**Lower St. Croix One Watershed, One Plan**

**Advisory Committee**

**SEPTEMBER 12, 2019 Notes**

The advisory committee discussed the implementation tables and the funding allocation/identification process. Laura Jester went through the implementation tables after review at the last Policy Committee meeting.

One suggested change was the term agronomist to agricultural conservation specialist. Craig Mell said his board raised the concern of whether farmers would even work with a government funded agronomist, as most have their own agronomist they use already. The group discussed whether the intention of the goal was to create capacity for a new position rather than to continue to support current staff involved in agricultural planning.

The group asked how local priorities would be included in the plan, especially for entities that would be replacing their current plans with the 1W1P. Jay Riggs said reference documents need to be part of the plan for funding eligibility of projects identified therein. The group suggested using an appendix with sections for each organization to include local priorities, which also allows for amendment in the future. The group asked what the process would be for amending the plan. Barb Peichel said BWSR is aware of the need for a minor plan amendment process but that this has not been developed yet. Jay Riggs asked if the priority mapping project that Washington County has worked on could be referenced in the plan and how maps like these could updated in the plan in the future. He reiterated that SWA’s and other reference documents need to be able to be referenced for funding eligibility as well.

The group acknowledged that the plan already has many activities with not enough funding identified and wondered about the implications of adding additional local tables and activities. There was a question on how funding would be allocated; such as if there was overlap with the 1W1P tables in the local tables or not. Barb Peichel reminded the group that the 1W1P plan was not solely referencing the 1W1P funding, but would include other funding sources. She said if organizations wanted to use watershed based funding that it has to be included in the plan and implementation section. If the appendix has overlap then the organizations could reference the plan for funding eligibility. She said LGU’s could submit individual implementation tables and could add a column indicating overlap with the 1W1P. Laura Jester suggested the question of whether to include local priorities in an appendix or a section in the plan would be discussed at the next meeting.

The group discussed the question of training and capacity activities, and whether these were inherent in each section or needed to be specified. Caleb Andersen explained that his goal in specifying capacity and training was to address the need for Pine County to catch up to the rest of the basin. This was also identified as being different from social capacity. Jen and Laura will circle back on social capacity and how this training aspect could be incorporated in that.

The group discussed the goal of avoidance standards being followed for WCA. The group discussed how this was saying that WCA needed to be followed which is required anyway. The group asked whether the goal could be clarified, if it was important to point it out, or if it should be removed.

The group discussed the wording of the groundwater plan activity and removed the wording “subject to MN statutes” so that organizations would be able to work on these plans even without adopting the state requirement.

#### Small Group Activity

Organizations were grouped by county to work on refining the implementation table by adding funding sources. The group discussed the difficulty in estimating the allocation of funding sources by topic area, and asked of they could be recombined later, especially in relation to social capacity. Mike Isensee asked if this would also be difficult for reporting requirements. Laura Jester said reporting would not be split by topic area, and that organizations should give their best guess of the allocation with the goal of identifying gaps in funding. She said the first step was refining local spending, the second step was prorating local funds (such as % of land area in the basin), and the third step was identifying stable and reliable non-local funds.

#### End of Meeting Discussion

The group discussed the proposed project implementation criteria. The concerns about the current format included:

* Non-structural projects or programs would score low
* It is biased to surface water rather than groundwater or habitat goals
* Cost-benefit analysis only being attributed to narrow goals
* The lower capacity of the northern district leading to less ability to compete despite having high impact projects

There was discussion around qualitative vs quantitative ranking. Susanna Wilson suggested re-incorporating the tiers identified previously in the process. Barb Peichel explained that other groups created a structure to allow for prioritization and a policy committee to make decisions based on a numerical score, the cost of the project, and order of application. Jen Kader explained that the criteria suggested would solely be used for projects, not for the whole plan. Jay Riggs pointed out that there needed to be flexibility in order to consider projects that would benefit waterbodies even if they aren’t in identified priority areas, as it could otherwise force less beneficial projects. He said high priority activities need to be able to occur even in low priority areas, and pointed out that this sort of plan would not be able to plan out that level of detail.

The group said they needed to know how funding would be distributed in terms of project vs. program, R&M vs. education etc. so the amount could be included in the discussion. Jen Kader explained that the purpose of the activity was to identify the need for funding. Mike Isensee identified three major areas to use when prioritizing: multiple benefit, cost-benefit analysis, and priority location. Barb Peichel said BWSR thought this was a good start.

The group performed the fist of five activity. People who were 2 and lower expressed concern that absolute scores would remove the ability to use judgement and a tier system. Laura Jester said that Bass Lake had some up with project scoring for their CIP projects that were not explicit disqualifications and allowed for conversations. Jay Riggs suggested this may be difficult to implement across 16 participating LGU’s. Jem Kader asked the group if the direction they were heading in suggested some kind of a steering committee to result for the LSCWD to make these sort of decisions. The group discussed the lower capacity of the northern end of the basin and asked how capacity could be shared to benefit the entire basin. The group said flexibility is important in order to collaborate and use the 1W1P funding as intended.

This conversation will be continued. Barb Peichel said there could be a built in process for future decision making so that project consideration did not end at a nu8merical value. She recommended the advisory committee think about the value of time spent on making these decisions in the future.

The next Advisory Committee meeting is scheduled for Thursday October 10, 9:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.