

**Lower St. Croix Watershed Partnership – DRAFT MINUTES**

<p><b>Policy Committee Meeting #13</b></p>	<p><b>Vision</b> The St. Croix River, groundwater, lakes, streams, rivers, wetlands, and upland habitat in the Lower St. Croix watershed sustain healthy ecosystems, recreation, public health, tourism, agriculture, the economy, and quality of life in our communities.</p> <p><b>Mission</b> Guide protection and restoration of priority natural resources in the Lower St. Croix watershed over the next ten years through implementation of the Lower St. Croix Comprehensive Watershed Management Plan.</p>	
<p><b>October 23rd, 2023</b> 4:00-6:00 PM</p>		
<p><b>Wyoming Area Library</b> 26855 Forest Blvd, Wyoming, MN 55092</p> <p>Recording: <a href="https://youtu.be/g07mF-rvYk0">https://youtu.be/g07mF-rvYk0</a></p>		
	<p><b>Facilitator:</b> Angie Hong</p>	<p><b>Note taker:</b> Barbara Heitkamp/Angie Hong</p>
<p><b>Attending:</b></p>	<p>Anoka SWCD: Sharon LeMay Brown's Creek WD: Jerry Johnson (alternate) Carnelian Marine St Croix WD: Kristin Tuenge Chisago County: Mike Mergens, Dan Dahlerg, and Lance Petersen (virtual) Chisago SWCD: Jim Birkholz Comfort Lake Forest Lake WD: Jackie Anderson Isanti SWCD: Tom Anderson Pine SWCD: Doug Odegard South Washington WD: Kevin ChapdeLaine (virtual) Washington County: Fran Miron Washington SWCD: Diane Blake</p> <p>Staff: <u>In-person</u>: Angie Hong (EMWREP), Barbara Heitkamp (Lower St. Croix Watershed Partnership), Craig Mell (Chisago SWCD), Michelle Jordan (BWSR), Stephanie Souter (Washington County), Jaime Schurbon (ACD), John Loomis (SWWD) <u>Virtual</u>: Laura Jester (Keystone Waters), Jessica Collin-Pilarski (Washington County), John Hanson (Valley Branch WD), Joel Larson (UMN Extension), Matt Moore (SWWD), Emily Heinz (CLFLWD), Susanna Wilson-Witkowski (Chisago County)</p>	
<p><b>Absent:</b></p>	<p>Isanti County: Kristi LaRowe Middle St. Croix WMO: Brian Zeller Pine County: Steve Hallan Valley Branch WD: Ed Marchan</p>	

## MINUTES:

The meeting was called to order at 4:06 pm by Chair Fran Miron.

**Approve agenda:** Motion to approve corrected agenda by Jackie Anderson. Second by Doug Odegard. All in favor. Agenda approved.

### Approve meeting minutes from the July 24th, 2023 meeting

- Motion to approve the 7-24 meeting minutes by Mike Mergens. Tom Anderson seconds. All in favor. The meeting minutes were approved.

### Updates on LSC Plan Implementation:

- Craig Mell with a financial update:
  - FY21 funds have been encumbered with 85% of the money spent. \$123K remaining for the SWWD Trout Brook project. All construction has been completed, but project will not be brought online till the spring to allow vegetation to establish.
  - In August we applied for 1-yr grant extension for FY21 funding from BWSR and it was approved, so no issues waiting to close out by December 31<sup>st</sup>, 2024
  - FY23 funding is currently 77% encumbered, with 25% nearly spent.
  - CWF soil health grant which currently funds LSC non-structural program: currently \$36K still unencumbered, grant runs through the end of 2025.
- Barbara Heitkamp with education update
  - Showed 2023 progress/update video: <https://youtu.be/uoQnnueiG64?si=oFwplnxOW5khG2bY>
  - Fran Miron: Would love to see this disseminated widely – BWSR, DNR, etc.
  - Jim Birkholz: I would recommend sending this to Wisconsin LSC LGUs and partners
  - Jackie Anderson: Send to the counties as well.
- Angie Hong with project updates
  - Refer to ppt
  - Jackie Anderson: for the targeting and prioritization analyses – who is doing the work?
    - Angie: All being completed by partner staff
  - Barbara Heitkamp: I really would love to connect with ongoing fall street sweeping efforts.
    - Craig: North Branch is getting ready to move forward – will put you in touch.
- Jennifer Hahn resignation and moving forward
  - Barbara Heitkamp: The original A1 subcommittee has reconvened to map a path forward. We are using this as an opportunity to check in on what worked with Jennifer’s position and what didn’t work. UMN Extension is still interested in maintaining the embedded educator collaboration, but they are hoping to update the job description so it truly fits with Extension’s strengths, with the recognition that what they can offer may or may not fit with our overall vision. At the most recent meeting, the subcommittee decided that it was too short of a collaboration to truly assess how it was working, and they signaled that they wanted to continue working with Extension.
  - Jim Birkholz, Jackie Anderson, and Fran Miron all expressed support for continuing the collaboration with Extension.

- Fran Miron: What is the timeline? UMN-Extension process will likely take longer given University processes?
  - Barbara Heitkamp and Craig Mell: Hope to have new person hired before end of Q1 2024.

### **Sunrise River (HWY 61) Wetland Enhancement Presentation**

- Jackie Anderson context/intro:
  - This project has been a huge priority for us as it addresses the major land use changes we've seen in the area historically.
  - Was originally a large wetland complex that was ditched for ag fields and development. As Forest Lake and Wyoming has continued to develop and we've seen conversion from ag to residential, the ag ditches are carrying stormwater runoff that eventually makes its way to the Sunrise River
  - Over the course of the larger project, have been able to experience seasons of high and low water – helps better inform project design
- Emily Heinz – refer to ppt
  - Jackie Anderson: Good to remember that the CLFLWD standards are stricter than state standards – building in more resiliency given climate change
  - Jackie Anderson: We are reducing the tremendous amount of sediment that enters Sunrise River, Comfort Lake and Lower St. Croix River.
- Fran Miron: Given the projected design lifetime, what is the expected maintenance?
  - Jackie Andersen: Definitely will need money to maintain throughout expected lifespan, but CLFLWD will perform post-project monitoring to anticipate issues so costs hopefully stay reasonable and as expected.
- Kristin Tuenge: How has business/local community engaged the project?
  - Jackie Anderson: HUGE support from local community and businesses – many of them are voluntarily finding innovative ways to reduce runoff, including underground treatment systems or facilitating a contribution/trade for impact mitigation. CLFLWD rules focus on onsite treatment.

### **Trout Brook Restoration Update Presentation**

- John Loomis: Context/Intro
  - This is a multi-phase project, land has logging history and then farmed, now rural/residential with hobby farms
  - Past land use legacy means large sediment loads delivered into Trout Brook (and on to the nearby St. Croix River), still seeing severe bank and bed erosion and large loss of fish habitat.
  - Project area is state park land into the Afton Alps ski area – mostly been a ditch through the commercial use area
  - No longer see the pools, runs, and riffles you would expect to see in a healthy trout stream – overall project goal is to reduce sediment/phosphorus inputs and restore habitat function
  - Been three phases of work (refer to John's ppt):
    - Phase I: Remove headcuts to reduce erosion in upland state park, create benches to allow floodplain connection - some worked, some failed!

- Phase II (2019-2020): Rebuilt channel through Afton Alps area, removed/replaced pair of perched culverts with large box culvert,
- Phase III (2021-present): Removed another fish barrier, created step-pool morphology to dissipate energy versus use of meandering in constrained Afton Alps area, re-meandered stream in state park downstream
- Project construction is now complete, but since there was a delayed start of construction due to early spring flooding in Lower St Croix and prolonged drought this summer, seeds haven't had a decent opportunity to take – really need the vegetation to provide overall new slope stability
- Project will come online next spring.
- Clean Water Council visited the project in September – we are putting up lots of signage about the project since it is in a highly visible area
- Kevin ChapdeLaine: Can you provide some of the outcome numbers from the project?
  - John Loomis: 150 lbs/hr phosphorus, 150-170 tons/yr sediment, fish count numbers went from 5 or less per mile to sections with over 1000 fish per mile.
- Fran Miron: Can you summarize the cost?
  - John Loomis: Phase III, with engineering was about \$1M (LSCWP funded \$350K of that)
  - Fran Miron: Cost of all phases?
    - John Loomis: About \$2M – half grants, half local funding
- Tom Anderson: How has it been working with Afton Alps? How are they intending to handle snow/ice removal in their parking lot given it is adjacent to the stream?
  - John Loomis: They have been a great partner – based out of CO – so really interested in doing what they can to support and help mitigate impacts
  - Established a conservation easement on land adjacent to Trout Brook
  - SWWD is housed with public works department and we've held meetings to discuss best snow/ice management approaches, lately showed them a graveling technique that will be really useful to them.
- Jackie Anderson: I really applaud the step-pool approach given space constraints.

### **Valley Branch WD Plan Amendment Request**

- John Hanson: A year ago the Policy Committee approved an amendment to include 2 waterbodies in the VBWD as priority waterbodies in the LSC CWMP. The amendment went to all local partners and was approved.
- BSWR had to come up with a process given this is the first amendment to a CWMP – recommendation to follow the minor amendment process
- We need to send out a request for comment and have a public hearing on the amendment at the next PC meeting (January 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2024).
- Jackie Anderson motions to schedule public meeting for January 22<sup>nd</sup> to hear amendment. Doug Odegard seconds. All in favor, motion carried.

### **FY23 Supplemental Funding Request**

- Craig Mell: Two weeks ago, we received notification that there is \$7.75M of WBIF funding available for non-metro areas. Funding is in addition to FY23 funding. Today we are looking for a recommendation

by the PC for the Steering Committee to pursue this funding by the January 8<sup>th</sup> deadline. Receiving the funds would require a workplan amendment.

- Michelle Jordan: Funding would follow the FY23 funding deadline – would need to be spent by December 2025. You can include increased costs for administration given time needed to manage additional funds.
- Craig Mell: We have been collecting a project ‘wish list’ from all LSC partners with projects that could fit this funding. Steering Committee will vet this list and decide on a number to spend. Current number given what has been submitted from partners thus far: \$5.6M
- Michelle Jordan: This is the first time this has happened – we don’t know if it will happen again. We will mimic the non-competitive process as much as we can, but there is much uncertainty about how much you will get.
- Craig Mell: Given that is specifically non-metro allocated funding, it will follow a similar process by which the metro group chooses to make WBIF funding available for the entire LSC basin.
- Jackie Anderson: What caused this surplus of funds?
  - Michelle Jordan: Some 1W1Ps aren’t as far along in implementation as was expected, and others aren’t spending all their funds.
- Jackie Anderson: I would love to use this to help accelerate some projects.
- Jim Birkholz: Seems very practical
- Kristin Tuenge: When would we receive the funds?
  - Likely March 2024 or after
- General group consensus for Steering Committee to submit a request for additional funding.

### **LSC 2024 Workplan Approval**

- Laura Jester: Bringing this 2024 Work plan today – trying to make it as straightforward as possible for you to take to your local partners. Every other year we’re bringing you the higher-level biennial work plan – this annual plan essentially splits the work outcomes of that biennial plan. This also includes all of the policies and project request calendars so everything moves together.
- Jackie Anderson: Is it possible to make this more targeted?
  - Staff or PC could make recommendations, but the currently approved plan doesn’t have that targeting aspect – we have priority water bodies.
- Fran Miron: Starting today, local partners have 60 days to review and approve the 2024 workplan – please get it to your boards!
- Motion to recommend approval of 2024 Workplan: Kristin Tuenge motions, Mike Mergens seconds. All in favor, motion carries.

### **LSC FY25 WBIF Grant Funds and Allocation of Metro Funds**

- Craig Mell: Anticipating the FY2025 WBIF allocation to go up from \$1.2M to \$2.0M; we are starting the metro convening process where metro partners decide whether to allocate part to all of that WBIF funding to the fuller basin
- Jackie Anderson: In talking at MAWD meeting, the process will start to come together in mid-December
- Craig Mell: We hope to have the metro partners decision on the metro portion of the WBIF grant funds by the end of Q1 2024. Tom Dietrich at Washington County has left – he worked to bring the metro

partners together previously. Does anybody object to having BWSR help facilitate the convening process? Or does another partner want to lead?

- Fran Miron: I think our overall approach to date has worked well. I have no issues with BSR convening the meeting.
- Group consensus that we will ask BSWR to facilitate the metro convening process.

**Other Business:**

- Craig Mell: Sharon LeMay (Anoka SWCD) is retiring – this will be her last meeting.
- Thank you Sharon!!

**Next Meeting: January 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2024** – Angie will look into a recommended Forest Lake meeting space.

Jackie Anderson moves to adjourn meeting. Jerry Johnson seconds. Meeting was adjourned at 6:03 pm.