

BUFFALO-RED RIVER WATERSHED DISTRICT

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BUFFALO-RED RIVER WATERSHED DISTRICT One Watershed, One Plan Policy Committee Meeting April 6, 2018

The One Watershed, One Plan (1W1P) Policy Committee held their first meeting on Friday, April 6, 2018, at 9:00 AM in the Buffalo-Red River Watershed District (BRRWD) office, located at 1303 4th Avenue NE, Barnesville, MN.

Policy Committee Members present included Paul Krabbenhoft, District Supervisor, Clay Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD); Fran Gross, Clay County Commissioner (Alternate); Barry Nelson, Becker County Commissioner; Wayne Johnson, Otter Tail County Commissioner; Jay Leitch, BRRWD Chair; Jerome Flottesch, District Supervisor, Becker SWCD; Lyle Hovland, Wilkin County Commissioner; Julian Sjostrom, District Supervisor, West Otter Tail County (Alternate); and Ross Aigner, District Supervisor, Wilkin SWCD.

Planning Team Members present included Henry Van Offelen, Clean Water Specialist, Board of Water and Soil Resources (BWSR); Brett Arne, Board Conservationist, BWSR; Bruce Albright, BRRWD Administrator; and consultants Rachel Olm, Environmental Scientist, and Matt Jacobson, Watershed Planner/Scientist, Houston Engineering, Inc. (HEI).

BRRWD Administrator Bruce Albright called the meeting to order and asked the participants to introduce themselves. A signup sheet was passed to record attendance. Albright noted that the meeting was being video recorded to assist in the preparation of meeting minutes. He explained that the Policy Committee is comprised of a representative from each of the governmental agencies, who have joined together in the Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) for the BRRWD's 1W1P effort. This committee is required by BWSR to make final decisions about the content and submittal of the Plan and expenditures of funds allocated for Plan development. The Policy Committee must be part of the MOA and adopt the associated Bylaws. Albright discussed the history of the 1W1P effort and the decision to move forward with the 1W1P instead of finishing the revision of our current Revised Watershed Management Plan (RWMP) to include the new areas that were added to the BRRWD in 2012. Last August, BWSR held a 1W1P kickoff meeting for the BRRWD to review the planning process. Bois de Sioux Watershed District also attended as they are also involved with the 1W1P implementation. A meeting was also held last November to prepare the MOA, and then the MOA was circulated for approval and signature among the nine partners: four Counties, four SWCDs, and the BRRWD. Each partner was asked to appoint one Policy Committee member and one alternate.

Henry Van Offelen, BWSR, is working with all the 1W1P efforts in the Red River Basin. He plans to participate in the Policy Committee meetings along with Brett Arne, BWSR, to support the 1W1P effort. He pointed out that the Policy Committee is the entity that will be making all final policy decisions regarding the implementation of the 1W1P. He noted that the Planning Team will be doing the planning work to implement the Policy Committee decisions. Albright commented that the BRRWD has many issues that could be addressed in the 1W1P. Van Offelen noted that it's helpful that the BRRWD and the Counties all have existing Water Plans to draw from during this process.

Matt Jacobson, HEI, presented an overview of the 1W1P process. The State of Minnesota decided to move from 152 water plans that are aligned to jurisdictional boundaries towards a watershed planning framework

that is aligned to 63 planning watersheds. The goal is to streamline the water planning process and remove redundancy between agencies and jurisdictions. Jacobson acknowledged that headwaters counties like Becker and Otter Tail, will be involved with multiple Plans because they are based on watersheds. Van Offelen noted that issue has recently been recognized by BWSR in their policy documents, which allow that if the county has less than 10% jurisdictional land area in a given watershed, they can opt in or out at their discretion. There was a brief discussion regarding potential funding allocation to the entities for projects and the need to represent the landowners in the smaller jurisdictional areas. Van Offelen noted that not all the 1WIPs are going to be completed at the same time, as there isn't enough funding. Jacobson displayed a map of the participating Watershed Districts and explained that BWSR started with five watershed pilot areas in 2017, and in June 2017, BWSR accepted nominations for the next round of 1WIP planning grants, which included the BRRWD. He explained that future State funding for projects will be prioritized based on the status of the applicant's 1WIP. Implementation of projects to utilize 1WIP funding can be initiated via the MOA, a Joint Powers Agreement (JPA), or individually.

The group reviewed a map of the proposed BRRWD 1WIP planning boundary, which is the same as the BRRWD boundary, encompassing parts of Becker, Clay, Wilkin, and Otter Tail Counties and containing 1,785 square miles and all or parts of three major watersheds: Buffalo, Otter Tail, and Upper Red Rivers.

Jerome Flottesch, Becker SWCD, commented that the lower part of Otter Tail County within the BRRWD should be part of the entire Otter Tail River 1WIP watershed plan when that takes place. He suggested that in the future, the BRRWD should be involved in the whole Otter Tail River sub-basin, instead of just the portion currently within the Watershed District. The group had an extended discussion regarding the long-term goal of the 1WIP effort, which some thought was to ultimately have all watersheds in the state organized into watershed districts. The current stated purpose of the 1WIP effort is an attempt to coordinate watershed activities within basins to make the best use of state funding.

Jacobson continued his presentation by discussing the Committees that will be involved with developing the 1WIP: the Policy Committee, Planning Team (Steering Committee), and Advisory Committees. The Policy Committee is made up of County Commissioners, SWCD Board Supervisors, and Watershed District Managers. They are responsible for reviewing and approving the draft components and the final, completed 1WIP, and to provide consensus direction on Plan development matters to the Planning Team. The Planning Team, comprised of one staff lead from each of the local Counties, Watershed District, and SWCDs, will guide the planning process and review draft material. They are responsible for providing information for the planning process, reviewing and accepting draft Plan related information, and assisting in the Plan development. The Advisory Committees will be made up of members from the Planning Team, local government staff, state agencies, main water agencies/plan review agencies, the general public/landowners, trade organizations, nonprofit organizations, and special interest groups, and could be organized into technical and citizen groups, by planning regions-specific or by resource concern. They will make recommendations on Plan content and communicate practical concerns during Plan development. In addition, public meetings/hearings will be held as part of the Plan development process to ensure a complete list of priority resources and concerns is compiled regarding issues impacting the community and watershed. A public Kickoff Meeting Event will be held early in the 1WIP process and a final public hearing will be held prior to the Plan adoption. The group recognized that more public input meetings might be necessary to address the diverse issues within the boundaries of the BRRWD. Albright commented that the scope of the 1WIP may have to be more general and less focused on addressing specific issues within the watershed unlike previous Comprehensive Plans.

Jacobson discussed the milestones for the planning process: aggregate and prioritized issues, set measurable goals, develop implementation schedule and programs, and finally, receive local approval through a public meeting. The goal is to submit the final Plan to BWSR for approval by April 2020.

The 1W1P is a comprehensive planning effort where resources are considered for inclusion in the Plan, organized into three levels: resource categories, resource concerns, and issues. Jacobson pointed out that due to time and funding constraints, the Plan will have to prioritize what issues will be addressed during the 10-year lifespan of the Plan. He discussed actions that could be implemented to make progress towards the stated measurable Plan goals and the targeted implementation schedule, which is a prioritized list of strategies and actions that will be used to make progress toward achieving the measurable goals for a local priority resource. In this list/table, each action is described with location, responsible entity, funding, cost, and completion date. The 1W1P should designate where to apply best management practices to produce the most impact. Using tools such as the Prioritize, Target, and Measure Application (PTMApp), problem areas can be identified and conservation practices can be put into action. Albright noted that the PTMApp can only be used to address water quality issues.

Paul Krabbenhoft asked about the composition and responsibilities of the three committees. He wanted to know which group would be handling the selection of the tools we will use to identify and prioritize target areas. Arne said that the Planning Team and the Technical Advisory Committees would probably be the ones to choose the modeling tools. Krabbenhoft also wanted to know on which committee would the water specialists serve. Arne thought the resource specialist would serve on the Advisory Committees.

Van Offelen pointed out that in addition to modeling tools, local input from landowners, etc., will be very important in targeting and prioritizing issues on the landscape.

Wayne Johnson, Otter Tail County Commissioner, commented that the 1W1P could cause disagreement about which projects/areas will take priority for state funding. Van Offelen pointed out that 1W1P will not override Drainage Law. He explained that with the 1W1P, we will have the process to designate areas to leverage external funds to do a multipurpose project. Albright noted that following the approval and implementation of the 1W1P, a permanent committee/team could be put in place to administer the Plan. Arne pointed out that each individual entity will still be able to apply for funding for their individual projects, plus the option of the 1W1P funding mechanism.

There was a brief discussion about the use of the various modeling applications to prioritize problem areas based on science, not individual self-interest. Krabbenhoft commented that his trust level is very high in the BRRWD and the district staff. He had no concerns about working together with the other 1W1P partners to develop projects that will be competitive on the state level for funding. Albright noted that all the agencies will still be doing the same day-to-day work after the 1W1P is put in place. Van Offelen explained that the 1W1P should be considered a "game plan" to set priorities in the BRRWD for water management and conservation management. Lyle Hovland, Wilkin County Commissioner, noted the 1W1P will provide for a coordinated effort across all agencies to provide for a better outcome.

The committee discussed the MOA, which all the participating agencies have approved. It was noted that the ground-verified approved BRRWD boundary is being used for the 1W1P. Albright added that some of those areas that the DNR thought should have been in the BRRWD will be included when the adjacent watershed is addressed.

The group reviewed and discussed the Policy Committee Bylaws. Several revisions were suggested during the review. It was noted that the Bylaws and Officer terms would run for the length of the 1W1P development process. When the Plan is in place, the agencies can consider organizing a JPA for administration of the Plan over its 10-year life span. The Committee also decided that a 1W1P Webpage should be created where all the Plan information could be posted. They discussed the Advisory Committees' roles, responsibilities, and commitment. **Motion** by Jay Leitch to approve the Bylaws with the suggested changes, noting that according to Article 9, Section 2, subsequent changes can be made if necessary. **Seconded** by Ross Aigner. **Approved.**

The Committee discussed the appointment of a consultant to develop the 1W1P. Albright noted that when the group met in September 2017, it was agreed to have HEI as the consultant. He asked if any of the Committee members had an objection to HEI acting in that capacity. If necessary, BWSR does have a process available to conduct a request for proposals (RFP). Wayne Johnson commented that he was comfortable with HEI assistance. Albright noted that no other company knows the BRRWD as well as HEI, who has produced the BRRWD's past Comprehensive Plans. The group agreed to continue with HEI in the role of Plan Consultant.

Brett Arne noted that the remaining items on the agenda will be addressed by the Planning Team (workplan, timeline, and budget). These items will come back to the Policy Committee for approval at their next meeting. Albright noted that agenda items for the next meeting would also include formalization of the Planning Team members and Advisory Committee appointments. Draft agenda packets will be distributed to the Committee members prior to the next meeting.

The Policy Committee agreed to schedule their next meeting for Friday, May 4, 2018, at 9:00 AM in the Barnesville office. The meeting was adjourned at 11:05 AM.