Sauk River Watershed Collaborative

Implementation Team Meeting Minutes

DRAFT

Date, Time, and Location: Wednesday, September 23, 2026, 9:00 a.m.-12:00 noon, Sauk River Watershed District Office, 642 Lincoln Road, Sauk Centre, MN 56378.

Attendance: Present / Absent / Online via Teams:*

Organization	Name
Douglas County	Dave Rush
Douglas SWCD	Danielle Anderson, Jerome Haggenmiller
Pope County	Ralph Hanson
Pope SWCD	Holly Kovarik*
Sauk River Watershed District (Plan Coordinator)	Jon Roeschlein, Steve Zeece III, Kory Klebe (EO Committee)
Stearns County	Emily Forbord*, Becky Schlorf
Stearns Conservation District (Fiscal Agent)	Kyle Weimann*, Stephanie Hatzenbihler, John Maile
Todd County & Todd SWCD	Adam Ossefoort, Deja Anton

Ex Officio & Advisors	
Policy Committee Ex Officio	Jerry Rapp (Douglas County) – primary Tim Kalina (Douglas County) - alternate
Board of Water and Soil Resources (BWSR)	Jason Weinerman, Brad Wozney, Zach Guttormson
MN Department of Health (MDH)	Annie Felix
MN Department of Natural Resources (DNR)	
MN Department of Agriculture (MDA)	
MN Pollution Control Agency (MPCA)	
City of St. Cloud	Noah Czech
Moore Engineering	Garret Munson

Introductions and Review of Previous Meeting Minutes

The August 26, 2026 minutes were reviewed. Emily Forbord requested that Becky Schlorf be shown as absent from that meeting.

Kyle Weimann clarified that grantee discretion was not needed to fund the Pope SWCD cover crop project approved in August. Slippage from an SCD non-structural ag project provided funding within the same objective.

Fiscal Agent Report

FY22 WBIF Report and Work Plan Revision

- The FY22 Watershed-Based Implementation Funding (WBIF) work plan amendment had been processed in eLINK.
    - Approximately $192,000 remains unspent.
    - The remaining $7,530 in administration and coordination funding was discussed for SRWD coordination needs through the end of the year.
- The SCD's Krippner erosion control project will not proceed in 2026.
    - Stearns Conservation District identified replacement projects for construction this fall. Other completed projects still require invoices.
- If the planned projects proceed, we will have used nearly all FY22 funds.
    - The amendment reset the $50,000 grantee-discretion allowance, which will enable for final adjustments during closeout within the IT group.
    - The grant expires December 31, 2026. Partners were asked to submit outstanding invoices as soon as possible.
    - Projects unable to proceed this fall should be considered under FY24 WBIF or FY27 for 2027 construction.
- FY22 supplemental expenditures are tracked separately even when combined in grant summaries.
- Members requested that monthly grant summaries include the date it was updated.

FY24 WBIF Report and Extension

- Approximately $222,000 (18 percent) of the FY24 grant has been spent & paid out.
    - Members supported the updated financial reporting format, which summarizes balances by both the objective and partner.
- The group reviewed members board resolutions supporting an extension through December 31, 2027.
    - Several resolutions had been received, and additional approvals were reported.
    - Discussion around whether County collaborative members (whom did not sign the original grant agreement or request funds) should pass this resolution.
        - It is not a requirement, but it could not harm the process to have their formal support.
- The plan coordinator will review prior to the fiscal agent submitting the extension request in eLINK once all of the supporting documentation is in hand.
    - Reasons discussed included difficulty securing voluntary projects within narrowly targeted areas, cancellation of major projects and time needed to develop replacements, the fiscal-agent transition, and broader economic conditions affecting contractors and landowners.

CRP Incentives

- All CRP projects had been identified.
    - Staff expected to know after October 1 whether the projects would proceed through the Farm Service Agency. Any projects that do not advance will be reported at the October meeting.
- BWSR advised that a one-year extension may be requested if needed.

Reimbursement Guidance

- Partners were asked to review the BWSR Grants Administration Manual and submit itemized invoices.
    - Staff-time invoices should list each employee and the hours charged on the invoice itself, with supporting documentation.
- Separate invoices are required for FY22 WBIF, FY24 WBIF, and CRP incentives.
    - FY22 supplemental expenses may be included with regular FY22 expenses, with supplemental-funded work identified where applicable.
    - Reimbursements will generally be processed monthly, with a submission cutoff approximately one week before month-end.
    - FY22 reimbursements may be processed weekly near year-end to support closeout.

FY24 WBIF Work Plan Revision

- The team reviewed remaining funds by objective and partner to identify amounts to retain, amounts available for reallocation, and additional needs.
    - No final work plan revision was adopted.
- The $75,000 allocated to the Vails Lake headwaters feasibility study is available for reallocation.
- There is $663 available in the wetland objective.
- SRWD will determine how much of its $45,000 supplies and equipment allocation is needed for monitoring equipment; the street sweeper proposal will not proceed.
- Additional administration and coordination funding may be needed for SRWD through early 2027.
    - SRWD and Stearns County/Stearns Conservation District will confirm projected costs, including SharePoint work and remaining 2026 expenses.
- Staff clarified that eligible staff time charged to an existing project development allocation does not require a separate project request form.
    - Non-staff expenses for education and outreach activities require advance review under the current process.
    - Invoice documentation must identify the work as project development within the Sauk River watershed. Stephanie will review the policies to ensure this distinction is clear.
- SRWD will confirm the remaining City of St. Cloud planning needs and develop a budget for Adopt a Drain participation and related outreach. The watershed norms allocation will be retained for continued Education and Outreach Committee work.

Partners generally requested retaining identified agricultural, livestock waste management, non-structural, and shoreline/stream allocations while confirming project readiness.

- SRWD will review potential uses for its shoreline and streambank allocation in the Getchell system, including whether work with individual landowners would be better administered by Stearns Conservation District.

Follow-up: Partners will provide Stephanie with amounts to retain, release, or request by October 19. Retained funds should correspond to work expected to be completed by December 31, 2027. Stephanie will prepare a revised summary for the October 28 meeting, with the goal of forwarding a recommendation to the November Policy Committee meeting.

FY27 WBIF Funding Request and Grant Work Plan

- The team continued reviewing partner requests against the anticipated $1.2 million funding allocation.
    - Todd SWCD reported reducing its request to $464,700.
- Partners were asked to reduce requests based on project readiness, capacity, other funding sources, and eligibility under FY24.
    - FY24 should support eligible 2027 construction wherever possible, with FY27 generally supporting work in 2028 and 2029.
    - SRWD will check whether approximately $100,000 for Site 17 engineering to the 30 percent design level could be completed in 2027 and funded through FY24. The monitoring request for the Prairie Creek inlet to Little Birch Lake was reduced from $9,600 to $4,100 for equipment, removing $5,500 in staff time.
- The team discussed using broad grant-level budgets by objective while maintaining more specific partner allocations internally.
    - Some categories could operate as shared funding pools to accommodate future projects.
    - Pope SWCD requested flexibility to bring forward additional project types, including well sealing and structural ag practices.
    - Groundwater and irrigation water management remain without an objective or funding and could be part of future work plans and targeting.

Stephanie reviewed draft narrative language and deliverables. Members discussed consolidating staff-time billing categories where practical and avoiding restrictions that could prevent eligible work. Deliverable estimates should be realistic. The draft remains subject to further partner and BWSR review.

Priority Areas and Targeting

- The team discussed using the summary map on plan page 5-5, PDF page 137, as a basis for priority-area language.
    - Members supported developing language that prioritizes high-value areas while retaining the ability to consider beneficial projects in opportunity areas.
    - Options included high, medium, and opportunity tiers; proximity to priority waters; and shoreline or streambank priority areas around identified water resources.
    - Members noted that the contributing watershed of Lake Osakis and areas near Smith Lake should be considered carefully.
    - No final decision was made.
- BWSR emphasized the plan's hydrology and nutrient priorities and the need to demonstrate measurable outcomes.

Follow-up:

1. Partners were asked to review and trim their requests.
2. Stephanie will draft flexible work plan and targeting language for partner and BWSR review, aiming to circulate language in early October and bring an updated draft to the October 28 meeting.

a. February 1, 2027 remains the preferred grant execution goal; a later timeline is available if needed.

Technical and Engineering Assistance Policy

- The current policy limits technical and engineering assistance reimbursements to 20 percent of a project or practice cost, with overages reviewed individually by the Implementation Team. Members discussed the administrative burden and uncertainty this creates as project costs change or projects do not proceed.
    - The proposed revision would reimburse documented eligible work at actual costs using BWSR billing rate calculators, within technical and engineering budgets allocated to each LGU during grant development. Additional funding needs would follow the Collaborative's process for budget and work plan changes.
- The Policy Committee must approve changes to this policy.
    - Members will provide comments before or at the October meeting so a recommendation can be prepared for November 19th policy committee meeting.

Cost Share Project Review

Sundermann Stacking Slab Roof

The project remains on hold/tabled. Todd SWCD reported that December may be the earliest opportunity to advance the request.

Wicker Erosion Control

Stearns Conservation District presented the previously developed erosion control project upstream of Pearl Lake for FY22 supplemental funding. The total project budget is $28,415, with $21,311.25 requested in WBIF cost share plus associated technical and engineering assistance.

Decision: The Implementation Team approved encumbrance by consensus.

Danckers Shoreline

Stearns Conservation District presented the shoreline project on Big Fish Lake. The total project budget is $23,039. The request is $5,000 in FY22 WBIF funds, paired with Midwest Glacial Lakes project funding and landowner funds.

Decision: The Implementation Team approved encumbrance by consensus.

Kipland Vale Inc Erosion Control

The proposed grass waterway project near the Sauk River has an estimated total cost of $35,000 and a requested FY22 supplemental cost share of $26,250. Final bids were not yet available.

Decision: The team supported by consensus the encumbrance contingent on completion of the preliminary eligibility review. The 15-day review period will be retained, with the Plan Coordinator providing review before final authorization.

Mehr Erosion Control

The proposed grass waterway project near the Kipland Vale project has an estimated total cost of $35,000 and a requested FY22 supplemental cost share of $26,250. Final design, bids, and reduction estimates will be completed.

Decision: The team supported by consensus the encumbrance subject to the same preliminary eligibility review conditions discussed for Kipland Vale.

Frieler Erosion Control

The proposed project includes 11 alternative tile intakes. It had received preliminary review under FY24; Stearns Conservation District requested use of FY22 funds to assist closeout. Members clarified that the mapped resource labeled CD44 appears to be a tributary to CD9, and the project request will be corrected.

Decision: The team supported encumbrance by consensus, contingent on confirming eligibility and the appropriate objective under the FY22 work plan, including whether supplemental funding should be used.

Thiesen Shoreline Overage

Additional erosion control materials were needed to complete the previously approved project SR-FY2022-026. The additional cost share at 75 percent is $182.70, and funding is available.

Decision: The team approved the additional $182.70 reimbursement by consensus.

General Updates

Getchell Creek

SRWD is arranging a meeting with BWSR staff to review completed work, funded activities, remaining needs, and potential Multipurpose Drainage Management funding. Securing permanent land rights below Getchell Lake remains necessary to use Outdoor Heritage funds for construction. Staff are also working with the township on a perched culvert that must be lowered for channel restoration and drainage function. The discussion will include feasibility study site 17 for upper watershed storage & flow attenuation and potential local matching funds.

Lake Osakis Projects

A September 28 drainage authority meeting was scheduled at 1:00 p.m. at the Douglas County Public Works Building to consider partial abandonment of JD2 Branch 3 for the wetland restoration project. Construction may occur in 2027 if the required approvals are completed. Staff clarified that the project involves impounding Branch 3, alone, and does not block the mainstem of JD2.

The Lake Osakis outlet modification project is also advancing via CPL grant awarded to the JD2 drainage authority, with Houston Engineering as the project engineer.

Education and Outreach

The committee has completed its work with Sarah Roth and is reviewing agricultural barriers and benefits to adopting soil health practices. Next steps include a communications campaign, evaluation of existing incentives and commitments, and opportunities for farmers to share experiences with other farmers.

The goal is to develop campaign materials and program recommendations for spring 2027. Staff noted that effects may be more apparent in the 2028 cropping season. A repeat statewide survey expected for the 2029 cropping season may help measure changes, with results potentially available in 2030.

The detailed survey findings review was deferred until Brad Wozney can participate, either at a future Implementation Team meeting or an Education and Outreach Committee meeting.

Upcoming Policy Committee Agenda (11/19/2026 1-3pm @SRWD)

a. Call to order & introductions
b. Approve agenda
c. Approve previous meeting minutes
d. Fiscal Agent Report & Grantee Discretion
e. FY24 WBIF Grant Extension Update
f. FY24 WBIF Work Plan Revision
g. FY27 WBIF Funding Request and Grant Work Plan
h. Cost-Share Policies & Procedures Overview
i. Project Highlight – SCD Soil Health Field Day & Well Screening Clinic
j. Plan Tracking Tool Dashboard

Open Discussion

- Members discussed how upland ag and other conservation practices protect and support aquatic habitat and macroinvertebrates.
- SRWD also provided an update on an update on the Long-Higgins lake outlet project, which is advancing through permitting and easement acquisition.

Closeout and Next Meetings

The meeting concluded at approximately noon.

The next Implementation Team meetings are scheduled for October 28, November 23, and December 16, 2026, from 9:00 a.m.-12:00 noon.