments and Work Plan Revisions. This memo was reviewed and approved by the LSC steering committee on Sept. 22.
		* Request to combine funds for grant activities A2 and A5 (urban and ag structural practices) to allow greater flexibility in funding priority projects. The subcommittees for grant activities A2, A4, A5, and A9 are already meeting jointly, so there is a high level of coordination happening.
		* Request to follow BWSR recommendation for shifting funding between grant activities – if in excess of $50,000, policy committee approval is needed before moving forward.
		* Jackie Andersen – what does BC stand for? Answer - BWSR Board Conservationist
		* Jackie Andersen moves to approve the requested changes outlined in the memo. Second by Jim Burkholz. Motion is carried with no objections.
4. **Project Request Form – Emily Heinz**
	1. Subcommittees and steering committee have developed a project request form for partners to use when requesting WBIF funding.
	2. To request funds, partners are asked to provide information about the prospective project and its anticipated benefit and note how the project meets a priority goal in the LSC plan. Information requested in the application form will also be used for BWSR grant reporting at the end of our two-year grant.
	3. The first two pages of the form apply to all projects. Then there are additional pages that are specific to different project types (ie. structural ag vs internal loading). Scoring criteria is still being finalized for the targeting and prioritization funds.
	4. The package also includes a flow chart outlining the project application and approval process. Partners bring projects to the relevant subcommittee first, and then to the steering committee. The policy committee provides oversight and approves the annual work plan.
	5. Emergency project proposals should be brought to the planning team for expedited review. The emergency protocol does not skip any part of the regular approval process, but can help move timelines along by ‘activating’ subcommittees outside their normal meeting times to accelerate the project evaluation timeline
	6. Questions and discussion:
		* Jackie Andersen requested that the procedure for emergency projects be written up as an official policy and approved by the policy committee.
			+ Staff will bring draft language to the next policy committee meeting.
		* Jackie Andersen – does this mean that priority projects will not happen unless partners apply for funding to do them?
			+ Yes, any projects need to be completed by one or more of the local partners who are signatories to the JPA. The LSC Partnership is not an entity and can not do projects on its own. Project proposals are evaluated by the subcommittees and steering committee and eventually approved for funding by Chisago SWCD, acting as the fiscal agent for the WBIF grant.
		* Jackie Andersen – partners are then individually responsible for 10% match?
			+ Emily – Usually, yes.
		* Jackie Andersen – please make sure a list of steering committee members is published somewhere for ease of finding the information.
			+ Angie will put it on the website. The steering committee consists of a minimum of one staff member from each partner entity.
		* Janet Hegland – does this mean project funding will be determined on a ‘first-come, first serve’ basis even though a higher priority project might simply not come along in time?
			+ Craig Mell – yes.
			+ Janet Hegland – I have hesitations about this and would appreciate further discussion at the next meeting.
			+ Angie mentioned that there will be a steering committee meeting this Wednesday, October 27th. During the meeting, the committee will review two proposals: One to conduct targeted street sweeping evaluations; and one to delineate and prioritize contributing subcatchments within the northern portion of the LSC watershed. These two evaluation efforts should lead directly to implementation of priority water-quality improvement projects in the near future.
		* Jackie Andersen – I am also concerned that this structure doesn’t allow the partnership to actively pursue priority projects versus waiting for partners to apply for projects – what work then is the policy committee doing?
		* Fran Miron – This project request form is being presented as an informational item. The policy committee will not be voting on whether or not to approve the project application form and project approval process, but we can discuss it further at the next meeting.
		* Jim Burkholz and Steve Hallan – the project approval process is defined well currently and allows for adequate oversight by the policy committee. The project form looks good as well.
5. **Subcommittee Updates**
6. Jay Riggs – agronomy outreach
	* The closing date for the agronomy outreach specialist was extended from late September and closed yesterday (October 25th). Interview committee is meeting this Friday and will then offer invitations for interviews in mid-November
	* Best case scenario – having an offer by December
	* Fran Miron asked Joel Larson from UMN Extension about overall UMN process in hiring
		+ Timelines can be tricky and getting things done is always subject to hiccups.
		+ Initial review committee will include Joel, an ag colleague in extension, Barbara Heitkamp, Jay Riggs, Lance Petersen, and Dave Tollberg. The group couldn’t meet earlier than late October, so decided to extend the job posting.
		+ The review committee is individually assessing applicants and we will meet this coming Friday with our first round of picks.
		+ Once we get beyond this first anonymous review, we can decide how public/open we would like interview process to be and whether members here want to be involved.
	* 15 applicants – lower than hoped for, but we just need 1!
7. Urban and Ag Projects – Craig Mell
	* Craig - $180,100 has been encumbered thus far for the McQuade and Hinze projects.
	* Activity 4 – waiting on the agronomist to be hired before proceeding.
	* Activity 5 – street sweeping proposal is being discussed at Wednesday steering committee meeting – several cities have expressed interest in participating.
	* Activity 9 – nothing yet, but some partners have indicated interest
8. Educator updates – Angie Hong and Barbara Heitkamp
	* Angie – An email newsletter was sent to all policy, advisory, steering and subcommittee members via MailChimp last Wednesday. The quarterly newsletters are designed to give partners more information about ongoing projects and programming.
	* Angie also shared a table that outlines what types of education and outreach activities will be funded by local funds through EMWREP vs state funds through the LSC.



* + EMWREP is entirely funded by local partners and has been in operation since 2006. Currently, all 25 partners are wholly or partially in Washington County. In 2022, several new partners from the northern portion of the LSC watershed will be joining EMWREP and providing local funding for the program as well.
	+ The state funding through LSC can only be used for education and outreach activities that are directly related to implementation of projects in the WBIF grant.
		- Jackie Andersen would like to have a discussion of EMWREP priorities and funding that will be provided by northern partners at a future meeting.
1. Wetland Restoration – Becky Wozney
	* One partner has reached out about potential project
2. Internal Analysis – Susanna Wilson-Witkowski
	* Recently issued a call for projects with a deadline of October 31. The subcommittee will meet on November 3rd to review applications.
	* So far, they have received proposals from Anoka SWCD and CLFLWD. Chisago County and Chisago LID have indicated they will be applying as well.
	* Overall application deadline is December 15th, so there is still some time.
3. Targeting Analyses – Jay Riggs
	* Still working to overall prioritization criteria – work will continue as project applications are still being accepted/evaluated – folks from WCD, Chisago, CLFLWD are doing the work
	* Street Sweeping Proposal will be considered by steering committee on Wednesday, Oct. 27. A Rock Lake prioritization project was sent back to Pine SWCD and Pine Co to revise to make sure it meets WBIF funding criteria. WBIF funds can not be used for monitoring activities and funds spent on monitoring can not be used as match either. The steering committee will also be reviewing a proposal to prioritize catchments in the northern portion of the Sunrise River subwatershed.
4. **WBIF Funding and Plan Implementation – Jamie Schurbon**
	1. 2023-24 funding will be divided into metro and non-metro pots, as it was during the last round of funding. There is $807,509 available for the metro portion of the LSC watershed and $471,070 for the whole watershed = $1,278,579 total.
	2. Our current WBIF grant expires 12-31-2023. On July 1, 2022, FY 2023 funds become available, so there is overlap. The 3 year grant will expire on December 31, 2025.
5. **Wrap Up**
	1. The next Policy Committee meeting will be held on Monday, January 24th, 4-6 pm. The group will wait until January to determine whether to meet in person or via zoom.
	2. Motion to adjourn by Doug Odegard, Susan Morris seconds, motion carries and meeting adjourns at 5:20 pm.