

Planning Work Group for Root River One Watershed One Plan
Tuesday, March 19, 2019, 8:30 am
Room 108, Fillmore County Office Building, 902 Houston St. NW, Preston

Meeting Notes

In attendance: Daryl Buck, Justin Hanson, Adam Beilke, Sue Glende, Jessica Bronson, Gary Larson, Dave Walter, Dan Wermager, Sara West, Caleb Fischer, Donna Rasmussen

Progress report on Watershed Conservation Planning Initiative—Dan Wermager, Root River SWCD, and the Watershed Conservation Partners Team: Dan provided a handout that showed progress on the work plan deliverables. He has completed the identification of landowners and outreach in the priority watersheds, and three watershed partnership team meetings have now been held. Priority areas can be reconsidered. There have been 27 of the 100 conservation plans completed. He still needs to present information at two events; a soil health event is planned for Saturday, March 23, in Brownsville. The NRCS Soil Health Grant has funds (\$1500/event) for SWCD soil health workshops or field days. If there are other events where he can present, he should be contacted. The evaluation of the prior year's efforts and annual report will be completed in June. All the planners in the state met last week with Jim Fritz, NRCS, and Lawrence Svien, BWSR, to discuss progress in each watershed with an emphasis on staff getting certified as conservation planners.

RCPP-1W1P update--Adam Beilke, BWSR: The April 19th sign up is approaching. Adam provided information from Jessica Weiss, NRCS, on what is available and eligible. The first year's available funding is \$297,680. State funds committed for match are \$490,000 for all eligible practices that address soil erosion and water quality degradation, plus technical assistance funds for planning up to Step 9 even if the producer does not follow through. Match calculations can start on September 25, 2018, when the agreement with NRCS was fully executed. Adam will send the shapefiles for the priority watersheds shown on the map in the handout.

Rush-Pine cover crop seeding program policy: The draft policy was reviewed with few changes. Under Program Terms, further clarification will be added that this deviates from the BWSR requirement for a three-year commitment for non-structural practices. The cost share rate and maximum acreage allowed will be set once the contractor rates and the number of acres requested are known. An RFP is not needed, but it was agreed that some sort of application be developed in order to compare the contractors. The Farmer Led Council has three local contractors who may be interested. The contract for the work would be between Winona SWCD and the contractor(s), not the landowners. It was decided that landowners doing their own seeding would not be eligible for the funds since the primary purpose of the funding is to address the problem of farmers not having time in the fall to do their own seeding.

PTMApp contract cancellation with SE MN Water Resources Board and options for completing the work: Several options were discussed, such as contracting with St. Mary's University GIS or with Bridgette Timm as an independent contractor. The best option, which will be further investigated, may be to contract with Willis Goll, who has already done some preliminary work in Riceford Creek to identify existing structures. Justin will check with Rock County SWCD about staff there who may be willing to provide some training. Adam will check with BWSR staff about training through the agency.

Project updates: The assessment work that the Regional Sustainable Development Partnership funding will pay for is beginning. A list of participants for the focus group interviews was provided to U of M staff, and the groups will be meeting next week. The information will be used to formulate a civic engagement plan for the watershed. There is a Crooked Creek Watershed meeting on Friday. The engineering plans are signed for the project, but NRCS is still working on geology issues related to the sandstone formation on site that is prone to sinkholes. The project is exempt from Corps of Engineers and DNR permitting. They are working with County Zoning on their permitting. Root River SWCD is working on 7-8 EQIP contracts in Riceford/South Fork and Crooked Creek, and Fillmore has 5 projects in the South Fork under development for EQIP.

Meeting adjourned at 9:50 am.