

Local Government Participation in Watershed-based Funding Program Development

In early 2019, the Board of Water and Soil Resources (BWSR) held meetings with local government staff representatives (selected by their respective associations) and BWSR staff (assigned to BWSR's internal Clean Water Team) to jointly develop options for the future Watershed-based Funding Program.

Participants were asked to represent their associations throughout the process by getting feedback on and sharing information about the draft products from a broader group of colleagues.

Materials and feedback from the 2017 pilot Watershed-based Funding (WBF) program were used as starting points for the group's discussions on the future WBF program policy, assurance measures, and funding allocation. For each program element, the group provided ideas and recommendations for further consideration by the BWSR management and board.

Watershed-based Funding Policy Development

The WBF policy sets the program requirements, including eligible activities, recipients, and administration. For this element, the group discussed successes and challenges identified through the pilot WBF program to develop recommendations for a long-term program policy.

Key ideas and recommendations:

- Allow some water quality monitoring for site investigation necessary for implementation.
- Ensure outreach and education activities are clearly eligible for funding.
- Follow the One Watershed, One Plan (1W1P) planning boundaries for allocation to the Seven-county Metropolitan (Metro) area, splitting the Mississippi Twin Cities and Lower Minnesota by their respective rivers (*recommendation from the WBF Metro Stakeholder Forum*).

Watershed-based Funding Assurance Measures

The purpose of the assurance measures is to provide a consistent statewide framework to collect information about how WBF is being used by local watershed partnerships to achieve clean water goals according to their watershed management plans. For this element, the group discussed and provided recommendations on the framework and procedures for collecting assurance measure information.

Key ideas and recommendations:

- Include both quantitative data (mainly compiled from eLINK) and qualitative information (collected through interviews or other means) to capture the situational factors that influence progress of local implementation.

Staff Representatives

- Soil and Water Conservation Districts
- Watershed Districts
- Watershed Management Organizations
- Counties
- BWSR Clean Water Team



24 Participants



3 Facilitated Meetings
March 29, April 26, and May 17, 2019

- Use existing local implementation, advisory groups or preexisting local meetings to collect interview data.
- Be considerate of the level of effort and amount of detail needed to collect information regarding funds leveraged through the WBF program.

Watershed-based Funding Allocation

The WBF allocation formula will describe how BWSR will distribute implementation funds to eligible recipients. In addition to providing input on components of the formula, the group discussed methods to systematically and equitably provide funding to the 1W1P planning areas, and to areas covered by Metro surface water and groundwater management plans.

Key ideas and recommendations:

- Any formula should be transparent and easy to understand.
- Primary factors to consider include:
 - Private lands (used for the pilot WBF allocations outside the Metro)
 - Watershed area (used for the pilot WBF allocations inside the Metro; consider combining with private lands for the formula)
 - Potentially water resource density (e.g. square or linear miles of water resources). For this factor, need to be mindful of: how to quantify or incorporate groundwater into the factor and the potential for increased formula complexity if included. Consider combining with private lands for the formula)
 - Maintain a minimum amount per area as used in pilot WBF (as long as this does not encourage splitting planning boundaries for the purposes of receiving additional funds; consider regardless of other factors in the formula)
- The formula should not attempt to establish priorities or values for water resources; these are best determined at a watershed scale as part of the local planning process.
- To the extent possible, application of the formula should minimally maintain the amounts allocated through the pilot WBF program and at the same time not increase such to create false expectations of unsustainable future funding amounts as the number of participants in 1W1P increases across the state.
- Application of the formula should recognize and consider the general complexity of watershed management in the Metro area by taking into account the existing surface water and groundwater management plans in the Metro and the additional complexity of watershed planning for watersheds

that span the Metro boundary. To the extent possible, application of the formula should encourage or incentivize watershed-wide partnerships spanning the Metro boundary while recognizing the potential for perceptions of unfairness that may occur if funds are distributed in a Metro allocation as well as in an overlapping allocation to a 1W1P area that spans the Metro boundary.



For more information:

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