**Lower St. Croix Steering Committee special meeting (4-12-22)**

**Participating:** Angie Hong (EMWREP / LSC), Barbara Heitkamp (EMWREP / LSC), Craig Mell (Chisago SWCD), Becky Wozney (Anoka SWCD), Emily Heinz (Comfort Lake Forest Lake WD), Jamie Schurbon (Sunrise JPWMO / Anoka SWCD), Jennifer Hahn (LSC), Michelle Jordan and Barb Peichel (BWSR), Paul Swanson (Pine SWCD), Susanna Wilson-Witcowski (Chisago Co), Tiffany Detterman (Isanti SWCD), Matt Downing (Middle St. Croix WMO), Caleb Anderson (Pine Co), Jay Riggs (Washington CD), Karen Kill (Brown’s Creek WD), Matt Moore (South Washington WD), Tom Dietrich and Stephanie Souter (Washington Co)

1. Updates on conversations related to JPC vs JPE:
   * Tom and Stephanie – had a special workshop with Washington County board today and the board is pretty firmly in favor of remaining a JPC. Commissioner Miron wants to know more about what isn’t working in the current format. The board doesn’t believe that we are incurring much cost or liability currently as a JPC.
   * Craig – Chisago SWCD talked about the issue yesterday. The board would be more comfortable if we adopted some of the proposed stream-lined approaches. They would also support approving large projects up front through a separate agreement before the WBIF work plan is established each round
   * Jay – WCD board is leaning toward staying as a JPC with enhanced efficiency. They are also in favor of continuing to pool funds between metro and non-metro.
   * Barb – when will metro group convene?
     + Date is not yet set.
   * Matt – MSCWMO board does not support moving toward a JPE because they do not want to create another layer of government.
   * Susanna - will talk with Chris DuBose and/or Chisago County board after today's meeting to have up to date info on options.
2. Barbara led a conversation on how to streamline the current project implementation process
   * We are currently spending $25k in local staff time just on subcommittees
   * The subcommittees played a really important role in Year 1 when we were hiring staff and developing policies and protocols. Now that that work is complete, the subcommittees could be dissolved. This is a success! We’ve completed groundwork in Year 1 to get implementing in years 2-10.
   * Shared an updated flow chart showing what a stream-lined approach might look like.
   * This might help policy committee members to feel more engaged in the process in addition to reducing staff time for meetings
   * Comments:
     + Jay – this looks good. We can still form ad hoc committees as needed to complete work.
     + Jamie – remaining questions to be resolved
       - What is the $ threshold for which projects would go to the PC?
       - What is the criteria for when we call a steering committee meeting vs getting approved or going directly to the PC?
     + Emily – would this change need to be approved by the PC?
       - Craig – if it’s only a change to the WBIF grant work plan, it doesn’t technically require approval from the policy committee
       - Angie – but it’s a big enough change that it would be good to get their guidance and support
     + Susanna – these changes are necessary now that the subcommittee work is completed. Would be good to reconvene the subcommittees in the future if needed. Good to at least bring the new process to the PC as an FYI to include them in the update.
     + Tom – it would be good to quantify how much time and $ we might be saving by using this approach
       - Barbara created a spreadsheet estimating how much $ in staff time we are currently spending
     + Stephanie – would this mean the steering committee meets less frequently?
       - Angie – hopefully
     + Craig – if a project is above $50k, Chisago SWCD board would prefer for a project to go to the PC instead of them
     + Barb – would like to suggest that the group not fund projects that are not in priority areas
     + Caleb – this is great but will not answer the question that his Pine Co policy committee member will have. Will this result in the PC having to meet more frequently? If we end up with more frequent PC meetings, we might not save as much staff time as we hope to
       - Angie - in her vision, the PC would continue to meet quarterly. Big projects should have enough lead time that they could wait three months for approval. Pushing small projects through more quickly without PC approval will ensure we don’t end up with small cover crop projects getting hung up.
       - Matt M – he agrees with Caleb that it could be a problem to have large projects held up for 3mo
       - Jay – the PC could call special meetings, as needed, for large projects. If the PC wants to become a JPE and approval all contracts, then they would need to meet monthly.
     + Matt D – MSCWMO is a JPE and has delegated authority to staff to make decisions for smaller $ amount projects.
     + Craig – the work plan approved by our boards in Jan. 25 of 2021 did not spell out the process for which we would approve projects. The language about subcommittees was added later, likely at the suggestion of BWSR staff.
     + Emily – thinks this looks good. Craig is correct – we didn’t get approval from the policy committee for the first process flow chart. Her CLFWD policy committee member is very concerned about the way the CWMP is being implemented currently and will likely want to be involved in developing the self-scoring sheet. Emily can not vote to approve or recommend this proposed change at this time.
     + Karen – her board and PC rep would support this streamlined approach and do not want to have a say in most project approvals
     + Jamie – Sunrise JPWMO would support this model but it would be good to bring this to the policy committee on April 25.
     + Craig – Yellow Medicine 1w1p uses $30k as its threshold. They don’t even go through a steering committee. The projects either get automatic approval or go to the policy committee. Michelle Overholser is the contact at YM WD
     + Paul – if we bring this flow chart to the policy committee on April 25, will we have to come back again in 3mo to get a self-scoring sheet approved?
     + Craig – we never had the original flow chart approved. It was brought to the PC for information only in 2021.
     + Karen – we’ve never asked the PC to approve any of the criteria that subcommittees developed this year so there isn’t a reason to have them approve a self-evaluation / self-scoring sheet now. We’re just making our process more efficient.
     + Jamie – recommends replacing the term “self-scoring” with “self-evaluating”
     + Matt M – we all have slightly different approaches to project approval and it’s important to remind the PC that this group’s process might not look the same as their own org’s process
     + Craig – would this require a WBIF grant work plan amendment?
       - Michelle – hopefully not but she needs to check
     + Caleb – it might be helpful to show the proposed new work flow alongside the old one
     + Barbara can develop a cover memo in collaboration with Jamie. He is also creating a memo for the PC related to financial costs of JPC vs JPE.
     + Emily – should she still bring forward a proposed policy related to fast track policies? If CLFLWD board decides not to move that conversation forward, maybe it shouldn’t come to the PC on April 25
3. JPC vs JPE
   * Angie reviewed the key differences between the two approaches and pros / cons of each. Jamie has previously presented that info to the PC in Feb. 2020.
   * Karen – does Chisago SWCD want to move to a JPE?
     + Craig – his board wanted to previously but is now excited about continuing as a JPC with this new streamlined approach
   * Craig – for entities that want to move to JPE, what is your primary reason?
     + Caleb – mostly to have only one entity approving projects instead of 17
   * Tiffany – Isanti SWCD was always in favor of a JPE and is now in the process of establishing one for Run River 1w1p. However, now she sees that the JPE approach is likely to take much more time. If the PC wants to have a say in every project and meet monthly, it could really decrease efficiency.
   * Angie is also concerned that a JPE with monthly PC meetings would be less efficient. Many of the watershed boards review projects several months in a row before approving.
   * Stephanie – Washington County is in a JPE with only two counties that is a lot of work because the PC rep is continually coming back to the county board to get their input before going to the JPE.
   * Jamie – the PC is already very familiar with the pros and cons of JPC vs JPE and doesn’t really need more guidance from us.
   * Jay – In today’s WashCo board workshop, Fran noted that the whole purpose of 1w1p is to promote collaboration. A JPC does that. A JPE might reduce collaboration and isolate the PC members from their local boards.
   * Matt M – Fran is also supportive of pooling together metro and non-metro WBIF funds. He sees it as the best way to leverage resources for the whole watershed and especially to get projects done in the northern watershed.
   * Karen – noted that we don’t have strong support for JPC vs JPE among staff but do have strong support for a more stream-lined approach
   * Angie would like to bring a staff recommendation to the PC for the April 25 meeting. Consensus among the group seems to lean toward remaining as a JPC and implementing this new stream-lined approach. Then revisit this conversation in a year and revise as needed.
   * Barbara and Jamie will work together to prepare a memo that Angie can send out with the policy committee packet next Monday. The planning team can also talk more tomorrow to iron-out remaining details.