

Lower Minnesota River East Watershed

Steering Team Meeting Minutes

Date & Time: 1:00pm-3:30pm, Wednesday, December 18th 2024

Location: Microsoft Teams

Attendees at meeting: Holly Bushman (Le Sueur County), Mike Schultz (Le Sueur SWCD), Meghan Darley (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 Wednesday, December 18th, 2024. The meeting was held virtually.
- We are shifting some items around to make sure we get to them first before Anne has to leave. The Cost-Share Policies and Procedures and CRP Incentive Grant agenda items will go first.

Recap Last Meeting

- Last ST meeting we were editing and cleaning up a variety of different documents that are needed before we start implementing projects.

Cost-Share Funding Policies and Procedures

- At the last ST meeting, there were quite a bit of revisions that were made to the policies and procedures document. The document has been updated to reflect the following changes: duplicative information was removed, ranking and scoring section of the document, approval process and amendments section, and referencing local, grant, and GAM policies as needed.
- 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.

CRP Incentive Program

- This program was brought up at the last ST meeting.
- Holly sent an email to BWSR stating that the watershed was interested.
- This program is not required to participate in.
- \$50,000 is available for the watershed.
- Before we can complete a workplan the following needs to be completed:
 - Local policies up to date
 - Rates for cost-share need to be decided.
- We talked about existing policies for the Cannon and for Scott SWCD.
- The ST agreed on the following items for the policy:
 - First come, first serve
 - Minimum of 0.5 acres
 - New and reenrollments are eligible
 - Project must be located in habitat priority areas within Plan
- The ST decided that initial sign up for the program would be \$1,000 for each applicant.
- For projects over 5 acres applicants would get an additional \$2,000.
- Holly will type up a policy for the next ST meeting for review.

Grant Agreement and Work Plan Updates

- The Grant Agreement has been signed and executed.
- Subagreements that are currently in the process of being completed include: Rice SWCD, Le Sueur SWCD, and Le Sueur County. Scott SWCD and Rice County are in the process of getting the subagreement on a board agenda.
 - Everyone is on track to get this completed by the new year.

Insurance Update

- Scott SWCD submitted the survey to MCIT to obtain an insurance quote.
 - Meghan said they have not received any quote for insurance yet. She will check in with Shelly and see if they can get an update.

FY'25 Dues Discussion

- The JPB approved dues for FY 2025. For Scott SWCD, Le Sueur County and Le Sueur SWCD dues for FY 25 will be \$4,000/entity. For Rice County and Rice SWCD dues for FY 25 will be \$2,000/entity.
 - Dollar thresholds set within the Joint Powers Agreement.
- FY'25 Dues are due to the Fiscal Agent by January 31st.
 - This was also mentioned in the Bylaws.

- Have Fiscal Agent send out invoice for Dues.

Legal Counsel RFP

- This was the first time the ST was able to really dive into the Legal Counsel RFP discussion. The partnership decided to hire a third party for legal services.
- Holly used the Cannon partnership example.
- Additionally, a list of firms to send the rfp has been developed based off their experiences.
- The ST had no revisions or additional discussions on the document.
- Holly will updated the RFP will dates and it will need JPB approval in January.

Lower Minnesota River Watershed SWAG Program Updates

- Holly mentioned that the MPCA's monitoring efforts for the second cycle of the WRAPS report. We did put in requests for monitoring sites.
 - It looks like the majority of the Watershed's priority resources will be monitored for this next WRAPS cycle.
 - Scott SWCD will be sampling Scott County and Rice County resources.
 - Le Sueur SWCD and County will be sampling Le Sueur County resources.

FY'25 CWF and AIG Grant Updates

- Le Sueur County and SWCD submitted a few different applications for FY'25 for projects and practices located within the Lower Minnesota River Watershed.
- 2 Accelerated Implementation Grants were approved. One application was to create a Stream Erosion Study for the Unnamed Creek (761) Subwatershed. The other application was to create Lake Subwatershed Assessments for multiple lakes and lakesheds in Le Sueur County (one being Clear Lake).
 - These grant applications will achieve a few different activities mentioned in the Comprehensive Plan.
- The other grant that was approved was a Projects and Practices Drinking Water Grant to seal a large Industrial Well in the City of Le Sueur.

Shared Drive Discussion

- Holly created a google drive and gmail account for the LoMRE partnership. It sounded like most ST members were not able to access the drive.
- She said that an account will need to be created in order to access the drive and edits folders (but you can use your work email to do this).
- Holly will resend out the google drive invite and asked that everyone try to access the shared drive.

Education and Outreach Campaign Update

- Holly has talked with Kortney and it sounds like she has been working on an education and outreach framework for the watershed. She may have a draft available by next week.
- The ST discussed that until staff have reviewed and discussed the Education and Outreach Campaign to wait to present a draft to the JPB.
- In the meantime, we can get a website and social media platforms started. Mike thought that was reasonable.
 - Once the subagreements are signed and executed, Kortney should be able to bill her time.

Updates & Next Steps

- Holly asked the ST if we wanted to change our meeting dates and times? Right now it can be difficult for the ST to meet because it is a day before the JPB meetings.
 - After some discussion the ST decided the first Thursday of the month from 10am-12pm will work to meet.
- Next Steering Team Meeting: **Thursday, January 2nd 2025, 10:00am-12:00pm**
- Next JPB Meeting: **Thursday, January 16th, 3:00pm-5:00pm**