

Lower Minnesota River East Watershed

Steering Team Meeting Minutes

Date & Time: 10:00am-1:00pm, Wednesday, November 20th, 2024

Location: Scott Soil and Water Conservation District Office
7151 190th St W #125
Jordany, MN 55352

Attendees at meeting: Holly Bushman (Le Sueur County), Mike Schultz (Le Sueur SWCD), Meghan Darley (Scott SWCD), Troy Kuphal (Scott SWCD), Steve Pahs (Rice SWCD), Anne Sawyer (BWSR), Barb Peichel (BWSR), Trevor Rudenick (Guest), Kourtney Spitzack (Guest), Teresa DeMars (Guest), Shelby Roberts (Guest), and Laura Godfrey (Guest)

Welcome & Review Agenda

- The Lower Minnesota River East Meeting was held on Wednesday, November 20th, 2024. The meeting was held in person at the Scott SWCD Office.

Introductions

- There were some new staff members at the meeting. The ST went around the room to introduce themselves. New staff included education and outreach and technical staff members from different LGU partners.

Grant Agreement and Work Plan Updates

- The LoMRE workplan was submitted, needed a few minor edits, and has been approved.
- The Grant Agreement has not been signed yet; waiting on a Bank Account to be set up. Should be able to have the Grant Agreement signed soon.

Education and Outreach Discussion

- Holly introduced the Education and Outreach topic to the ST. This is the first time that we have sit down as group to start thinking about how we want Education and Outreach efforts to work for this watershed. The goal is to learn from each other about existing efforts, what efforts we want/need, and start developing a framework for education and outreach for the partnership.
- The ST started off by sharing different experiences on how other watersheds and partnerships are doing education and outreach.
 - Teresa DeMars mentioned that in the Cannon there is a Substantial Education and Outreach Plan.

- This plan includes a diversity of activities and goals with a budget.
 - The partnership came up with a strategy on how to achieve the goals for each activity and what was mentioned in the plan.
 - Each year staff picks which activities we want to implement and add in the workplan.
 - Education and outreach is completed by both Staff and is contracted out (have used Clean River Partners).
 - Ed and Outreach Plan is a wish list; however, there are specific activities within the Plan that are also in the Comprehensive Watershed Plan as well.
- Barb mentioned that in the Rum there is an excel spreadsheet that is developed for education and outreach.
 - The spreadsheet lists the different activities.
 - This partnership has a dedicated staff member for education and outreach. There are other education and outreach staff that do help out with these efforts as needed.
- Shelby Roberts mentioned that will Scott SWCD they have a workplan and report that is developed annually and she is the dedicated staff member for education and outreach and works with many different metro partners.
 - A workplan is developed by all partners and then priorities are chosen for each year.
 - Decisions on what to do each year is based off of existing and previous efforts.
 - A table is developed of planned activities and any new activities are highlighted.
 - Metrics that are used can include audience attendance, handouts, posts, etc.
 - Different categories for metrics depending on events, articles, social media, etc.
 - Scott SWCD also mentioned that they send out quarterly newspapers and feedback is received.
 - News articles are also important.
- The ST had discussions about once we collect information how do we actually use it?
 - Surveys, short answer takeaways, checkboxes, number of attendees, etc.
 - Difficult information to collect that can be useful.
- Le Sueur SWCD mentioned that we don't have a main conduit where we can reach the entire county.

- Direct mailings are currently the most effective outreach method we have.
- The ST had discussion on whether we should have some kind of branding for the watershed.
 - Most of the things we do are through our local offices, and we want to limit confusion on who should be contacted and reached out to.
 - Important to mention the partnership and include, but not over do it.
- After some discussion the ST thought the version that Scott SWCD has developed was great. To start we want to a 1-2 page document that has a table that identifies the who, what, where, when, and how. This would be done on an annual basis.
- To start, Kourtney will develop a rough draft of the 1-2 page document and have something ready by January for the ST to review.
 - She will reach out to Teresa and Shelby for assistance in developing this rough draft.

October JPB Meeting Items Approved

- Holly recapped what the JPB approved in October.
 - Plan, Bylaws, Staff Roles and Tasks, Insurance Survey and Obtain Quote, Grant Agreement (chair can sign), and Set up Bank Account and Tax ID.
 - There was some discussion about the recently adopted Bylaws and how the only officer positions were the Chair and Vice Chair. Logistically, Scott SWCD thought that it made more sense to add a Treasurer position that would be dedicated to sign checks for cost share and staff time reimbursements. Just want to make sure that this runs efficiently as possible.
 - We discussed that two signatures should always be made for payment.
 - Digital signatures were okay to do.
 - There was also discussion about adding a Secretary officer position to sign and approve minutes. This could be added to a different officer position or delegated to a staff member.
 - Any duties/tasks can be delegated but must be documented in the bylaws and approved.

Items that need JPB Approval prior to spending WBIF

- The ST spent the bulk of the meeting discussing these two agenda items. The Cost-Share Funding Policies and Procedures just needs to be completed and approved before starting any cost-share projects. The subagreements need to be completed as soon as possible so each LGU partner can be reimbursed for any staff time spent.
- *Cost-Share Funding Policies and Procedures*

- The ST had discussions about duplicative information and what really needed to be in the funding policies and procedures. The list of priority areas and resources was too wordy and instead the ST agreed to reference the priority area figures in the plan.
- The Ranking and Scoring section of the document seemed to not jive with what the partnership was actually doing. We already ranked the Measurable Goals but aren't necessarily ranking projects. We clarified which projects automatically have the green light to move ahead and which ones need more discussion before approving. This should help simplify the process.
- The procedures on project approval, contracts, etc. were detailed and had ST concurrence was well defined.
- One suggestion was to reference BWSR GAM, local policies or grant policies as this may change depending on funding source.
- Subagreements
 - After some consideration and discussion, the ST agreed to use a template similar to the LoMRE 1W1P planning grant for the subagreements. The template did a better job explaining in detail reimbursement, reporting, etc.
 - The ST looked at previous versions of the subagreements to make sure nothing was missing.
 - The subagreement will not put a specific dollar amount that is allocated to each LGU as this will likely change as time goes on. Instead language will be added that references the Exhibits (budget, workplan, and roles) as amended. This will allow as much flexibility as possible.
 - There were a few clarification questions about the budget that the ST discussed. Additionally, a few minor changes in staff roles were made (defined lead and supporting roles) and emphasized the education and outreach as a role.
 - The ST agreed that the changes looked good pending JPB approval and County attorney review.

CRP Incentive Grant Program

- The LoMRE Partnership has the option to opt into the CRP Incentive Program for this watershed. Up to \$50,000 would be available. At this point in time Anne is looking to see if we would be interested in these funds.
- There was discussion amongst ST partners what the program is and it's purpose.
- At this point in time, the Partnership is interested and asked Anne to send us over the information.
- At the next ST meeting, we can decide if we would like to put in a funding request for these funds.

Updates & Next Steps

- Next Steering Team Meeting: **Wednesday, December 18, 2024, 10:00am-1:00pm (Tentative)**
- Next JPB Meeting: **Thursday, November 21st 3:00pm-5:00pm**