

**Lower St. Croix Comprehensive Watershed Management Plan (CWMP)
Implementation Policy Committee**

Policy Committee		<p>Vision</p> <p>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>Mission</p> <p>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>
Meeting #9		
<p>September 26th, 2022 4:00-6:00 PM</p>		
<p>Wyoming Area Library 26855 Forest Blvd, Wyoming, MN 55092</p> <p>Optional zoom call-in: https://us02web.zoom.us/j/81062688584?pwd=NDlrRz-gxV3pCVlg3NDhjQ3hMWnUyZz09 Meeting ID: 810 6268 8584 Passcode: 165880</p>		
	Facilitator: Angie Hong	Note taker: Barbara Heitkamp
Attending:	<p>Anoka SWCD: Sharon LeMay Chisago County: Chris DuBose (Vice Chair) and Mike Mergens (virtual) Chisago SWCD: Jim Birkholz Comfort Lake Forest Lake WD: Jackie Anderson Isanti County: Susan Morris Isanti SWCD: Dave Medvecky (alternate) Middle St. Croix WMO: Mike Runk Pine County: Steve Hallan Pine SWCD: Doug Odegard South Washington WD: Kevin ChapdeLaine (virtual) Sunrise River JP WMO: Janet Hegland Washington County: Fran Miron (Chair) Washington SWCD: Diane Blake (virtual)</p> <p>Staff: <u>In-person:</u> Angie Hong (EMWREP), Barbara Heitkamp (Lower St. Croix Watershed Partnership), Jennifer Hahn (Lower St. Croix Watershed Partnership), Jamie Schurbon (Sunrise River WMO), Michelle Jordan (BWSR) <u>Virtual:</u> Jay Riggs (WCD), Craig Mell (Chisago SWCD), Susanna Wilson-Witkowski (Chisago County), Emily Heinz (CLFLWD), Matt Moore (SWWD), John Hanson (VBWD)</p>	
Absent:	<p>Brown's Creek WD: Klayton Eckles Carnelian Marine St Croix WD: Wade Johnson Chisago County: Lance Petersen Valley Branch WD: Ed Marchan</p>	

MINUTES:

Meeting called to order at 4:05pm by Chair Fran Miron.

1. **Approve agenda** - Motion to approve agenda by Steven Hallan. Second by Susan Morris. All in favor. Agenda approved.
2. **Approve meeting minutes from July 25th meeting**
 - Jackie Anderson indicated that her comment regarding the need to plan more like watershed districts, i.e. have more multi-year planning involved, needs to be reflected in the minutes of the meeting.
 - Motion to approve the 7-25 meeting minutes with Jackie's addition by Jackie Anderson, Mike Runk seconds. All in favor. Meeting minutes approved.
3. **Education, outreach, and engagement update**
 - Barbara Heitkamp put together a YouTube video summarizing education efforts across the basin, including work in both urban and rural areas. Highlights the efforts of agronomist Jennifer Hahn. **Video link:** https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=i_LL28QnKyc
4. **Update on FY20 WBIF Work Plan Amendment:** Craig Mell is happy to announce that BWSR has approved the amendment request for the FY20 WBIF Work Plan and they are submitting it next month for approval. No questions from the group.
5. **Review and approve [FY23 WBIF Work Plan](#)** – The FY23 WBIF work plan is largely modeled after the FY21 work plan, with some restructuring of categories to make it more intuitive. Emily and Angie have both indicated that they are interested in stepping down from/reducing their roles in the partnership. Emily will step away from the grant management/reporting, and Angie wants to continue her facilitator capacity only for Policy Committee meetings.

Emily Heinz provided a recommended action from the steering committee to ask that partner boards put FY23 WBIF Work Plan on their October agenda for approval. We want to have 2/3rds board approval for BWSR by the end of October, which is generally recognized as a time where they gather and bundle such requests for review. Our hope is that it will be submitted for final approval by BWSR by February 2023.

- Doug Odegard asked who needs to be notified of approval? *Angie, Craig, and Emily should be notified of that decision.*
- Jackie Andersen asked how do we make sure those members absent today understand what's going on? *Angie - we copy all steering committee members on policy committee agenda items and the staff liaisons for the organizations should be coordinating with the partner board administrators to make sure all materials (provided by the Partnership) are submitted in a timely fashion for board meetings.*

- Susan Morris indicated that Darrick Wotacheck is no longer with Isanti County – will need to make sure there is a new liaison with the Partnership to make sure requests like this are not missed.
 - Chris DuBose indicated that while we remain a collaborative versus an entity, he is comfortable with this process but it does rely on making sure we are on top of communications with those partner liaisons.
 - Steve Hallan indicates a nervousness of something of this nature falling through the cracks when there is hard deadline. As Pine has four watersheds going through this type of planning, it can be hard to keep track of everything.
 - **Chris DuBose motions to approve the FY23 Work Plan, Susan Morris seconds. All in favor. Motion carries.**
 - Michelle Jordan says there also needs to be a motion for the Chisago SWCD to continue acting in their role as fiscal agent.
 - **Jim Birkholz motions for Chisago SWCD to continue to act as fiscal agent for the FY23 Work Plan. Jackie Anderson seconds. All in favor. Motion carries.**
6. **VBWD LSC Plan Amendment Request** – John Hanson is requesting the addition of Valley Creek and Kelle’s Creek to the regionally significant stream list in Lower St. Croix Comprehensive Watershed Management Plan. While VBWD submitted comments during the Plan planning process to include these two streams, the Plan ended up not being modified.
- Jackie indicated understanding and indicated that sometimes these types of things happen when you have so many stakeholders at the table.
 - Fran asked for a rough outline of the amendment process. *Angie – It is similar to that of submitting an amendment for the work plan – it will require approval from 2/3rds of the partner boards before being submitted to BWSR. **This should also be included as an agenda item for approval for partner boards at their October meetings.***
 - Michelle – in terms of timeline for approval for amending a watershed plan on BWSR’s side, it is dependent on whether the issue can be considered ‘controversial’ versus ‘noncontroversial’ – noncontroversial can likely be moved through in a couple months, more controversial asks may require a public comment period, etc. and could take up to 6-7 months.
 - **Jackie motions to approve the Plan amendment as presented for local partner board approval, Mike Runk seconds. All in favor. Motion carries.**
7. **Refining the process and policies for soliciting, reviewing, and approving project funding requests:** Angie indicated that we are continuing to refine our processes and procedures for project selection and funding and we want policy committee input and feedback. Initially it was a month by month project selection basis and now we are thinking of batching project requests so projects are reviewed more

side by side during 3 months of the year. There have been questions on whether we should be more proactive on going after projects or reactive to projects that come through the door.

- Jackie Andersen stated that the piece that has felt sorely missing for her is having a clear calendar and schedule of when partners need to submit applications for evaluation. Having a clear understanding of what and when partners need to submit materials will help alleviate confusion and make the process feel unbiased, hopefully taking care of some of the dissatisfaction expressed by some partners thus far.
- Chris DuBose – Do we need to review projects 3x a year? Do we need to plan further ahead?
 - i. Steve Hallan indicated that in being a farmer himself and going through previous processes with other programs, it can get really frustrating having to wait for things to move through a batch process. He just wants a process that can be nimble and works well with our boots on the ground staff who can act quickly and help make things happen for landowners.
 - ii. Chris DuBose – what if larger projects (in excess of \$50,000) are reviewed once a year and smaller projects are subject to the 3x a year calendar?
 - iii. Sharon LeMay – I think once a year for larger projects makes sense.
- Jim Birkholz laid out 5 points from Chisago SWCD discussions that he wanted to submit for discussion by the policy committee
 - i. Recommend partners always seek funds from other sources first, ie. CWF grants, USDA Farm Program funds, etc.
 - 1. Generally supported by majority of comments (Fran, Chris DuBose)
 - ii. Establish a funding timeline/process for partners to request funds. All funds must be received prior to designating funds toward a project.
 - 1. Jackie’s scheduling comment applies.
 - 2. Most of the group agrees about the funds received prior to designation, although it brings up the point again that it’s really important to be thinking longer term in project planning so if there is a larger project that comes up, it’s less of a surprise if we want to continue funding for that project in the next round
 - 3. Jackie – this is out watershed districts work – our entire budget is driven by our 5-year and 10-year plans and when projects should happen.
 - 4. Kevin – Agree – sometimes things happen and timelines are interrupted, so having some flexibility would be appreciated
 - iii. Designate a set amount of funds for 10-year cost share projects vs. 25-year capital improvement projects.
 - 1. Sharon LeMay – What about some type of ‘flex fund’ for small project asks (\$1K or less)
 - iv. Allocating a set amount of funds for designated subwatersheds.
 - 1. Chris DuBose against this point.

- v. Establishing a maximum amount a partner can request. (The Chisago SWCD board was mixed on this topic).

1. Mixed response from group

- Jackie Anderson – I like where this discussion is trending. Perhaps hold a workshop to really try and hammer out these points? Make sure we really dial in on our focus of improving water quality as it pertains to the big three (nitrate, phosphorus and sediment) and really focus on using partnership funds as an accelerator for work already happening? *Angie – Planning team will take the input from policy members today and create a word doc with suggested policies and procedures to follow moving forward. The team will bring that doc to the Policy Committee for review and additional conversation at the next meeting.*
- Jim Birkholz – one aspect to remember as well – the relation of upstream to downstream and the fact that we might be able to get bigger pollution reduction for our buck in the northern portion of the basin.
 - i. Angie – related to that – need to remember that the northern basin has much less data to work with, so while a lot of project money is flowing to southern basin right now, we are funding efforts in the north to collect the needed data and in future years we’re likely going to see a larger chunk of funding going to projects ‘upstream’
- Angie Hong also believes that in setting a calendar, we can make a more official call for proposals that feels proactive and catches people’s attention.
 - i. Jackie Anderson – yes – we want to make this feel official and truly establish a predictable routine for partners
- Jackie Anderson has a question on the process graphic – Right now, the graphic indicates that the PC would only see steering committee recommended project requests that exceed the \$50,000 threshold – I think the PC should see ALL project request that exceed with \$50,000 threshold with a justification why a project might NOT be recommended for funding. I think while it’s important that local staff offer a technical review, the PC committee can provide another perspective that can/should be considered
 - i. Chris DuBose – my main concern would be whether it would take more time/waste time of the staff; *Angie and Jamie and Barbara – it would only require doing a small write up of why a project application was not recommended. The materials submitted to the steering committee that are recommended for approval are not modified before being sent to the policy committee*
 - ii. Steve Hallan – I can’t think of a time I would go against a steering committee recommendation – if we did want to review everything, we essentially become the new steering committee
 - iii. Mike Runk – it sounds like we’re just trying to identify some type of appeal process, so if a partner doesn’t feel like they agree with a steering committee decision, they have an avenue to have another group have a look at that application

- iv. Janet Hegland – I agree with this – it’s important to have both the technical review and the larger elected perspective as well.

8. Addressing concerns brought forth by Sunrise River WMO memo.

- Janet – our board remains concerned in the lack of structure and process clarity represented by the JPC model versus the JPE model. Have already have instances of where we are doing things before we have a set policy in place – that makes our board nervous. We are getting government dollars and need this to be as unbiased as possible. Also still not comfortable assuming a level of risk/liability because of that structure.
 - i. Jackie – I think the memo was clearly written and I agree with many of the points made. We are committed to the current process and working things through, but I understand and agree with much of what was written. The CLFLWD was always in favor of a JPE.
 - ii. Fran Miron – I think we do have a structure with our steering and policy committees, we have a depth of technical staff able to review projects and elected officials who have opportunities to review everything that’s happening. Most decisions require 2/3rd support of partners before proceeding, so some assurance that an assumed agenda isn’t going to dominate the conversation. The JPC has allowed us to be more nimble and thus far, no concerns with turnaround times or getting things done in a timely fashion. It is an annual conversation to have with this group, but a reminder that deciding to go to a JPE would require a lot of time and energy to make that switch, would require hiring an attorney and have more paid staff, and if we don’t like it, it’s much harder to dissolve.
 - 1. Janet Hegland – we do need to remember that with a JPC there is a lot of staff time making things work for the partnership that is paid for by the local partner. And Angie and Emily wanting to step back from their roles indicates to me that continuity would be better in a JPE model.
 - iii. Jamie Schurbon and Michelle confirm that all other 1W1P groups, except oine, are JPC.
 - iv. Sharon LeMay – our board’s selling point was that this is a JPC. We would want hard evidence that a JPC doesn’t work before we would consider going toward a JPE.
 - v. Susan Morris – I think many of us county folks, with our attorneys, prefer the clean legal structure of a JPE, but it’s important to understand that Washington County is opening up that metro funding to the larger basin, so as long as we keep honor, respect, and collaboration first and foremost, we will continue forward with this model. Glad we have the ability to have these conversations and revisit as it makes sense.
 - vi. Chris DuBose – I can understand concern – I appreciate that we continue to do more to establish this process and procedures for project selection. If we do decide to go JPE, I’ll be ok with that too.
 - vii. Jackie Anderson brings up the Red River Watershed Management Board as an example entity that has a good balance of structure and collaboration

1. Jim Birkholz – that is also an entity that was established in state statute.
9. Next meeting will be January 23rd, 4-6 pm.
10. The meeting was adjourned at 6pm by Chair Miron.