

# ***BUFFALO-RED RIVER WATERSHED DISTRICT***

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## **BUFFALO-RED RIVER WATERSHED DISTRICT One Watershed, One Plan Initial Planning Kickoff Meeting September 28, 2018**

The One Watershed, One Plan (1W1P) Initial Planning Kickoff Meeting was held on Friday, September 28, 2018, at 9:00 AM in the Buffalo-Red River Watershed District (BRRWD) office, located at 1303 4<sup>th</sup> AVE NE, Barnesville, MN.

Policy Committee Members present included Ross Aigner, District Supervisor, Wilkin Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD); Paul Krabbenhoft, District Supervisor, Clay SWCD, Jerome Flottesch, District Supervisor, Becker SWCD; Rick Drevlow, West Otter Tail SWCD Supervisor; Wayne Johnson, Otter Tail County Commissioner; Jay Leitch, BRRWD President; Frank Gross, Clay County Commissioner; Jenny L. Mongeau, Clay County Commissioner, Lyle E. Hovland, Wilkin County Commissioner, and Barry Nelson, Becker County Commissioner.

Planning Team members present included Bruce Albright, BRRWD Administrator, Kathy Fenger, BRRWD Assistant Administrator, Rachel Olm, Scientist, and Matt Jacobson, Watershed Planner/Scientist, Houston Engineering, Inc. (HEI); Peter Mead, District Manager, Becker SWCD; Kevin Kassenborg, District Manager, Clay SWCD; Brad Mergens, District Manager, West Otter Tail SWCD; Don Bajumpaa, District Manager, Wilkin SWCD.

Advisory Committee members present included Jim Grier, Biologist, North Dakota State University (NDSU); Aaron Larsen, Project Manager, West Otter Tail SWCD; and Anthony Nelson and Lynn Foss, Clay SWCD.

Chair Lyle Hovland called the meeting to order at 9:02 AM and asked the group to introduce themselves.

BRRWD Administrator Bruce Albright referred to the meeting handouts and today's meeting agenda. He provided an overview of the BRRWD's work to date on the 1W1P including the formation and functions of the Policy Committee, Planning Team, and Technical/Citizen Advisory Committee. Albright explained that he is in the process of contacting potential members to serve on the Advisory Committee. He reported that the 60-day notification comment period expired on 9/23/18, and we received comments from several agencies. The next meetings to be held will be with the Advisory Committee so they can become familiarized with the 1W1P process.

Rachel Olm, 1W1P Project Lead, HEI, discussed HEI's role in the 1W1P process. Matt Jacobson is the Lead Plan Writer, and Erik Jones is the Project Engineer. Olm noted that HEI, who has been hired to guide the efforts of the planning process, has been involved with several other 1W1Ps around the State, and has developed strategies that should facilitate the process. HEI will provide the technical staff and writers to put together the Plan components, guide the process to manage funding, governance, Plan editing, and technical support.

Albright briefly discussed the difference between the previous BRRWD Revised Watershed Management Plans (RWMP) and the 1W1P effort. In the past, the RWMP was developed as a "comprehensive" plan including all possible watershed issues/solutions. Unlike the RWMP, the 1W1P is an attempt to streamline the process and be more generic, understanding that the Plan's scope is only for a 10-year period. The

BRRWD will be able to utilize the current planning tools, such as LiDAR, Stream Power Index, and the PTMApp, to prioritize our 10-year workplan goals. He explained that once the BRRWD's 1W1P is in place, the State of Minnesota has set aside funding that the BRRWD will use to implement the 1W1P goals.

Using the overhead monitors, Olm gave an overview of the 1W1P process, and how that process will be implemented over the next year. All the local agency/government comprehensive water plans will be consolidated into the new 1W1P based around major watershed boundaries. Olm noted that the first five pilot watersheds have completed their plans. There are seven 2016 grant recipients, six 2017 recipients (including the BRRWD), and nine 2018 grant recipients. She briefly discussed the Minnesota Board of Water and Soil Resources (BWSR) 2017 watershed-based funding pilot program, which is designed to fund best management practices (bmps) implementation in watershed areas that have completed 1W1Ps.

Matt Jacobson, Water Planner/Scientist, HEI, provided an update of the 1W1P process progress. Using the overhead monitors, he noted that it was decided that the 1W1P boundary would coincide with the BRRWD's boundary. He discussed potential community solutions that the 1W1P should be designed to effectively prioritize and implement, including stewardship, local implementation of the Plan, identify implementation cost and benefits, and locally prioritized resources. Jacobson reviewed the three committees that will be implementing the 1W1P: Planning, Advisory (Citizen and Technical), and Policy, and their respective responsibilities. Albright is currently working on organizing the Advisory Committee. He plans to provide a list of potential members for the Policy Committee's approval. Jacobson noted that the Advisory Committee will be encouraged to attend joint meetings to get the benefit of their exchange of ideas/expertise. Jacobson explained that the general public will also be a vital component of the 1W1P process. One of BWSR's requirements is for the District to hold a public kickoff meeting to inform the public about the process and gather their input. At the end of the 1W1P process, the public will be invited to provide comments on the completed draft Plan. Albright noted that because of the size of the BRRWD, we might consider holding a series of meetings across the District to make it possible for more citizens to learn about the Plan.

Jacobson discussed the meeting schedules for the various committees: Planning Team-monthly, Advisory Committee-bi-monthly, and the Policy Committee-bi-monthly and as-needed for decision making. Albright noted that the office staff is preparing meeting minutes. Jacobson explained the meeting approach process: Meeting 1-introduce items; Meetings 2 and 3-debate and discuss items; Meetings 3 and 4-Decide. After the four-meeting process and decisions are made, there should be no more opportunities to change it, which helps to keep the planning process on track. Albright noted that the Planning Team members will be welcome to participate in any meetings that are held with the Advisory and Policy Committees.

Paul Krabbenhoft and Jerome Flottesch both commented that the Policy Committee needs the input from both the Advisory Committee and Planning Team to make good decisions. Jacobson added that the meeting minutes will also be a valuable tool for keeping everyone informed to assure good decision making. Olm commented that receiving input from a variety of groups will make it possible to create a Plan that will have technical and public support. Jacobson discussed how multiple meetings could be scheduled on the same day, and then multiple items could be addressed that same day.

Jacobson discussed the Plan Benchmarks and Timelines. The 1W1P is expected to be completed in approximately 1.5 years, wrapping up in April of 2020. Three major landmarks need to be met: aggregate past local water plan information and prioritize issues, set measurable goals for the Plan, and develop the Plan's implementation schedule. During this time, two public meetings should be held at the beginning and end of the process. BWSR has 90 days to review and approve the draft Plan. Following Plan approval, Albright noted that a new team will be organized to provide oversight of the Plan implementation. Jacobson pointed out that the current Committees/Teams would remain in place to act in a supervisory role, as well.

Jim Grier asked if BWSR will provide guidance throughout the Plan development process. Jacobson said that BWSR does provide guidance during the process. BWSR would interact with the Planning Team and the Advisory Committee. Brett Arne, BWSR Board Conservationist, has already been involved in the process from a State perspective to be sure the Plan follows statutory requirements.

Jacobson discussed which data sources will be used to assemble information to incorporate into the Plan: Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL)/Watershed Restoration and Protection Strategies (WRAPS) information, local government/agency plans, modeling and reports prepared for the watershed, and responses from the 60-day notification letter. These sources will be organized into three levels: resource categories, concerns, and issues. Resource categories are considered resources that can be managed: surface waters; local development and land stewardship; management, coordination and funding; groundwater; fish and wildlife habitat; and local knowledge base and technical capacity. Each resource concern will have one or many "issues". During the public and committee meetings, these resource issues will be narrowed down to the local priorities, as they will become the focus of the Plan's initial implementation efforts. The first step in the prioritization process will occur during the Public Kickoff Event where the public will rank resources. The Planning Team and Advisory Committee will also provide input on prioritization. After review of all the data, the Policy Committee makes the final determination about which priorities can be addressed in the 10-year life span of the Plan and will be included in the Plan.

Jacobson discussed the need to set measurable goals for the locally prioritized resources included in the Plan so that we can document that the strategies and actions are actually improving those resources. Documentation could be obtained by input from agencies reviews and public comment at meetings. As an example, Olm noted that some watershed districts have opted to publish measurable goal factsheets as a means of communicating their goals to policy makers and the general public.

Krabbenhoft asked if the BRRWD could use the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency's (MPCA) measurable TMDL reductions as a goal. Olm explained how MPCA's targeted goals could be implemented for each individual watershed within the BRRWD. Albright noted that the State is focused on the 1W1Ps being primarily water quality plans, but the watershed districts in the Red River Basin have many other "issues", especially flood damage reduction, that will also be addressed in the 1W1P. The group discussed issue ranking, including the development of an issues table to be used to catalogue all the issues that are impacting the natural resources within the BRRWD.

Flottemesch observed that it was important to be aware that the issues ranking will vary throughout the BRRWD. Olm noted that the issues table will be ranked according to the BRRWD planning regions. Albright commented that one of the keys to the 1W1P effort that we must remember is that all landowners/regions throughout the BRRWD are "all in this together".

Peter Mead commented that the 1W1P should be more than just a water quality plan. Jacobson mentioned that one watershed district set a goal of addressing 10% of the sediment impairments in each of their "management areas" as a realistic goal for the 10-year life span of their plan. He explained that actions can be put in place to address multiple impacts on different issues.

Once the actions/issues are identified, all the information will be summarized in the targeted implementation schedule that will include type of action, location, leader and partners, timeline, measurable goal, and target location. Jacobson explained that the 1W1P should designate where to apply best management practices (bmps) to produce the most impact. Using tools such as the Prioritize, Target, and Measure Application (PTMAApp), problem areas can be identified, and conservation practices can be put into action. Olm discussed strategies that could be used to allocate funds to maximize plan implementation. She suggested that the BRRWD could develop strategies for funding agreements with the local governmental units (LGUs) like the Counties and SWCDs, to address the priority goals and issues.

The group took a five-minute break.

Jacobson presented an overview of the participation plan and meeting schedule. Olm noted that the group will be asked to come to an agreement regarding the meeting schedule. Jacobson gave an overview of the draft Participation Plan. Items included in the draft include Plan Background, targeted Audience and Roles: Policy Committee, Advisory Committee, Planning Team, General Public; Intent for Stakeholder Involvement in Plan Development, the Tools for Stakeholder Involvement, and Conduct of the Committee Members. The document also included lists of the names/contact information for the various committees, and a plan development timeline. Olm noted that the planning timeline is aggressive and might have to be adjusted as we go forward. She asked the group to comment on any concerns they see with the Participation Plan and acknowledge an informal consensus that the plan development is moving forward in the right direction.

Albright commented on the Participation Plan, noting that the Committee members are familiar with the roles and didn't think there would be anything new that they couldn't handle. He thought that the structure looked fine to him.

Grier asked which committee is responsible for the plan writing, meeting scheduling, etc. Olm said that as the Plan writing consultants, HEI is responsible for taking ideas from the groups during the meeting discussions and incorporating them into the draft plan, which is subject to review by the Planning Team and Policy Committee. She discussed their use of a "comment response table" process for each plan section component as it is addressed. Jacobson noted that the Committee members won't need to be concerned about editing/proofing comments, which will be addressed in the final draft by professional copy editors. Albright noted that the BRRWD office staff is preparing the meeting minutes. Meeting materials will be distributed 10 days before scheduled meetings. HEI will be responsible for plan content and tracking comments received during committee and public meetings.

Krabbenhoft asked about the Plan timeline and how we should proceed since it appears the plan development is already behind schedule. He felt that it is the Policy Committee's responsibility to make sure the Plan is on schedule. There was general discussion about member availability during harvest, etc. Olm commented that the goal timeline will probably have to be adjusted. Albright noted that the Planning Team will be responsible to update/address the timeline delays, and then the proposed changes will come back to the Policy Committee for approval. Olm also suggested that HEI could provide a timeline update at Planning Team and Policy Committee meetings. The group had an extended discussion regarding this issue and possible strategies to keep the process moving forward on schedule.

The group considered arriving at a consensus regarding the Participation Plan prior to it going to the Policy Committee for formal approval. Chair Hovland asked if there was any further discussion. Krabbenhoft asked about the comment process for the Participation Plan. Olm said that if the comments would change the intent of the information in the document, then the comments should be discussed at this meeting, or if the comments are more editorial, then he could discuss it with her or Jacobson after the meeting. Grier commented that the meeting minutes will be critical to the process. Given no further comments or discussion, the group agreed that the Participation Plan framework is acceptable.

The group discussed scheduling recurring meeting dates for the various committees. They agreed to schedule the Planning Team meetings for the fourth Wednesday of each month, alternating with either Policy Committee or Advisory Committee meetings in the afternoon. The December meeting date will be adjusted as needed due to the Christmas Holiday.

Using the overhead monitors, Olm introduced the concept of the draft Issues Table. The data aggregation process involved reviewing information from several sources: TMDL information, local water restoration protection strategies documents, local water plans, the 60-day notification comments, etc. The resulting

priority issues were loaded into the Issues Table and sorted into resource categories with the intent of developing an exhaustive comprehensive list of issues that are impacting the respective planning regions within the BRRWD and the watershed as a whole. Olm explained that as part of the prioritization process, the list will be honed down to a more manageable list. Jacobson noted that the Planning Team and Advisory Committee will review this list and make decisions about the final content. He reported that we received 60-Day Notification comments from the State agencies: Minnesota Department of Natural Resources (DNR), BWSR, MPCA, Department of Agriculture, and Department of Health. Flottesch noted that it would be important that the tribal governments should be represented, including the White Earth and Wild Rice Bands.

The comprehensive issues list will be available at the public meetings so that the public can "vote" on issues that are most important to them. Those issues will be catalogued in the issues table. Olm explained that the group should provide feedback today regarding the issues table concept and if the formatting is acceptable. They also need to indicate if the Planning Team should continue to define and assemble the issues into larger groups, and if they want the issues broken down by planning regions subgroups.

Jacobson reviewed the Issues Table, organized by Issue, planning region or watershed-wide focus, resource concerns, comments, and the data source. The group had a brief discussion regarding other ways to format the Issues Table information. Grier commented that he favored the spreadsheet format as presented, retaining the detailed information. Jacobson explained that the Issues list will be fine tuned as the planning process moves forward. The group would like to have the Issues Table Excel file forwarded to them for their review and comment. Following the review of the group's comments, HEI will work on collapsing/combining the issues prior to disseminating the information publicly. The group also agreed that the Planning Regions should be kept as an issue locator for now.

The group discussed scheduling the Public Kickoff Meeting, which is a BWSR requirement for the 1W1P to document public involvement in the Planning process. Olm suggested holding the meeting in early November or early December after the Issues Table comments have been processed, and harvest is complete. Albright commented that it might be more reasonable to wait until next fall when we have more of the Plan ready for public review. Jacobson suggested an earlier date might provide for more timely public input on the issues in the initial stages of the 1W1P process. Jacobson explained that a meeting framework that has worked well for other Watershed Districts is an open house to introduce the 1W1P concept to the public with food and refreshments. Maps would be set up around the room with the Issues Table available nearby. Using markers, the attendees are encouraged to vote for or write in the issues they feel are important in their region. Albright commented that the Issues Table will need to be more complete to make public input more useful. He suggested that notices should be sent to the BRRWD Citizen Advisory Committee members, Township officials, and newspapers, radio, etc. Grier suggested holding a press conference in Moorhead. Discussion continued about ways to promote the Kickoff Meeting to encourage public participation. Krabbenhoft suggested that if the meeting promotional materials stressed that we are looking for input on the issues, not just announcing another informational meeting about 1W1P. Advertising ideas included holding a press conference, website link to information for feedback, TV advertisement, fliers placed in public sites like elevators, etc. Olm summarized the discussion by observing that the group agreed to hold one initial Kickoff meeting in the BRRWD office yet this year where the 1W1P will be introduced and where opportunities to give Issues related input will be provided. The Planning Team will discuss this issue at their next meeting and make a recommendation to the Policy Committee for a final decision.

Jacobson provided a brief overview of the current draft Plan Outline. Copies were distributed to the group for their review. He noted that Item 2, Identification and Prioritization of Resources and Issues is a major component of the plan, and the Committees will be asked to decide how detailed this component should be: only watershed-wide issues or broken down by planning regions. He also discussed Item 3, Establishment of Measurable Goals. The Plan will use protection and restoration strategies to achieve water quality measurable goals, according to State supported approach, on a regional basis. Albright commented that the

Plan might not need to go into regional detail for both Items. Olm commented that the plan could be organized by issues with regional variations. The regional issues could be documented in Item 4, Targeted Implementation Schedule. Item 5, Implementation Programs, addresses broad programs that would be used to administer and fund the actions in the implementation phase. Olm explained that the purpose of the Plan is to target the best locations for projects that address the issue-based goals and to guide the implementation effort. The Plan will also help target Accelerated Implementation Grant funding to the identified goals by determining where the most cost-effective practices can be implemented on the ground to make progress towards the stated goals. The Plan could also predict how much the BRRWD would need in funding to complete all the goals in the 10-year life span of the Plan, which would be useful when estimating funding needs for BWSR's Biennial Budget Request. Bajumpaa noted that the Plan won't replace the County evaluation schedules. Kassenborg asked if there is an evaluation schedule for the 1W1P. Olm said there are annual assessments and a 5-year evaluation worked into the Plan. Jacobson recapped the Plan Outline discussion by saying that the one significant change the group requested was to remove the regional details from Items 3 and 4.

Olm explained that the Plan Outline was distributed for the group's review and will be revisited with the Policy Committee for approval to be sure the Plan development is moving in the direction the Committees intend. It will also be submitted to BWSR for review and comment once it's finalized and approved by the Policy Committee.

There being no further comments, Chair Hovland adjourned the meeting.