

Lower Minnesota River East One Watershed One Plan

Steering Team Meeting Minutes

February 15, 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), Linda Loomis (LMRWD), Barb Piechel (BWSR), and Anne Sawyer (BWSR)

Welcome & Review Agenda

- The Lower Minnesota River East Meeting was held on February 15, 2023. The meeting was held in person at the Scott SWCD Office. Holly briefly went over the agenda. The main goals of the meeting were to continue conversations about the priority areas and resources (habitat and storage) that were discussed at the Advisory Committee meeting, discuss how the measurable goals activity went at the Advisory Committee meeting, continue conversations about Organizational Arrangement of the partnership, and lastly discuss how often the policy committee should meet moving forward.

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 areas. Most of the discussion was geared towards priority lakes, streams, and groundwater. Additionally, the steering team discussed storage and habitat goals. Lastly, the steering team worked through creating an agenda for the Policy Committee meeting in February.

Advisory Committee Meeting Recap/Discussion

- Holly wanted to go through each priority resource/area with the steering team to make sure we were all on the same page before getting approval from the policy committee.
 - The steering team started with storage. This priority area will not be going to the Policy committee tomorrow for approval.
 - There are data differences between the two WRAPS documents for the Lower Minnesota River Watershed. We want to make sure the data is comparable and understand the differences before giving the okay to move forward. ISG has utilized HSPF runoff rates and restorable wetlands to create the first draft of the storage priority area.
 - Next the steering team discussed natural resources and habitat priority areas. The first draft of the priority areas followed an existing habitat corridor study

completed by Scott WMO. Parameters that were included for the priority areas included public lands, NWI, stream and lake corridors, and existing natural vegetation.

- After further discussion amongst the steering team, we decided to only have a habitat and natural resources map that includes a 1500 foot buffer for stream riparian areas. This would also help address stressors that priority streams may have for habitat, connectivity, and altered hydrology. Habitat is not the main priority issue for the watershed; therefore, the steering thought simplifying the priority area was best.
- The next priority area was groundwater.
 - The steering team was in concurrence with this priority area and gave the thumbs up to bring it to the policy committee for tomorrow's meeting.
- The steering team discussed the Drainage priority area next.
 - There were conversations amongst steering team members that drainage is important and can be addressed with our storage goals; therefore, creating another priority area for drainage would be redundant and not needed.
 - One suggestion was to rank storage projects differently if they include a drainage system and provide a higher score.
 - County ditches could be identified differently on the storage map so we know where existing drainage areas are located.\
- The next priority area up for discussion was streamsheds.
 - For all impairments and stressors that we want to address in streams, the steering team was in concurrence of the 8 streamsheds that were chosen. We will bring forward the "final list" to the policy committee meeting tomorrow for approval of the priority streams.
- The final priority the steering team discussed was the priority lakesheds.
 - We were in concurrence with the 12 lakes listed and that we should not tier the lakes. The 12 lakesheds will go to the policy committee meeting tomorrow for approval.
- Holly then shifted into the discussion and asked the steering team to start thinking about if we want to prioritize our issues? Other watersheds have done this.
 - One suggestions was to prioritize goals instead.
 - This doesn't have to be a decision made today, but Holly wanted to the steering team to start to think about where we want to focus our efforts first within the plan.
- Lastly, the steering team discussed the measurable goal exercise we participated in in the Advisory Committee meeting.

- More tangible goals will be formulated at the next meeting. There was discussion that we likely will need the Advisory Committee to meet in person again in March to help create measurable goals for all priority areas.
 - There was discussion about how to treat education and outreach efforts. These will be listed mostly as activities instead of goals within the plan.

Organizational Arrangement

- The first item to discuss is staff roles in this process. We have budgeted staff to do the work and Scott WMO is listed as the lead. Holly has not had a ton of discussions with Scott WMO about working with this item, but will reach out to them.
 - Scott SWCD stated they would be happy to help put documents and materials together for this item. They will keep these at a high level.
 - Holly will reach out to Scott WMO to see if they would be willing to facilitate the March meeting.
- The second time to discuss is the structure of the partnership on whether we should have Joint Powers Entity or Collaboration. The steering team had good discussions about how we will implement this plan and it really comes down to efficiency. The steering team is leaning towards a JPE, but would like to have some other partnerships to present their experiences working with a JPE or JPC at the March policy committee meeting. The steering team will also try to get a county attorney to attend the meeting as well.

Policy Committee Agenda

- Holly wanted to run Policy Committee agenda items for the February Meeting by the Steering Team.
 - After today's meeting, the steering team will bring forward approval of priority areas for lakes, streams, and groundwater.
 - Storage and habitat will be mentioned; however, staff will state we are continuing to work on defining these priority areas.
- Additionally, there is an agenda item for organizational arrangement of the partnership. The thought it to just introduce this idea and provide a handout that summarizes the differences between a Joint Powers Entity and Joint Powers Collaboration.
 - Staff will be introducing and presenting this activity to the policy committee instead of third parties. Barb mentioned to Holly earlier that policy committees in different watersheds have perceived this information better from staff.
 - Barb also wanted to note that the main difference between the JPE and JPC is where decisions are being made. The JPE is with the policy committee and JPC is with each individual board. If we decide to be a

JPC, there would be expectations that a few times a year we would have to go to our individual boards for items such as workplan, annual budgets, and grant agreement amendments.

- Barb mentioned that a Joint Powers Agreement is required for each entity; however, there are plenty other examples of JPAs available, and we can wordsmith the agreement to make it work for the partnership.

Updates & Next Steps

- The next steering team meeting will be held on **Wednesday, March 15th** from **1:30pm-3:00pm**.
- The next policy committee meeting will be held **Thursday, March 16th** from **3:00pm-5:00pm**.
- Next Advisory Committee Meeting will be held either **Wednesday, March 15th** or **Wednesday, April 19th** from **10:00am-1:00pm**.