

**BOARD OF WATER AND SOIL RESOURCES
520 LAFAYETTE ROAD NORTH
LOWER-LEVEL BOARD ROOM
ST. PAUL, MN 55155
THURSDAY, DECEMBER 14, 2023**

BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT:

Joe Collins, Jill Crafton, Jayne Hager Dee, Kurt Beckstrom, Mike Runk, Neil Peterson, Rich Sve, Lori Cox, Ted Winter, Kelly Kirkpatrick, Eunice Biel, Todd Holman, Ron Staples, Mark Zabel, Katrina Kessler, MPCA; Peder Kjeseth, MDA; Steve Robertson, MDH; Sarah Strommen, DNR

BOARD MEMBERS ABSENT:

Joel Larson, University of Minnesota Extension, LeRoy Ose

STAFF PRESENT:

John Jaschke, Rachel Mueller, Tom Gile, Travis Germundson; Lucy Dahl, Eric Forward, Jen Swartz, Sharon Doucette, Kristina Geiger, Kevin Roth, Sara Reagan, Jenny Gieseke, Don Bajumpaa, Dave Weirens, Jennifer Hahn; Annie Felix-Gerth, Julie Westerlund, Ryan Hughes, Darren Mayers, Karli Swenson, Bill Penning, John Voz, Marcey Westrick, Dusty VanThuyne, Udai Singh

OTHERS PRESENT:

Jeff Berg, MDA; Brian Martinson, AMC; Jan Voit, Minnesota Watersheds; Mike Schultz, MACD, LeAnn Buck, MASWCD; Troy Daniell, NRCS; Steve Barrows, Crow Wing County; Jamie Beyer, BdSWCD; Terry Jeffery, Jesse Martus

Chair Todd Holman called the meeting to order at 9:01 AM

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

**
23-62 ADOPTION OF AGENDA - Moved by Rich Sve, seconded by Joe Collins, to adopt the agenda as presented. *Motion passed on a roll call vote.*

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23-63 MINUTES OF OCTOBER 25, 2023 BOARD MEETING – Moved by Kurt Beckstrom, seconded by Jayne Hager Dee, to approve the minutes of October 25, 2023, as circulated. *Motion passed on a roll call vote.*

PUBLIC ACCESS FORUM

No members of the public provided comments to the board.

INTRODUCTION OF NEW STAFF

Lucy Dahl introduced two new Easement Acquisition Specialists Eric Forward and Jen Swartz. Sharon Doucette introduced Kristina Geiger, Program Analyst; Sumbal Rana, Assistant Program Analyst; Kevin Roth, Easement Programs Coordinator; and Sara Reagan, Easement Programs Coordinator. Jenny Gieseke introduced Don Bajumpaa, PRAP Coordinator.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST DECLARATION

Chair Holman read the statement:

“A conflict of interest, whether actual, potential, or perceived, occurs when someone in a position of trust has competing professional or personal interests, and these competing interests make it difficult to fulfill professional duties impartially. At this time, members are requested to declare conflicts of interest they may have regarding today’s business. Any member who declares an actual conflict of interest must not vote on that agenda item. All actual, potential, and perceived conflicts of interest will be announced to the board by members or staff before any vote.”

REPORTS

Chair & Administrative Advisory Committee – Chair Todd Holman reported the committee has not met. Stated Rich Sve was recognized for the Minnesota Counties President’s award. Dakota SWCD was awarded the 2023 Outstanding Conservation Award where Jayne Hager Dee is a member of.

Lori Cox thanked agencies that participated in panels at conferences, appreciated the time they put into it.

Executive Director’s Report - John Jaschke reported the Minnesota Association of Soil and Water Conservation District (MASWCD) held their conference this week and the Minnesota Watersheds organization held their conference the week before in Alexandria. Stated Jan Voit couldn’t be here today and passed along her thanks to all the participants for their assistance in making their annual conference a success. Stated the Association of Minnesota Counties (AMC) also held their annual conference. AMC and BWSR presented a Conservation Award to Pennington County.

BWSR presented Employee of the Year Awards to Michael Hayman, Program Manager at Minnehaha Creek Watershed District and Skip Langer, Manager at Olmsted SWCD.

John stated they have started preparing legislative proposals. Reminder from Jenny Gieseke we are getting closer to the end of our Strategic Plan input process, survey was sent out to solicit feedback.

John reviewed the Day of Packet that included an update to the LGRWR plan, Campaign Finance Discloser letter, Org chart, and the Conflict of Interest form. Noted there are no Snapshot articles included for December.

Audit and Oversight Committee – Joe Collins reported they will be meeting in January.

Dispute Resolution and Compliance Report – Rich Sve reported they have not met. Travis Germundson reported there are presently eight appeals pending. There have been five new appeals filed since the last board meeting. No decisions have been made. Travis provided a Buffer Compliance Status Update.

Lori Cox asked about the numbers being different than what was in the packet. Travis stated the numbers have recently updated.

Grants Program & Policy Committee – Mark Zabel reported there is one item on the agenda for approval today.

RIM Reserve Committee – Jayne Hager Dee reported they met November 13th and have items on the agenda for today.

Water Management & Strategic Planning Committee – Joe Collins reported they met in November and will have an item on the agenda today.

Wetland Conservation Committee – Jill Crafton reported they met and are focusing on tracking more high-quality wetlands.

Buffers, Soils & Drainage Committee – Dave Weirens reported Tom Gile is working on scheduling a meeting in January.

Drainage Work Group (DWG) – Neil Peterson and Tom Gile reported the full DWG met on November 16th. The group discussed multiple concepts for the Broader 103E notification conversations, which have taken place through the year to that point. The general direction is for Tom to develop a concept which better defines 103E notice terms via 103E definitions and then develop a section of 103E on notification process. That framework may eventually lead to discussions of adapting the various parts of 103E, which call for notice to be more uniform in their design.

This process is separate but related to the “Registry concepts” and discussion. A subcommittee of the DWG has been established consisting of 7 members, which will further go into the ideas and concepts around additional notification procedures in 103E including a drainage registry portal concept.

The First Draft of the Outlet Adequacy Subcommittee report was provided to the DWG and Rita Weaver walked the group through the contents of the report. The report has been finalized by the committee and was provided prior to the December Drainage Work Group meeting.

Two additional meetings were set to focus on specific aspects of the DWG Outlet Adequacy Subcommittee report during November and early December. These meetings may not include full DWG participation but those with interest and availability on specific topics were welcome to attend. Dates are also held for two more such focused meetings if needed.

The DWG members also briefly spoke on the Runoff and Sediment Delivery Option for repair costs, which currently exists in 103E but is set to sunset in July of 2024. The DWG is considering extending the sunset date for an additional 5 years.

The DWG is meeting today December 14th at 11:00 a.m. and will be discussing these topics and the intention is to provide some direction for the Legislative Report, which is due to chairs and ranking members of the House of Representative, Senate committees and divisions with jurisdiction over environment and natural resources by February 1, 2024. A report is expected to be considered by the BWSR Board at the meeting in January to meet this legislatively directed responsibility.

AGENCY REPORTS

Minnesota Department of Agriculture – Peder Kjeseth reported they are close to announcing recipients of their first round of Soil Health Financial Assistant Grants. Stated they will continue to work with partners and the Department of Health regarding nitrates in southeastern Minnesota.

Lori Cox stated she heard the University of Minnesota applied and asked if the Soil Health Grants are for individuals and not institutions. Peder stated they are more individual; they received a lot of requests and might have one or two interesting applications.

Minnesota Department of Health – Steve Robertson reported they responded to the EPA letter on nitrates in southeastern Minnesota. Stated they will continue their pilot grant program for private well protection that allows local entities to address well testing and mitigation needs of private well owners.

Minnesota Department of Natural Resources – Sarah Strommen reported they had the largest single capture of invasive carp. Stated they are paying close attention to the unusual warm dry weather and the lack of snow from a fire danger consideration.

Minnesota Extension – No report was provided.

Minnesota Pollution Control Agency – Katrina Kessler reported that they have been in close contact with other agencies regarding nitrate in the groundwater in southeastern Minnesota and are committed to accelerating the efforts. Stated she attended a Nutrient Hypoxia Task Force meeting with 11 other states that contribute to the Gulf of Mexico. Stated they released the draft 2024 Impaired Waters List and it's on public notice through April.

Ted Winter asked how many counties are involved in southeastern Minnesota. Commissioner Kessler reported there are eight counties.

ADVISORY COMMENTS

Association of Minnesota Counties – Brian Martinson reported they held their annual conference last week. They've been coordinating and hosting several meetings of the Local Government Water Roundtable with partners from Watersheds and Soil and Water Conservation Districts. A lot of the discussion has been focused on the Clean Water Fund.

Minnesota Association of Conservation District Employees – No report was provided.

Minnesota Association of Soil & Water Conservation Districts – LeAnn Buck thanked everyone for their participation at their annual conference.

Board Members thanked LeAnn for her work and everything that went into the conference.

Minnesota Association of Townships – Eunice Biel reported they hosted their annual conference last weekend in St. Cloud.

Minnesota Watersheds – No report was provided. John Jaschke stated they also held their annual conference.

Natural Resources Conservation Service – John Jaschke stated Troy Daniell wanted to pass on that what Minnesota does is possible because of the strong local conservation network. Stated he is interested in helping respond to the nitrates issue in southeastern Minnesota.

Jill Crafton stated Tom Gile did a good job at the Conservation Drainage Session.

Steve Robertson stated NRCS will receive funding over the next several years for conservation programs and its good to hear of their commitment to help coordinate and participate.

Chair Holman called a recess at 10:29 a.m. and called the meeting back to order at 10:39 a.m.

Ron Staples left the meeting at 10:35 a.m.

COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATIONS

Grants Program and Policy Committee

CWF FY 24 competitive grant application recommendations – Annie Felix-Gerth presented CWF FY 24 competitive grant application recommendations.

On June 29, 2023 the Board adopted Board Order #23-40, which authorized staff to conduct a request for proposals from eligible local governments for Clean Water Fund projects in the following program categories: Projects and Practices, & Drinking Water. Applications for the FY2024 Clean Water Fund Competitive Grants were accepted from June 29 through August 24, 2023. Local governments submitted 64 applications requesting \$23,516,843.50 in Clean Water Funds. BWSR staff conducted multiple processes to review and score applications and involved staff from other agencies to develop the proposed recommendations for grant awards per the attached spreadsheets. On November 20, the Grants Program and Policy Committee made a recommendation to the full Board. A draft order is attached based on that recommendation of the Grants Program and Policy Committee.

Lori Cox asked if there were distinct projects in the allocation tables between projects and practices and drinking water or if there are some working in concert with each other. Annie stated there is some intermingling.

In the Drinking Water Allocation Table with language that says up to 20%, Lori asked if these were the only ones that came in and if they were all selected. Annie stated there were more funds available than what was applied for in this sub-category. Stated there may have been one that was ineligible, but the others were all recommended for funding.

Jill Crafton noted you can see the point value in the table.

John Jaschke stated a reminder that while voting to note if there is a conflict or not.

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23-64

Moved by Kurt Beckstrom, seconded by Ted Winter, to approve the CWF FY 24 competitive grant application recommendations. ***Motion passed on a roll call vote.***

Water Management and Strategic Planning Committee

Nonpoint Priority Funding Plan Revision – Julie Westerlund presented Nonpoint Priority Funding Plan Revision

BWSR adopted the first version of the Nonpoint Priority Funding Plan (NPPF) in 2014. Subsequent updates did not change the fundamental elements – which laid out a vision for the transformation to watershed-based planning and funding. That vision has largely been realized over the past decade. Legislation in 2019 allowed BWSR to establish alternative timelines or content for the NPPF in consideration of the watershed transition (locally driven and state supported planning and non-competitive funding for plan implementation) and connections to the Clean Water Council’s strategic plan. This order incorporates elements of a previous board order (21-60), allowing for additional time to complete the NPPF revision.

Neil Peterson left the meeting at 10:55 a.m.

Ted Winter asked when the Water Council’s Strategic Plan will be complete. Julie stated they are aiming for February.

Lori Cox asked what the hold back is for having a timeline and a cutoff. Julie stated they would like to allow more time to engage with agency partners and they may need more time to be able to participate. John stated this plan applies to agencies and how the State utilizes funds, so they want to make sure they have a chance to participate.

Joe Collins stated the committee is asking for a status report at the June meeting.

Mark Zabel stated he would like it to be more specific and directly accountable in the next version.

Jill Crafton stated she appreciated the comments.

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23-65

Moved by Joe Collins, seconded by Mike Runk, to approve the Nonpoint Priority Funding Plan Revision. ***Motion passed on a roll call vote.***

Northern Region Committee

Mississippi River – Brainerd Comprehensive Watershed Management Plan – Ryan Hughes and Steve Barrows presented Mississippi River – Brainerd Comprehensive Watershed Management Plan.

The Mississippi River – Brainerd Watershed (MRBW) is in central Minnesota and spans 1,687 square miles which contains 2,100 miles of river and over 300 lakes. This watershed is rich with natural resources from the Mississippi River and the land cover transitions from forests to agriculture over four counties: Aitkin, Crow Wing, Morrison, and Todd. The planning group received a grant through the One Watershed, One Plan program in 2021 to begin the process of developing a comprehensive watershed management plan. On September 29, 2023, BWSR received the final Plan, a recording of the required public hearing, and copies of all written comments pertaining to the Plan for final State review. The planning partnership has responded to all comments received during the 60-day review period and incorporated appropriate revisions to the final Plan.

BWSR staff completed its review and subsequently found the Plan meets the requirements of Minnesota Statutes and BWSR Policy.

On November 1, 2023, the Northern Regional Committee met to review and discuss the Plan. The Committee's decision was to recommend approval of the Mississippi River - Brainerd Watershed Comprehensive Watershed Management Plan as submitted to the full Board per the attached draft Order.

Joe Collins and Katrina Kessler stated they thought this was a good plan.

Lori Cox noted on page six in the Executive Summary, the Ag Land Management Process Production states of implementing 7,130 acres of agricultural best management practices (BMP) and asked if that is a percentage or what the total is in the area. Bethany Chaplin stated they looked at acres of agricultural land that they could work on to put BMP's and made a 10-year goal out of those total acres.

John Jaschke thanked Steve Barrows for his work.

**
23-66 Moved by Kurt Beckstrom, seconded by Rich Sve, to approve the Mississippi River – Brainerd Comprehensive Watershed Management Plan. ***Motion passed on a roll call vote.***

Wetland Conservation Committee

Local Government Roads Wetland Replacement Program Easement Acquisition Payment Rate – Les Lemm and Dennis Rodacker presented Local Government Roads Wetland Replacement Program Easement Acquisition Payment Rate.

The Board adopted the “Wetland Credit Acquisition Plan - Local Government Roads Wetland Replacement Program” (Plan) on March 27, 2019, through Board Order 19-18 as an overall framework for acquiring wetland credits as funds are appropriated for the Local Government Roads Wetland Replacement Program (LGRWRP). Due to recent increases in farmland values, the long-term risks and responsibilities associated with wetland bank sites, and the existence of other more financially attractive alternatives, it has become increasingly challenging to attract and retain quality wetland restoration projects sufficient to meet BWSR's statutory obligation to provide wetland replacement credits for qualifying local government road projects. The 2019 plan sets the easement sign-up payment rate at 125% of the Reinvest in Minnesota (RIM) program per-acre payment rate. Staff are proposing to increase the program's easement payment rate to 150% of the RIM per-acre payment rates to remain competitive in attracting high quality wetland restoration projects.

Joe Collins asked when looking for land in the metro area if they've gone to the Port Authority in St. Paul or larger companies that control a lot of land to look for potential wetland sites. Les stated they do look within the metro area. Dennis stated they have not contacted the Port Authority but do post it. Stated it's a good suggestion.

Steve Robertson asked if the idea behind the change to the multi-year is to broaden the appeal program to allow the recipients to spread the tax consequences over multiple years. Dennis acknowledged that is a consideration.

Lori Cox stated a gap occurs between what is in statute for one area to say they must fulfill this but they're hoping for the voluntary of it being fulfilled. Stated it's a difficult position for them to be in.

Mark Zabel stated this is very encouraging.

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23-67 Moved by Ted Winter, seconded by Jill Crafton, to approve the Local Government Roads Wetland Replacement Program Easement Acquisition Payment Rate. *Motion passed on a roll call vote.*

RIM Reserve Committee

Reinvest in Minnesota (RIM) Easement Enhancement Program – Sharon Doucette presented Reinvest in Minnesota (RIM) Easement Enhancement Program

ML 2023 Chapter 60, Article 1, Section 4(o) designated “\$2,000,000 the first year and \$2,000,000 the second year to enhance existing easements established under Minnesota Statutes, sections 103F.501 to 103F.531. Enhancements are for the purposes of climate resiliency, adaptation, and carbon sequestration and include but are not limited to increasing biodiversity and mitigating the effects of rainfall and runoff events.” This program will inspect and prioritize vegetative and structural enhancements on existing easements to improve easement lands resiliency, provide for added carbon sequestration, increase biodiversity for current and future climates as well as assist in mitigating larger rainfall events. Structural project examples include, but are not limited to, modifying outlet structures or increasing the footprint of existing wetland restorations to increase capacity. Vegetative work examples include, but are not limited to, pollinator planting and enhanced biodiversity of existing vegetation on site.

Ted Winter asked if this was for existing RIM projects already happening. Sharon stated they will be for existing projects.

Chair Holman asked if this cost is covered by the existing RIM support dollar or if there is additional funding that covers the technical assistance work. Sharon stated engineering staff have reached out to districts and if they are interested in participating and assisting on the technical assistance side for the construction projects, they would find a way to fund them through normal work order process under their joint power’s agreement. If they step in to help the landowner with vegetation, they’ll also work out something similar.

Jill Crafton asked if there are metrics they are looking to measure in ecological enhancement. Sharon stated engineering have some things they are able to measure by improvements to the outlet structures and how they can enhance the wetland restorations. They haven’t had conversation about what their metrics are and how sites will be selected on the vegetation side.

**
23-68 Moved by Jayne Hager Dee, seconded by Joe Collins, to approve the Reinvest in Minnesota (RIM) Easement Enhancement Program. *Motion passed on a roll call vote.*

Kelly Kirkpatrick left the meeting at 12:13 p.m.

RIM Easement Alteration Request for MnDOT Highway 93 Improvements – Easement #72-01-17-01 – Karli Swenson presented RIM Easement Alteration Request for MnDOT Highway 93 Improvements – Easement #72-01-17-01.

The MN Department of Transportation is undertaking the reconstruction of a segment of State Highway 93 from the intersection of US Highway 169 to the City of Henderson. This reconstruction will include a significant grade raise of the roadway to mitigate the reoccurring road closures due to flooding of the Minnesota and Rush Rivers along this corridor. With the roadway being raised, additional right of way is

needed to maintain standard slopes and ditches for the safety of the traveling public. MnDOT is requesting the release of 0.98 acres from RIM easement 72-01-17-01 (known as MnDOT Parcel 40) to accommodate for the new right-of-way.

The supporting map shows the existing RIM easement and the area proposed for release.

BWSR's Easement Alteration Policy for public benefitted projects allows for release of land from the easement if the public entity compensates BWSR for the released acres at two times the current RIM payment rate, plus reimbursement of state funds paid for conservation practices, and a \$500 administrative fee. MnDOT has agreed to compensate BWSR according to the following calculations:

$(2x \text{ current CREP cropland rate for Henderson Township}) = \$10602.05/\text{acre} \times 2 = \$21,204.1/\text{acre}$

$\$21,204.1 \times 0.98 \text{ acres to be released} = \$20,780.02$

$\$20,780.02 \times 20.05\% \text{ (BWSR portion of CREP payment)} = \$4,166.39$

Cost for conservation practice payments paid by state on release area: $\$62.06/\text{acre}$ (BWSR portion) for direct seeding of hardwoods $\times 0.98 \text{ acres} = \60.62

Application fee for easement alteration request = \$500

Total cost due to BWSR for Easement Alteration: \$4,727.01

This easement, having been funded through the Outdoor Heritage Fund, requires approval by the Lessard-Sams Outdoor Heritage Council prior to this release. The easement alteration request was presented to the Council at their November 16, 2023 meeting. OHF dollars originally spent to acquire these acres will be returned to the fund, with the additional dollars (less the \$500 processing fee) to be used towards future RIM wetland easement acquisition.

Recommendation

Easement staff recommends approval of the easement alteration request, to amend easement 72-01-17-01 to release 0.98 acres, as proposed, to accommodate improvements to State Highway 93 for the benefit and safety of the public.

**
23-69 Moved by Ted Winter, seconded by Mark Zabel, to approve the RIM Easement Alteration Request for MnDOT Highway 93 Improvements – Easement #72-01-17-01. ***Motion passed on a roll call vote.***

RIM Easement Alteration Request for MnDOT Highway 93 Improvements – Easement #72-04-93-01 – Karlie Swenson presented RIM Easement Alteration Request for MnDOT Highway 93 Improvements – Easement #72-04-93-01.

The MN Department of Transportation is undertaking the reconstruction of a segment of State Highway 93 from the intersection of US Highway 169 to the City of Henderson. This reconstruction will include a significant grade raise of the roadway to mitigate the reoccurring road closures due to flooding of the Minnesota and Rush Rivers along this corridor. With the roadway being raised, additional right of way is needed to maintain standard slopes and ditches for the safety of the traveling public. MnDOT is requesting the release of 0.4 acres from RIM easement 72-04-93-01 (known as MnDOT Parcel 32) to accommodate for the new right-of-way.

The supporting map shows the existing RIM easement and the area proposed for release.

BWSR's Easement Alteration Policy for public benefitted projects allows for release of land from the easement if the public entity compensates BWSR for the released acres at two times the current RIM payment rate, plus re-imbusement of state funds paid for conservation practices, and a \$500 administrative fee. MnDOT has agreed to compensate BWSR according to the following calculations:

Current RIM payment rate for Henderson Township: \$8218.64/acre

2x current rim rate = 16,437.28 x 0.4 acres = \$6574.91 for release per BWSR Policy

Application fee per BWSR policy = \$500

No State funds were spent on conservation practices on this parcel.

Total cost for Easement Alteration request of easement 72-04-93-01 = \$7074.91

Recommendation

Easement staff and the RIM Reserve Committee recommend approval of the easement alteration request, to amend easement 72-04-93-01 to release 0.4 acres, as proposed, to accommodate improvements to State Highway 93 for the benefit and safety of the public.

**
23-70 Moved by Rich Sve, seconded by Mark Zabel, to approve the RIM Easement Alteration Request for MnDOT Highway 93 Improvements – Easement #72-04-93-01. ***Motion passed on a roll call vote.***

Reinvest in Minnesota (RIM) Reserve Critical Shorelands Program – Bill Penning presented Reinvest in Minnesota (RIM) Reserve Critical Shorelands Program.

ML 2023 Chapter 40, Article 2, Section 6(k) designated funds “to purchase permanent conservation easements to protect lands adjacent to public waters with good water quality but that are threatened with degradation.” This project will utilize RIM easements to protect priority parcels in the Rum, Crow Wing, Pine and Mississippi River (Brainerd) Watersheds, important and threatened tributaries to the Mississippi River and the source water for numerous Twin City and rural communities while providing numerous other benefits. Initial funding for the program was approved by the Board in 2015 (Pine River), 2017 (Crow Wing River), 2019 and 2021 (Rum River). With the exception of 2021, those funds have been allocated and there is a waiting list of landowners who are interested in getting into the program. This resolution adds the Mississippi River (Brainerd) watershed, makes funds available to all 4 watersheds, authorizes staff to reallocate 2021 funds to ensure they get used before they expire, and to utilize new and existing funds to continue to implement this program.

**
23-71 Moved by Jayne Hager Dee, seconded by Joe Collins, to approve the Reinvest in Minnesota (RIM) Reserve Critical Shorelands Program. ***Motion passed on a roll call vote.***

Reinvest in Minnesota Reserve – Working Lands Program – Bill Penning presented Reinvest in Minnesota Reserve – Working Lands Program.

Minnesota Laws of 2019, Chapter 2, Article 1, Section 4(d) allowed for up to \$1,000,000 to be used to acquire working lands easements. These initial funds were used to establish a RIM Working Lands Pilot Program. With these funds, staff, working with partners, developed eligibility requirements, process, procedures, payment rates and cost share rates and began taking applications for the program. Recently, Minnesota Laws of 2023, Ch. 40, Art. 1, Sec. 2, subd. 2(e) appropriated an additional \$2,709,000 to the program which is now ready to move from a pilot to a fully operational program.

This resolution authorizes expenditure of the new funds and implements the program into the future using the process developed during the pilot phase.

Mark Zabel asked if its specific to grazing lands why are we calling it working lands instead of grazing lands. Bill stated at some point they could look at renaming it, the name was used when they were first developing it.

Ted Winter asked if people who enroll in the program will be able to continue grazing like they've done in the past. Bill stated they can continue grazing.

Katrina Kessler asked if there were compliance checks to make sure that they're following their grazing plan. Bill stated the districts do checks and are hoping for help from NRCS staff who have frequent interactions with the landowners and are involved in this program.

Kurt Beckstrom stated he thinks this is a good program.

Jayne asked if we could partner with the Cattleman's Association to promote it. Bill stated some of the districts have already been going to local Cattlemen's Associations.

**
23-72 Moved by Kurt Beckstrom, seconded by Ted Winter, to approve the Reinvest in Minnesota Reserve – Working Lands Program. ***Motion passed on a roll call vote.***

Peder Kjeseth left the meeting at 12:35 p.m.

Reinvest in Minnesota (RIM) Reforestation Program – Bill Penning presented Reinvest in Minnesota (RIM) Reforestation Program.

ML 2022 Chapter 94, Section 2, Subd. 8(j) as amended in ML 2023 Chapter 60, Article 2, Section 14 designated "\$3,318,000. . . to the Board of Water and Soil Resources, in cooperation with soil and water conservation districts, the Mille Lacs Band of Ojibwe, and the Department of Natural Resources, to accelerate tree planting on privately owned, protected lands for water-quality protection and carbon sequestration." The ENRTF project will significantly expand the capacity of tree planting for private landowners in three priority watersheds – the Rum, Long Prairie and Redeye. These three watersheds are in the transitional zone of the state, where the most significant losses of historic forestland cover have occurred. The project budget includes approximately \$1.4M for easement acquisition via RIM in addition to grant funds to SWCDs. The grant funds were previously approved by the board via Board Order 22-42. The program will utilize the ENRTF funds and future funds from the same or other funding sources to accelerate reforestation efforts in Minnesota.

Ted Winter asked what area this is going to be in. Bill stated it will be in the Rum, Long Prairie, and Redeye.

Sarah Strommen noted she appreciated the enhanced collaboration on forest management and tree planting on private and public lands.

Lori Cox thanked them for their work.

**
23-73 Moved by Jayne Hager Dee, seconded by Joe Collins, to approve the Reinvest in Minnesota (RIM) Reforestation Program. ***Motion passed on a roll call vote.***

Reinvest in Minnesota (RIM) Buffalo-Red River Watershed District (BRRWD) Stream Restoration Program – John Voz presented Reinvest in Minnesota (RIM) Buffalo-Red River Watershed District (BRRWD) Stream Restoration Program.

ML 2023, Ch. 40, Art. 1, Sec. 2, subd. 5(d) designated funds to “acquire permanent conservation easements and restore and enhance aquatic and upland habitat associated with the Red River and Buffalo River watersheds”. BWSR and BRRWD are partners on the program. BRRWD, with BWSR’s assistance, will work to secure easements on several straightened stream reaches within BRRWD for restoration as well as restoration of the adjoining riparian habitat corridors.

This resolution authorizes expenditures of the new funds as well as future funds for the same purpose and implements the program using the process developed with BRRWD.

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23-74 Moved by Rich Sve, seconded by Kurt Beckstrom, to approve the Reinvest in Minnesota (RIM) Buffalo-Red River Watershed District (BRRWD) Stream Restoration Program. ***Motion passed on a roll call vote.***

Reinvest in Minnesota (RIM) Reserve Grasslands Program – John Voz presented Reinvest in Minnesota (RIM) Reserve Grasslands Program.

ML 2019, 1st Sp. Session, Ch. 2, Art. 1, Sec. 2, subd. 2(g), ML 2020, Ch. 104, Art. 1, Sec. 2, subd. 2(g), ML 2021, First Sp. Session, Ch. 1, Art. 1, Sec. 2, subd. 2(k), ML 2022, Ch. 77, Art. 1, Sec. 2, subd. 2(b) and ML 2023, Ch. 40, Art. 1, Sec. 2, subd. 2(c) all designated funds to “acquire permanent conservation easements and to restore and enhance grassland habitat.” Staff began implementing the RIM Grasslands program in late 2019/early 2020 acting under Resolution 13-108, Reinvest in Minnesota (RIM) Reserve – Grasslands for the Future Pilot Project. After recent review of the previous resolution, it became clear to staff that the current Grasslands program is operating significantly differently than the program in 2013 and a new resolution was warranted for the current version of the Grasslands Program.

This resolution authorizes expenditures of the new funds, previous funds and future funds for the same purpose and implements the program using the process developed with input from local staff.

Ted asked how many acres are protected in the program. John stated we have about 43 easements throughout the state and are generally at least 25 acres or larger.

Mark Zabel asked if there are endangered species that are protected under regulatory basis by the Endangered Species Act are they then ineligible for RIM. Sharon stated it doesn’t make them ineligible for RIM.

Jayne Hager Dee asked if there is a part of the state that has more of these than others. Sharon stated the priority area is the Minnesota Prairie Plan, which is western to southwestern Minnesota. John stated there are 11 core areas throughout the state.

**
23-75 Moved by Ted Winter, seconded by Lori Cox, to approve the Reinvest in Minnesota (RIM) Reserve Grasslands Program. ***Motion passed on a roll call vote.***

UPCOMING MEETINGS

- Northern Region Committee is scheduled for January 3rd time and location TBD and by MS Teams.
- Southern Region Committee is scheduled for January 5th at 10:00 a.m. in New Ulm and by MS Teams.
- BWSR Board meeting is scheduled for January 24th at 9:00 a.m. in St. Paul and by MS Teams.

Chair Holman adjourned the meeting at 12:50 PM

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'TH', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Todd Holman
Chair