

# Sauk River Watershed Collaborative Implementation Team Meeting



## Date, Time, and Location:

Wednesday, April 22, 2026

9:00am-Noon,

Sauk River Watershed District Office 642 Lincoln Rd Sauk Centre MN 56378

## Attendance:

**In Person:** Steve Zeece (SRWD), Jerry Rapp (Douglas Co, PC Ex Officio), John Roeschlein (SRWD), Stephanie Hatzenbihler (Stearns CD), Kory Klebe (SRWD), Danielle Anderson (Douglas SWCD), Abi Borgerding (SRWD), Emily Forbord (Stearns County), Becky Schlorf (Stearns County)

**Virtually Via Teams:** Drew Kessler (Houston Engineering), Nicole Brede (Pope SWCD), Katherine Disrud (Pope SWCD)

## Review of Previous Meeting Minutes, Agenda Additions, Introductions:

- The March 2026 meeting minutes were reviewed. No additional corrections were raised beyond previously submitted edits.
- Introductions were made by those in attendance.
- **Additions to the Agenda:**
  - Thellin Shoreline Restoration follow-up under Cost Share Projects
  - JD2 PAS Alternatives Analysis overage reallocation request under General Updates
  - Todd SWCD Host Shoreland discussion moved later in the agenda due to scheduling conflicts

## Fiscal Agent Updates

- FY22 WBIF & Supplemental
  - The fiscal agent provided updates on current balances and invoicing.
  - Remaining budget: \$222,061.91
  - Interest earned: \$38,794.45
  - Match requirements for the grant have been exceeded
  - Discussion occurred regarding remaining balances within:
    - Objective 3 (Supplies & equipment)- The SRWD have received their monitoring equipment, and the remaining balance can be reallocated to the Todd SWCD's Padua Prairie Partnership.
    - Objective 6 (Technical & Engineering Assistance)- The SCD and other SWCD's reported they expect to use the majority of this allotment, but the remainder can also go to Todd SWCD's Padua Prairie Partnership.
    - Objective 7 (Agricultural Practices) and Objective 11 (Streambank and Shoreland Protection). Stearns CD expects most remaining TEA and shoreline project funds to be utilized by year-end, though final needs will depend on construction season completion and quarterly invoicing.
  - Discussion also occurred regarding increased construction costs due to:
    - prevailing wage requirements
    - fuel and mobilization costs
    - increased material costs, particularly tile and plastics

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- Partners noted bids are increasingly coming in 10–20% above engineer estimates.
- Reminder from BWSR was given that projects must be completed by 11/30/2026. It is highly unlikely this grant period could be further extended.
- FY24 WBIF
  - The FY24 WBIF balance remains substantial.
  - Approximately \$894,024.56 remains budgeted but unencumbered
  - Interest earned: \$45,046.19
  - Workplan re-write projects are now eligible for reimbursement.
    - Each objective remains tied to specific eligible project categories and funds cannot be freely shifted outside objective purposes without approval.
  - Extension eligibility for FY24 was reviewed, and because execution occurred June 3, 2024, an extension request remains possible if needed.
- FY27 WBIF
  - Discussion occurred regarding whether the partnership should request the full FY2027 allocation. BWSR noted the group is not required to request the full amount and may wish to consider a smaller request based on current spending pace and project readiness.
  - The group discussed beginning FY2027 planning this summer with a goal of finalizing the workplan request by fall 2026. The final deadline for submittal is 4/30/2027
- CRP Incentives
  - FY24 CRP has been closed out.
  - FY25 CRP remains active.
    - Approximately \$17,000 remains unencumbered
    - Roughly \$19,000 has been paid out
    - Approximately \$3,200 in interest has been earned
    - The CRP incentive remains a one-time local payment layered on top of annual federal Farm Service Agency CRP payments.
    - Pope SWCD may have additional eligible CRP enrollments pending confirmation.
    - Round 2 for Continuous CRP enrollment is now open. Partners were encouraged to identify eligible projects and submit requests as soon as possible.

## SharePoint Transition

- SRWD continues working with its IT consultant and Stearns County to transition SharePoint hosting to the watershed district as part of the Plan Coordinator role.
- The transition is expected to be relatively smooth, though users may need to be reauthorized or issued new access permissions.
- Current file redundancy includes:
  - SharePoint hosting
  - SRWD server backups
  - daily offsite backup systems

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- Discussion also occurred regarding cybersecurity concerns following recent local government cyberattacks in Minnesota. Staff emphasized that both Stearns County and SRWD maintain regular security updates and backup protections.

## **Fiscal Agent Transition Updates**

- Updates were provided regarding the transition of fiscal agent responsibilities from Stearns County to Stearns Conservation District.
- Three agreements are being developed:
  - Assignment Agreement (BWSR, SCD, Stearns County)
  - Transfer Agreement (Stearns Co & SCD)
  - Fiscal Agent Agreement Amendment (all collaborative members) by 7/17/26
- The Fiscal Agent Agreement Amendment will be shared with partners prior to the May 21 Policy Committee meeting for review.
- Key Dates:
  - May 21, 2026 — Policy Committee review
  - July 17, 2026 — deadline for partner signatures
  - July 30, 2026 — final day for Stearns County as fiscal agent
  - July 31, 2026 — Stearns CD begins fiscal agent role
- Invoice Deadlines:
  - Quarter 1 invoices due to Stearns County by April 30th (within 30 days of the quarter ending)
  - Additional project/engineering invoices due by May 29. Invoices submitted after May 29 will go to Stearns CD and may not be processed until August, potentially creating a 3–4-month reimbursement delay.

## **SWCD Cost-Shared Projects Review**

- Todd SWCD Host Shoreland- Tabled until May IT meeting due to staff availability.
- Thellin Shoreline Project- Stearns CD
  - A shoreline restoration project completed last fall did not have successful vegetation establish in the riparian/near-shore portion.
  - Stearns CD asked whether the collaborative would consider cost-sharing restoration work if site review confirms significant damage.
  - The group agreed this was a reasonable and more funding could be issued pending availability.
  - The group advised changing the design referencing significant lake surface elevation bounce well above the OHWL. Stearns CD informed Greg B will be leading the investigation.
  - The project may return for formal approval at a future meeting.

## **JD2 PAS Alternatives Analysis Reallocation**

- An average of \$18,403.14 was reported for the JD2 PAS Alternatives Analysis due to additional study items and final engineering review.

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- SRWD proposed reallocating these funds from FY24 Objective 3 (originally intended for the St. Cloud street sweeper project) to Objective 4 to cover the overage.
- BWSR confirmed this reallocation was allowable.
- An additional future overage of approximately \$6,000 may still occur for final review and presentation work, but the group agreed to address that separately later if needed.
- Decision: Approved by consensus to reallocate \$18,403.14 from Objective 3 to Objective 4.

## General Updates

- CWMP Minor Amendment for Cold Spring Dam Feasibility
  - All resolution have passed from collaborative member board's and the amendment is currently under review by the State Planning Authority for 30 days.
  - SRWD will work with Stearns Co, SCD, and BWSR to draft and advertise a public hearing at least 10 days before the hearing at the policy committee meeting on 5/21.
  - SRWD has 9 papers to publish legal notices.
  - Collab members are encouraged to post this notice in their office, website, and social accounts.
  - Expenses from SRWD staff time and newspapers time will be billed to the FY24 admin budget.
- City of St. Cloud Reimbursable Expenses
  - The City of St. Cloud submitted reimbursement expenses totaling \$3,332.95 related to work completed in an area that fell within SRWD jurisdictional boundaries but outside the collaborative planning boundary.
  - Because of a mapping discrepancy between watershed district boundaries and hydrologic based planning boundaries, FY24 WBIF funds could not technically reimburse the work.
  - BWSR confirmed this could be treated as a one-time special circumstance due to historic watershed planning transitions.
  - Decision: Approved by consensus to reimburse the City of St. Cloud \$3,332.95.
- Getchell CIP Updates
  - Landowners did not complete RIM applications by the previous deadline, preventing progress toward securing sufficient permanent easements for the project corridor.
  - The group discussed possible barriers, including:
    - perpetual easement concerns
    - haying restrictions
    - easement footprint size
    - landowner reluctance toward government programs
  - The next step is to directly identify the primary barrier with landowners before pursuing alternate funding strategies.
  - The group is also exploring BWSR's Multipurpose Drainage Management Program as another potential easement and funding pathway.
  - Without permanent protection, existing Outdoor Heritage Fund construction dollars cannot be used.

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- JD2 PT & USACE PAS Alternatives Analysis
  - The initial draft plan from the Corps of Engineers has been received for internal review.
  - Internal review deadline: May 15
  - Final draft target: July 17
  - Following completion, the plan will be presented to: Implementation Team, Project Team, potentially the full collaborative.
  - Most remaining expenses are expected to be staff review and final engineering review.
- Education & Outreach Committee
  - The Planning Commission / Board of Adjustment presentation remains on hold while partners determine the most useful assistance tools for county planning and zoning staff.
  - Additional shoreline outreach efforts include:
    - A new media campaign with Minnesota Lakes and Rivers and Leighton Broadcasting
    - Three new shoreline stewardship videos for smart TVs and local commercials
    - Continued promotion of the Shoreline Steward Program
    - Coordination with lake associations and local leaders
    - Potential future presentations may include University of Minnesota Duluth research regarding how lake associations impact water quality and aquatic invasive species management.
  - Billboard outreach opportunities were also discussed for future consideration.

## Upcoming Policy Committee Agenda Items

- The next Policy Committee meeting is scheduled for May 21, 2026.
- Proposed agenda items include:
  - Previous meeting minutes
  - Fiscal Agent Report
  - Discretionary Reallocations
  - Minor Amendment Public Hearing (1st agenda item)
  - Fiscal Agent Transition (action item)
  - Cost Share Project Highlight (SCD Loxtercamp or Noll) or a Todd SWCD project.
  - Plan Tracking Tool Updates
  - SharePoint Hosting

## Closeout & Next Meetings

- Upcoming Implementation Team meetings: May 27, 2026
- The collaborative reaffirmed the 2026 meeting schedule of the 4th Wednesday of each month (9:00 AM – Noon).

## Adjournment

- The meeting adjourned at 11:40 PM