

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

### **Policy Committee Meeting Minutes**

**Date & Time: 3:00-5:00pm, Thursday, August 18th, 2022**

**Location:**

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

Attendees: Barb Piechel, BWSR; Holly Kalbus, Le Sueur County; Mike Schultz, Le Sueur SWCD; Greg Entinger, Le Sueur SWCD; Laura Amundson, LMRWD; Linda Loomis, LMRWD; Danny O'Keefe, Le Sueur County; Jeff Docken, Rice County; Meghan Darley, Scott SWCD; Doug Schnoecker, Scott SWCD; Rita Weaver, Scott County; Brad Behrens, Rice County

#### **Welcome & Review Agenda**

Chair Danny O'Keefe called the meeting to order at 3:03pm, he asked everyone to review the agenda.

Holly Kalbus mentioned there was one addition to the agenda for the Public Kickoff meetings item. ISG had sent in a summary of the all public comments and Holly wanted to show the Policy Committee. Danny O'Keefe asked if there was a motion to approve the agenda with the addition.

Motion by Jeff Docken, seconded by Doug Schnoecker to approve the August 18th, 2022 agenda.

#### **Approval of May 26th 2022 Meeting Minutes**

Motion by Greg Entinger, seconded by Greg Laura Amundson to approve the May 26<sup>th</sup>, 2022 meeting minutes.

#### **Public Kickoff Meetings**

Before staff and policy committee members discussed results from the public kickoff meetings, Holly thought it would be beneficial for everyone who attended to share their insights about how the meeting went.

- Greg Entinger though the in person meeting was well put together. He noticed that more agency staff were present. It was a bit discouraging to not see more members of the public.
- Doug Schnoecker had the same thoughts as Greg. He thought maybe 10 or so people that attended were not agency staff.
- Laura Amundson was curious how the virtual meeting went?

- Meghan and Holly stated that most of the virtual meeting information (surveys) was from the in person public kickoff meeting. There may have been one to two individuals that participated in the virtual meeting. Staff did receive positive feedback from BWSR and neighboring counties about having a virtual option and it was an easy format to follow.
- Meghan stated she did send out some personal invites which was in addition to large stakeholder list.

Holly went through the kickoff summary that ISG had developed. The summary had each issue category and the priority concerns shown as a bar graph to demonstrate which concerns were the top priorities. The other categories were further explained below each bar graph. Additionally, ISG included the Prioritize Investment/Money activity. This activity demonstrated where the public would like to spend funds in order to address resource concerns within the watershed. Lastly, ISG included a map and list of the location of concerns within the watershed. There was some discussion about the different resources mentioned such as boiling springs and drinking water.

Barb had asked if wakeboats were an issue for the watershed? Wakeboats had been mentioned several times in the public kickoff meeting summary results. The answer is yes. Laura Amundson stated the University of Minnesota is currently working on a study about wakeboarding effects. Jeff Docken stated that wakeboats constantly turn up the bottom of the lake and can create shoreline erosion problems. At this point in time, staff can create awareness, enforce boat rules and ordinances, but the problem will still persist.

Greg Entinger mentioned that for the education and outreach concern stakeholder's lack of understanding was answered as high priority, but was very vague. Staff mentioned we kept it vague intentionally to not single out one stakeholder group. There was really good discussion amongst staff and policy committee members about lack of understanding from the general public about watershed related issues. We need to focus on educating all stakeholders.

### **Public Notification**

Holly mentioned that she had sent out the State Agency formal letters that were a result of the 60 public notification period. The letters were well written, but had a lot of information included with them. To summarize the results, Holly listed similar and different priority concerns and resources amongst the agencies. She also included maps and graphs. to display the similarities and differences. It appeared that most of the state agencies had very similar concerns and resources about the watershed. There were some differences too, but staff thought this would be helpful in further prioritizing implementation activities and specific

resources. Some of the differences were to be expected because each agency is a bit different in what they focus on.

- Laura Amundson stated that groundwater rose to the top again. She was surprised this happened, but glad to see it.
- Doug Schnoecker stated that groundwater comes to the top, but also is the least known when it comes to our resources. It is important that we are making it a priority. He mentioned that it seems groundwater is starting to become more of a focus. Doug provided an example on how NASA is using satellites that can image depth, volume, and recharge areas of groundwater.
- Meghan was surprised that AgBMPs rose to the top.
- There was discussion amongst policy committee members and staff about what fens are and why they are worth protecting. We have one fen present within the Planning Area; the Savage Fen. This ecosystem is extremely rare and has unique flora and/or fauna species.
- Barb stated that state agency staff spent significant time writing the letters, and thought they were great.
- Barb explained why there maybe differences on resources that were listed by state agencies.
  - Laura Amundson asked if the consulting firm can help us with this and figure out if that resource is worth listing within our plan?
  - Staff answered yes, they will help us going through different priorities issues and resources which is our next step with planning efforts.

Holly thought this would be a good Segway into the topic of priority issues and resources. We eventually will need to narrow down where we want to focus our efforts within the plan. She was hoping that if we already known some of our priorities to share with the group. Barb also mentioned these priorities should be something that we must have in the plan. Think of it as if we didn't have this in the plan, it will fail.

- Laura Amundson stated that sediment loading in the River and Fens would be a top priority for the Lower Minnesota River WD.
- Doug Schnoecker asked if there was going to be a final list of priority issues and resources for them to choose from?
  - Holly stated yes. Just thought it might be helpful to start thinking about this.
- Greg Entinger stated that education efforts for farmers and the agriculture community as well as reduce tillage would be good areas to focus on.

- Jeff Docken mentioned that soil health practices such as cover crops are important as well as education.
  - Greg Entinger and Doug Schnoecker stated that they thought education with homeowners and urban landowners would also be important.
- Rita Weaver mentioned that she agrees education is important. She also stated other priorities would be storage and addressing the rates and volumes within the water to help reduce runoff and erosion.
- Doug Schonecker stated that he was surprised water retention and storage weren't a higher priority. They are a huge reason why flooding occurs.
- Rita Weaver asked if we can have types of practices as priorities versus locations. Because otherwise we are limited on where the funds can be spent.
  - Barb Piechel stated that we can't pick the whole watershed. Need to pick specific areas/priorities/resources. We can also pick priority strategies too.
  - Rita Weaver asked if we would be limited with funding if we only pick certain areas?
    - Barb Piechel stated that we have multiple funding streams in addition to WBIF such as (nonprofits, EQUIP, CWF, etc.). We should pick a healthy number of areas so we have flexibility but we can't pick the whole watershed.
- Jeff Docken asked how we can target more within the watershed?
  - Meghan Darley stated that the data aggregation work that was done should help us decided this. Then we can start to focus in more and decide.

### **Advisory Committee, Subcommittee/Stakeholder Group**

Holly stated that after multiple attempts for figuring out who would like to sit in on the Advisory Committee, only one entity requested to be on the committee which was the Prior Lake Spring Lake Watershed District. The core staff from each planning partner along with state agency staff are required to be on the Advisory Committee.

Formal action was needed on this item to finalize the Advisory Committee.

Holly mentioned that there is an option to have additional subcommittees or stakeholder groups for specific topics. Barb furthered commented and provided different examples on how this has been done for other watersheds. For example, everyone receives an email, and additional stakeholders come to the Advisory Committee meetings for specific topics of interest. Or we invite stakeholders to specific meetings depending on which topics are being addressed.

Danny O’Keefe asked the Policy Committee for a motion to approve the final Advisory Committee. There was a motion by Doug Schnoecker, and seconded by Greg Entinger. 6 ayes and 0 nays. Motion passed.

### **Planning Effort Timeline & Policy Committee Meeting Schedule**

Holly stated that looking at our timeline we are officially out of pre-planning stage and now moving into the planning stage! The planning stage is where we really are diving into developing the plan. We are a little behind on our timeline, but that is okay. This summer we established multiple committees, hosted our public kickoff meeting, had our 60-day comment period, start working on the land and water resources narrative, and will start to work on identifying and prioritizing our resources and issues. This fall we will continue with the narrative and prioritization process, establishing measurable goals, developing a targeted implementation schedule, describing our implementation programs, and introducing the plan administration and coordination. As the advisory committee works through things, we can review and adjust different items within the planning effort. We will see different parts of the plan and go through them.

For a meeting schedule for the rest of 2022, we have a meeting planned for October 20<sup>th</sup> and December 15<sup>th</sup>. We are having bimonthly meetings since the planning stage will take some time for each activity/item we go through.

### **Updates & Next Steps**

- Next Policy Committee Meeting: **Thursday, October 20th from 3:00pm-5:00pm** – The September Policy Committee Meeting will be cancelled.
- Next Steering Team Meeting: Thursday, September 1st from 10:00am-1:30pm
- Advisory Committee-First meeting is tentatively Thursday, September 1<sup>st</sup>. If we can’t make the 1<sup>st</sup> work the steering team will try to get a meeting scheduled sometime in September.

Chair O’Keefe asked for a motion to adjourn the meeting.

Motioned by Greg Entinger, seconded by Jeff Docken at 5:00pm.