

Lower St. Croix Watershed Partnership – Policy Committee meeting 4-24-23

**MINUTES**

Meeting was called to order at 4:08pm by Chair Fran Miron.

**Policy Committee members in attendance:**

Chisago County: Dan Dahlberg, Lance Petersen, Mike Mergens

Pine County: Steve Hallan (Virtual)

Washington County: Fran Miron – Board Chair

Anoka SWCD: Sharon LeMay

Chisago SWCD: Jim Birkholz – Vice Chair

Isanti SWCD: Dave Medvecky

Washington SWCD: Robert Rosenquist (Virtual)

Carnelian Marine St Croix WD: Kristin Tuenge - Secretary

Comfort Lake Forest Lake WD: Jackie Anderson

South Washington WD: Kevin ChapdeLaine (Virtual)

Middle St. Croix WMO: Mike Runk

**Absent:**

Brown's Creek WD: Klay Eckles

Isanti County: Kristi LaRowe

Pine SWCD: Doug Odegard

Valley Branch WD: Ed Marchan

**Other people attending:**

Brenda Green (Chisago County at-large alternate), Angie Hong (EMWREP), Jennifer Hahn (LSC), Laura Jester (LSC), Ben Elfelt (Chisago LID), Tiffany Determan (Isanti SWCD), Susanna Wilson Witkowski (Chisago Co), Emily Heinz (CLFLWD), Barb Peichel and Michelle Jordan (BWSR), Talisha Zimmerman (Isanti Co), Maggie Karschnia (UMN Extension and SeaGrant), Mike Isensee (CMSCWD), Tom Dietrich (Washington Co), Craig Mell (Chisago SWCD), Jay Riggs (WCD)

- Approval of agenda
  - Motion Jackie Anderson
  - 2<sup>nd</sup>: Mike Runk
  - Votes: Unanimous
  
- Approve Minutes
  - Motion: Kristin Tuenge
  - 2<sup>nd</sup>: Dan Dahlberg
  - Votes : Unanimous
  
- Updates on Lower St. Croix Watershed Plan Implementation
  - WBIF Grant
    - Financial Report – provided by Craig Mell. All partners on track to spend funds by end of FY 23 – Craig noted Michelle Jordan approved our FY 23 progress

report, triggering the next 40% payment. For the FY 23 – the Partnership is anticipating 70% encumbrance of funds after the next Steering Committee meeting. Craig also noted that the Comfort Lake Forest Lake Sunrise Wetland project is substantially completed.

- Ag Outreach & Non-Structural Ag Program - Jennifer Hahn provided a presentation overviewing Ag Outreach. Jennifer outlined that they had planned and held 3 in-person meetings over the winter to promote programs and information sharing. A large focus was soil management and cover crops. In the Scandia area, presentations and outreach focused on equipment set up. 2 virtual workshops were also held on feed production and small livestock. Both were recorded and embedded on the LSC's youtube page. Jennifer also highlighted that they've established a presence on social media (facebook and intstagram), and presented at a number of partner programs.
  - Jennifer provided a snapshot of plan implementation, indicating that there would be more concrete numbers later on, but roughly there are 6,000 acres planned. Jennifer also indicated that there will be tracking reductions of total suspended solids (TSS), soil loss, phosphorus (TP), and nitrates (TN). These will be deliverables for end of year reporting.
  - Jennifer also detailed that Chisago SWCD was awarded CWF Soil Health grant for \$200,000. The grant award will allow funds from FY '23 WBIF to be reallocated toward other projects, making the money go farther. They are set to encumber 88% of funds, and are anticipating nitrate reductions of 160% and extended lifespan on practices. They also leveraged \$30,000 in match coming primarily from watershed partners.
  - Steve Hallan asked for clarification on cost share arrangements through USDA and how that dovetails into current practices.
    - Jennifer and Chair Miron explained that the federal NRCS has a program called EQIP (Environmental Quality Incentive Program). The program commits federal conservation dollars thru the federal farm program. The program allows for continuous sign up with rankings once per year.
    - Jennifer explained that they looked at the practices that seemed reasonable for the area – used similar approach, but increased the funds dedicated toward applications. Jennifer also highlighted that applicants are able to piggyback the funds – meaning they can look for other opportunities on top of the cost-share.
  - Kristin Tuenged asked for more information on the workshop in Scandia.
    - Jennifer explained that the workshop focused on the economics of different tillage management systems. They brought in an equipment dealer, who farmed and was also involved in conservation – they wanted to bring out specifics – deep rip cost, strip tilling, no tilling, etc. Jennifer explained that the speaker went through a list of different tillage and management

systems and average fuel use; the range of systems they'd be using this year; cost comparisons; and, soil erosion and infiltration rates. The recording of the workshop will be posted once editing has been completed. will be some editing of the video then it'll get posted.

- Jackie Anderson commented that it was nice to see us (LSC) going after other funding, and not just relying on WBIF.
- Shared Education Program - Angie Hong provided an overview of the shared education program. Updates included: the creation of social media pages for LSCP on youtube, facebook, and Instagram to share general contact, updates, and education events; shoreline realtor workshop, with 45 individuals in attendance. Tiffany Determan, Matt Bauman, and a few others focused on what information to provide when people are considering purchasing waterfront property; protect your shore webinar; restore your shore webinar – which will be held on May 20 at Uncommon Moon Brewery; outreach with the lake associations; and, Outreach planned with local officials, notably the St. Croix Workshop on the Water. This will include 2 opportunities on 6.27.23 and 7.25.23 – tentative plan is 3 presentations, focusing on the economic value of clean water, shoreland ordinances, and success stories.
- Other Updates
  - EMWREP – now in Pine, Chisago, and Anoka. We've amplified the reach and utilize already existent tools.
  - Communities starting to promote adopt a drain – girl scout troop in Lindstrom, MN.
  - Grant awarded from SeaGrant – working with home owners and associations – this is a continuation of the work that we began in 2014
- Mike Runk commented on the proposed dates for Workshop on the Water both are 4<sup>th</sup> Tuesdays, which conflict with council meetings, for future reference.
- Projects In-Progress - Angie Hong provide updates on other items being funded thru WBIF:
  - 3 are happening in Carnelian Marine – St. Croix Watershed District, including:
    - Boat launch sediment reduction
    - A bio-retention project
    - The May Township stormwater retrofit
  - 2 additional large projects:
    - Comfort Lake Forest Lake Sunrise Wetland nearly done.
    - South Washington Troutbrook Project – this project is underway.
  - A number of targeted prioritization efforts (stormwater analyses) are underway.
- Program Snapshot: Targeted, Enhanced Street Sweeping

- Mike Isensee and Maggie Karschnia gave a presentation overviewing enhanced street sweeping in the Lower St. Croix. The presentations covered the effectiveness of the practice, the example the Lower St. Croix is setting nation-wide, cost-effectiveness, and the calculator that has been developed supporting street sweeping efforts.
- The presenters also discussed that cost-share funding is being allocated for 2023 – 2025. The 3-year incentive payments that cover a portion of costs (\$100/curb mile/yr for calculated collections ; \$125/curb mile/yr for weighted collections).
- There was a short discussion about assistance programs or partnerships with Counties for townships that might be too small to have their own equipment. This also touched on how credits were able to be applied to municipal MS4 requirements.
- Review and Consider Endorsing Updated Policies for Project Evaluation and Approval
  - Tom Dietrich provided an overview of the Policy and requested the Policy Committee’s acceptance of revisions. The most notable changes from the previous version included:
    - Clarification on funding requests vs. total project cost
    - Consideration of Steering Committee evaluation criteria
    - Clarification on partner responsibilities
    - Guidance on non-structural projects
    - Addition of language exempting contracts.
  - There was a short discussion about whether or not a public hearing would be needed. If local partners want to have a public hearing, they can have them as part of their public meetings. The current request is to “accept” the proposed policy.
  - Motion – Dave Medvick. 2<sup>nd</sup> – Jackie Anderson - To accept policy as proposed using the language provided. Motion approved.
- Summary of Agendas for July and October Policy Committee Meetings
  - MIDs
  - 2022 Annual Report
  - Sunrise River Wetland Restoration
  - 2024 Annual Plan of Work – we’ll only be bringing one, rather than 2 (like last year)
  - JPC v JPE annual discussion (October)
  - CLFL Sunrise River Field Trip – suggested and agreed upon by all.
  - Notes
- The meeting was adjourned at 5:49pm.