



Steering Committee Meeting
Zoom
Wednesday, October 25th, 2023
1:00PM

Attending: Craig Mell – Chisago SWCD, Jessica Colin-Pilarski – Washington County, Emily Heinz – CLFLWD, Barb Peichel – BWSR, Becca Oldenburg – WCD, Matt Moore and Kyle Axtell – SWWD, Susanna Wilson-Witkowski – Chisago, Laura Jester – Keystone Waters LLC, Mike Isensee – CMSCWD, Joel Larson – U of MN Extension, Karen Kill – BCWD, Jamie Schurbon – ACD, John Hanson – VBWD, Matt Downing – MSCWMO

Call to Order – 1:00PM

Becca Oldenburg started the meeting at 1:02PM. A request for an addition to the agenda was brought forward by Craig Mell to discuss the upcoming Steering Committee meeting dates. No objections were made to this addition. Another request for an addition was made by John Hanson for Valley Branch Watershed District's (VBWD) submittable of a Watershed Basin Implementation Funding (WBIF) Supplemental Fund spreadsheet to be included. Karen Kill asked had been discussed with the Policy Committee on WBIF Supplemental Funds. Matt Downing inquired if the Policy Committee had approved a specific dollar amount. Craig Mell shared that the Policy Committee was supportive of applying and that no specific projects or dollar amount was discussed, but that they were aware it was in the several millions currently. Craig Mell motioned that the VBWD WBIF Supplemental Fund be added to the amended agenda and Jamie Schurbon seconded, the motion passed with all those present voting in favor.

Approval of Minutes

No changes were made to the October 5th, 2023 minutes.

Administrative updates

No administrative updates were given.

FY21 WBIF Review

CMSCWD's SWA is almost done with an anticipated mid-November completion. This is the last outstanding project with the exception of SWWD's Trout Brook project that was delayed due to drought conditions impacting revegetation. The final payment for this cycle is expected the summer of 2024.

FY23 WBIF Review

No FY23 WBIF updates were given.

Project Proposals & Reports

There were no project proposals.

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

Old Business

There were no old business items.

New Business

A discussion was held around the potential application for WBIF Supplemental Funds. Craig Mell asked for BWSR's insight to the potential request. Barb Peichel shared that the LSC WP should ask what they can accomplish and not a wish list. If the submitted requests exceed the dollars available BWSR will be using a formula to divvy up dollars and our eligibility would be based on the non-metro portion of the LSC. There is an advantage to requesting more money and requesting money for administrative costs associated with receiving additional funding is allowable.

Craig Mell shared that this will likely have to go back to the Policy Committee (PC) because of warranting a workplan amendment. This constraint means the Steering Committee (SC) meeting in January should take place before the Policy Committee meeting. Emily Heinz asked when the request is due for WBIF Supplement Funds. Craig Mell stated the request needs to be submitted by January 8th and BWSR will respond with what funds have been awarded by January 16th. The funds would be available around April 2024 and need to be spent by December 2025. Karen Kill asked if the PC is supportive of this request with so many of the projects being in metro areas of the LSC. Craig Mell shared that the PC is very supportive of applying, and is aware of the potential size of the request, and is supportive of spending the funding basin wide.

Karen Kill requested that each partner submitting a project for requested WBIF Supplemental Funds share if they think it is feasible to finish their projects in that timeline. Matt Downing asked if these projects can be completed without receiving these funds and if money is already lined up to fund them. Kyle Axtell, Emily Heinz, Mike Isensee, Craig Mell, and John Hanson all shared that the projects are feasible and dependent on receiving funds and that they have applied for some competitive grant funding. Matt Downing shared that the MSCWMO project would not happen if the WBIF Supplemental Funds were not received. Kyle Axtell motioned to move forward with the WBIF Supplemental Fund request as is and Mike Isensee seconded. The motion was tabled and later withdrawn by Kyle.

Jamie Schurbon suggested waiting to reduce the list and asking for some more information such as; are competitive funds available and can the project be scaled up or down. Barb Peichel asked what the process would be for prioritizing funds after they were awarded. Matt Downing asked to pare things down to reduce administrative time. Mike Isensee inquired if it was any less administrative time to submit the list as is. Emily Heinz shared that specific projects don't need to be included in the request and that we would likely be submitting a rolled-up version of our current template with dollar amounts listed by activity type without projects being specified. John Hanson shared a lot of this will depend on what competitive grants are awarded. Matt Downing suggested that the time required to rank thirty projects be considered and Kyle Axtell said we should wait to pare the list down based on the competitive grant outcome.

Next steps were discussed with Jamie Schurbon suggesting projects be listed as wants or a wish and including funding for administrative tasks. Mike Isensee suggesting adding categories to the current template for: project scalability, priority level, and the LSC priority plan reference number. Matt Downing suggested talking to Michelle Jordan individually before the next SC meeting to check projects for eligibility. Craig Mell motioned for the cancelation of the November SC meeting due to holiday conflicts and moving the dates of December and January meetings to accommodate holidays and the WBIF Supplemental Fund deadline to December 14th and January 17th, Jamie Schurbon seconded, the motion passed with all those present voting in favor.

The 2023 Reporting Deadline for WBIF and non-WBIF activities was discussed by Laura Jester. Laura said that the plan was to bring one completed report with both WBIF and non-WBIF activities to the January Policy Committee (PC) Meeting. Mike Isensee brought up that watershed annual reporting isn't due until later so bringing non-WBIF items to the PC in April would be easier. Laura Jester asked about bringing on report with both WBIF and non-WBIF activities to the PC in April. Emily Heinz shared that the downside to waiting until April is that the PC doesn't get to see the eLINK report until after it's submitted but that their approval isn't technically needed so it's not a policy issue. Craig Mell shared that Barbara Heitkamp and Jennifer Hahn had asked for the January deadline for reporting their own work and Emily suggested that they report individually and the rest can be presented in April. John Hanson and Kyle Axtell agreed with waiting until April and presenting one report. Emily suggested that Laura use the templates that partners are required to submit for final payment that include metrics as a start for reporting.

Other

Barb Peichel brought up holding a metro convening meeting and Emily Heinz and Kyle Axtell offered to help while BWSR works to fill positions. She also shared information on interactions with tribal entities. BWSR is now able to subcontract with tribal entities. John Hanson shared an update that the Prairie Island Indian Community is working through some lawsuits and have land in VBWD.

Joel Larson gave an update on the agronomist position. He shared that the A1 Subcommittee met after the last Steering Committee meeting and decided to continue the partnership between the LSC and U of MN Extension. Joel has been working on a job description and duties with the A1 Subcommittee and when that is finalized a new agreement will be drafted.

Adjourn

Becca Oldenburg called to adjourn at 2:23PM.