

Lower Minnesota River East One Watershed One Plan

Steering Team Meeting Minutes

January 18, 2023

Attendees at meeting: Holly Bushman (Le Sueur County), Karl Schmidtke (Le Sueur SWCD), Steve Pahs (Rice SWCD), Brad Behrens (Rice County), Meghan Darley (Scott SWCD), Melissa Bokman-Ermer (Scott County/WMO), and Linda Loomis (LMRWD)

Welcome & Review Agenda

- The Lower Minnesota River East Meeting was held on January 18, 2023. The meeting was held virtually. Holly briefly went over the agenda. The main goals of the meeting were followed up with further discussion about the priority areas and resources that were discussed at the Advisory Committee meeting, and discuss the next policy committee meeting agenda.

Recap Last Meeting

- We discussed any follow up items from the Advisory Committee meeting. The steering team continued conversations and discussions about priority resources and issues. ISG had sent out a survey with numerous criteria to help us rank different water resources. Additionally, we discussed our issue statements and mentioned further refining the habitat issue statements. Lastly, the steering team talked about planning effort timelines and more than likely we will not have a January policy committee meeting.

Advisory Committee Meeting Recap/Discussion

- Holly asked the steering team how they thought the Advisory Committee meeting went? Good discussion at the meeting.
- ISG provided a list of lakes for us to have discussions on and we were able to narrow down the list to 12 lakes.
 - Melissa stated that we could potentially even remove another lake, would need to have some discussions about McMahon or Cedar.
 - Meghan thought the list of 12 lakes was good, and Barb thought it was okay to have 12. Meghan also mentioned that we will have more flexibility for spending funds.
- Holly brought up the tiers and asked the group what they thought? Seemed to be mixed results at the meeting.

- Steve stated that in the Cannon we lost a lot of time waiting to finding projects for specific tiers. He would prefer not to have them.
 - Holly mentioned we can have a list of priority lakes, but how we prioritize would not be with tiers.
 - Linda asked if we are prioritizing waterbodies or lakesheds?
 - The steering team was in agreement that it was lakesheds.
 - Holly mentioned to the group to start thinking which lakesheds we would like to prioritize over others.
- ISG provided a list of streams for us to have discussions on and used a tier approach. The AC was able to narrow down the list a bit further for prioritization.
 - Holly wanted to make sure we were all in agreement the Minnesota River should be removed. Very important resource, but the end goal would be to improve and protect the Minnesota River and we can write that in a narrative.
 - The steering team was in agreement.
 - Holly asked how do we want to prioritize streams? Should it be similar to lakes? I'm guessing we don't want to tier streams?
 - Steve stated within the Zumbro they ranked streams based off of total benefits.
 - Linda mentioned that maybe having an assessment of each stream would be helpful so we know how to prioritize better.
 - Brad stated in the Zumbro they were going to start with assessments for each stream, but realized it was too much to do within a reasonable amount of time.
 - Holly suggested maybe going off of the WRAPS and Stressor ID reports. Could base prioritization off of number or impairments; however, there is some data lacking.
 - Melissa provided an example on how the WMO prioritizes streams.
 - Tier 1 (if they had the financial means and fully support as a lead for project)
 - Tier 2 (there is value and could support with cost share, but would not be the lead with the project)
 - Waterbodies were prioritized by attributes and pollutants.
 - Drinking water, high pollutant loads, public access, etc.
 - Melissa further commented that if there is missing data for many stream reaches, we need to collect the data to make more informed decisions.
 - Holly suggested that maybe we start implementation efforts on streams such as the Sand Creek and others that already have had subwatershed assessments completed. In the meantime, we will work on all of the other streamsheds to

complete assessments. As the stream assessments become complete and available we would have more flexibility of spending funds for implementation efforts.

- We just need to decide on which streamsheds to start with. Maybe we do 1-2 each year until they are complete?
- Melissa liked this idea.
- Holly wasn't sure on how we want to address other pollutants/impairments besides TSS?
 - Melissa stated writing up strategies to address other impairments might be helpful with this.
 - Holly asked the steering team if we could prioritize a few different streamsheds for the water quality issues and for the hydrology issues.
 - Maybe have 2-3 subwatersheds where we focus on water quality issues and 2-3 subwatersheds where we focus on hydrology issues.
- Holly asked the steering team if they had any issues with the priority groundwater areas?
 - Everyone was on board with these priority areas for groundwater. Just wanted to make sure MDH was on board with it as well before going to the Policy Committee.
- Holly asked the steering team if they had any issues with the habitat priority areas?
 - At our last steering team meeting, we discussed just have riparian areas.
 - Riparian areas along the Minnesota River and within the priority lakesheds and streamsheds.
 - Melissa recommended maybe not stating the Minnesota River corridor. We can take a look at existing subwatersheds and go from there.
- If we start on Measurable goals, it sounds like the preference from BWSR is to have an initial conversation and then start to finalize.
 - We could finish our priority resources and areas at the next AC meeting and also start with a huge list of measurable goals to go through. Later on we can have subgroups to go through measurable goals for different issues and priorities.
 - The steering team was okay with this.
- The steering team talked about when our next PC and AC meeting would take place. The next PC meeting is on February 16th.
 - Meghan stated that nothing is on the agenda for February as of now. She also stated that ISG mentioned we would have measurable goals ready by February. Wondering if we should have another meeting in February for priorities?

- Holly agreed we should so we aren't so far behind. But unsure of what the budget looks like? We will have to have further discussions with ISG.
- Melissa brought up water storage and asked the group on how we want to address?
 - Meghan stated that Scott SWCD will have some resources.
 - There are already existing tools available.
 - But unsure of prioritization after that?
 - Karl mentioned that landowner willingness is an important piece to water storage.
 - Linda asked about making a watershed wide goal?
 - Unsure if BWSR would allow that. If not a watershed wide goal, how far can we stretch that priority area in size?
 - Linda agreed that it is mostly based off of willing landowners.
 - Holly stated she will check with BWSR to see how large of an area we can make storage? Hoping if there is good evaluation criteria, we could make the priority area quite large.
- Holly asked the steering team if there were any priority areas missed? Any alterations or removals we need to address?
 - The steering team agreed everything looked good.
- Summarization of our discussion.
 - Priority areas will be ready to go for PC approval in February.
 - 12 lakesheds
 - 8-9 streamsheds (TSS)
 - Groundwater
 - Priority areas may be ready to go for PC approval in February.
 - 8-9 streamsheds (Other impairments)
 - Habitat areas (tentative)
 - Storage areas (tentative)

Policy Committee Agenda

- Holly wanted to run agenda items by the Steering Team and ask if anything else should be put onto the agenda.
- First thing we will have to start with is election of officers. If anyone has a change in board members or supervisors, just let Holly know.
- Start getting approval of priority resources and areas. More than likely the lakes, streams, and groundwater will for sure go for board approval.
- Provide a quick budget update for 2022.
- Organization of the partnership and how they will structure themselves. Just start within an introduction of this topic and maybe provide some examples. Basically the

policy committee will need to decide how we want to work together in the future. There are numerous ways to do this.

Updates & Next Steps

- The next steering team meeting will be held on Wednesday, February 15th from 1:00pm-3:00pm.
- The next policy committee meeting will be held Thursday, February 16th from 3:00pm-5:00pm.
- Next Advisory Committee Meeting will be held either Wednesday, February 15th or Wednesday, March 15th from 10:00am-1:00pm.

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