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| Lower St. Croix Watershed Partnership |
| Policy CommitteeMeeting #15 - MINUTES | **Vision** The St. Croix River, groundwater, lakes, streams, rivers, wetlands, and upland habitat in the Lower St. Croix watershed sustain healthy ecosystems, recreation, public health, tourism, agriculture, the economy, and quality of life in our communities. **Mission**Guide protection and restoration of priority natural resources in the Lower St. Croix watershed over the next ten years through implementation of the Lower St. Croix Comprehensive Watershed Management Plan.  |
| April 22nd, 20244:00-6:00 PM |
| **Forest Lake City Center**1408 Lake St S, Forest Lake 55025 |
|  | **Facilitator:** Angie Hong | **Note taker:** Barbara Heitkamp |
| Attendees: | **Policy Committee members attending:**Anoka SWCD: Kate Luthner (arrived at 4:30 pm)Carnelian Marine St Croix WD: Kristen Tuenge Chisago County: Lance Petersen and Mike MergensChisago SWCD: Jim Birkholz Comfort Lake Forest Lake WD: Jackie AndersonIsanti County: Kristi LaRowe (virtual)Isanti SWCD: Tom AndersonPine County: Steve Hallan Pine SWCD: Doug OdegardSouth Washington WD: Sharon DoucetteWashington County: Fran MironWashington SWCD: Diane Blake**Policy Committee members absent:** Brown's Creek WDMiddle St. Croix WMOValley Branch WD**Staff Members (in person):** Angie Hong (EMWREP); Barbara Heitkamp (LSCWP); Jay Riggs (WCD); Jessica Colin-Pilarski (Washington County), Craig Mell (Chisago SWCD); Dan MacSwain (Washington County); Barb Peichel (BWSR); Kyle Axtell (SWWD), Jessica Shu Teli (EMWREP)**Staff Members (virtual):** Joel Larson (UMN-Extension); Scott Soderman (Isanti County); Tiffany Determan (Isanti SWCD); Emily Heinz (CLFLWD) |
| Meeting packet: | [Available here.](https://www.lsc1w1p.org/meetings-committees)  |

**MINUTES:**

The meeting was called to order at 4:04 pm by Chair F. Miron.

**Approve agenda**: Motion to approve agenda by S Hallen. Second by J Birkholz. All in favor. Agenda approved.

**Approve meeting minutes from the January 22nd meeting**

* M Mergens motions to approve the 1-22-24 meeting minutes. Second by J Anderson. All in favor. Minutes approved.

**2023 Activities Report: Barbara Heitkamp**

* Refer to the [2023 report by Laura Jester](https://static1.squarespace.com/static/5b0dadc59772aeb1df30d0d8/t/661d8738f877911cafd132e4/1713211192640/LSC%2B2023%2BActivity%2BReport%2BWBIF%2Bnon%2BWBIF_v2.pdf)
* Already have met our 10-year phosphorus reduction goal outlined in the LSC Comprehensive Watershed Management Plan!
	+ We still have plenty of reduction needed to help meet the phosphorus reduction goal outlined in the 2012 Lake St. Croix TMDL.
* Report highlights the extensive collaborations our partners have with our communities and in obtaining supporting grants to do good work
* Non-structural ag program has been immensely successful – funding has been the rate-limiting factor versus demand from producers
* S Hallan – how are the upstream Minnesota watersheds doing?
	+ B. Peichel – Snake River in its first year of implementation; Kettle River is finalizing their plan

**Updates on 2024 Lower St. Croix Watershed Plan Implementation**

* WBIF Financial report: Craig Mell
	+ FY21 WBIF grant: 100% of the grant funds have been encumbered and 90% are spent. There is one remaining payment for the SWWD Trout Brook project that will be completed this spring.
		- K Axtell – Trout Brook project is almost complete - waiting for vegetation to come up
	+ FY23 WBIF grant: 72% of the grant funds have been encumbered and 25% have been spent. Grant expires in December 2025.
		- The LSCWP was awarded $167,615 of supplemental funding for projects, to be completed by the end of 2025. Funding has been allocated to existing workplan activities
			* Steering Committee has approved $47K in supplemental funding for technical assistance for Health Ave IESF Feasibility study
			* Additional $120K proposed for Washington County project being discussed later at this meeting.
	+ CWF Soil Health Grant: 100% of this grant has been spent on soil health projects
		- 50 producers across the basin utilized funds
* Program Updates:
	+ See powerpoint for information.
	+ J Anderson (in reference to shoreline contractor workshop) – are contractors required to have a certification to work on shorelines?
		- A Hong – not in our area, although Stearns County has a model program that mandates that any vendor working on shorelines has to complete a shoreline training once every three years in order to work in the county.
		- J Anderson and M Mergens – we strongly endorse figuring out a way to replicate a similar program here.
	+ F Miron – can we do some additional outreach about the Minnesota Ag Water Quality Certification Program? It continues to grow and would be nice to track those stats throughout the basin
* Welcome Jessica Sahu-Teli – new watershed educator
	+ Started today at WCD!

**Hiring update for agronomy outreach specialist (LSC FY23 WBIF Work Plan Revision and Budget Amendment): Jay Riggs**

* [Reference the memo here.](https://static1.squarespace.com/static/5b0dadc59772aeb1df30d0d8/t/661d87264670452982f11568/1713211175877/LSC%2BFY23%2BWBIF%2BWork%2BPlan%2BRevision%2Band%2BBudget%2BAmendment%2BRequest.pdf)
* The agronomist subcommittee and Steering Committee have recommended to end the collaboration with the University of Minnesota Extension for hosting the agronomist outreach specialist position – none of the applicants over our two periods of open applications had the direct farmer experience that we were hoping for; separating from the University allows us more flexibility in setting required qualifications (University mandates a 4-year degree) and salary
* Need a motion to strike the collaboration with UMN Extension from the workplan and adjust the FY23 budget by $100,000 – **this will require going back to our local boards for approval**
* Motion to accept recommendation as presented in the memo by J Anderson, K Tuenge seconds. All in favor. Recommendation carries.

**Project Funding Request: Washington County – St. Croix Bluffs Regional Park Ravine Stabilization**

* This request for $120,000 of WBIF supplemental funding exceeds the $50K threshold and requires recommendation from the policy committee before approval from the fiscal agent. The Steering Committee has unanimously recommended the project for approval.
* Project presented by Dan MacSwain (Washington County Parks) and Kyle Axtell (SWWD)
* See powerpoint slides here.
* SWWD will provide $30K of match for the project.
* Bank along the St. Croix River bank is starting to erode due to combination of runoff and slumping
* Phase 1 of the project includes embankment stabilization at Lake St. Croix shoreline using vegetated riprap, new drop structure and culvert stabilization,
* Pollution reduction estimates: 4.6 lbs/yr total phosphorus (TP), 5.4 tons total suspended solids (TSS)
* J Birkholz – how old is existing pipe and culvert?
	+ K Axtell: Very old – a vestige of the old railroad
* J Anderson –
	+ Lots of root exposure in pictures – are we planting trees to replace those that might fail?
		- K Axtell: Stabilizing with native plants (not trees on the eastern side), main goal is ground cover
	+ Looking at wider drainage area and runoff contribution – what is being done to address that?
		- The first phase started in 2017 to get cover crops installed on several acres of land.
		- Phase 2 coming up will likely include 4 upland bioretention basins, upper ravine stabilization via canopy clearing, channel riprap, check dams, and drop structures
* J Anderson motions to provide project recommendation to Chisago SWCD for approval. Jim Birkholz seconds. All in favor. Motion carries.

**Update on LSC Metro WBIF Convene Process: Kyle Axtell**

* Second meeting is scheduled for tomorrow; anticipate the bulk of FY25 funds will be available for the wider partnership.
* Craig Mell: At our next Steering Committee meetings, we will start working on FY25 work plan and budget, will have recommendation for the policy committee to review at a future meeting.

**Possible Updates Needed for the LSC Comprehensive Watershed Plan: Jay Riggs**

* As plan implementation continues, we recognize that there are omissions and clarifications that need to be made to update the plan as we encounter them.
* BSWR has made administrative funding available to help fund staff time to update the plan – it would be good idea to apply for this funding.
* J Birkholz – any idea of an amount we should ask for?
	+ J Riggs: potentially up to $50K – we need to assess needs and form an estimate of staff capacity to work on this and put a proposal together.
* S Hallan makes a motion to pursue the funding. K Tuenge seconds. All in favor. Motion carries.

**Remote Participation in Policy Committee meetings: Angie Hong**

* [Memo included here.](https://static1.squarespace.com/static/5b0dadc59772aeb1df30d0d8/t/661d8f8ffcfebe666465237d/1713213327674/Memo%2B-%2BRemote%2Bparticipation%2Bin%2BPolicy%2BCommittee%2Bmeetings.pdf)
* A Hong: In our JPA agreement, we stated we would follow public meeting law even though we are a joint powers collaboration but not an entity.
	+ In order for a policy member to participate AND vote remotely, we need to know 3-days ahead so we can post the address for where the member will participate (a location that must be open to the public).
	+ A member can still participate remotely but they CAN NOT VOTE if it a shorter notice than 3 days.
		- S. Hallan – are there any medical exemptions from this?
			* F Miron – no, but if you think there might be a chance of needing to participate remotely, perhaps let Angie know before that 3 day window so you can utilize the remote option if necessary.
* A Hong: Also of note: Only the designated PC member or their alternate can vote. There are no proxies allowed.
* J Anderson motions to accept the memo recommendation as stated. D Odegard seconds. All in favor. Motion carries.

**Next Meeting: July 22nd, 2024**

* Will determine location.
* A Hong will be absent, B Heitkamp will run the meeting.

Meeting adjourned at 5:14 pm.