

# Lower Minnesota River East Watershed

## Steering Team Meeting Minutes

**Date & Time:** 10:00am-12:00pm, Thursday, January 2<sup>nd</sup> 2025

**Location:** Microsoft Teams

**Attendees at meeting:** Holly Bushman (Le Sueur County), Trevor Rudenick (Le Sueur County), Mike Schultz (Le Sueur SWCD), Karl Schmidtke (Le Sueur SWCD), Meghan Darley (Scott SWCD), Troy Kuphal (Scott SWCD), Brad Behrens (Rice County), Steve Pahs (Rice SWCD), Anne Sawyer (BWSR), Barb Peichel (BWSR)

### Welcome & Review Agenda

- The Lower Minnesota River East Meeting was held on Thursday, January 2<sup>nd</sup> 2025. The meeting was held virtually.
- The ST meetings have been rescheduled as reoccurring for the 1<sup>st</sup> Thursday of month. This allows more time for staff to prepare before JPB meetings.

### Recap Last Meeting

- Last ST meeting we were finishing up some conversations and edits about a few additional items and documents that are needed prior to implementation efforts starting.

### Subagreement Updates

- 3 subagreements have been executed
- We are waiting for 2 more to be completed with signatures

### LoMRE Reporting Implementation Efforts

- Since staff will be started to bill their time and projects to the LoMRE watershed, the ST thought it would be a good idea to run through some items that will be required when submitting reimbursement requests.
- Meghan had mentioned requirements that the fiscal agent would like from each partner:
  - Invoice with dates
  - Total hours and rates (use billable rates)
  - Have some type of record of when staff time was spent on specific projects, practices, etc. (ex: timesheet)
- Quarterly reporting

- Due the 10<sup>th</sup> of every month after quarter ends
- Follow up emails will be sent to make sure reporting is completed.
- This information can be uploaded in the shared drive and emailed to Meghan.
- Project database
  - Each project or practice will be required to be entered into the project database excel spreadsheet.
  - Anne and Barb stated that a few of the projects and practices that are listed in the drop down need to be revised.
  - 2 more columns will be added to the Match/Inkind categories to obtain more details about the type of match/inkind and how much was provided.
  - This database reflects current projects funded by WBIF and any other grant fundings sources the JPB receives.
  - Project tracking for other funding sources have not been decided yet, but the ST will need to come up with a way to track these efforts as well. There are some concerns about double reporting.
- A few comments were missed during the discussion at the last meeting, and Holly wanted to make sure that the ST discussed those comments.
  - The amendment process had some clarification questions about providing examples of change of scope and outcomes within the text. The ST was on board with those changes.
  - Add a line item under project requirements for contracts and how they are required prior to receiving financial assistance.
  - Payments-Types of payments issued to include and expand in detail the difference between percent based, flat rate, and incentive payments. Also, add clarity on partial payments and what type of approval is needed.
- If a budget starts running low for a LGU allocation, consensus to let the rest of the ST know as soon as possible.

### **Legal Counsel RFP**

- An update draft of the Legal Counsel RFP was provided to the ST.
- The timeline of the RFP shifted due to the JPB meeting quarterly.
  - RFP would be sent out in early March and the JPB would finalize the decision of the firm at the April JPB meeting.
- As of now, no projects have been completed, very low risk.
- The ST had no revisions or additional discussions on the document.
- The 3 year window for the length of the agreement was worked for the ST members.
- The RFP will go to the January JPB meeting for approval.

## **CRP Incentive Program**

- This program was brought up at the last ST meeting. The ST was interested in the program. Holly said that before we apply for the program, we would need to develop a policy. There was some discussion from the ST as to what we would like to see in the policy such as minimum acres enrolled, where projects are located, etc. Holly typed up a draft policy for the ST to review and discuss. The intent is to have a policy ready for JPB approval at the January JPB meeting since we need to apply for funds by February.
- Karl Schmidtke had some additional thoughts about the CRP incentive policy that he wanted to bring up to the ST.
  - Provide higher incentives for new enrollments versus reenrollments. And provide additional incentives for 5+ acres and 10+ acres. The consensus was \$1,000 for initial sign up for the Incentive Program. Reenrollments of 5+ acres get an additional \$2500. For new enrollments 5-10 acres get an additional \$5000 and 10+ acres get an additional \$10000.
  - Approval process requires an incentive contract form. No technical sign off is needed. Compliance form included within contract.

## **Education and Outreach Campaign Update**

- Kourtney has developed a rough draft of the Education and Outreach Campaign Plan/Framework. The ST did review what had been developed so far.
- We discussed that the Plan would line up with the workplan and funding that is available.
- One thing that the ST talked about adding to the plan was action items for the “Activity in the plan that states develop an Education and Outreach Campaign.”
  - Examples include X number events/social media postings, maintain website, etc.
  - Add more strategies to the table.
- As homework, the ST will review the draft Ed and Outreach Plan and provide comments and feedback. We can discuss updated draft at the next ST meeting.
- We also talked about website maintenance and updates.
  - Minutes, agendas, policies, bylaws, JPA, etc. should all be added to the LoMRE website.

## **Updates for the Partnership**

- Scott SWCD will send out invoices for 2025 Dues for each member.
- MCIT finally provided a quote of \$1,488 for insurance for 2024. Just waiting on a contract for signature.

## **January JPB Packet**

- Holly mentioned what was planned on the agenda so far for the January JPB meeting.

- Orientation for JPB members, Funding Policy, Legal Counsel RFP, Updated Bylaws Draft, CRP Incentive Program and Policy, and any other updates.
- Will have some new board members.
- There were no additional edits or amendments to the agenda.

#### **Updates & Next Steps**

- Next Steering Team Meeting: **Thursday, February 6 2025, 10:00am-12:00pm**
- Next JPB Meeting: **Thursday, January 16<sup>th</sup>, 3:00pm-5:00pm**