



Bassett Creek Watershed Management Commission

MEMO

To: BCWMC Commissioners and Alternate Commissioners
From: Laura Jester, Administrator
Date: February 8, 2024

RE: Appointing Representative to BWSR Watershed Based Implementation Funding Convene Meeting

Within the next several weeks, an official “convene meeting” should be held to determine how and where Watershed Based Implementation Funds (WBIF) allocated to the Bassett Creek watershed area should be spent. The WBIF program utilizes Clean Water Funds to provide a small but consistent source of funds for water quality projects. The program is facilitated by the MN Board of Water and Soil Resources (BWSR) (see program fact sheet attached). In the current biennium, the Bassett Creek Watershed has \$183,256 which must be spent on targeted, prioritized, and measurable activities that are listed in an approved plan’s implementation section and which have a water quality benefit. Hennepin County, cities in the watershed, and the BCWMC are all eligible funding recipients.

The Commission should appoint a representative to participate in the convene meeting and make decisions on funding allocations on behalf of the BCWMC. I have been appointed as the BCWMC representative for convene meetings since the 2017-2019 biennium. This has worked well as I have knowledge about BCWMC projects and programs that could use WBIF funding. I request to be appointed for this WBIF biennium as well. Yesterday the BCWMC Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) appointed two members to officially represent cities: Ben Scharenbroich and Liz Stout. The county will also appoint a representative.

In the last biennium, the Bassett Creek Watershed area received \$87,887 in WBIF funding. This whole amount was used to support the new West Mississippi Water Alliance (WMWA) education coordinator. The BCWMC, Shingle Creek WMC, Elm Creek WMC, West Mississippi WMC, Richfield-Bloomington WMO, and Hennepin County pooled their WBIF funds to create this position. The position, filled by Grace Barcelow, is split between the WMWA education activities and Hennepin County conservation implementation activities. Ms. Barcelow has been working on several education projects on behalf of WMWA since early 2023. It’s likely some of the current Bassett Creek Watershed WBIF would go to continue supporting this position. The additional funds could go towards a BCWMC CIP project, city project, or county project. Representatives at the convene meeting will develop a prioritization process to determine the best use of the funding.

In addition to the attached fact sheet, you can visit BWSR’s website for more information on the WBIF program <https://bwsr.state.mn.us/watershed-based-implementation-funding-program>.

Metro Area Convene Process Guidance for the FY24-25 Watershed Based Implementation Funding (WBIF) Program

The purpose of WBIF is to supplement existing funding to accelerate clean water activities toward advancing Minnesota’s water resources goals through prioritized and targeted cost-effective actions with measurable water quality results.

All eligible activities must have a primary benefit towards water quality. Activities that result in multiple benefits are strongly encouraged. Eligible activities must be identified in the implementation section of a state approved, locally adopted comprehensive watershed management plan developed under Minnesota statutes §103B.101, Subd. 14 or §103B.801, watershed management plan required under §103B.231, county groundwater plan authorized under §103B.255, or a Metro soil and water conservation district enhanced plan as identified in the “Metro Enhanced SWCD Comprehensive Plan Options Guidance Document” (<https://bwsr.state.mn.us/watershed-based-implementation-funding-program>) and authorized under §103C.331.

Twin Cities Metro Area Allocation Map for the Watershed-based Implementation Funding Program



For purposes of this document, the group of participants in each watershed allocation area (see map) will be called a partnership (e.g., Rice Creek partnership or Rum partnership). WBIF is available to all eligible partners within each watershed allocation area.

Convene Meeting Process

The convene meeting process allows the partnership to jointly coordinate on the development of a funding request to BWSR that is prioritized, targeted and measurable. The partnership needs to select a local government entity (or entities) to coordinate and facilitate the convene meeting(s) or request assistance from BWSR by contacting the board conservationist (BC). Each partnership will include one decision-making representative (participant) from each watershed district and/or watershed management organization, soil and water conservation district, county with a current groundwater plan, and up to two decision-making representatives from municipalities within the allocation area.

Municipalities in each allocation area must coordinate prior to the start of the convene process to self-select up to two decision-making representatives. Municipal representatives are expected to

communicate with other municipalities on the solicitation and selection of projects and activities during the process.

The BWSR BC and Clean Water Specialist (CWS) must be invited to convene meetings. The facilitating entity must: 1) take meeting notes that document the general discussion, decisions, and attendees, and 2) share the notes with the partnership soon after each meeting and be made available upon request.

Each partnership must meet at least one time prior to submitting a funding request. Ideally, partnerships will develop a shared understanding of proposed activities during the convene meeting process. In order to improve the efficiency of the convene meeting process, BWSR recommends the following meeting objectives:

1. Determine an overall decision-making process (e.g., majority rules, consensus, informed consent)
2. Pick one of the following methods for selecting activities:
 - Developing a list of potential activities from eligible plans,
 - Dividing funding among eligible entities in an equitable manner,
 - Selecting a few priority waterbodies (lake, streams) and/or groundwater areas to prioritize activities,
 - Using agreed upon criteria to select activities, or
 - Using a process approved by the BWSR Central Region Manager.
3. Select the highest priority, targeted, measurable, and eligible activities to be submitted to BWSR as a funding request (see submittal process below).
4. Confirm which entity will serve as grantee and/or fiscal agent for each selected activity and decide on the source of the 10% required match.

Eligibility

To better understand the eligibility of proposed activities, BWSR recommends that you first refer to the FY24-25 WBIF Policy at <https://bwsr.state.mn.us/grant-program-policies>. If you have questions regarding eligibility, consult with the BWSR BC as early as possible.

The partnership must send the BWSR BC a list of partnership-approved activities prior to submittal of an eLINK funding request. This list should include the project title and description, water resource(s), proposed measurable outcome(s), grant funds requested, plan reference(s), entity requesting funding (grantee), and fiscal agent (if different from grantee). A template is available on the [BWSR WBIF webpage](#). For plan references, please provide the title(s) to the eligible water management plan(s), page number where these are found in the implementation section of the eligible plan(s), and weblink to the referenced plan(s).

Submittal of the Funding Request

Once the activities have been agreed upon by the partnership, each grantee will then be responsible for submitting an eLINK funding request to BWSR (<https://bwsr.state.mn.us/elink>). BWSR may deny the funding request for reasons such as: activities are ineligible according to the WBIF Policy, activities are not identified in the implementation section of an eligible plan, requested amount is inaccurate, the request is incomplete, etc.

Once BWSR approves the eLINK funding request, each grantee is responsible for completing an eLINK

work plan. BWSR must approve the work plan and execute the grant agreement prior to the funds being distributed. Guidance on the eLINK funding request and work plan is at <https://bwsr.state.mn.us/grant-profile-watershed-based-implementation-funding> under “Resources”.

Timeline

- BWSR will hold an informational meeting in January 2024. The recorded meeting will be available on BWSR website.
- Organizations select decision-making representatives for convene meetings
- Partnerships select meeting coordinator/facilitator
- Partnerships hold at least one convene meeting
- Partnerships send the list of partnership-approved activities to BWSR (prior to the submittal of the eLINK funding request)
- Funding available on July 1, 2024
- Partnerships submit eLINK funding request between July 2024 – April 30, 2025
- BWSR will process funding requests and workplans on a monthly basis. NEW – Draft requests DO NOT expire at the end of the month.
- All grant agreements must be executed by June 1, 2025
- Grant expiration date is Dec. 31, 2027

Additional Information

- Please see the WBIF Policy, Allocation Table, work plan guidance, FAQs and other guidance documents on our website at <https://bwsr.state.mn.us/watershed-based-implementation-funding-program>.
- More information about the terms “prioritize, target, and measure” can be found at https://bwsr.state.mn.us/sites/default/files/2021-11/WP_1W1P_guidebook.pdf.
- Partnerships should consider the high-level priorities of the Nonpoint Priority Funding Plan (<https://bwsr.state.mn.us/reports>).