 **BIG SIOUX RIVER PROJECT**

**Steering Committee Meeting Minutes**

**March 22nd, 2022**

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**Location:** Dell Rapids City Hall, 302 E 4th St, Dell Rapids, SD 57022

**Time and Date:** 09:00-11:00 Tuesday, March 22nd, 2022

**Attendees:** Barry Berg, Colin Chatterton, Travis Entenman, Jay Gilbertson, Dean Jaycox, Alexa Kruse, Andy Lacey, John Parker, Carolyn Rudebusch, Deron Ruesch, Jeremy Schelhaas, Brian Top, Justin Weiland

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**Meeting called to order at 9:07am by Minnehaha Conservation District Project Sponsor, John Parker.**

**Approval of Agenda:**

Motion Carolyn Rudebusch, seconded Justin Weiland, motion carried.

**Approval of December 7th, 2021 meeting minutes:**

Motion Dean Jaycox, seconded Carolyn Rudebusch, motion carried.

**NRCS Programs Update by Deron Ruesch:**

* Minnehaha Sustainable Ag. Initiative has $35k allocation, and has obligated $24,247 towards high tunnels and cover crops thus far.
* EQIP Cover Crop Initiative has $2mil (this sum is usually spread across approx. 5 counties, this round spread across 22) and has obligated $317,691 thus far. Deron shared the break down of how much each county has been obligated and allocated thus far.
* The RCPP is the biggest funding source for this year. No applications have been ranked as of this time due to issues in CART.
* The Emergency Conservation Program (implemented due to last year’s drought) is now approving funding for tanks and pipelines.
* Rental rates and corn and bean prices being high mean that CRP is not especially attractive at this time.
* Jay asked about GFP’s CREP program, but we don’t know much as of now.
* There is a new State Conservationist, when he visits partners will be notified.

**City of Sioux Falls Update by Colin Chatterton:**

* SRF-NPS needs to spend $2mil by 2024/25, in particular $1.7mil by March 2024, so SF is pushing some projects ahead, and the City needs to spend $1mil to uphold their end.
* The Covell Ave. project is finishing this spring and will have some educational signage.
* On the 6th & Cleveland Ave. ravine drainage property (500ac watershed), the City is implementing green infrastructure­ (treatment, drainage, retention) that will impact water flowing into the Big Sioux toward Brandon. At the railroad south of 41st St. near I-229, some drainage, infrastructure approved (need to spend by Dec. 2023), and there will be major work by the Dept. of Transportation near there soon.
* The City is working with a team from SDSU to install an advanced filter for E.coli and phosphorus downstream of a detention facility, which was in the SRF-NPS budget.

**Big Sioux River Project Update by Barry Berg:**

* 2 RAM and 4 SRAM contracts completed
* 2 SRAM and 1 RAM final planning stages
* 2022 (140 acres SRAM 21,163ft, 38 acres RAM 8,281ft)
* 178 acres 5.6 miles
* Some stragglers for trees, grass seedings, etc., and so they will be done around June/July. There are also a couple of SRAM sites to survey yet this spring.
* Carolyn asks if there are any sites north of Sioux Falls, and we do have 3 planned on Skunk Creek, ,one by Bachelor creek heading south on I-29 by Madison exit.
* Soon, 3mi of river just north of Newton Hills State Park will be enrolled in RAM/SRAM.

**Big Sioux River Project Website, Social Media, and Outreach Update by Alexa Kruse:**

* Since the December meeting, both Alexa and Barry have presented at the annual Big Sioux River Water Summit.
* Job description/vacancy announcement for an EDWDD/BSRP Project Coordinator, posted in early January.
* Education/outreach provided to a handful of classrooms in different school districts and had a table at the Sioux Empire Water Festival with over 1,100 4th graders.
* Priorities now are scanning several years’ worth of producer files in the NRCS office, advertising via social media/billboards/mailers, creating an infographic-heavy brochure for RAM and SRAM, and planning events/talks for the summer.

**Legislative Update by Jay Gilbertson:**

* SD Senate Bill 62 – ARPA (appropriation for eligible wastewater, storm water, and nonpoint source projects and to declare an emergency, $600mil); passed, scheduled for bill signing at 11 today. 193 applications for funds (most years approx. 30 apps.). Funds avail. for allocation for 1.5yrs, money must be spent in 5 years; likely 2/3 of the funds will be allocated in April with 2-3 more funding rounds later.
* Senate Bill 50; using ARPA funds for state owned facilities (GFP, state institutions).
* Senate Bill 64 (omnibus); turn loose some of the regular grant funds ($15 mil).
* HB 1165 Dell Rapids, Representative Tom Pischke, $1/2mil request for general upkeep along river.

**Riparian Buffer Initiative and 3 million appropriations for Big Sioux River Watershed by Jay Gilbertson:**

* Same as before, the funds are tied up currently.

**Upper Big Sioux River Project by Jay Gilbertson:**

* After 20yrs on the project, Roger Foote is retiring mid-April. The project is in transition. The City of Watertown is the sponsor, but the process is complicated by the fact that the city switched to a city manager style of government, so there isn’t much institutional memory to continue with the project. Some concern it may go away.

**Other Business:**

* Jay: BSRP has a new employee, Michaela Carlson, to help Barry with more producers starting April 18th.
* Jay: In the south central SD area, there is new watershed talk about the Vermillion basin, lower James and White rivers, and talk of expanding to Aberdeen, but seems implausible.
* Barry: Invite after meeting to look at potential SRAM site. The property is owned by the City of Sioux Falls.
* Moody County has a new hire, Adam McClary.

**Motion to adjourn meeting by Carolyn Rudebusch, seconded Justin Weiland, motion carried. Meeting adjourned 10:52am.**