



**Steering Committee Meeting  
Wednesday, July 13: 1-2:30pm**

To join the Meeting:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/81644480415?pwd=TGx6a1ZrN3Z0bGJBM3psRHUxa3dndz09>

Meeting ID: 816 4448 0415

Passcode: 732347

**AGENDA**

**1. Proposed projects review and vote**

- Jahnz Wetland project – Pine SWCD: [Project request form](#) | [Scoring matrix](#) | [Overview map](#) | [Restoration area](#) | [USFWS restoration plan](#)
- Zach Van Orsdel from Pine SWCD introduced the project. They will be able to meet the 10% match requirement and the project will reduce phosphorus loading to Rock Lake by 5lb
- Questions from the steering committee:
  - Emily Heinz – at the last meeting, we talked about factoring a project’s impact to the St. Croix River into decision-making
    - The project is approximately 1 mile SE of Rock Lake and 7 miles from the St. Croix River
    - Craig – we should follow the 1w1p plan as it was approved, which lists multiple priority water bodies and not just the St. Croix River
    - Matt D – the purpose of that conversation was to use impact to the St. Croix River as a “tie-breaker” for projects when funding is limited vs a reason to disqualify a project
    - Zach – this seems like it should be a factor when considering large projects that are more than \$50k and the group wants to consider multiple benefits.
    - Mike I – this is a pretty small grant request and we don’t want to hold up a \$10k project when it is good. Also, the conversation last month was to consider partial funding for some of the larger projects vs no funding at all
- The steering committee voted 15-0 to approve funding the Jahnz wetland project, with all members present voting yes.

[Anoka Soil and Water Conservation District - Brown's Creek Watershed District - Chisago County](#)  
[Carnelian-Marine-St. Croix Watershed District - Chisago Soil and Water Conservation District](#)  
[Comfort Lake-Forest Lake Watershed District - Isanti County - Isanti Soil and Water Conservation District](#)  
[Middle St. Croix Watershed Management Organization - Pine County - Pine Soil and Water Conservation District](#)  
[South Washington Watershed District - Sunrise River Watershed Management Organization](#)  
[Valley Branch Watershed District - Washington County - Washington Conservation District](#)

## 2. Budget and plan implementation – conversation

- YTD Budget - see attached Program log (7-13-22)
  - Column B is original budget
  - Column C is what we've encumbered
  - Potentially available funds = \$431,160; partners have requested \$650,449, which would result in a shortfall of \$219k
  - There are three possible funding options suggested by BCWD, CMSCWD, and CLFLWD, which could be used to partially or fully fund the project requests from SWWD and CLFLWD
  - Michelle Jordan has since sent a memo from BWSR that outlines how WBIF \$ could be used for 21-22 and 23-24 cycles
  - Craig recommends a special policy committee meeting on Sept. 27 to consider a proposed funding arrangement that would fully fund both SWWD and CLFLWD projects.
    - This would require a WBIF work plan amendment, which would need to be approved by local partners
  - Karen – thanks for such a helpful budget spreadsheet. Would like to see this every time the steering committee considers a project request
  - Matt D – would like thoughts from the group on why we might over-spend any of the project funding categories, especially to such a large degree (ie. \$300k for wetlands vs \$39k as originally planned). The group spent a lot of time setting budget amounts and it doesn't seem right to change the actual amounts we spend so early in our plan implementation
  - Emily – we originally set a small \$ amount for wetland restoration because some partners thought it is hard to quantify phosphorus reduction / water quality benefit. However, the proposed CLFLWD project has a large estimated benefit - 81lb / year phosphorus reduction - to Sunrise River. Also, we are getting close to the end of this first WBIF grant and don't want to end up with leftover funds.
  - Matt D – if that is the case, that is good rationale.
  - Jamie – timing is big on these projects. The CLFLWD project can only happen during frozen conditions, so Feb. 2023 start time works. SWWD project would start in the fall but continue into spring and summer of next year.
  - Craig – restore wetlands was an “A” category activity, so it is high priority even if we didn't allocate much funds in the grant. Did the Mattson project (which was similar) meet or exceed expectations for water quality benefits?
  - Emily will check on that. Addressing legacy loading from wetlands in ag areas can have major water quality benefits. [This project is meeting expectations for water quality benefits and functioning as designed]
  - Matt M – is phosphorus-loading from the Sunrise wetland consistent? Or is it sometimes discharging and sometimes sinking P?
  - Emily will check on details for that. [The soil assessment indicates this area is likely a slight phosphorus sink. Part of the benefit of the project is increasing residence time through the wetland to promote phosphorus uptake. In the current ditched condition, there is likely very little reduction in phosphorus since runoff flows right through the wetland and on to the Sunrise River.]

- Mike I – this is a good project. To Matt’s question, the majority of the P loading is not actually coming from the wetland; it’s coming from the contributing watershed. It seems like the primary beneficiary for this project will be Comfort Lake and secondarily Sunrise River. He doesn’t want to see us pre-allocating funds from the next grant cycle when other partners have not yet had the opportunity to apply for those funds.
- Karen - Can CLFWD and SWWD speak to your support or concerns with Craig's proposed option 4?
  - Emily supports this proposal.
  - Matt supports this proposal. If SWWD doesn’t get funding, the Trout Brook project will not happen.
- Jamie – Craig’s proposal would not split funds for SWWD’s project. CLFLWD needs to be ok with the timing for their project and funding arriving in Feb. 2023.
- Jay – likes Craig’s proposed funding scenario and also thinks we need some language to give CLFLWD certainty that they will actually get funding in the next cycle. It would also be good to retain some funds from the current grant
- Emily supports funding their CLFLWD project with 2023 WBIF grant funds
- Craig – we can get next year’s WBIF grant plan developed and approved by the policy committee on Sept. 27, then taken to local boards in October. The steering/advisory committee would need to meet in August.
- Jamie – as part of that process, let’s give other partners the option to bring forward large projects that they might have coming in the future
- Mike – concerned that we are setting a bad precedent. CLFLWD has a large annual levy but is coming forward with a large grant request and not planning to contribute any local funds toward the project. Some local partners have more financial capacity than others. We want to make sure that shared funds go to partners that really need it.
  - Emily – CLFLWD is planning to contribute \$190k from their local levy to their project and is also leveraging federal funds. Construction costs right now are somewhat unpredictable.
    - John H – construction costs have been all over the place (high vs low) and depends a lot on what other big projects are happening in the area
    - Matt D - Our last 2 big projects have come in 35-50% low
- Matt M – SWWD’s budget for the Lower St. Croix portion of their watershed is very low compared to what they have available in the rest of the watershed. They are also getting funds from Great River Greening for the Trout Brook project.
- Craig – the steering committee can not vote on these projects, but could recommend funding scenarios to go to the policy committee for consideration on July 25
- Angie – what question are we asking the steering committee to vote on right now? Seems appropriate to suggest three options: 1) Fund neither; 2) Partially fund both using only 21-23 funds; 3) Fully fund both using the scenario Craig suggested (steering committee recommendation)

- Angie called for an informal vote - attendees in favor indicated a thumbs up, there were no thumbs down.
- Updates needed to LSC WP Project Request Form related to Activity 4 for Non-Structural Ag BMPs
  - Craig - Partners should use the project targeting criteria when their local boards approve projects funded with their non-structural ag allocations
  - Emily – we should use the same rigor for large projects as for small projects. Several small projects can add up to be the same dollar amount as one large project. Cost-benefit should be applied uniformly to all WBIF funded projects.
  - Craig – ability to move quickly is important when doing nonstructural ag with farmers. We are also changing mindsets.
  - Jay – projects in WashCo will be reviewed by WCD board
  - Zach – pasture and hayland plantings need to turn around very fast (aka in two weeks). Local approval is critical.
  - Angie – the steering committee already pre-set the total funding allocations for the local partners to use for nonstructural ag. So there is cap on how much each partner will be spending.
  - Michelle – very important that scoring matrix gets used to score projects.
  - Craig – the scoring matrix doesn't really work well for nonstructural ag projects.
  - Emily – could we give an update to the policy committee on how nonstructural projects will be approved in comparison with other types of projects?
    - Craig – yes. And Jennifer can help do that.
    - Jay – Jennifer already does a very nice job of providing updates on her work and eventually we can map the locations of all of the cover crops and other practices installed.

### 3. Program Updates

- **Prioritization and analysis projects** (Jay Riggs)
  - Tree Canopy Assessment Protocol – FINAL DRAFT IS COMPLETE!
    - The A8 subcommittee recommends approval of the draft protocol to trigger payment for the work completed by EOR along with working with EOR to host a free training session.
    - Mike would also support using A8 budget to plan a training if EOR won't do it for free.
    - Jay also supports this approach.
- **Implementation actions on agricultural lands** (Jennifer Hahn)
  - First of three field days held on June 24<sup>th</sup> at the farm of Tim Behrends, WCD district supervisor and corn/soybean farmer near Hastings. Over 30 local farmers and partners got together to discuss no-till and cover crops practices. Read more about it in [Barbara's most recent blog post](#).
  - **Rooting into Resilient Soils: Strip Till** is coming up on ~~July 26<sup>th</sup>~~ in northern Chisago County at the farm of Lance Petersen.
    - Rescheduled to Thu., Aug. 18 to allow for more crop growth. Focus will be on strip till, no till, and conservation tillage.

- **WORKSHOP: You've Got Land: Exploring farming and land management options for 10-40 acres (Aug 1):** This 3-hour workshop will help participants who are in the beginning and exploratory stages of land-based living: [Learn more, RSVP, and forward to interested participants!](#)
- **Video Series:** If you haven't already, check out the new video series created by Jennifer and Barbara: "[Out Again with Jenn.](#)" Meet farmers in the watershed who are practicing conservation tillage and learn about their strategies for success.
- **NEW! Learn about federal, state, and local incentives for conservation practices** that can include [cover crops, nutrient management, prescribed grazing, and conservation tillage.](#)
- **Monthly Ag Updates on WCMP 100.9 FM Radio:** Jennifer provides information about agricultural conservation planning services available, ag program updates, what's happening out in the field, and upcoming events on WCMP 100.9 FM radio the 1st Wednesday of the month. To listen, find it on [WCMP's website](#), [Apple Podcast](#), [Google Podcast](#), or [Spotify](#).
- **Other updates:**
  - Let Barbara know if you have a veggie farmer who could host a future field day
  - Will be releasing another "Out again with Jenn" video soon
  - Will be developing a video about the field day on June 24
  - Aug. 5 [conservation cook-out in Pine County](#) with food and music
  - July 27 Farm Bureau Board of Directors boat ride out of Stillwater. Fran Miron invited us to participate and talk about our stakeholder engagement with farmers and new programs we're rolling out now. Angie, Jennifer, Caroline (MDA), Angela (WCD), Zach (Pine SWCD) and Todd (Isanti SWCD) will attend.
- **Implementation actions on developed lands** (Barbara Heitkamp)
  - **Workshop on the St. Croix River for local decision makers** – July 20, 5-8pm. [Register here.](#)
  - **Workshop at the Winery for Local Decision Makers** – Aug. 24, 5:30-9pm. Register here: [tinyurl.com/WineryWorkshop](http://tinyurl.com/WineryWorkshop)
  - **Ongoing:** lake association outreach, Adopt a Drain
    - 40 drains adopted in Chisago County; 850 adopted in WashCo
  - **Upcoming:** Shoreline workshop for realtors – northern version will be happening in the fall