

## **Lower Minnesota River East 1W1P**

### **Policy Committee Meeting Minutes**

**Date & Time: 3:00-5:00pm, Thursday, April 20, 2023**

**Location:**

Le Sueur County Soil and Water Conservation District Office  
181 W Minnesota Street, Le Center, MN 56057

And

Virtual – Microsoft Teams

Attendees: Holly Bushman (Le Sueur County); Mike Schultz (Le Sueur SWCD); Greg Entinger (Le Sueur SWCD); Laura Amundson (LMRWD); Danny O’Keefe (Le Sueur County) (chair); Steve Pahs (Rice SWCD); Meghan Darley (Scott SWCD); Doug Schoenecker (Scott SWCD); Jeff Docken (Rice County); Virgil Pint (Scott County/SWMO); Rita Weaver (Scott County/SWMO); Melissa Bokman Ermer (Scott WMO); Linda Loomis (Lower MN River Watershed District); Steve Pahs (Rice SWCD); Roger Bongers (Rice SWCD); Troy Kuphal (Scott SWCD); Brad Behrens (Rice County)

#### **I. Welcome & Review Agenda - Policy Committee Chair**

Chair O’Keefe called the meeting to order at 3:00 pm. Holly gave an introduction on the agenda and what will be covered in today’s meeting.

#### **II. Review and Approval of Agenda**

Motioned by Schoenecker; Seconded by Docken to approve the agenda.

**The Motion carried unanimously for the agenda to be approved as presented.**

#### **III. Review and Approval of March 15<sup>th</sup> Meeting Minutes**

Motioned by Entinger; Seconded by Schoenecker to approve the March 15<sup>th</sup> meeting minutes.

**The Motion carried unanimously for the approval of the March 15<sup>th</sup> meeting minutes.**

#### **III. Priority Resources and Areas (Decision Item)**

Holly gave an update on the Habitat & Natural Resources Protection and Restoration Priority Areas to the group. After consultation with the Advisory & Steering Committee the group decided to utilize the existing priority resources and areas for habitat and natural resource protection. The focus for existing habitat that is already in place for natural areas and habitat protection, would be on public lands and high-quality habitat.

The focus would be on riparian areas in streamsheds. This would also address other stressors and impairments for streams such as IBI, connectivity, habitat and altered hydrology. Holly presented the Natural Resources & Habitat Protection map.

Cmsr. Schoenecker – are lands under CREP and RIM looked at? Staff indicated we can talk more about adding those into the map. Most in the room agreed. The data is easy to get, it exists.

Holly presented the Natural Resources & Habitat Restoration map. After discussions with both the Advisory and Steering Committees, staff decided the stream buffer for this priority area should be a ½ mile buffer on both sides of the streams. Gives us more flexibility and opportunity with projects near the stream. It is an arbitrary number, but it gives us more flexibility if a parcel is only partially within the buffer area.

Motioned by Entinger; Seconded by Docken to accept the Habitat & Natural Resource Protection & Restoration Priority Areas maps.

**The Motion carried unanimously for the approval of the Habitat & Natural Resource Protection & Restoration Priority Areas maps.**

#### **IV. Measurable Goals (Decision Item)**

Holly & Mike gave some background on how measurable goals were developed. We will have better numbers to use for our goals when the models are complete from ISG. The Advisory Committee discussed the measurable goals at their March meeting. Holly then went through the draft Measurable Goals hand out with the group. There was some discussion on measuring chloride.

Holly and Mike explained the Surface Water Hydrology Goal of reducing annual runoff by 0.1 inches. Rita asked if this is 0.1 inches across the whole watershed or across the priority areas. It would be a 0.1-inch reduction in the priority streamsheds.

During the Groundwater Quality Goal overview, Cmsr. Pint asked if there was a discussion on aquifer recharge areas that are susceptible to contamination of the aquifer? Holly showed the Groundwater Protection map to recap the vulnerable areas. A question was also asked about whether Wellhead Protection Areas are included. Staff indicated both Drinking Water Supply Management Areas (DWSMA) and aquifer vulnerability was taken into consideration when developing the map. Data collection and monitoring need more discussion.

Cmsr. Schoenecker asked the question regarding Habitat Restoration ½ mile buffer with a concern we are excluding a lot of area. Mike explained the ½ mile buffer is the priority area for this plan, but the areas outside the buffer might be eligible for other programs, but this Plan's purpose is to focus on priority areas.

The final understanding of the buffer priority area is to create more connecting corridors in the watershed.

Motioned by Schoenecker; Seconded by Docken to accept the Measurable Goals as presented.

**The Motion carried unanimously for the approval of the Measurable Goals as presented.**

#### **IV. Organizational Arrangement (Informational item)**

Holly asked if anyone had any time to discuss with their boards or staff on the future organizational arrangement.

Cmsr. Pint indicated Scott County is leaning toward Collaboration. Cmsr. Schoenecker indicated the Scott SWCD Board is leaning more toward the Entity. Some discussion took place, Steve Pahs talked about the Cannon and how they created a reserve fund for future expenses. A question was asked about matching funds, Holly discussed that those funds would have to come from local or other sources, or plan in annual budgets.

Holly introduced organizational arrangements giving an overview of the Entity and Collaboration options and what both types of partnerships would include.

Melissa (Scott County) stated she gave a handout that describes notes on Scott County experiences from being involved in both kinds of arrangements in our other organizational work on the pros and cons list for an Entity vs a Collaboration.

Mike indicated we are providing information today, not making a decision. Holly indicated the goal would be to have an idea on an arrangement by some time this summer since drafting an Agreement will take some time.

Troy Kuphal asked what metrics would the Board like us to assess for the Board to make a decision? What's important to you to know, what are the five things we should consider and give you back that information so you can make an informed decision? Cmsr. Docken asked, what would be the obligation to the County Board? If there a financial difference or cost of one or the other to the County Board? Cmsr. Bongers ask if another watershed done something similar, could we use what they did?

A discussion occurred regarding how changes in the workplan do come up, staff has experienced that, and that is a consideration on how to address that with what type of formation would work best for this group. Melissa stated we could ask other Collaborative how they address the questions brought up.

Troy recapped the discussion as hearing efficiency and decision making is important to the Board, and if we contact other Collaboratives, find out how does efficiency work, and the efficiency of decision-making and where that impact is.

Next Mike and Holly presented a handout of Questions to Consider for the Board when thinking about what type of arrangement they think would work best. Holly indicated the Board could talk with their boards and staff on the list of questions to find out what matters to them.

Liability was mentioned as being a concern. Cmsr. Docken asked about what kind of equipment could be shared. Holly explained how they share equipment in the Cannon.

Troy led a discussion and suggested to put the questions to consider in a matrix on what the implications are on a collaborative vs an entity. That way the Policy Committee can compare questions to each other to see if they align with what they need to know. Cmsr. Schoenecker recommended leaving a space for other concerns that the Policy Committee comes up with. Add efficiency and obligation into the matrix.

#### **V. Planning Effort Timeline & Policy Committee Meeting Schedule (Informational Item)**

Holly gave an update on the Plan timeline, we are a little behind, but we are towards the end of the planning stage.

Holly showed a list of items we have been working on and the list is long. We are making progress on a lot of items.

Holly informed the Policy Committee that we are not meeting in May but asked if they would like to meet in June or wait until July. The purpose would be to give the Committee time to go to their Boards and staff and talk about organizational arrangement options. Steve Pahs asked how that would affect our planning timeline and if they would put us behind if we wait until July. Holly indicated there is still more planning items to work on for the draft plan. Cmsr. Docken asked if there are any other decision-making items that would need to be addressed before then.

## **VIII. Updates & Next Steps**

Updates & Next Steps

- Updates?
- Next Steering Team Meeting: **Wednesday, May 17<sup>th</sup> 1:30pm-3:00pm**
- Next Policy Committee Meeting: **Thursday, July 20<sup>th</sup> 3:00pm-5:00pm (Tentative)**
- Advisory Committee Meeting: **May 17<sup>th</sup> 10:00am-1:00pm**

## **IX. Meeting Adjourn**

Motioned by Schoenecker, Seconded by Entinger at 4:36pm

**The Motion carried unanimously for the approval to adjourn at 4:36pm.**

DRAFT