

**Metro Lower St. Croix Watershed
BWSR FY24-25 Watershed-Based Implementation Funding
Convene Meeting Minutes**

Date: 02-21-2024

**In-Person: Washington County Public Works North Shop
11660 Myeron Road N, Stillwater, MN 55082
Hybrid Option via Microsoft Teams**

NOTE: These minutes are intended to serve as a general summary of discussion and to document decisions. Audio and video recordings of the meeting are available and can provide additional detail.

Attending Voting Members:

	Organization	Representative	Contact
P	Washington County	Stephanie Souter	stephanie.souter@co.washington.mn.us
P	Anoka SWCD	Jamie Schurbon	jamie.schurbon@anokaswcd.org
V	Ramsey County Parks SWCD	Ann WhiteEagle	ann.whiteeagle@co.ramsey.mn.us
V	Washington SWCD	Jay Riggs	jriggs@mnwcd.org
–	Brown’s Creek WD	Karen Kill	karen.kill@mnwcd.org
P	Carnelian Marine St. Croix WD	Mike Isensee	mike.isensee@cmscwd.org
P	Comfort Lake Forest Lake WD	Jackie Anderson	jackie.anderson@clflwd.org
P	Middle St. Croix WD	Matt Oldenburg-Downing	moldenburg-downing@mnwcd.org
P	South Washington WD	Kyle Axtell	kyle.axtell@woodburymn.gov
P	Sunrise River WMO	Tim Melchior	timothymelchior@gmail.com
P	Valley Branch WD	John Hanson	jhanson@barr.com
P	Municipal – City of Afton	Ron Moore	rmoore@ci.afton.mn.us
P	Municipal – City of Columbus	Janet Hegland	counciljaneth@ci.columbus.mn.us

P – Present In-Person

V – Present via MS Teams

Other Attendees:

Jessica Collin-Pilarski, Washington County
Emily Heinz, Comfort Lake Forest Lake WD
Chris Volkers, City of Oakdale

Michelle Jordan, BWSR
Craig Mell, Chisago SWCD
Kristina Handt, City of Forest Lake

The meeting was called to order at 1:17pm. Kyle Axtell served as meeting facilitator and described the meeting background and purpose.

1. Attendance

All voting members were present with the exception of Karen Kill (Browns Creek WD).

Per BWSR program guidance, voting convene committee members include Washington County, three SWCDs, seven WDs/WMOs, and 2 self-selected City representatives (13 total). Rom Moore from Afton and Janet Hegland from Columbus volunteered to be voting City representatives in the

partnership. No objections or additional volunteers have been submitted by other municipalities in the allocation area.

*****Audio/Video recording of the meeting began just after introductions were completed*****

2. Rules of Engagement and Decision Process

Janet Hegland moved that decisions should be made with a simple majority vote (7/12 members for today's purposes). Tim Melchior seconded the motion. Jamie Schurbon added that he expected we would likely move closer to a full group consensus through discussion but agreed that a simple majority vote should be the rule if there were tough decisions that needed to be made. **Motion passed unanimously.**

3. Metro Funding Allocation Discussion

Kyle Axtell explained that \$1,266,380 has been made available through BWSR's Watershed-Based Implementation Funding (WBIF) program for the Metro Lower St. Croix (LSC) allocation area. Eligible activities include projects found within the implementation sections of the LSC Comprehensive Watershed Management Plan (1W1P), individual WD/WMO plans, or Washington County's Groundwater Plan. In recent previous cycles, convene committees have directed this funding to be combined with Non-Metro LSC WBIF funding for implementation of the LSC 1W1P, administered by the LSC Watershed Partnership (LSCWP).

Janet Hegland stated that with more funding available this cycle there should be more latitude to consider other projects from local entities that fulfill local priorities that aren't necessarily seen as priorities in the LSC 1W1P. She offered two options: 1) that a simple percentage of funding could be set aside for this purpose, or 2) that the convene committee could directly reach out to local communities to seek project proposals. She stated, for example, that several local priority projects for the Sunrise River WMO (SRWMO) are not prioritized or eligible for funding through the LSC1W1P.

Tim Melchior added that SRWMO has stopped applying for funding through the LSCWP because it knows their projects aren't eligible despite local prioritization. He asked for equal opportunity among all eligible entities.

Mike Isensee explained that in the past, he felt that the LSCWP has followed the requirements put in place by BWSR. He personally looked forward to more projects being proposed from the northern, rural areas of the LSC basin.

John Hansen stated that during the initial round of WBIF funding, allocations were evenly split among eligible entities. In later rounds, after the LSC 1W1P was developed, the convene committee opted to direct funds through the LSCWP for implementation of the 1W1P. He reiterated that there are some local priority areas and waterbodies that are not priorities for the larger LSC basin.

Jamie Schurbon gave the example of Coon Lake. Given its location in the watershed, Coon Lake is not a priority waterbody in the LSC 1W1P, but it is Anoka County's most important recreational lake and is a huge priority for SRWMO, Anoka County and the Anoka SWCD. Activities that would seek to

improve Coon Lake are lot LSC priorities. He supported the idea of asking the local communities for project proposals, but also cautioned that he also supported pooling the majority of funds to implement the LSC 1W1P.

Stephanie Souter stated that Washington County's official position is to support pooling of Metro LSC WBIF funds through the LSCWP.

Janet Hegland added that if local projects were to receive funds through this program, it would be important to determine which entity (or entities) would serve as fiscal agent.

Jackie Anderson stated that in her view, BWSR intended for the WBIF program to align with the priorities of the 1W1Ps around the state and for the funds to be implemented through the partnerships. She also pointed out that WBIF is not the only source of funding available to local partners to implement their priorities.

Matt Oldenburg-Downing stated that he appreciated when the funding was evenly divided among partners.

Tim Melchior stated that due to his background he always defaulted to the fairness doctrine and that this process simply hasn't been fair to all partners all the time.

Jay Riggs added that the Washington SWCD strongly supports the idea of pooling resources through the LSCWP, but his Board also recognizes that local projects aren't always prioritized and that he would be interested in seeing what folks had in mind. He also reminded the group that the Chisago SWCD serves as the fiscal agent for the LSCWP.

John Hansen asked if municipal local surface water management plan projects were eligible for funding through the WBIF program. Michelle Jordan responded by reiterating that project found within the implementation sections of the LSC 1W1P, individual WD/WMO plans, or Washington County's Groundwater Plan are eligible for funding consideration with WBIF funds. Project only found in a city's local surface water management plan are not directly eligible, but a WD/WMO could amend their plan to incorporate a city project if it chose to do so.

Kyle Axtell proposed that the convene committee open a window of time to accept project proposals from local partners for consideration, possibly through the end of March or so. He noted that it is important to keep the window reasonable but short so that decisions can be made in a timely fashion out of respect to other non-metro LSC partners and the fiscal management duties of the Chisago SWCD. He felt that a month should be plenty of time for local partners to compile information needed about projects that should already be on the books.

Stephanie Souter added that partners would need adequate time to consult local elected officials and get approvals for project proposals if needed. She felt that the end of March provided enough time to do that. She noted the complexity of the partnerships involved in the LSCWP.

Kyle Axtell added that the purpose of doing this would be to respect the areas in local plans that aren't priorities for the larger LSC basin and to serve as a survey of what level of funding need is out there.

Matt Oldenberg-Downing stated that he felt BWSR needs to think about the reality that this is supposed to be a non-competitive process. By introducing all these priorities, it has turned into a different kind of competitive process, which is counterintuitive to what the process was originally supposed to be.

Jay Riggs noted that requiring two meetings seemed appropriate to him and would be needed if we were sending a request for proposals out to partners. He asked representative from the SRWMO if they had a proposal of how much funding they would like to see carved out for this purpose.

Janet Hegland indicated that they had discussed this a bit ahead of the meeting. Considering that SRWMO is about 20% of the land area of the Metro LSC allocation area and looking at project they were aware of, a wide range of 6% to 20% would likely be adequate.

Jamie Schurbon stated that he felt the amount of Metro WBIF funding to be pooled through the LSCWP should be at least \$1,000,000.

Jackie Anderson reminded the group that project proposals would still need to follow the PTM (Prioritized, Targeted, Measureable) guidelines of BWSR.

Kyle Axtell moved that a window would be opened through the end of March to accept project proposals from eligible entities; that those proposals should use BWSR's existing spreadsheet fields to describe their project, its cost, and its relationship to plan, etc.; that he and Janet Hegland would coordinate to ensure the request was issued to all eligible entities; and that proposals could be sent to Kyle for compilation. Motion seconded by Tim Melchior. Ron Moorse asked for a clarification if the committee was setting aside a particular amount of funding for this purpose and that the rest of the funding would be pooled through the LCSWP. Kyle Axtell replied that he viewed that as a decision the committee would make at a subsequent meeting depending on the proposals received and that he did not see a reason to impose any arbitrary caps on anything at this point. ***Motion passed unanimously.***

3. Next Steps

Kyle Axtell noted that the convene committee would be surveyed to find a second meeting date in early April to review proposals received.

The meeting adjourned at 2:19pm.