**Lower St. Croix Watershed Partnership   
Policy Committee Meeting  
April 25, 2022, 4-6 pm via hybrid**

**MINUTES - DRAFT**

1. **The meeting was called to order by chair Fran Miron 4:03pm.**

* Policy Committee members in attendance:
  + Anoka SWCD: Sharon LeMay
  + Brown's Creek WD: Klayton Eckles
  + Carnelian Marine St Croix WD: Wade Johnson (via Microsoft Teams)
  + Chisago County: Chris DuBose (Vice Chair), Mike Mergens, Lance Peterson
  + Chisago SWCD: Jim Birkholz
  + Comfort Lake Forest Lake WD: Jackie Anderson
  + Isanti County: Susan Morris (Secretary)
  + Isanti SWCD: Jerry Schaubach
  + Middle St. Croix WMO: Mike Runk
  + Pine SWCD: Doug Odegard
  + South Washington WD: Kevin Chapdelaine
  + Sunrise River JP WMO: Janet Hegland
  + Washington County: Fran Miron (Chair)
  + Washington SWCD: Diane Blake
* Policy Committee members not in attendance:
  + Pine County: Steve Hallan
  + Valley Branch WD: Ed Marchan
* Also in attendance:
  + Policy Committee alternates: Dawn White (Chisago County), Steve Schmaltz (CLFLWD)
  + Farmer: (member at large)
  + Local staff: Angie Hong, Jamie Schurbon, Barbara Heitkamp, Craig Mell, Emily Heinz (via Teams), Jay Riggs, Susanna Wilson-Witkowski, Tiffany Determan, Jessica Collin-Pilarski (via Teams), Jennifer Hahn, Tom Dietrich, Matt Moore (via phone).
  + Other: Michelle Jordan (BWSR)

1. **Motion by Kevin Chapdelaine, second by Sharon LeMay to approve 4/25/22 agenda.** All members voting yes. Agenda approved.
2. **Motion by Chris DeBose, second by Doug Odegard to approve 1/24/22 minutes.** All members voting yes. Minutes approved.
3. **2021 Progress Report:** Angie Hong shared a map highlighting [2021 partner projects](https://www.google.com/maps/d/u/0/edit?mid=18tuXF9ztzoFbR-q01FC19Fs1wUC-cZJV&usp=sharing) throughout the Lower St. Croix watershed, inclusive of projects funded by WBIF and other sources. The projects can be filtered by type and each includes a brief description of impact (pollution reduction or other benefit).
   1. Steve Schmaltz: We need to make sure we’re doing whatever we can to justify the use of taxpayer money so they can see the return they are getting on their investment.
      * Angie: Yes, WBIF funded activities are reported to BWSR in detail and the 2021 WBIF grant report was shared at the January 2022 Policy Committee meeting.
4. **Discussion: Re-evaluating JPC vs JPE & Streamlined Approach to Project Review – Jamie Schurbon**
   1. In the meeting packet, a draft memo from the LSC planning committee (subset of the steering committee) reviews the different options for organizational structure given PC interest in JPE vs. JPC organizational structure. The memo outlines the ongoing preferred alternative of the steering committee, which includes remaining a JPC while incorporating revised procedures to increase efficiencies and assurances.
   2. We have heard concerns on both sides of the JPC versus JPE debate, we understand concerns about continual application process feels like first-come, first serve process, and a growing desire of staff to improve efficiency and reduce costs.
   3. The recommendation from the steering committee is for partnership to remain a JPC, but to revise procedures to improve efficiencies and reduce costs
      * Move to dissolve subcommittees and save $25K a year
      * Review WBIF proposals 2-3 times a year.
      * Carve out an opportunity for PC to be able to review projects above a $50K threshold
   4. Discussion:
      * Klayton Eckles: Does the review need to happen so often? Even 2-3 times per year seems too frequent. Coming from the public sector, usually we know about projects a year in advance. We should be planful and approve projects on an annual basis to align with budget cycles.
      * Jamie Schurbon: For different project categories (like ag), we want to retain some nimbleness, recognizing opportunities can happen more suddenly and don’t want to lose momentum because a review period and vote is too far away.
      * Fran Miron – farmers don’t necessarily work on the same schedule as municipalities
      * Janet Hegland: At last meeting, there seemed to be a lot of momentum for a JPE, but now it seems like there is more push against it – what concerns exist?
      * Jamie Schurbon: One question we heard is, “Why do we feel the need to change? What’s not working now? And if we can identify what’s not working, is there a way to fix it before we make the jump to JPE?” The other common objection is not wanting to create another layer of government.
      * Fran Miron: We discussed this at a Washington County board meeting. Having the partnership as a JPC really illustrates and showcases the collaborative effort – it just defines our intentions well. Also, we do feel that we need to ask the question of what’s not working before we change something. An entity would be required to get its own insurance, conduct annual audits, have its own bank account. Partners have more involvement in partnership efforts in a collaborative. We can get more value for our money by doing projects in the upper portion of the watershed.
      * Janet Hegland: The attorney’s statement in the memo about liability being shared across all partners is my #1 argument to go JPE versus remain JPC. I also am interested in understanding how the proposed SC recommendation will reduce overall costs?
      * Angie Hong: By eliminating subcommittee meetings, we estimate that the partnership will save $20-25k per year in local staff time expenses
      * Jamie Schurbon: JPE costs are estimated to be on top of what we are currently spending in the JPC. At minimum, we would spend $4000 more per year that we are currently.
      * Jackie Anderson: I agree with Janet. It’s difficult to separate out local versus entity needs. Right now, it looks like 60% of the budget is for Chisago County (primarily SWCD work), 15% for other counties partially in the LSC, and very little for municipalities. Feels like this is turning into a county SWCD program. I feel like the cost differential of switching to the JPE is well worth the cost from liability. Also feel it includes more transparency and accountability. LSC partnership requires its own staff who don’t have divided interests.
      * Fran Miron: We worked with the county attorney on this issue, who suggested minimal risk of liability. As participants, I feel we have more knowledge of what’s going on throughout the watershed. Washington County is excited to see projects happen whether they are led by watersheds or SWCDs. It is very hard to get rid of an entity once it’s formed.
      * Jackie Anderson: Disagree – I feel there is greater transparency and accountability in a JPE model. I feel the cost differential is minimal and the proposed projects themselves will be proposed/planned based on existing data – it seems much easier to target and prioritize. And if we did end up needing to dissolve – that process is through BWSR and not as cumbersome as you might expect.
      * Chris Dubose: At this point, transferring to a JPE would require unanimous consent and it doesn’t look like we have that support. Let’s revisit this again next year as suggested by JPA agreement.
      * Mike Mergens: We are only 1 year in – let’s keep going as a collaborative and take a look again in another year
      * Janet Hegland: It is too early to conclude anything yet, but I’m personally not comfortable with the liability. We need to make sure partners understand and accept that risk.
      * Lance Petersen: With other 1W1P processes, how many are JPC versus JPE?
      * Jamie Schurbon: Most are JPC, with only 2 being JPEs. All of the pilot programs became JPCs.
      * Jim Birkholz – As part of the Chisago SWCD, we are still most comfortable with the JPE, but realize we are part of a collaborative – we’d like to keep working on this and see how things come together. I do appreciate the efforts of the steering committee to reduce cost and gain efficiency. Motion to approve steering committee recommendation. Second from Jerry Schaubach.
      * Janet: Request to amend the motion to allow for communication back to the partners about accepting the liability risk first.
      * Klayton Eckles: Local boards already reviewed and approved the existing JPC last year at the beginning of this process. Risk of a suit will always be there, but I feel trying to make this change now will result in potentially losing partners, which is a bigger risk.
      * Susan Morris: Yes, we covered this issue extensively with our board – don’t know if there is much value in going back to talk about it more.
      * Motion for accepting the Steering Committee recommendation to remain a JPC while revising procedures to increase efficiency and assurances made by Jim Birkholz, seconded by Jerry Schaubach. All vote yes with the exception of Jackie Anderson and Janet Hegland, who vote nay. Motion carries.
5. **2022-2023 Annual Plan of Work** – Emily Heinz
   1. Spreadsheet contains summary of 2021 outputs and proposed 2022-2023 activities. Are there questions?
      * Jackie Anderson: Suggestion – would like to see a summary that shows how much of the workplan effort goes to particular entities and how money is being distributed. Would also like to have a simple visual breakdown of by project type and by year – how many stormwater projects, how many ag projects, etc.
      * Fran Miron: Is that an easy task to do?
      * Angie Hong: It would be time consuming – partners are already reporting their projects to multiple other entities – BWSR, MPCA, NRCS, DNR, etc. We do provide a lot of detail on the WBIF funded projects but are trying to find ways to efficiently report locally led projects without spending excessive amounts of staff time.
      * Klayton Eckles: Could this be reported out graphically? Happy to see money from urban areas getting spent in rural areas to get work done most efficiently
      * Angie Hong: We are working to try and utilize the interactive map that we built for the 1W1P effort so we can map all the projects. The current map created to show 2021 progress does show locations of projects and countywide programs, but doesn’t include the additional data layers for surface water, groundwater, and other features that are in the interactive map.
      * Jackie Anderson: Can you give each entity a number and show how many projects and dollars go to each entity?
      * Emily Heinz: The information is in the spreadsheet currently, but it would take additional staff time to parse it out differently. WBIF grant reporting is covered by the grant, but additional reporting would be an extra expense born by the local partners.
      * Fran Miron: We need to remember our goal is improved water quality, not necessarily knowing the cost per entity. As long as water quality is improving, we’re doing our job.
      * Chris Dubose: We all have an interest in helping our immediate areas and reporting back to our boards. Could staff provide some end-of-the-year stats summarizing what amount of work happened where?
      * Klayton Eckles: I would much rather see money go to areas that need it and where the money can be used more effectively.
      * Susan Morris: Yes, I think counties like Pine are just very thankful to have these funds available.
      * Steve Schmaltz – could we report out on cumulative impact/benefit to the river? We need to justify the additional expense to taxpayers.
      * Angie – we are currently reporting out projects completed and phosphorus reductions to the receiving water body. Would you want that to be reported out as cumulative benefit to the river? Or to a particular entity/county?
      * Emily Heinz: We have been doing that for WBIF projects, but not the other local partner projects.
      * Jackie Anderson – could we separate the WBIF funded projects from the other projects in the annual plan?
      * Chris Dubose: I’d caution us on keeping score too much, perhaps add a column to show entity that would potentially benefit from a WBIF project and report that out at year end.
      * Fran Miron: Shall we motion to approve the 2022-2023 annual workplan?
      * Chris DuBose motions to approve the 2022-2023 annual workplan. Mike Mergens seconds. All members voting yes. Motion carries.
6. **Draft Policy for “Fast Track Projects”** – Angie Hong
   1. If we move WBIF project application review to only 2-3 times a year, there may be high value projects whose timeline dictates a more immediate review before the next official review session. So we wanted to create a policy/process appended to the 2022-2023 workplan that would lay out what that fast-track process might look like so that potential project is reviewed by the steering committee in a timely manner. These are not emergency projects, which are defined by statue.
      * Klayton Eckles: Would we get in trouble and need to do work plan amendments to accommodate such projects?
      * Craig Mell: We’re already allowed to shift up to $50K between budget lines before needing a work plan amendment, so no.
      * Fran Miron: How official does this policy need to be?
      * Chris Dubose: How often do we feel we are going to need this policy? Once or twice a year? Or 6-7 times a year?
      * Angie Hong: The thought is only on occasion, but we will learn as we go.
      * Fran Miron: We can add/change policy, but we want to make sure we compile policies and keep track of what we’re doing. Where would the policy go?
      * Craig Mell: It would stay in my binder with the JPA and bylaws.
      * Jackie Anderson: Would this be a policy or an amendment to the 2022 work plan?
      * Angie: This defines how we will be reviewing and approving projects for WBIF funding moving forward.
      * Chris Dubose: I would be comfortable with a motion to approve with the following amendment: Projects will only be fast-tracked if they cannot wait until the next scheduled review meeting and their benefit would significantly outweigh that of future projects that will be considered.
      * Chris Dubose moves to approve the Fast Track policy with the aforementioned amendment. Second by Jackie Anderson. All vote yes. Motion carries.
      * Lance Petersen: Can somebody outline what a ‘high value’ project means? High value in cost or pollution reduction?
      * Angie Hong: The language is intentionally vague – could be either/or or both.
7. **April 2022 Financial Report – Craig Mell**
   1. 13 months into the program – just wrapped up year 1, encumbered 40% of the funds toward projects
   2. Jackie Anderson: What is the balance of the fund?
   3. Craig Mell: We have $661K still available.
8. **Proposed Project: Trout Brook Restoration**
   1. Angie Hong: We are bringing the Trout Brook Restoration project application form from SWWD that has a large funding request of $350K. We are not asking for an approval for the overall project, but would like to get the policy committee’s input on whether this is the type of project that we want to pursue and allocate staff time to bring forward a proposal in the future. This project would require a grant amendment and work plan revision. It has not been discussed yet by the steering committee, but staff wanted to get input from the policy committee before spending staff time to discuss further.
      * Jackie Anderson: I don’t feel there is enough information to evaluate it – it would take over half of what we have budgeted this year.
      * Chris Dubose: Why is it not in the workplan?
      * Angie Hong: The funding request is larger than any of the categories in current WBIF grant work plan. However, given that it took us a while to get Jennifer and Barbara hired, we may have extra money available in this grant to shift funds. This may be one of the only years where we do have unallocated monies.
      * Klayton Eckles: Sounds like a great project, but timing wise, what’s the urgency?
      * Kevin Chapdelaine: this is the final step in a long-term, three-year project
      * Fran Miron: How were the other two phases funded?
      * Angie: funding for the previous installations came from MnDNR, the State Clean Water Fund, and Lessard Sams Outdoor Heritage Council.
      * Fran Miron: Is this a case where our contribution could really enhance the project?
      * Angie Hong: The total project budget is $1 million, and SWWD is providing 25% of the funding. The request is for $350K in additional funding from the Lower St. Croix Partnership.
      * Matt Moore joined the meeting via phone.
      * Matt Moore: timing is to clean out in the fall and then build the project next summer. It is designed and ready to go out to bid.
      * Klayton Eckles: So if you don’t get the $350K from us Matt, what’s going to happen?
      * Matt Moore: We’re going to build it somehow, but this is what the WBIF money is for – projects that directly benefit the river.
      * Klayton Eckles: I just want to be sure that we aren’t taking any money away from what Jennifer needs to do her work
      * Matt Moorse: Totally agree.
      * Fran Miron – we just hired Jennifer and want to give her the funds to work with
      * Doug Odegard: could staff look at the proposal and suggest partial funding?
      * Craig Mell: After July 1, we do have new funding coming through the metro and would have more funding available. We will have a better answer at the end of this construction season as to funding available for the Trout Brook project.
      * Matt Moore: We don’t need an immediate answer, work doesn’t begin until fall.
      * Jackie Anderson: is this the third phase in an already approved project?
      * Matt Moore: It is.
      * Michelle Jordan: But the first two phases are certified and complete so this is considered a new project.
      * Chris Dubose: I would suggest we wait to make any decisions on this until the next funding cycle.
      * Steve SChmaltz: A 226 lb phosphorus reduction is huge – these big projects really make sense versus doing smaller projects where cost per pound of phosphorus is higher.
      * Fran: It sounds like there is interest to consider this type of project in the next round of funding and when we can get more information. On that note, we also need to recognize how doing small projects with farmers helps to change the culture and build relationships so that we can do bigger projects later
      * Steve Schmaltz: Agree. Not interested in cutting back on Jennifer’s programming at all.
9. **Program Updates:**
   1. Implementation actions on agricultural lands – Jennifer Hahn
      * Working to build relationships with LSC ag staff, had a meeting to discuss immediate priorities – networking, education/outreach, and existing program promotion.
      * Working to build relationships with farmers who may be good ‘influencers’ in future events
      * Planning 3 field days this growing season – variety of landscapes, variety of management practices
      * No questions
   2. Implementation actions on developed lands – Barbara Heitkamp
      * Ramping up work targeting shoreline owners, urban and rural landowners, launched new blog, and excited about doing more in person events this summer.
   3. Implementation actions for ecosystem services
      * No updates
   4. Prioritization and analysis projects – Jay Riggs
      * Memo outlines 6 projects currently ongoing.
      * No questions
10. **Next meeting**
    1. Next meeting will be July 25th, 2022. Venue to be decided by Angie – would like to minimize travel time with a central location (Wyoming or Forest Lake City Hall?)
11. **Doug Odegard motions to adjourn the meeting. Second by Jackie Anderson.** All members voting yes. Meeting adjourned at 6:01 pm.