



**Steering Committee Meeting  
Zoom  
Wednesday, October 5<sup>th</sup>, 2023  
1:00PM**

**Attending:** Craig Mell – Chisago SWCD, Tom Dietrich – Washington County, Emily Heinz – CLFLWD, Michelle Jordan – BWSR, Jay Riggs – WCD, Becca Oldenburg – WCD, Paul Swanson – Pine SWCD, Kyle Axtell– SWWD, Susanna Wilson-Witkowski – Chisago, Laura Jester – Keystone Waters LLC, Mike Isensee – CMSCWD, Joel Larson – U of MN Extension, Todd Kulaf – Isanti SWCD

**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 supplemental WBIF dollars. There were no objections this addition.

**Approval of Minutes**

No changes were made to the August 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2023 minutes.

**Administrative updates**

No administrative updates were given.

**FY21 WBIF Review**

100% of the funds have been encumbered.

**FY23 WBIF Review**

72% of funds have been encumbered. The cycle expires in 2025. 19% of the funds have been spent on work CLFLWD has done.

**Project Proposals & Reports**

There were no project proposals.

**Old Business**

Laura Jester presented the 2024 Workplan. The workplan is split into a biennium with this being the in between year, as the next grant cycle will start in 2025. Outputs for the workplan were split in half from FY23 goals when it made sense. New activity numbers were added to the workplan (A11 Aquatic Invasive Species Prevention & Management, A12 Land Acquisition & Management, A13 Shoreland Protection & Management, A14 Ditch Law, and A15 Interagency Coordination), as well as additional documents (2024 Calendar, Project Evaluation and Approval Process, Non-Structural Ag Practices Policy, Non-Structural Urban Practices Policy, Tree Canopy Assessment Protocols, Fast-Track Projects Policy, and the Joint Powers Agreement). Michelle Jordan inquired if the new activity numbers are aimed for grants or for activity tracking. Laura explained that they are to track activities occurring in the basin.

[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](#)

Craig Mell shared that next year there will be more of a narrative workplan. The 2024 workplan will go to the Policy Committee with the additional documents. Barbara Heitkamp suggested making the workplan more digestible by packaging it together with some explanation. Tom Dietrich asked if there is someone willing to take over the project policy as he is leaving his current position and Barbara agreed to house the documents Tom has been working on. Craig Mell motioned to approve the 2024 Workplan and bring it to the upcoming Policy Committee meeting for consideration, Emily Heinz seconded. The motion passed with all voting members voting in favor.

### **New Business**

Jennifer Hahn has resigned and the Agronomy Outreach Specialist position will need to be filled. Some considerations were discussed around the position continuing to be through the U of MN Extension. Joel Larson stated that the U of MN Extension is interested in continuing to host the position and making sure that the partnership's needs are met, and asked to hear about challenges from Jennifer's time. Mike Isensee shared that the position was great and that Jennifer made some major inroads with agricultural landowners. He shared that it would be helpful to have metrics of what this position accomplishes, in addition to the EMWREP monthly email update, and to also have the position filled quickly. Barbara Heitkamp shared some challenges of the position being hosted by the U of MN Extension from her time working closely with Jennifer. She stated that having multiple computers and email accounts was a challenge, the U of MN's requirements regarding branding were cumbersome, the Extension is decentralized and a lack of support for registration for trainings, and that some farmers distrusted the U of MN. Emily Heinz inquired if the challenges Barbara presented can be solved. Joel Larson shared that the challenges are partially policy and partially procedural but that he would like to address challenges. The computer issue will be reduced since the new hire would not have a laptop from NRCS. Joel is willing to work through the branding policy and challenges. Discussion was held about who Jennifer's supervisor was (Joel Larson) and where her physical office was housed (WCD and U of MN Extension). Paul Swanson suggested that someone with an agricultural background and comparable experience be hired as the knowledge was helpful for his staff and to be able to direct farmers to a point person. Jay Riggs mentioned that the A1 Subcommittee is meeting after this meeting to discuss qualifications and that they can start by reviewing the posting used to hire Jennifer. Craig Mell suggested not having a bachelor's degree as a requirement because it may deter otherwise qualified candidates. Craig Mell was not previously on the A1 Subcommittee due to potential conflicts of interests with Jennifer's application but will be joining the Subcommittee. Jay Riggs confirmed that Kyle Axtell will be filling the watershed seat on the subcommittee. Jay asked for feedback on who should host the position (WCD, Chisago SWCD, U of MN Extension). All voting LSC partners agreed with a show of hands that the decisions regarding the position can be made by the A1 Subcommittee.

The presentation on LSC accomplishments and discussions on the role of the Advisory Committee were skipped due to no Advisory Committee members being present.

A discussion was had around the available supplemental WBIF money. 7,750,000 supplemental WBIF dollars are available to request. They must be requested by a non-metro entity, but the money could be spent anywhere within the LSC, including the metro portions. A request must be submitted to BWSR and Michelle Jordan would review it before signing off. A funding formula will be used if there are requests that exceed the available money. The formula will be the same one that was used for FY21 and FY23 to decide how much money each applicant receives. An amendment could be made to the FY23 grant if awarded money and an extension could be wrapped into the agreement. This supplemental funding doesn't impact future funding.

This topic was suggested to bring to the upcoming Policy Committee meeting. Craig Mell pointed out that this would likely be a workplan amendment and that would mean this would have to go back to local boards for 2/3 approval. Kyle Axtell said that applying for this with the non-metro partners onboard is goodwill for money to continue to be spent as a partnership, with later metro dollars going to the LSC as a whole with non-metro partners being able to use them. Jay Riggs brought up that a metro convening group is coming up and this could be discussed there. He said it was smart to apply and Mike Isensee agreed. Craig Mell pointed out that we currently have three watershed wide grants, and that there are Clean Water and Soil Health Grants, and the LSC will see a 65% increase in FY25. He stated that since this grant would expire on 12/31/25 it would be ideal to have 1-2 big projects that need to be completed during that time. Kyle Axtell mentioned the bluff stabilization project for SWWD if they don't receive Clean Water Funding. Michelle Jordan shared that exact projects don't need to be included in the request. Craig inquired how much match is required and Michelle shared it's ten percent and that administrative costs could be included as well. Jay said that additional staff time would be needed to do the extra projects, including technical assistance. Craig stated that the decision will likely hinge on if the Policy Committee is comfortable with letting staff make the decision since there isn't enough time with local board having 60 days to approve or deny, that approval would be needed to move forward with the request at the upcoming meeting. Laura Jester said that it should be made clear that the 2024 Workplan is separate from this opportunity and still needed. Emily Heinz suggested building in flexibility for these dollars. Craig asked that partners should submit a request by October 18<sup>th</sup> so requests can be discussed at the next Steering Committee meeting. Laura also asked that 2023 reporting be a topic at the upcoming Steering Committee meeting.

#### **Other**

#### **Adjourn**

Becca Oldenburg called to adjourn at 2:48PM.