**5-26-21 Steering Committee Notes**

1. Review action items from May 24 policy committee meeting
   * The Policy Committee scheduled meetings for July 26 and Sept. 27, in-person at a location to be determined.
   * The group would like to resume meeting in person but offer a hybrid option for people to join remotely
2. Subcommittee updates
   * Agronomy Outreach – Jay Riggs
     + Group has met once so far. The position will require a combination of tech, economics, and outreach skills. The group would like to hire one full time person as opposed to multiple part time people.
     + Jay met with Joel Larson and Mike Schmidt from MN Extension. U of MN will put together a few proposals for the group to consider for a contract staff person that could work in our area or be housed locally. The group will also consider the cost-effectiveness of hiring a full time staff person, who would be a WCD employee working on behalf of all partners.
   * Urban and Agricultural Projects – Craig Mell
     + Combined subcommittee for activities 2, 4, 5, and 9
     + The group sent out a request for shovel-ready projects and got proposals from SWWD and CMSCWD
       - $150-175K from LSC WBIF for a SWWD ravine project with direct drainage to St. Croix River in Afton (Total project cost = $243K)
       - $20K from LSC WBIF for a CMSCWD Goose Lake project in Scandia (Total project cost = $58k)
     + $360k is available for structural projects in the first round of funding. The subcommittee is recommending to allocate 50% of funding for projects this year.
     + See attached memo for proposed language regarding policies and rates for cost-share
       - *“Cost share amounts are based on Subcommittee and Steering Committee recommendations and Fiscal Host approved percentage range (typically 75%, but potentially up to 100%) of the total estimated project costs.”*
     + Discussion:
       - Matt M and Jay: there will be enough funding to cover match in Washington County but want to make sure that the northern partners can get projects installed without needing to provide match
       - Matt D: can we use EMWREP as match toward the whole WBIF grant?
         * Jay: possibly yes – we just need to make sure we aren’t double-counting EMWREP funds that might be used for match for another grant.
       - Craig: The only local source of match in Chisago County is in the Chisago LID. Everywhere else, their only potential match is federal funds.
       - Tiffany: Isanti County has no non-state, local match. But they also don’t have any projects they are seeking funding for currently
       - Paul: Pine County has no local match either. There may be one project on Rock Lake / Rock Creek area but it’s still unsure.
       - Karen: It is ok to provide match from Washington County for projects in the northern watershed currently. But also, thinking long-term, we should work with local officials to help them understand the importance of providing a local match.
       - Caleb: These 1w1p plans are very new to county commissioners and it will take them a bit of time to learn about these kinds of projects. However, Pine County is also an impoverished county and has a very low tax base compared to other parts of Minnesota.
       - Jay: Recommends supporting the language that is proposed. We could consider changing it in the future if needed.
         * Craig asked others on the steering committee if they agree and support the proposed language. All said yes.
       - Mike K requested that the following consideration be included for ag projects:
         * *“In consideration of the attached proposed language for cost-share policies and rate, I would like the Steering Committee to consider adding a qualifier so as to maximize limited staff resources (time) and limited funding so as to capitalize on the taxpayers’ return on investment. This qualifier would require all cropland being considered for structural BMPs to meet the Tolerable soil loss rate of “T” for any given field regardless if it is classified as HEL or NHEL. In many occasions, the need for a structural BMP can be eliminated or reduced in scope if the manner in which the land is being managed meets such a goal, and in turn, helps to improve the farmer’s profitability. Also, as you can see from the South Fork Pine PTMApp Summary, certain structural practices have very poor returns on investment of public funds compared to cover crops and other cropland management options. As such, this is another reason to include such a qualifier.”*
         * For example, he does not want to see people installing WASCOBs if they are not meeting T.
       - Matt M – who is not meeting T in our area? It is old technology and almost everyone is meeting it currently
       - Angie: during conversation at Policy Committee meeting on Monday, Jim Birkholz and Lance Peterson said most farmers are currently meeting T. They consider it a bare minimum and think farmers should do much more. Most are meeting T but way over on phosphorus export.
       - Craig: T refers to sediment moving around on the field, not what’s leaving the field
       - Jay: this is one part of a broader policy we should eventually develop related to ag cost-share projects. But we don’t need to talk too much about it today.
       - Craig: One big project in Chisago County was to identify gullies and potential projects. The study resulted in 35 projects – most are end-of-field projects. Some farmers are meeting T and using cover crops but still have gullies forming downstream.
       - Tiffany: Would like to remain flexible to work with landowners.
       - Craig: Chisago SWCD board has talked about this issue a lot. They have three certified conservation planners on staff. The federal subsidies unfortunately reward people for doing the wrong thing. The program promotes bushels per acre and no alternative crops.
       - Mike K: Would like to see many more conservation planners working in our area and ensure that farmers are doing work that protects land and water and is also economically viable. Many farmers are going out of business or struggling with mental health.
       - The subcommittee will bring a list of suggested CIP projects to the next steering committee meeting to review and recommend for approval to the Chisago SWCD board
   * Watershed Education – Angie Hong
     + Welcome Barbara Heitkamp
       - Barbara introduced herself to the group. Today is her first official day!
       - Expect to hear a lot from Angie and Barbara in the coming months as we begin rolling out the expanded education program.
     + Virtual NEMO workshops and/or fall tour?
       - In previous years we’ve held a workshop on the water on the St. Croix that was very popular. But it hasn’t worked to plan one in 2020 or 2021 due to COVID. Could we plan an outdoor tour of projects or sights in the fall to allow for in-person interaction and to kick-off outreach related to MIDS and shoreline ordinances for local decision makers?
       - Matt Moore: Maybe an informal gathering like a picnic in a park?
       - Caleb Anderson: Likes the idea of a tour for local officials to learn more.
   * Wetland Restoration – Becky Wozney
     + The subcommittee will be meeting next week
     + Darrick W emailed to inquire about the Hesse projects in Anoka/Isanti County. Would that be funded through wetland or structural ag funding?
       - Answer – Wetland funding. But, the group needs to meet to determine what criteria they will use to use to evaluate potential projects
   * Internal Analyses – Susanna Wilson-Witkowski
     + The subcommittee met on April 26 and developed criteria for prioritizing lakes for internal analyses. They are considering if lakes are part of WRAPS, if they have large external loads coming in, etc.
     + Will develop a 1-2 pg form for next meeting on June 3 and will get request for quotes out this fall
   * Targeting Analyses – Jay Riggs
     + First meeting will be tomorrow
3. Discussion – meeting format and topics for future meetings
   * The group will keep meeting virtually