Sauk River Watershed Collaborative
Policy Committee Meeting

Date, Time, and Location: Thursday, August 20th, 2026, 1:00-3:00 p.m., Sauk River Watershed District Office, 642 Lincoln Road, Sauk Centre, MN 56378

Invitees / In Person & Online Attendees:

Policy Committee: Ken Rutten (Douglas SWCD), Randy Neumann (Todd County), Bill Becker (Sauk River WD), Tom Williamson (Todd SWCD), Tom Gregory (Stearns CD), Paul Wildman (Pope County), Gary Reents (Pope SWCD), Steve Notch (Stearns County), Jerry Rapp (Douglas County)
Policy Committee Alternates: Billy Dropik (Douglas SWCD), Bob Byers (Todd County), David Zerr (Sauk River WD), Lee Buchholz (Todd SWCD), Arlyn Lawrenz (Stearns CD), Paul Gerde (Pope County), Randy Pederson (Pope SWCD), Jeff Bertram (Stearns County), Tim Kalina (Douglas County)
Implementation Team: Adam Ossefoort (Todd County), Emily Forbord (Stearns County), Becky Schlorf (Stearns County), Danielle Anderson (Douglas SWCD), Dave Rush (Douglas County), Deja Anton (Todd County & SWCD), Holly Kovarik (Pope SWCD), Jon Roeschlein (Sauk River WD), Kyle Weimann (Stearns CD), Ralph Hanson (Pope County), Stephanie Hatzenbihler (Stearns CD), Steve Zeece III (Sauk River WD)
Implementation Team CC: Jason Weinerman (BWSR), Brad Wozney (BWSR), Zach Guttormson (BWSR), Noah Czech (City of St Cloud), Garrett Munson (Moore Engineering), Jerome Haggenmiller (Douglas SWCD), Drew Kessler (Houston Engineering), Annie Felix (MDH), John Maile (Stearns CD), Renee Thell (Stearns CD)
Education & Outreach Committee: Kory Klebe (SRWD), Katie Disrud (Pope SWCD), Jessica Albertsen (Douglas SWCD), Sarah Katterhagen (Todd SWCD), Alyssa Scheve (Todd SWCD), Emily Forbord (Stearns County), Stephanie Hatzenbihler (Stearns CD), Abbie Meyer (Stearns CD), Jason Weinerman (BWSR)

1. **Call to Order & Introductions**
    - With Committee Chair Notch enroute, Vice Chair Neumann called the meeting to order at approximately 1:00 p.m.
2. **Approve Agenda**
    - Rutten motioned with second from Williamson to approve the meeting agenda.
3. **Review and Approve Previous Meeting Minutes**
    - A motion was made by Reents to approve the May 21, 2026 Policy Committee meeting minutes, seconded by Tom Williamson. No discussion followed. All in favor; motion passed.
4. **Fiscal Agent Transition**
    - Stearns Conservation District began their role as Fiscal Agent on Friday, July 31, 2026, following the transition from Stearns County. A total of $927,172.31 was transferred: $341,957.52 for FY22 WBIF, $405,688.96 for FY24 WBIF, $80,768.00 for FY25 CRP Incentives, and $98,757.83 in interest earnings.
    - Grant principal remains separately budgeted. Going forward, interest earnings will be pooled and tracked as one collaborative total in the public money market account

rather than separated by grant. The collaborative retains discretion over the use of interest earnings.

- The committee discussed whether the new arrangement could affect interest earnings. Staff mentioned a fair comparison can be made after one year has been with SCD as the fiscal agent

5. **Fiscal Agent Report**
    - Staff reviewed grant terminology, funding sources, the BWSR 50/40/10 payment schedule, project status terms, and the thirteen objectives used in SRWC WBIF work plans.
    - In response to a question about how much funding reaches on-the-ground projects, staff said the collaborative generally aims for at least 70%, with the balance supporting administration, coordination, technical assistance, and education and outreach. Staff will prepare a breakdown of current spending and the proposed FY27 grant allocation.
    - Vice Chair Neumann requested, for the Q4 2026 PC meeting, an overview of the collaborative's cost-share policy and other policies and procedures.
        i. FY22 WBIF: $1,136,821 total award; 60% spent, 25% encumbered, 1% allocated, and 15% ($159,208.65) remaining. The grant expires December 31, 2026, with no further extension available.
        ii. FY24 WBIF: $1,212,865 total award; 17% spent, 13% encumbered, 2% allocated, and 68% ($826,041.24) remaining. Staff planned to request an extension through December 31, 2027.
        iii. FY25 CRP State Incentives: $100,000 total award; 19% spent, 71% encumbered, and 10% allocated for administration. All funds have an identified use and the grant ends December 31, 2026.
        iv. FY27 WBIF: BWSR allocated $1,220,674. The funding request and grant work plan are being developed, and updated policies and procedures are expected to apply to this grant.
        v. Other grants: staff described a potential 1W1P midpoint grant of up to $75,000. The FY24 CRP State Incentives grant is closed after spending $29,313.53, or 97% of its $30,000 award.
    - The Implementation Team reviewed and directed four FY22 grantee-discretion reallocations totaling $43,000. Staff also noted that $140,000 shown as unassigned in FY24 Objective 9 had been identified for Todd SWCD livestock-waste projects and would be updated in the financial records.
    - A motion was made by Wildman and seconded by Rutten to accept the Fiscal Agent Report. No further discussion followed. All in favor; motion carried.
6. **FY22 WBIF Work Plan Revision**
    - The Implementation Team recommended moving $22,000 from Objective 11 to Objective 4 for JD2 analysis overages and $7,530 from Objective 11 to Objective 1 for administration and coordination. Staff explained that the JD2 overage included septic-record review and shoreline fetch analysis.
    - A motion was made by Becker and seconded by Reents to approve the FY22 WBIF work plan revision described by staff and to accept the FY22 grantee-discretion reallocations

presented by the Fiscal Agent. No further discussion followed. All in favor; motion carried.

- The Fiscal Agent will work with BWSR to update the work plan in eLINK, with a target effective date of September 1, 2026. Eligible expenses must occur by December 31, 2026, with closeout and final reporting to follow in early 2027.

7. **FY24 WBIF Grant Period Extension Request**
    - The Implementation Team recommended requesting the available extension to provide more time to complete projects and spend the remaining grant balance. BWSR staff clarified that returning unspent funds would not reduce future WBIF allocations, but the Implementation Team recommended pursuing the extension.
    - A motion was made by Becker and seconded by Wildman to recommend a resolution of support requesting a grant period extension through at least December 31, 2027, and approving the associated grant agreement amendment. No further discussion followed. All in favor; motion carried.
    - Staff will distribute the draft resolution which is included in this meeting packet to the collaborative member boards. LGU Staff were directed to put this on their September board meeting agenda. An update will be provided at the Q4 meeting.
8. **FY27 WBIF Grant Update**
    - The Implementation Team is targeting Policy Committee review in November 2026 so the grant agreement can be executed by February 1, 2027. If additional development time is needed, the backup schedule would bring the request to the February 2027 Policy Committee meeting.
    - Initial partner wish-list requests totaled $940,000 of the $1,220,674 allocation, leaving $280,674 to be assigned. Staff will refine the requests and return with details at the next meeting.
9. **Plan Tracking Tool Dashboard**
    - Staff presented highlights from the plan tracking dashboard, including 295 completed projects across the watershed. Watershed-wide shoreline-restoration and native-vegetation goals have been surpassed; approximately 3,000 acres of cover crops were also reported.
    - Since plan implementation began, nearly 20,000 outreach mailings have been sent and more than 8,000 people have attended collaborative events. The dashboard can also be filtered by management zone or unit and will support the midpoint evaluation and performance review.
    - The committee discussed permitting timelines. Staff noted that shoreline permits often have an approximately 30-day turnaround, while many agricultural practices do not require permits.
10. **Watershed Norms - Shoreline Efforts**
    - The Education and Outreach Committee continued its watershed-norms work, focusing on the shoreline audience and the 'Keep It Rooted' behavioral norm. Current efforts include shoreline tours, cost-share projects, Blue Thumb/Lawn to Legumes support, lake-association outreach, and the Minnesota Natural Shoreline Partnership/Lake Steward program.
    - The 2025 shoreline stewardship campaign generated approximately 160,000 website impressions and 183,000 streaming-TV impressions. The 30-second videos had an 85% completion rate, compared with an approximately 40% industry benchmark.

11. **Project Highlight - EARTH Program at Todd SWCD**
    - Deja Anton presented Todd SWCD's Environmental Assessment of Riparian and Terrestrial Habitat (EARTH) Program. The voluntary, no-cost technical service evaluates properties along lakes, rivers, and wetlands, as well as urban properties contributing to stormwater systems, and provides recommendations to reduce nutrient loading and address site problems.
    - Assessments consider hydrology, soils, geology, nutrients, vegetation, wells, septic systems, lawn care, structures, drainage, and other property conditions. Todd County's Board of Adjustment and Planning Commission recognize the evaluations when reviewing shoreline land-use decisions.
    - The program uses bronze-to-gold recognition signs or urban decals and is intended to encourage voluntary improvements. A case study showed how recommendations addressed drainage, septic, tree replacement, shoreline stabilization, and access issues.
    - Discussion included acid-rain reductions and the importance of managing wetland grazing to avoid feedlot conditions or damage during wet periods.
12. **JD2 & Lake Osakis Study**
    - SRWD's Zeece summarized the completed U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Planning Assistance to States report for Lake Osakis. The study is intended to guide maintenance, enhancement, and restoration of the lake and watershed, with emphasis on recreation, aquatic habitat, water-level management, invasive species, and water quality.
    - The process included a public planning charrette, project-team work, technical modeling, and evaluation of objectives, measures, and alternatives. The full report was provided to Policy Committee members; a technical appendix of approximately 90 pages detailing the *CE-QUAL-W2 Lake Response Model* is also available and the documents will be posted to the SRWD website.
    - Modeling indicated that the proposed JD2 outlet rock-arch rapids configuration could reduce average Lake Osakis water-level fluctuation by approximately seven inches over a 50-year period.
    - The committee discussed septic systems, shoreline stability and restoration, fertilizer and other shoreline-management concerns. Staff stated that the full report addresses these topics in greater detail and that the project team is identifying priorities for implementation.
    - Members also discussed the apparent decline of freshwater shrimp/amphipods. Staff noted that macroinvertebrates are indicators of water-body health and that the reported decline is concerning.
13. **Next Meeting Date**
    - The next Policy Committee meeting was confirmed for Thursday, November 19, 2026, from 1:00-3:00 p.m.
14. **Open Discussion**
    - No additional items were brought forward.
15. **Adjournment**
    - A motion was made by Becker and seconded by Wildman to adjourn. All in favor; motion carried. The meeting adjourned at approximately 2:54 p.m.