

# Lower Minnesota River East One Watershed One Plan

## Steering Committee Meeting Minutes

December 20<sup>th</sup> 2023

**Attendees at meeting:** Holly Bushman (Le Sueur County), Meghan Darley (Scott SWCD), Troy Kuphal (Scott SWCD), Brad Behrens (Rice County), Steve Pahs (Rice SWCD), Linda Loomis (Lower Minnesota River WD), Barb Peichel (BWSR), and Anne Sawyer (BWSR)

### Welcome & Review Agenda

- The Lower Minnesota River East Meeting was held on Wednesday, December 20, 2023. The meeting was held virtually.

### Advisory Committee Meeting Recap and Discussion

- The advisory committee meeting focus was reviewing the informal review process and addressing any comments, concerns or questions that anyone had.
  - The one item that needed a little more discussion was the funding source column that is listed within the implementation tables. It currently isn't clear what funding sources would be utilized to help cover the financial costs for the implementation activity.
    - Barb mentioned that in other watersheds they have specifically listed out what is being covered with WBIF, so it can easily be translated into our workplans.
      - Additionally, the summary table that describes the different funding sources should be broken down more.
    - After some discussion the ST decided to list out the different funding sources as WBIF, Local, State, and Other. We went through each implementation activity and wrote down which funding sources would be applicable.

### Roles

- Holly mentioned that we have discussed as a ST the different roles we would like to have with planning efforts. However, we didn't formalize/agree as a group would be implementing those roles. After discussion, most partners will assume their existing roles. However, the education and outreach role will need to be filled by additional staff. Le Sueur SWCD is planning on hiring someone for 2024. Scott SWCD and Rice SWCD have stated they are more than willing to have their existing ed and outreach staff help train in the new staff member. Additionally, the education and outreach staff

person would help take on soil health initiatives due to the new RFP that is out. There is shared understanding between all partners that existing staff would assist with the soil health practices.

- Project Coordinator-Le Sueur County
- Fiscal Agent-Scott SWCD
- Legal Services-Hire out services
- Project Tracking/Reporting-Scott SWCD
- Education and Outreach-Le Sueur SWCD
- Agronomist-Shared amongst partners
- Supplemental handouts will be created for the PC and ST to describe in more detail what each role entails.
- The ST decided to wait with budgets for each role, until they are fully developed and we start our workplan.

### **Project Ranking/Scoring, Policies, and Tracking**

- Staff asked Barb and Anne if there were specific requirements for partnerships when it comes to ranking and scoring projects?
  - In previous watershed efforts, staff mentioned the ranking and scoring projects has been difficult and not always super effective.
    - Barb and Anne mentioned there is nothing that is required by BWSR.
    - Barb suggested to keep it simple and look at the main issue areas. Decide which activities will be funded by WBIF versus others.
  - The ST reviewed some examples of different watershed ranking and scoring, and decided that anything too complex is not needed. Agreed to implement projects in priority areas.
    - As homework, the ST will rank out priorities (measurable goals) for the next meeting. From there, we can decide what makes the most sense.
- The next item we moved onto was Cost-Share policies.
  - Barb asked if we want to stick to local policies or have a watershed wide policies?
  - Troy mentioned that his preference would be a watershed wide policy. Local policies can be complicated and driven by other partners priorities and needs.
    - The ST will discuss this more in detail at the next meeting.

### **Education and Outreach Campaign**

- Holly asked how we want to set up our education and outreach campaign. While this will not be implemented right away, as a ST, we should start thinking about this.
  - She did provide examples for the ST to review.

- Barb wasn't sure if we should hit pause on this item until new staff come in.
  - Holly's concern is if we wait too long then we won't have any education and outreach activities being implemented within the first year or two of implementation efforts.
    - Mike mentioned it might take some time for the staff to be trained fully before fully taking on this role. He suggested just developing some kind of framework for now so we can start on activities, and then it can grow over time when the new staff member starts.
  - Barb recommended finding a framework that already works with existing programs; make simple and easy.
  - Staff agreed to pause on this item until early 2024. A subcommittee will be developed with existing ed/outreach staff and a few members of the ST to develop a framework for the partnership.

### **Updates & Next Steps**

- Holly will send out homework to the ST to rank measurable goals in order to jump start how we want to move forward with deciding where we want to focus implementation efforts.
- The next steering committee meeting will be held on **Wednesday, January 17<sup>th</sup> from 10:00am-1:00pm.**
- January policy committee meeting will be held **Thursday, January 18<sup>th</sup> from 3:00pm-5:00pm.**
- No AC meeting in January