



## Bassett Creek Watershed Management

### MEMO

To: BCWMC Commissioners and Alternate Commissioners  
From: Laura Jester, Administrator  
Date: August 9, 2022

**Recommendation:** Provide up to \$5,000 per year (for two years) of BCWMC education funding for a shared education position with Hennepin County

BCWMC is a member of the West Metro Water Alliance ([WMWA](#)), a partnership of four watershed organizations (Elm Creek, Shingle Creek, Bassett Creek, and West Mississippi Watershed Management Organizations (WMOs)), who pool their resources to jointly provide education and outreach programming and help cities meet stormwater education requirements. The partnership uses watershed staff (including me), city staff (primarily Plymouth), and one very part time educator (under contract) to accomplish its work. While the partnership works well, it lacks the staff capacity and funding to meet the education needs of the watersheds and cities in the area.

In recent months, the WMWA partners along with the Richfield Bloomington WMO have been working with Hennepin County to develop a pilot program to share an education specialist to better serve our education needs with consistency and efficiency. The staff person hired for this position would be a Hennepin County employee funded through a variety of sources, with most watershed funding coming from State funds granted to each watershed area as Watershed Based Implementation Funds (WBIF) (Table 1). Half of the staff person's time would be dedicated to WMWA and watershed education needs while the other half would fulfill Hennepin County education and technical assistance needs.

This pilot program would meet education and outreach needs, increase technical assistance, provide outreach with residents focused on increasing conservation implementation success through the delivery of practical and interactive conservation education, follow-up technical assistance site visits, and financial assistance to help defray that cost of taking conservation action. This pilot program will include three elements:

- 1.) A limited-duration half-time program coordinator to provide community engagement, education, marketing, and promotion of program elements 2 and 3 as well as other related conservation priorities as defined by the partners (e.g. salt reduction education) through activities like speaking to groups or clubs, tabling at community events, establishing a social media presence, and producing content for distribution via formats like community newspapers and city newsletters. The top priorities of the educator will be coordinating program elements 2 & 3 and associated marketing and outreach. Additional activities will include creating a more general water education and conservation promotion presence. Priorities will be discussed and agreed upon by the funding partners. In general, however, partners share a common vision to grow this work in the model of the [East Metro Water Resource Education Program](#),

while adding and maintaining a focus on residential-scale technical assistance; driving conservation implementation and behavior change; and reaching diverse audiences.

2.) Resident-facing workshops using a model similar to Dakota County's Landscaping for Clean Water program where participants attend workshops and receive technical and financial assistance project installation.

3.) Multi-family housing engagement and project implementation using Metro Blooms' model of Equitable Engagement.

At the Commission meeting in April, the Commission appointed me to officially represent BCWMC at the required "convene meetings" to determine how and where the BCWMC's \$88,000 in WBIF would be allocated. A county representative and two city representatives (Mark Ray and Erick Francis) were also official members of the BCWMC "convene" group. More information on the WBIF and the convene process can be found here: [http://bwsr.state.mn.us/sites/default/files/2021-11/Convene Process Metro WBIF FY22-23 0.pdf](http://bwsr.state.mn.us/sites/default/files/2021-11/Convene%20Process%20Metro%20WBIF%20FY22-23%200.pdf).

The BCWMC convene group held two meetings this summer. At the second meeting on August 8<sup>th</sup>, the group decided to allocate all BCWMC WBIF (nearly \$88,000 over two years) to the shared education position with Hennepin County. Although the funding could be used for BCWMC CIP projects, the \$44,000 per year is a very minimal amount compared to the cost of our typical project. The group agreed the funding would be better utilized filling the current gap in education activities.

Further, the group recommends that the Commission provide up to an additional \$5,000 per year towards the shared education position to help ensure that appropriate funding levels are in place to hire and retain a qualified staff person. The additional \$5,000 would come from the Commission's Education and Outreach Budget which includes \$15,000 in 2023 and in the past was partially used to pay for the Commission's education consultant (who ended her contact in November).

More details will be developed regarding the specific work of the educator and the oversight role of WMWA partners. The county is taking the lead on developing an official budget request and work plan with the MN Board of Water and Soil Resources for the WBIF grant funding.

The WBIF convene group's decision is final and does not need Commission approval. However, I recommend the Commission approve providing up to \$5,000 per year (for two years) of BCWMC education funding for a shared education position with Hennepin County.

Table 1 includes a likely breakdown of funding sources for the shared position. Most watersheds have verbally agreed to this structure and will be making final decisions on funding levels in the coming weeks.

**Table 1. Probable Funding Sources To-Date**

Partner	Contributions	
	2023	2024
WMWA	\$12,000	\$12,000
Shingle/West Miss WBIF	\$22,500	\$22,500
Elm Creek WBIF	\$15,000	\$15,000
Bassett Creek WBIF	\$44,000	\$44,000
Bassett Creek WMC	\$5,000	\$5,000
Richfield-Bloomington WMO WBIF	\$12,500	\$12,500
Hennepin**	\$16,500	\$16,500
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$127,500</b>	<b>\$127,500</b>
<b>Overall Need</b>	<b>\$127,500</b>	<b>\$127,500</b>
Personnel	\$67,500	\$67,500
Direct Costs to Partnership (as scoped)	\$60,000	\$60,000
Additional Funding for Multi-family Housing Project Implementation	*	*

\*Multi-family equitable engagement projects may be eligible for cost share funding from Shingle Creek, West Mississippi, and Elm Creek WMOs. This can include some of the outreach and design elements, which would vary project to project.

\*\*Toward this partnership pilot program. Hennepin County will also hire, manage, support the educator position, and agrees to take on the financial commitment of the other half of this person’s salary to support Hennepin priorities.