

Lower Minnesota River East One Watershed One Plan

Steering Committee Meeting Minutes

May 17, 2023

Attendees at meeting: Holly Bushman (Le Sueur County), Mike Schultz (Le Sueur SWCD) Steve Pahs (Rice SWCD), Brad Behrens (Rice County), Meghan Darley (Scott SWCD), Troy Kuphal (Scott SWCD), Melissa Bokman-Ermer (Scott County/WMO), Vanessa Strong (Scott County/WMO), Barb Peichel (BWSR), and Anne Sawyer (BWSR)

Welcome & Review Agenda

- The Lower Minnesota River East Meeting was held on May 17, 2023. The meeting was held in person. Holly briefly went over the agenda. The main goals of the meeting were to discuss organizational arrangement. Specifically, how staff wants to present the information moving forward to the policy committee, a timeline on when we need a decision, and staff's thoughts on the process.

Ground Rules for Steering Committee

- The purpose of setting ground rules for the Steering Committee was to assist with efforts in having discussions about content that is difficult to work through. The ground rules for this Steering Committee include: everyone participates, no one dominates the conversation, one person speaks at a time, listen to and respect others points of view, do your best to understand the pros and cons of every option, seek first to understand not to be understood, tackle problems not people, at times we may have to agree to disagree, stay on task, be respectful, and use inside voices.

Ice Breaker Questions

- Holly thought to start off these conversations it might be helpful to start with a few different ice breaker questions.
 - Barb is facilitating the conversations and is asked each steering committee member the following questions:
 - What has been working well so far?
 - Is there anything that has been frustrating during the planning process?
 - Are there suggestions on how to improve us working together as a steering committee?
 - What are you looking forward to the most when the plan is completed?

- There was an overwhelming concurrence about how participation and the dedication of all of the partners has been really positive. Everyone works well together and comes prepared. Additionally, we all agreed on our priority resources and issues.
- There were mixed thoughts about frustrations with the planning process. Some individuals thought the process was going too slow and we were falling behind, others thought that some individuals were maybe too quiet during the Advisory Committee, and lastly there was some frustration from miscommunications amongst steering committee members.
- Suggestions on how to improve us working together as a steering committee include increasing participation/workloads for others, more direct communication and making decisions, and bringing more materials and information to the policy committee.
- Lastly, what steering committee members are looking forward to the most when the plan is completed includes: a new allocation of funds/new opportunities, complete plan that allows us to implement projects, work in areas some staff historically were not able to do so, and new funding opportunities for the upper part of the watershed.

Steering Committee Updates for Organizational Arrangement

- The first bullet point for this agenda item was asking if any research has been done with other 1W1P partnerships for organizational arrangement?
 - Melissa stated that she reached out to quite a few different 1W1P partnerships to ask them what type of organizational structure they have, how it was formed, and any other information that would be helpful.
 - Melissa stated that some partnerships had a PC, TAC, and implementation work group. The decision-making process and liability varied amongst different 1W1Ps. There are a million different ways to form the partnerships.
 - Holly mentioned that she also did a bit of research. What she noticed was that each 1W1P was unique and the type of organizational arrangement chosen was unique and was chosen based off of what worked best for that partnership.
- The next bullet point item was asking if there has been any discussion with board members and their staff?
 - Mike stated that his board relies heavily on what staff says. 1W1P is a lot of them and they want guidance. At this point in time, his board is leaning towards a JPE.
 - Meghan echoed Mike's comments.

- Brad agreed with that. At this point in time, Rice County is leaning towards a JPE. He stated that he does not think Rice County would be upset either way if a JPC or JPE is selected. Rice County's biggest concern is if every single item has to be brought back to individual boards.
- Vanessa stated that she did reach out to the Scott County attorney to get some guidance.
 - The county attorney stated there were no legal issues with a JPC or JPE, dependent on what we do and how we want to function will determine why type of partnership we have for this watershed.
 - Liability is in the work we do, not the different funding streams.
 - MCIT states that we can not stack liability.
 - JPE is a decision-making tool which is a pro. The con of a JPE is that there is some local control that is given up.
 - Vanessa stated that the County won't likely sign into a JPE. The board feels that a JPE would be redundant of the existing partnerships and plans that are already doing this work. She has worked with explaining the differences to the County board and they are slowly becoming more open to the different partnerships, but she is not so sure about the JPE. She can see the County board being more willing to sign onto a JPC.
- The third bullet point item asked what are current staff recommendations to the policy committee in July?
 - Barb went through each type of partnership and asked staff to raise their hand when the type of partnership they are recommending to the Policy Committee is called.
 - There were no votes for no formal agreement.
 - There were no votes for a MOA.
 - There were 2 votes for a JPC.
 - There were 6 votes for a JPE.
 - Barb did want to mention that we can revisit this conversation annually and mention this in our JPA.
- The last bullet point item was a question asking what if we do not all agree?
 - The steering committee agreed that it is okay to agree to disagree.
 - We should just be honest with the policy committee about this and upfront.
 - Lastly, we agreed in the end it is up to the Policy Committee to make a recommendation/decision about what type of organizational agreement they would like for this partnership.

Email Questions and Responses

- Barb stated that if there are additional questions or something needs clarification on the email that was sent out please let her and Anne know. She would like to stay on task with the agenda to make sure we get through all of the items.

Next Steps Organizational Arrangement

- If staff have not already done so, they will meet with their local boards to discuss organizational arrangement for the Lower Minnesota River East 1W1P.
- Holly is requesting that she be notified which way each LGU board is leaning for organizational arrangement one week before the July Policy Committee meeting;
Wednesday, July 12th.
 - This will give Holly enough time to collect all the responses and show the policy committee in a formal document.
- At the July Policy Committee meeting, the following will be presented on organizational arrangement:
 - Preference of type of partnership for each LGU board.
 - Staff recommendations.
 - Potentially a vote on organizational arrangement (pending on policy committee's thoughts).
 - Discuss next step son to formally create a partnership.

Questions to Consider Handout

- The steering committee started to review the questions to consider handout. We went through the questions to make sure all of the questions were asked and the responses for each type of partnership was correct. After a lengthy discussion, the steering committee decided that the handout could be a supplemental resource that steering committee members could use when talking with the boards. However, the handout is not required.

Updates & Next Steps

- We may schedule another Steering Committee meeting in May to discuss plan content.
- The next steering team meeting will be held on **Wednesday, June 21st** from **1:30pm-3:00pm.**
- The next policy committee meeting will be held **Thursday, July 20th** from **3:00pm-5:00pm.**
- Next Advisory Committee Meeting will be held either **Wednesday, June 21st** **10:00am-1:00pm.**