

Planning Work Group for Root River One Watershed One Plan  
Tuesday, May 22, 2018, 9:00 am  
SWCD Conservation Building Conference Room, 912 Houston St. NW, Preston  
Meeting Notes

In attendance: Caleb Fischer, Skip Langer, Savannah Horstmann, Justin Watkins, Justin Hanson, Dan Wermager, Sheila Harmes, Adam Beilke, Jess Stevens, Kevin Kuehner, Donna Rasmussen

Review final drafts of implementation policies and sub-agreements: Daryl provided copies of the sub-agreement with areas highlighted for further discussion. The Winona County Attorney has reviewed the language. It was agreed by all that having all payments to the sub-recipients on a reimbursement basis would be easier than having some funds distributed upfront. LGU staff can assist with real-time tracking expenditures if a Google Docs spreadsheet is set up that staff can access and update. This would lessen the work for Daryl and staff for assuring adequate funds are available for projects. The watershed-based grant could be extended if needed up to five years, e.g. to match EQIP funding or a last minute cancellation of a contract so funds can be reallocated. It was asked whether earnest money should be in the policies to discourage cancellation of contracts; this may be considered later if there appears to be a need, otherwise, follow individual SWCD policies for now. RCPP funding deliverables are still being negotiated with NRCS and must be completed before funds are accessible. Bridgette Timm is signed up to attend the PTMAApp desktop training in June. Daryl also had an invoice format for submitting reimbursements. Dollar amounts were added to Exhibit A showing budgeted amounts per LGU for cost share, TA, etc.

Develop recommendations for 1W1P supplemental implementation funds, if available: The House passed a bill with the supplemental 1W1P appropriation as well as buffer cost share, CREP funding, and funds for groundwater, but it did not pass in the Senate. The Senate wants to roll over the surplus funds to the next session for grants. Therefore, the PWG has no need to make any recommendations for the Policy Committee.

Consider submitting proposal of interest for 319 grant: Donna submitted an email expressing interest in the program for the Root River. Now a letter of interest would be needed if we decide to consider requesting the funds expressing why the watershed is a good candidate for the funding. The feedback to MPCA has been that this should not be another planning effort. MPCA is hiring a staff person to tie together the nine elements of planning using existing information from other plans. There would be heavy involvement by MPCA from the beginning of any request. The funds would be focused on HUC12 watersheds for up to 16 years of funding. Some money can be used for effectiveness monitoring. Kevin reported that MDA's Clean Water Fund allocation is expected to be cut next year by about \$30,000/year from \$180,000 (currently \$60,000/watershed/year) to \$150,000. The 319 funds could be used for to make up the difference so the monitoring can continue. A couple of the edge of field sites could be discontinued. One option is to reinstall the equipment for a paired watershed design in another area of the watershed for five years or so to evaluate no till and/or cover cropping systems. The 319 funds could be a match for the state watershed based grant; RCPP funding is only expected to continue for 4-5 years. A letter of interest should be submitted by the end of the month. This information will be shared at the Policy Committee meeting.

Planning Initiative update: Mary Peterson has been meeting with all seven watersheds (Yellow Medicine is the eighth being considered) and is working with NRCS on the deliverables and budget. At the last meeting with Root River SWCD, there is \$90,000/year available for three years to hire new staff or fund existing staff. With changes at NRCS, there was a different perspective regarding utilizing existing staff so that took time to work out. The plan is to have the planners hired and on board so they can attend the Conservation Planning course at the end of July/beginning of August, or they could attend the three-week NRCS Boot Camp in Nebraska. Costs

for the boot camp are paid by the National Association. There is still discussion about the Mower SWCD planner being shared to do work in the Mower portion of the Root River rather than have the planner from Caledonia travel to that part of the watershed. Some of the watersheds mentioned for initial planning efforts were Money Creek, Torkelson Creek and Mill Creek.

Planning for the Policy Committee meeting on June 11<sup>th</sup>: Agenda items:

- Update on the watershed based grant agreement-Winona SWCD
- Review and approval of policies and sub-agreement
- Trout Unlimited Driftless Region Trout Angling Economic Study
- Introduce Sara West, Nutrient Management Specialist in the Fillmore SWCD office covering the five counties in the watershed
- Planning initiative update
- 319 letter of interest
- RCPP update-Adam B.

Packets will go out June 4<sup>th</sup> at the latest.

Next Planning Work Group meeting: meet after the Policy Committee meeting on June 11<sup>th</sup>.

Justin Watkins mentioned that the TMDL/WRAPS for the Upper Iowa will begin soon so he suggested meeting with the PWG first to assure that it fits with the watershed plan; then bring to the Advisory Committee and Policy Committee. MPCA has funds for a consultant to write the WRAPS. The next PWG after the June 11<sup>th</sup> meeting will likely be in late July/early August. Jeff Hastings is also interested in talking to the group about projects; Nick Proulx should also be invited. Donna will contact Jeff.

Adam reported that the legislature passed a bill to repeal the soil loss component of the law that also included the buffer law so that things revert back to what existed before the law was passed—only counties with ordinances would enforce on soil erosion complaints. The Governor is likely to veto the bill.

Dan provided an update on the Crooked Creek structure, which is still on hold while DNR hydrologists assess the site for dam safety and effects on the cold water stream. EQIP did not provide funding in the past because it was considered a flood control structure, but recent flooding and erosion created a resource concern so that EQIP is a funding possibility.

Adjourned at approximately 11:40 a.m.

Upcoming meetings:

June 11, 2018, 9:00 am: Policy Committee followed by a Planning Work Group meeting

July 30, 2018, 9:00 am: Policy Committee