

Meeting of the Policy Committee for Root River One Watershed, One Plan
Monday, June 11, 2018, 9:00 AM
Room 108, Fillmore County Office Building, 902 Houston Street NW, Preston, MN
Minutes

In attendance: Rodney Peterson (Dodge Co.), Fred Arnold (Houston Co.), Jerry Mueller (Winona SWCD), Glenn Hahn (Dodge SWCD), Paul Fruechte (Crooked Creek WD), Brian Hazel (Fillmore SWCD), Duane Bakke (Fillmore Co.), Marcia Ward (Winona Co.), Matt Flynn (Olmsted Co.), Jim Kellogg (Mower SWCD). Also present: Dan Wermager (Root River SWCD), Daryl Buck (Winona SWCD), Sheila Harnes (Winona Co.), Adam Beilke (BWSR), Skip Langer (Olmsted SWCD), Jeff Hastings (Trout Unlimited), Caleb Fischer and Donna Rasmussen (Fillmore SWCD).

1. Open meeting: The meeting was called to order by Chair Bakke at 9:06 a.m.
2. Approve Agenda: Brian Hazel moved to approve the agenda with the changes (deleted 4.f and 5.c); Rodney Peterson seconded; motion carried unanimously.
3. Approve minutes of the January 29, 2018 Policy Committee meeting: Marcia Ward moved to approve the minutes; Fred Arnold seconded; motion carried unanimously.
4. Old Business
 - a. Update on watershed-based grant agreement-Winona SWCD: Daryl Buck reported that the BWSR grant agreement is fully signed and executed. The first 50 percent of the funds have been received and are deposited in a separate account (\$425,000+).
 - b. Funding updates: Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP): Adam Beilke reported \$2.5 million in EQIP funds is available for the five 1W1P pilot watersheds, which amounts to about \$500,000 each. More might be available since some watersheds have a high percentage of forest land that may not utilize much EQIP funding. BWSR is working with NRCS on the agreement terms in the Memorandum of Understanding. Funds are expected to be available in July or August. The first signup is expected in February or March of 2019. A Local Work Group will convene for the watershed to set priorities and funding criteria.
 - c. Conservation Planning Initiative update: Adam provided a handout summarizing the planning initiative in seven watersheds statewide. There is a need for a cooperator to have a plan in place before accessing EQIP money. NRCS and BWSR have allocated \$1.5 million each to get a conservation planning position in seven watersheds in partnership with MASWCD. The Root River position is in the Caledonia office. Existing staff will produce the deliverables over three years, which includes a certain number of meetings, workshops and conservation plans (100). NRCS provides the office space. The deliverables are to be finalized today, then a contract will be developed between NRCS and Root River SWCD. Staff will be on board in time to attend training in about six weeks. The Mower portion of the Root River may be covered by the Mower SWCD planner.
 - d. ACTION: Approve Root River Comprehensive Watershed Management Plan Implementation Policy: The Committee reviewed the policy with input from staff. Discussion included targeting of cover crops to wellhead protection areas and watersheds and townships with elevated nitrate levels. Eligibility for cost share and the cost share rate for cover crops were also discussed. The grant agreement ends in 2021 for this round of funding. The policy will be reviewed annually in January or February in case changes are needed. Rodney Peterson moved to approve the Root River Comprehensive Watershed Management Plan Implementation Policy; Jim Kellogg seconded; motion carried unanimously.
 - e. ACTION: Approve Root River 1W1P 2018-2019 Sub-agreement: The Committee reviewed the sub-agreement format. Two changes were made from the version in the meeting packet: the BWSR grant number was added to the title, and the Winona County Attorney made some modifications to paragraph II. Scope of Services and Specific Duties. The expiration of the agreements is set for October 31, 2021, which is almost to the end of the grant agreement. New sub-agreements will be signed for each new round of funding. The approximate amount distributed to each SWCD/County is listed in Exhibit A. Rodney Peterson moved to approve the Root River 1W1P 2018-2019 Sub-agreement; Jerry Mueller seconded; motion carried unanimously.

~~f. ACTION: Authorize Chair to sign sub-agreement with Southeast Minnesota Water Resources Board for PTMA app analysis in the amount of \$10,000.00~~

5. New Business

- a. Economic Impact of Recreational Trout Angling in the Driftless Area: Trout Unlimited: Jeff Hastings reviewed the findings from a 2014 study of the economic benefits from trout angling in the Driftless region of Minnesota, Iowa, Wisconsin and Illinois. It is estimated that trout angling has an economic impact of over \$1.6 billion in the region with an average of \$475 spent per angler. Jeff also spoke about the stream restoration projects and funding sources that TU is involved with in the Root River. TU has been approved for \$9.2 million in RCPP funds for the Driftless for coldwater restoration starting this fall. They are in Phase 10 for receiving Lessard Sams Outdoor Heritage funding for a total of \$20 million. They incorporate nongame habitat into their projects, and the Root River has the highest biodiversity of any area in the four states. Sloping back the streambanks reduces the impacts of flooding, and removing shallow-rooted trees, such as box elder, reduces erosion while having minimal impact on shading. Total cost for stream restoration is about \$150,000 to \$200,000 per mile which includes about \$50,000 for engineering.
- b. Review letter of interest for 319 grant funding for the watershed: The Committee reviewed the letter sent to MPCA expressing interest in the 319 Small Watersheds Focus Grant Program. This only reflects interest and carries no commitment at this point. MPCA contacted us about applying as a 1W1P pilot watershed and also because of the evaluation monitoring occurring with the Root River Field to Stream Partnership. No action at this time.
- ~~c. Introduce Sara West, Nutrient Management Specialist for five counties~~
- d. Report from Policy Committee members re: feedback from their respective Boards: None
- e. Partner project updates: Adam Beilke announced the Locally Led workshops being held around the state with one in Rochester on July 16th. The Root River 1W1P Advisory Committee meeting was combined with the USDA Local Work Group meeting as a trial run for this type of process. Donna reported that the NRCS Multi-State Conservation Collaboration Grant for continuing the Soil Health Technician position in SE MN was awarded. Paul Fruechte reported that the Crooked Creek WD has started a Facebook page to highlight past projects which includes a video/slide show of structures being built in the 1960s as well as pictures from the annual inspection tour. Skip Langer announced a meeting between the Olmsted SWCD and the city of Chatfield on June 18th regarding priorities in their wellhead protection plan and providing them with technical assistance to implement practices.

6. Next meeting

- a. Review plans for upcoming meetings: None
- b. Set next date for Policy Committee meeting: The July 30, 2018, meeting is cancelled due to no known business to conduct at this time. If a need arises, a meeting will be called. The next meeting will likely be after the Advisory Committee meets in the fall.
- c. Agenda items: None

7. Adjourn: Jim Kellogg moved to adjourn at 11:06 am; Glenn Hahn seconded; motion carried.

Marcia Ward, Secretary