

# Lower Minnesota River East One Watershed One Plan

## Steering Committee Meeting Minutes

September 20, 2023

**Attendees at meeting:** Holly Bushman (Le Sueur County), Mike Schultz (Le Sueur SWCD), Meghan Darley (Scott SWCD), Troy Kuphal (Scott SWCD), Brad Behrens (Rice County), Steve Pahs (Rice SWCD), Linda Loomis (Lower Minnesota River WD), Barb Piechel (BWSR), and Anne Sawyer (BWSR)

### Welcome & Review Agenda

- The Lower Minnesota River East Meeting was held on Wednesday, September 20<sup>th</sup>, 2023. The meeting was held virtually. The goals of the meeting were to discuss any unfinished items from the Advisory Committee meeting, continue discussions with plan chapter content requirements and provide some kind of narrative for ISG, and lastly discuss the policy committee agenda.

### Advisory Committee Meeting Recap and Discussion

- There were a few items and comments that were mentioned at the Advisory Committee that needed some further discussion amongst the Steering Committee.
- The first item was discussing the TP load output that was developed for Cody, Lemay, and Phelps lakes.
  - Compared to all of the other lakes this was the biggest reduction listed at 323lbs/year.
  - While these lakes are impaired and need a high TP load reduction, there was some uncertain amongst the Steering Committee that this goal could be achieved on an annual basis.
    - Steve mentioned he was unsure how to address this?
  - There was some discussions about determining load reductions and number of acres from existing soil health practices and determining feasibility on a lakeshed scale.
    - If the expectation was that the TP load reduction was just from soil health practices, it is unlikely this number would not be achieved. If additional practices can help achieve the TP load reduction, there may be more wiggle room for a higher goal.
  - Steve mentioned he would look at current soil health practice numbers and come up with a comprised TP load reduction he thinks would be achievable.

- The next item that the Steering Committee discussed was formatting and content concern BWSR staff had with the plan.
  - Anne mentioned that the labels utilized within the timeframe columns were dollar signs; however, not every number listed under these columns were dollars.
    - Make sure what ever labels are utilized are consistent. Strategy listed and measurable outputs should have the same label.
  - Measurable outputs
    - For Ag and Urban BMPs, we may want to use pollution reductions instead of number of BMPs. Would provide more flexibility. Otherwise we would be held accountable for the number of practices installed and that could change.
    - Putting the number of practices/acres or pollutant reduction loads would provide us the most flexibility from a reporting standpoint.
    - For the BMPs, the Steering Committee was unclear if the cumulative outputs were actually accounted for or if it was more on an annual basis. Might be easier to just put cumulative outputs in the measurable outcome.
  - Listing priorities of activities (low-high threshold)
    - Have this included in the appendix to reduce clutter within table and allow more flexibility.

### **Continue with Developing Funding/Budget and Implementation Table of One Watershed One Plan**

- The steering committee went through the implementation table and addressed any comments that were brought up at the AC or any new comments that had come about.
  - The comments from the AC were more about monitoring and data collection. At this point, the SC mostly would like to continue with existing efforts and account for any large-scale efforts (WRAPS, GRAPS) as a narrative within the plan.
  - Additionally, there was interest in adding some kind of gauge to monitoring flows and potentially chemistry data along the Minnesota River adjacent to Le Sueur County. Currently there is no flow or chemistry data being collected on the Minnesota River in between Jordan and Mankato.
  - The major comment from the Steering Committee was adding some kind of education and outreach campaign activity.
    - This needs to be added in order to have funding to implement education and outreach activities.

- This specific implementation activity is kept broad to provide more flexibility and we can be more detailed in some type of additional plan/policy.
  - Lastly, add municipalities as supporting roles in the applicable implementation activities.
- Additional comments about the plan developed by the Steering Committee includes:
  - Ask ISG if there will be one large implementation table or multiple implementation tables.
  - Format the plan in a way that reduces the amount of flipping through pages when trying to reference the table and priority areas.
  - See if ISG is using the excel tables that were developed to describe plan implementation programs, regulation, and enforcement for the partners.
  - See if it is possible to develop some kind of document that references the goals, maps, and tables in an effective manner.
- Finish Discussion of Decision Making and Staffing, Organizational Structures Formal Agreements, and Collaboration with other Units of government Sections of Plan
  - ISG had brought up a few questions to Holly that needed to be answered in order to finish these chapters.
    - Again, the information in these chapters can be amended, but needs content to include right now.
      - Likely will change as we have more discussions between now and the final draft.
    - There was a further items to discuss handout provide to the Steering Committee to assist with guidance on some items that need to be decided on. These decisions then would be recommended to the policy committee tomorrow to make a decision.
      - The first item up for discussion was filling roles for implementation efforts.
        - This included Day to Day, Fiscal, Legal, Education & Outreach, Project Tracking & Management, and Agronomist.
        - The steering committee decided to start small with roles and build up as needed. Staff need time to get use to the flow of things as well as see what needs are out there.
        - Another role that may be of interest to the partnership is someone who can work with monitoring/modeling, and assessments.
      - Another discussion items was about Committees.

- The Steering Committee was good with having the Advisory Committee stay as is and meet a few times a year. This committee would provide technical expertise for implementation and activities and provide opportunities to partnership for funding and implementing projects.
- Our Steering Committee would remain as is and meet frequently. This committee would keep the partnership continuing to operate and get projects and practices installed on the landscape.
- The next discussion item was Shared Services.
  - The Steering Committee was open to sharing services such as education and outreach programs (soil health field days, smart salting), technical expertise, RIM easements, equipment, and so forth.
- The next discussion item was about Capital Improvement Projects. We are required to reference and CIP programs, but Holly wanted to know if there was interest in with the partnership in having our own CIP program.
  - The steering committee was open to this and mentioned that only certain projects would qualify such as stream restorations/stabilization projects, ravine stabilization, and storage projects (MDM, wetland restorations).
- The next item for discussion was setting dollar thresholds for project approvals.
  - There was some good discussion amongst partners on what threshold should be set and if one is needed? Can local staff and boards have the authority to approve all projects or does there still need to be some type of checks and balances?
    - The steering committee would still like some threshold set for staff approval versus Joint Powers Board approval.
      - Locally it will be up to each local board whether they need additional approvals beyond staff approval for projects under a certain dollar threshold.
      - Make sure this language is all clear in either the JPA or bylaws.

- The last item for discussion was about dues. Holly first started out with dues are based on percentage of land and had multiple tiers.
  - There was some discussion about what the dues could be used for as well.
  - Holly said we can dive into the dues discussion more tomorrow at the PC meeting, but wanted to have some kind of initial conversation. The steering committee would like to see more options about the dues.

### **Assessment, Evaluation, and Reporting, and Plan Amendments Sections**

- Holly mentioned the next round of chapters that will need context for the plan. She mentioned for assessment and evaluation of efforts we talked about having some kind of more detailed table that shows milestones of dollar amounts, bmps installed, and load reductions. This detailed table will be included in the appendix. ISG has already developed this and it should be easy to include.
- BWSR has updated their Operating Procedures for Amending plans.
  - Anne and Barb suggested to get started to use that language.
- General language that will be included within the plan will discuss annual reporting and a 5 year amendment mark.
- Holly asked how else do we want to keep ourselves on track for assessment, evaluation and reporting? Are there certain criteria we want to set for amendments?
  - The steering committee was going to start thinking about these items and would make more decisions about these chapters at the next SC meeting.

### **Discussion Policy Committee Meeting**

- All the decisions to make that were discussed at this meeting will be brought up tomorrow at the PC meeting.
- Holly mentioned she revised the JPA and the major amendments that are needed are the name for the entity, how can hold easements for property, and dues.
  - Would like to have a final JPA ready sometime in early 2024 so it is ready to go before the plan is approved.
- Holly mentioned she will keep the Lower MN River WD in the JPA, but will remove Scott County/WMO based off of conversations with staff members.

### **Updates & Next Steps**

- The next steering committee meeting will be held on **Wednesday, October 18<sup>th</sup>** from **1:30pm-3:00pm.**

- The next policy committee meeting will be held **Thursday, October 19<sup>th</sup>** from **3:00pm-5:00pm**.
- Next Advisory Committee Meeting will be held **Wednesday, October 18<sup>th</sup>** **10:00am-1:00pm**.

DRAFT