**Steering Committee Meeting**

**Wednesday, June 22nd: 2-3:30pm**

Attendees: Barbara Heitkamp (LSC), Jay Riggs (WCD), Craig Mell (Chisago SWCD), Paul Swanson (Pine SWCD), Todd Kulaf (Isanti SWCD), Karen Kill (Browns Creek WD), Matt Downing (Middle St Croix WMO), Mike Isensee (Carnelian-Marine-St. Croix WCD), Mike Kinney (CLFLWD), Emily Heinz (CLFLWD), Matt Moore (SWWD), Michelle Jordan (BWSR), Tom Dietrich (WA County), Jamie Schurbon (Sunrise River WMO), Susanna Wilson-Witkowski (Chisago County), Caleb Andersen (Pine County), John Hanson (Valley Branch WD), Zach Van Orsdel (Pine SWCD), Angela Defenbaugh (WCD)

**Notes**

1. Metro convening meeting summary (Tom Dietrich)
	* Group voted unanimously earlier today to pool funds for the 2022-23 WBIF grant
		+ CLFLWD member – Jackie Andersen asked that we notify metro partners that workplans/projects are eligible for funding
		+ Thanks to Craig and Emily for help in putting together some numbers and being available to help answer
2. Review of the [Jones Wetland](https://lower-st-croix-partnership.mobilize.io/main/groups/51936/lounge/resources?path=%2FSteering%20Committee%2F6-22-22%20Meeting%2FJones%20Wetland%20-%20Pine%20SWCD) project - Pine SWCD
	* Total project cost: ~26K, $5,100 ask from the A6 category
	* Potential pollution reduction
		+ Phosphorus: 319 lb/year
		+ Sediment: 312 tons/year
	* Series of wetland restorations with some upland pollinator plantings
	* Previous SC meeting, two questions
		+ How was the phosphorus reduction calculated? How many acres of area would be restored?
			1. Paul: John Reins (USFWS) used restoration toolbar developed by Chris Lenhart at UMN and approximately 9.5 acres will be restored.
		+ Is John Reins (USFWS) considered the technical expert on the project?
			- 1. Pine SWCD approved him as the technical assistance provider
	* Additional discussion:
		+ Craig –where is the remaining $21K of match coming from?
			1. Paul - USFWS, the landowner, and a non-profit – no state funds
		+ Jamie – is the cost or amount you’re requesting based off an estimate or construction bid?
			1. Paul – off an estimate, helps compensate part of the payment for the landowner
		+ Jamie – and if costs come in high, will you be able to cover?
			1. Paul – yes, we have it a flat rate contract on our side so no additional charges on our end
		+ Michelle – thanks for your help to collect those assurances – appreciate working with you.
		+ Vote for recommendation for funding
			1. Anoka SWCD: Absent
			2. Browns Creek WD: Yes
			3. Carnelian Marine St. Croix WD: Yes
			4. Chisago County: Yes
			5. Chisago Lakes LID: Absent
			6. Chisago SWCD: Yes
			7. CLFLWD – Yes
			8. Isanti County – Absent
			9. Isanti SWCD – Yes
			10. Middle St. Croix WMO – Yes
			11. Pine County – Yes
			12. Pine SWCD – Yes
			13. South Washington WD – Absent
			14. Sunrise River JP WMO – Yes
			15. Valley Branch WD – Yes
			16. Washington CD – Yes
			17. Washington County – Yes
		+ Majority carries. The project is recommended for funding to the fiscal agent.
3. Budget Check in and Discussion on Funding Allocation
	* Karen - Prior to moving forward on the next two projects, can we have a financial update on the status of the WBIF budget?
	* Craig - With recommendation of the Jones project, we have currently $737,475.71 encumbered/spent, with a balance of $527,055.29 unencumbered
	* Craig – Another thing to consider for these larger project requests: Per the JPA, recommending either one or both of these projects would require a large grant amendment and would not only have to go to the policy committee but potentially (waiting for attorney clarification) also go back to local boards for approval. Thus, the timeline would require not only moving forward from the steering committee to the policy committee meeting in July, but then it may have to go back to local boards to approve the amended budget (since the amendment would be over the $50,000) and then it would make it to the Chisago SWCD by September *at the earliest*.
	* Karen – Is there a concern from either of the two partners proposing projects of that more anticipated timeline? Also, I couldn’t find on the form whether either of these projects are specifically listed in the work plan? Can that be added to the form?
		+ Craig – the workplan is more points and areas on a map versus specific projects
		+ Matt M– For SWWD project, project plans are being finished, hoping to do tree work this fall and avoid bats and be ready for spring construction, have to work around ski season for the portion in Afton Alps
		+ Karen – So it sounds like it’s feasible, do you need to know whether or not its approved in order to move forward?
		+ Matt M – looking for implementation and engineering dollars for construction
	* Craig – another thought: we would be required at a minimum to do a workplan revision, but if both projects are approved we’d most likely need a grant agreement amendment, so if they do have to go local boards for approval (in August) and are passed by a 2/3s vote, then it has to be submitted to BWSR – Michelle can you give us an idea of how long it would take for a workplan revision or a grant agreement amendment to be approved
		+ Michelle – Workplan revision is simpler, once I have reviewed it I can approve internally. But if you need to do that amendment it will take a bit longer. On our end, from getting a signed copy from the grantee, we need at least a 15-day turnaround to get it executed. You’re looking at about a month in total, but I can also work on some pieces concurrently if I know something is coming, which can shorten the timeline.
		+ Matt M. – Craig, can you remind me again why we would need the amendment?
		+ Craig – In Feb 2021, we went to our boards to approve annual workplan and budget (same as what we did this year in May/June) which includes the 10 activities, and funding these projects would require a grant amendment, and we’re waiting to hear whether legal counsel would require it to go back to the local boards
		+ Karen – we don’t have enough to fund both of these projects – could they move forward if they both got $199K and how does that change the process?
			1. Craig – it’s cumulative for the grant, so it would be $398K – its not per item
		+ Jay – Craig, can you summarize where budget funds are unencumbered?
			1. Craig, A2, A4, A5, A6 (structural and nonstructural urban/ag, wetland restoration), some internal analysis, prioritization, and admin
			2. Mike I – I didn’t realize we were looking at all programs across LSC budget – we do still have the potential to approve some non-structural sweep sweeping and completing analyses within this plan cycle that ends in 2023?
			3. Craig – We did finally receive draft tree canopy report from EOR - I feel like we’ve lost this street sweeping season – I would recommend to not encumber FY 21 WBIF funds for non-structural street sweeping projects – it would be cleaner if the group allocated those funds in the FY 23 and we start next year with that one.
			4. Mike I – I agree with one exception – we have the opportunity to complete the enhance street sweeping prioritization studies this fall – so I don’t want to delay on those.
			5. Craig – I would agree – that would come out of A8 (targeting analysis) budget and EOR is also working up the subcatchment studies for Rock Lake and Sunrise River – I would be reluctant to spend any of the $75K in the A8 budget.
			6. Mike I– thanks for that clarification
			7. Jay – Can we summarize what categories we are proposing to help cover these two project requests?
				1. Craig – sharing spreadsheet

A2 – still have $54K, A4 – at least $100K, A5 - $190K and a few here and there across other categories

We’re really down to about $450K – and that would zero out everything.

* + - 1. Paul – we do have an additional wetland project technically ready to look at today for $10,350
			2. Craig – looking at all the requests, we would be short approximately $208K
			3. Karen – can you remind me what the $75K for the targeting analyses are for?
				1. Craig and Mike – enhanced street sweeping and Rock Creek subwatershed studies that will help guide future projects/work
			4. Mike I – so in summary, we have approximately $440K left in the budget (including new Pine project) to spend down
			5. Karen – do you have any issues with spending down the grant fully?
				1. Craig – I have a little concern with spending down the admin budget ($12K there), also an ask came in to help with education/outreach expenses- that’s coming from A3 but just realizing we need to be somewhat cautious.
			6. Emily – sounds like Trout Brook work is primarily in the spring – would we be able to split a request between the FY21 grant and FY23 grant?

Michelle – short answer yes – we can link grants and having funding from two different FY grants, but we need to be wary of making sure

* + - 1. Mike I– my hesitation with pushing forward large grants to next FY is that I’m already seeing interest pick up for coming projects (smaller projects with smaller load reductions) and I’d rather see larger projects addressed with the FY 21 budget versus carrying forward
			2. Jay – my preference would be to encumber as much of the balance as we can and if we need to adjust later with FY 23 funds.
			3. Emily – part of the encumbered FY21 - $100K is set aside for non-structural ag practices
			4. Craig – just as a note, Chisago SWCD did apply for a $200K soil health grant (CWF grant) with BWSR – it is groundwater focused. Contact indicated that there were less applications than funds available.
1. Review of [Sunrise River-Tax Forfeit](https://lower-st-croix-partnership.mobilize.io/main/groups/51936/lounge/resources?path=%2FSteering%20Committee%2F6-22-22%20Meeting%2FSunrise%20River-Tax%20Forfeit%20-%20CLFLWD) – CLFLWD
	* + Total project cost: ~$1.14 million, $300,449 ask from the A6 category
			1. Since project funding request exceeds $50,000, after today’s review and feedback, project will be sent to the policy committee at the July 25th meeting for review and approval
		+ Potential pollution reduction
			1. Phosphorus: 81 lb/year from Sunrise River, 60 lb/year from Comfort Lake
			2. Sediment: 58,000 lbs/year Sunrise River; 18,000 lb/yr from Comfort Lake
		+ Emily – clarification for a few submitted questions – the watershed is that we have our project immediately adjacent to Sunrise River, but since it drains downstream, we likely will see increased benefit to Sunrise River.
		+ Discussion:
			1. Mike I – is this wetland creation or restoration?
				1. Mike K – very little upland, so restoration, looking to reestablish the wetland complex
			2. Mike I – pollutant load reduction calculation – is it based on diverted flows and wetland treatment or based on soil samples and phosphorus release from wetland?
				1. Mike K – combination of the two – we know what the load is into the Sunrise River and will be able to push over a volume of water and get treatment but there will be some excavation as well
			3. Mike I – did you do soil sampling and what’s your excavation plan?
				1. Mike K – we did soil borings throughout the area and used to identify the volume of the reduction goal
			4. Mike I – you have a CWF grant and 319 grant – any local match?
				1. Emily – there is district levy in play as well
			5. Matt M – how much district funding?
				1. Emily – at least $100K – will be based on how grant funding turns out – this is a high priority project
				2. Mike K – a bit of a caveat with 319 grant – city of Forest Lake has a lot of dead end streets with public accesses to FL - we’ve been wanting to do something in those areas – we had hoped to work with city on those – hasn’t really launched

Matt – we have those too

* + - 1. Matt M – So what happens with wetland in high water conditions? Export or import of nutrients?
				1. Mike K – we anticipate reducing import and export
			2. Karen – Have you looked into wetland banking credits to help recoup costs?
				1. Mike K – we had hoped to do that. Ended up that the amount of wetland per the guidance for what the wetland bank would be would be more than the wetland bank, so we shifted approaches
			3. Craig – I think this is a good project, but we don’t have funding for this and Trout Brook. Is the group ok with doing a budget modification to spend down the budget except out of A8 or A10?
				1. Karen – I’m uncomfortable with spending more than $436K today
				2. Craig – give me a thumbs up of you are ok with spending up to $436 (majority thumbs up)
				3. Our next policy committee is July 25 and SC is July 27 – can SWWD and CLFLWD – can you visit with your boards and see what’s possible?

Mike – adaptive management is always whats needed, so yes, I can go back to board and see what’s possible

Matt M – But let’s just fund a project, and our project load reduction has increased and we are ready to go, we need to put projects on the group, so ok if we fund one and not another. John and I can look at the numbers though too

Craig – In the end, we can offer a recommendation but the approval needs to come from the PC committee

* + - * 1. Karen – would like to make a motion that the steering committee recommends to the PC that the SWWD project be allocated up to $235K and the CLFLWD be allocated up to $200K

Matt Moore second the motion.

Craig – A friendly amendment to allow time for verification of the available budget

Mike I. – my opinion would be to allocate up to $300K for SWWD and $136K for CLFLWD just based on the greater load reduction numbers and proximity to St. Croix River

Karen – still, both of the areas are priority areas and the CLFLWD projects are further upstream?

Mike I. – We’ve prioritized direct drainage to the St. Croix River in the past and it’s unclear of the immediate benefit of the CLFLWD project to the St. Croix River, even though helping the impairment of two priority water bodies is important

John Hanson: Matt, since most of the construction is limited until next spring, would you be eligible to receive later funding or workplan?

Matt M – good question – I’d definitely be back to ask for more funds

Jamie: Is there the possibility of helping apply for competitive grants to help fund given longer timeline?

Matt M – Great River Greening have already allocated approximately $325K toward construction of this project, this potential state money, SWWD money – we’re scratching the bottom

Jamie – does having a reduced budget reduce the feasibility of the CLFLWD to do the project (suggested $136K versus $200K)?

Mike K. – no

Jay: I think both are worthy projects – since we have time before next PC meeting, could we let SWWD and CLFLWD go back to their boards and discuss what they think is possible and then meet July 13th to discuss the recommendation?

Karen – We can move to table or withdraw motion. Looking for guidance from Matt and Mike K – we are looking at between $136K - $200K for CLFLWD and $236K-$300K. Do they feel like this conversation and our overall stance of trying to fund portions of both is enough to continue forward?

Matt M – yes, Mike K. – yes

Karen: then I move to withdraw my motion and we will meet again on July 13th.

Craig – and I will work with Emily to verify that we have the most accurate budget numbers.

1. Check-ins and planning team updates
	* Local approvals for 22-23 Annual Plan of Work – COMPLETE!
	* New streamlined approach to project review and approval
		+ Quick review of proposed process and scheduling next WBIF review meeting
			1. Will review new Pine SWCD wetland project on July 13th
			2. Materials need to be sent in TWO weeks prior to that meeting (so 6/29 for next meeting)
2. Outreach and agronomy updates – Barbara Heitkamp and Jennifer Hahn
	* Non-structural ag and urban BMP policies -
	* Upcoming Ag Field Days
	* Northern Workshop at the Winery
	* Please read our monthly updates sent out to all the partners!