

Lower Minnesota River East One Watershed One Plan

Steering Team Meeting Minutes

November 16, 2022

Attendees at meeting: Holly Bushman (Le Sueur County), Mike Schultz (Le Sueur SWCD) Steve Pahs (Rice SWCD), Meghan Darley (Scott SWCD), Melissa Bokman-Ermer (Scott County/WMO), Linda Loomis (LMRWD), Anne Sawyer (BWSR)

Welcome & Review Agenda

- The Lower Minnesota River East Meeting was held on November 16, 2022. The meeting was held virtually. Holly briefly went over the agenda. The main goals of the meeting were to provide updates and have discussion about planning efforts (land and water resources narrative, issue statements, and priority resources/areas), and discuss the policy committee meeting agenda.

Introductions

- The partnership has a new team member, Anne Sawyer. She is our new BC for the watershed. We virtually went around the room to introduce ourselves, which entity we work for, and our experience with one watershed one plan.

Recap Last Meeting

- Holly briefly went over discussion at our last meeting which was October 14, 2022. Since the steering team meetings have moved to right after our advisory committee meetings, the discussion for the steering team was heavily focused on the advisory committee meeting. We discussed any follow up items from that meeting. Additionally, the steering team discussed what should be on the agenda for the next policy committee meeting.

Updates with Planning Efforts

- Summary of Efforts Thus Far
 - Holly summarized for Anne on where we are at with the planning process. She mentioned it took about 2 years for us to finalize the partnership and apply for a planning grant. During that time, we were able to discuss priorities, mention what we would like to see included within the plan and strengthen relationships. We applied for a planning grant in 2021 and were awarded funds. So far, we have held the public notification period, public kick off meeting, completed data

aggregation, and started on issue statements. We have an advisory committee and policy committee established.

- Land & Water Resources Narrative
 - Holly mentioned that ISG sent out the Land & Water Resources Narrative for the advisory committee and set a deadline to review and provide feedback. Holly mentioned that she also sent the narrative to other local government units who opted out of efforts but wanted to stay informed. It sounds like ISG received quite a bit of comments and is incorporating them into the narrative.
 - Holly asked the steering team if they had any concerns or questions?
 - Mike stated he had no major concerns.
 - Melissa stated that the narrative is less detailed than what is included with their watershed plan, but no major concerns. She did provide some feedback on the narrative.
 - Linda stated that she made comments. Some of the comments were an accuracy check on data for example where is the sediment loading occurring. Linda also asked ISG to highlight some of the resources that we will be including within the plan as a priority (ex: trout streams, fens, etc.)
 - Discussion reminded Holly to ask the steering team how we want to see comments being incorporated into different sections of the plan?
 - Meghan asked if this has been an issue in other planning efforts.
 - Holly stated yes. Just wants to make sure everyone has the opportunity to comment, we aren't leaving anything out, and we prevent further revisions down the road that would delay planning efforts.
 - Meghan stated that track changes would be good.
 - Melissa stated underline what was added is how they typically show comments being made. Track changes can get messy.
 - Checking to see if the changes are being incorporated will require the steering team to police ourselves. Make sure review the document at some point to see changes are being made.
 - Holly stated she could save versions of the sections of the plan with the dates. That way we at least have them all and can verify changes. She will upload to our Teams folder. Holly will also mention to ISG that would like to see versions of the plan's sections to verify changes.
 - Another comment about the narrative that was brought up are the visuals. Check to see if visuals can be made larger, different color options when there are lots of layers present, and how to accommodate those that may be color blind?

- Priority Issue Survey
 - Holly asked the steering team what they thought of the survey for the issue statements?
 - Mike stated that he thought the questions were good, however, he wants to make sure water storage and bluffs are identified.
 - Melissa stated she had made a comment at the end of the survey that geological setting has a high part to play with erosion and sedimentation within the Minnesota River; therefore, it should be called out.
 - Holly stated she had put a comment at the end of the survey stating mines were something we briefly mentioned, but did not really talk about how we want to address.
 - Mike further commented and stated we do not know their impacts but know there is a presence of silica and gravel mines.
 - Melissa stated that Scott County has an inventory of the mines present within the county and have ordinances in place to regulate. The biggest concern would be groundwater.
 - Mike stated they do have a 30-year plan that was addressed under the Environmental Impact Statement. It might give us some more information on how to address.
 - As a Steering team, we went through each of the draft issue statements that were developed. Under each issue statement there were comments from the survey, a first attempt of the issue statement, and then a revised issue statement based off of the comments and feedback received from the survey.
 - The first issue statement was Hydrology-Surface Water.
 - Melissa thought the statement was good.
 - Anne commented and stated the wording of the statement made it seem less focused on hydrology. Just needs to some wordsmithing to emphasize hydrology within the watershed is being impacted.
 - Anne also asked what we would like to do with climate change? It could be seen as its own issue statement?
 - The second issue statement was Water Quality-Surface Water.
 - The steering team thought the statement was good, but try to be broader and not list specific pollutants. That way we are not limiting ourselves to only a few pollutants.
 - The third issue statement was Groundwater Quality.
 - The steering team thought the statement was good, but try to be broader and not list specific pollutants. Naturally occurring and human introduced pollutants.

- The fourth issue statement was Groundwater Quantity.
 - The steering team initially thought this statement was too long. Furthermore, after reading the comments, the steering team had additional discussion about whether groundwater quantity is an issue or not for the watershed. Difficult to know because lack of data. The issue is more the gaps in data and information than groundwater quantity. The steering team was leaning towards removing this issue statement.
- The fifth issue statement was Habitat & Natural Resources Protection and Preservation.
 - Seemed like a loaded statement and didn't really specify which habitats were going to be focused on or why certain habitats should be focused on.
- The sixth issue statement was Habitat & Natural Resources Restoration.
 - The steering team had similar issues with this statement. Need to provide a little more specifics on which habitats.
- Some overarching questions the steering team had was how to address climate change and geological setting?
 - Climate change could be applied to each issue. Should it be its own issue statement or left out completely in a separate section of the plan?
 - With geological setting, how would be address as an issue statement? Or again is this something we need to describe a bit more in a different section of the plan.
- There was good discussion amongst the steering team, and it provided direction on how we want to shape the issue statements. Most of the comments were in regards to wordsmithing.

Priority Resources Discussion

- Identifying priority resources and areas is going to be our next step as an Advisory Committee. Holly wanted to introduce the topic to get staff to start thinking about this.
- There are some resources or issues we clearly want to focus on within our plan due to the feedback we received such as Eagle Creek, Savage Fen, Upper & Lower Prior Lake, Spring Lake, bluffs, and sediment reduction. How are we going to pick and choose the rest of the priority resources and areas?
- Holly went through the WRAPS and found some resources need over 60% -90% reduction of pollutants. Which one do we focus on?
- There are other resources that were listed for impairments that we haven't really discussed as a group on whether we want to address.

- For example, chloride reductions or coliform bacteria reductions.
- Melissa stated that having some supplemental information/attributes about each waterbody and then having the advisory committee rank them is an exercise Scott County has done and it was helpful.
- Holly stated she will make sure we have some resource to help us with prioritizing waterbodies and areas.

Policy Committee Agenda

- The steering team reviewed the agenda for the Policy Committee meeting tomorrow.
- The land and water resources should be ready to go and will be presented as a decision item with the corrections that were suggested.
- The priority issue statements as is currently, would not be ready to go to the policy committee. It will delay planning efforts, but we want them to be right.
- The limited timeframe in between the Advisory Committee/Steering Team and Policy Committee meetings is tricky. It makes it difficult, and we may have to think of creative ways on how to move activities forward.

Updates & Next Steps

- The next steering team meeting will be held on Wednesday, December 21st from.
- The next policy committee meeting will be held either on Thursday, November 17th from 3:00pm-5:00pm.
- Next Advisory Committee Meeting will be held either Wednesday, December 21st.