

Meeting of the Policy Committee for Root River Area One Watershed One Plan

Wednesday, January 21, 2015, 9:00 AM – 12:00 PM

Fillmore County Office Building, 902 Houston Street NW, Room 108, Preston, MN

Meeting Minutes

1. Jennifer Ronnenberg, Fillmore SWCD Water Management Coordinator, opened the meeting. Following introductions, she reviewed the revised agenda.

2. Introduction to the Root River Area One Watershed, One Plan: Steve Lawler, BWSR Board Conservationist, provided the background and history of One Watershed, One Plan. He first thanked the Policy Committee for their commitment to the process. He reviewed the timeline of water planning in Minnesota starting with the Soil Conservation Law 80 years ago which established SWCDs. Each SWCD had an annual comprehensive plan that addressed flooding and soil conservation; water quality concerns were added later. In 1938, the Burns-Homer-Pleasant SWCD in Winona County was the first established in Minnesota. Other key dates: 1955 Watershed Act that established watershed districts (WD); 1972 Federal Clean Water Act; 1982 Metropolitan Surface Water Management Act; 1987 County Water Management Act.

More than 260 entities do water planning in Minnesota and there are 150 water plans. (There are 6 local water plans and 1 watershed district plan in the Root River planning area.) At the 2011 Water Summit, the Local Government Water Round Table, made up of counties, SWCDs and WDs, met to determine how to bring better coordination and efficiency to water management. The Policy Paper from this effort is based on four recommendations: 1) scale (watershed); 2) streamline statutes and programs; 3) funding is predictable and equitable; and 4) remove barriers (share and coordinate services).

MPCA's Watershed Approach focuses on assessment and the Watershed Restoration and Protection Strategy (WRAPS) process to identify pollutants in a watershed and strategies to meet water quality standards. The steps in the process are 1) monitoring and assessment, 2) water resource characterization and problem investigation, 3) WRAPS, 4) comprehensive watershed plan, and 5) ongoing implementation in a 10-year cycle.

In 2012, the Water Management Coordination Act was passed which allows a comprehensive plan, local water management plan, or watershed management plan, may serve as substitutes for one another or be replaced with a comprehensive watershed management plan. BWSR established the planning area boundaries. BWSR's guiding principles are: 1) water planning will stay local and that past planning history, 2) leverage past planning history and experience to streamline plans, 3) leverage streamlined plans to increase efficiency of implementation, and 4) build off the Watershed Approach (WRAPS). The timing is good for the Root River because the WRAPS is almost complete. As one of five pilots in the state, the experience here will be used to learn how to improve the process so that statewide guidance documents will be ready for use by 2016. The key words are prioritized, measurable and targeted implementation; goals must be achievable. 1W1P= WRAPS + GRAPS (science and analysis) + aspects of comprehensive water management + citizen values/priorities (citizen committees) + local adoption and fiscal projections and commitments + join agreement about who does what where.

Jennifer reviewed the consultant's schedule which will result in a draft document by this fall and showed a map of the planning area. The Planning Workgroup and consultant will work closely together in this process. The Planning Workgroup has held monthly meetings since August to develop the MOA, RFP and bylaws. The RFP went out to nine consultants, and seven proposals were returned. The Planning Workgroup ranked all seven and selected three for interviews in December. Houston Engineering is the unanimous recommendation from the Planning Workgroup.

3. Organizational structure – Karin Sonneman, Winona County Attorney, has coordinated legal review with the other county attorneys in the planning area. She also worked with Brein Maki (Winona SWCD), Sheila Harmes and Natalie (Winona County), Donna Rasmussen and Jennifer Ronnenberg (Fillmore SWCD), and Jennifer Wolf (MICT).
 - The MOA is not a Joint Powers Board (JPB). It outlines cooperation among the 13 entities to develop a plan for the Root River watershed. Liability language is based on MCIT recommendations. This is a Joint Powers Agreement (JPA) to form a collaborative entity for the purposes of planning similar to a mutual aid agreement for public safety. A JPA is not a JPB.
 - The bylaws govern the business of the Policy Committee. Robert’s Rules of Order are used; Karen has a simplified version which she will provide.
 - The Policy Committee will appoint a temporary Chair to conduct the election of a permanent Chair, Vice Chair and Secretary.
 - The contract submitted by Houston Engineering still needs changes; it was written for engineering projects, not a planning project. The contract will be signed by the Policy Committee Chair, the Winona SWCD Chair as fiscal agent, and the Fillmore SWCD Chair as day-to-day contact, all on behalf of the Policy Committee.
 - It is the consensus of the Policy Committee that if the county attorneys are ok with Karin’s opinions, then it is ok with the Policy Committee as long as the other county attorneys are kept informed.
 - The bylaws state that alternates may be appointed; this is recommended so it is easier to meet a quorum.
 - Open meetings: notice of meetings must be posted. Data practice laws apply to this group.
 - Sharepoint is being developed by the DNR to allow limited access by committee members. A public website should also be maintained for transparency. Fillmore SWCD has a Root River web page which could be used and could include links to the other counties and SWCDs.
4. Action Item: Appointment by Membership of Temporary Chair to conduct Elections of Chair
Marcia Ward nominated Karin Sonneman as Temporary Chair; seconded by Matt Flynn; passed unanimously.
Sonneman called for nominations for Chair. Matt Flynn nominated Duane Bakke; Dana Kjome moved that nominations cease and cast a unanimous ballot; Marcia Ward seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.
5. Action Item: Elected Chair conducts election of Vice-Chair and Secretary
Chair Bakke called for nominations for Vice Chair. Marcia Ward nominated Jerry Mueller; seconded by Dana Kjome. The Chair called for further nominations three times; there were no further nominations. The Chair called for the vote, and the motion passed unanimously.
Chair Bakke called for nominations for Secretary. Dana Kjome nominated Marcia Ward; seconded by Leonard Leutink, Jr. The Chair called for further nominations three times; there were no further nominations. The Chair called for the vote, and the motion passed unanimously.
6. Action Item: Adoption of Bylaws by the Membership
Question regarding expenses on page 4, item 5: the Policy Committee sees that the work is completed and approves Winona SWCD to make the payment. Notifications will be sent to the primary contact by email; replies should be sent to Jennifer Ronnenberg if unable to attend to assure there is a quorum. Names for alternates should be sent to Jennifer. If the primary contact is unable to attend, they should contact the alternate. Hard copies of additional materials will be mailed to the members. Matt Flynn moved to approve the bylaws; Glen Hahn seconded the motion; 100% approved the motion.

7. Action Item: Approve hiring of the recommended consultant firm to write the watershed plan. County Attorney Sonneman has the proposed changes to the contract with Houston Engineering which must still be reviewed by their representative. Matt Flynn moved to authorize the Chair to sign the agreement pending legal and staff review; seconded by Leonard Leutink, Jr.; motion passed unanimously.
8. February meeting
 - a. Choose location, date and time: The fourth Wednesday was agreed upon for the next meeting, which will be Feb. 25th at 9 a.m. in Room 108 of the Fillmore County Office Building. Jennifer will check on the availability of Houston Engineering.
 - b. Agenda items
 - i. Kick-off event planning: The consensus is to have two events on the same day, one in the afternoon and one in the evening in Preston in Room 108. Press releases should go out to Agri-News, radio stations, local papers (Bluff Country Reader, Fillmore County Journal, Houston County News). The Root River citizens group may help with meeting facilitation. Have cards available for people to write their questions and to be added to the mailing list. A presentation should be given first to orient visitors about the planning process. Committee members will donate money for coffee and snacks.

Prior to adjourning, those in attendance signed the bylaws.

9. Adjourn: Motion to adjourn by Steve Connelly; seconded by Rick Gehling; motion passed at 11:10 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Marcia Ward, Secretary

Upcoming Meetings of the Policy Committee:

Meetings are anticipated but have not yet been scheduled. Dates and topics are based on the work plan.

February 2015: Prioritization Process/Development

Mid-March 2015: Public "Kick-off" Meeting

April 2015: Review of Priorities

July 2015: Review of Goals/Preparation for Implementation Schedule

September 2015: Review of Draft Implementation Schedule

November 2015: Review/Approval of Draft Plan Document and Reassess the Formal Agreement

February 15-March 1, 2016: Public Hearing Meetings and Response to Summary of Public Comments

June 2016: Approval of Final Plan Document and Submission to BWSR