

# Considerations for Joining the Rum River One Watershed One Plan (1W1P) Partnership

for local government boards

## Summary

Counties, soil & water conservation districts, watershed organizations and the Mille Lacs Band of Ojibwe are eligible to join the partnership to implement the Rum River Comprehensive Watershed Management Plan (CWMP) that was created by those same local governments through the One Watershed One Plan (1W1P) process during 2019-2021. The plan contains mutual priorities for water quality and other natural resources. Approximately \$1M in State Watershed Based Implementation Funds (WBIF) grants are provided every two years to implement the plan. The partnership is forming a joint powers entity (JPE) to direct plan implementation and grant funds use.

## Decisions needed by each eligible party

Each eligible party needs to decide if they will:

1. **Join the JPE** and
2. **Adopt the CWMP.** For non-metro parties, it is a replacement of your local water plan. For metro parties it can be adopted as a guidance document in addition to your existing local plan.

Both actions 1 & 2 must be taken to join the JPE.

## Timeline

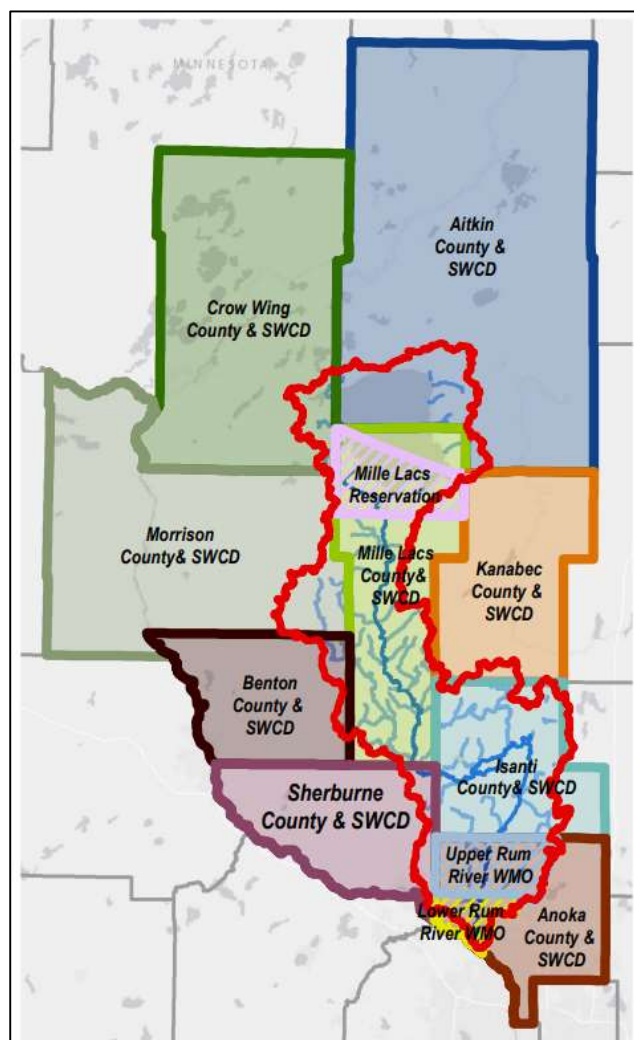
The initial period to join will be **approximately June 1 to July 31, 2022**. This initial period is 60 days after State approval of the plan. At the end of this period, the partnership will begin functioning. Parties may join the partnership later, but may miss contributing to early decisions such as how to use the first round of State grants.

## What are benefits of JPE membership?

- Have a voting member on the JPE board.
- Decide which projects/programs are selected to be funded with WBIF grants.
- Collaborate with partners throughout the watershed on mutual goals.

## What will joining the JPE cost?

Nothing except participation time. The JPE will not have the authority to compel members to pay dues. Operating expenses are anticipated to be covered with grant funds. Your representative will be committing time to participate in meetings and you may choose to compensate them for time & mileage. Expect quarterly meetings, except for those who choose to participate in an Executive Committee that meets up to monthly.



Rum River watershed boundary and eligible parties to the joint powers entity.

### **When will the draft JPE agreement be available to review?**

A draft is available now, but attorneys from eligible parties are refining it. Expect a final draft around 6/1/2022.

### **Why a Comprehensive Watershed Mgmt Plan (CWMP)?**

Because without it there are 15+ local water plans without cohesion or coordination, managing different parts of the same watershed. It's hard to reach watershed-level goals that way. The CWMP is a single umbrella plan containing the mutual priorities of all local governments and prioritizing across them all. It is required to access WBIF grants.

### **Why form a JPE?**

The State requires formation of a legally binding structure for implementing the plan and receiving state grant funds. In choosing a JPE model, the 1W1P partnership considered:

- A JPE shields members from liability and is recommended by MN Counties Intergovernmental Trust (MCIT; insurer for most parties).
- Offers efficiencies over other models that require decisions go back to every party's governing board.
- Allows every party to be represented and vote.
- The new entity's authorities will be strictly limited. No levy authority, land use planning authority, etc.
- Parties can exit the JPE at any time.
- Attorneys from all interested parties are preparing the JPE agreement together.

### **Who will be on the JPE board?**

One representative from each eligible party that joins. It is anticipated that most or all parties will choose and elected or appointed official to represent them.

### **What's in the Comprehensive Watershed Management Plan (CWMP)**

The draft Rum Comprehensive Watershed Management Plan (CWMP), posted at [www.millelacsswcd.org](http://www.millelacsswcd.org), includes:

- Riverbank and lakeshore stabilization.
  - Stormwater treatment projects
  - Agricultural water quality projects
  - Outreach and education leading to projects
  - Septic system fix up for low income owners
  - Incentivizing buffers and buffer enhancements
  - Wetland restorations.
  - MIDS stormwater standards (a voluntary alternative for cities)
  - Drainage management projects
  - Forestry practices
  - Land protection
  - Others...
- Projects will be done only with willing landowners.

### **About Watershed Based Implementation Funding (WBIF)**

WBIF is State grant funding provided to partnerships for implementing a CWMP. It is approx. \$1M every two years. Only projects in the CWMP are eligible, and projects must have a primary benefit of water quality. 10% match req'd. There is a separate pot of "metro WBIF" that is for metro parties with water plans only, and is approx. \$371K every two years. JPE membership is not required for metro parties to access this second pot of funding.

### **Pros of joining the JPE**

- Help decide how to use grant funds for benefit the watershed.
- Access to \$1M+ WBIF grant funds every other year. 10% match required.
- Ensure planned regional programs (outreach, forestry, etc) are serving your area.
- Collaboration. Board members are decision-makers who are empowered to make a meaningful change – county commissioners, SWCD board members, Mille Lacs Band representative, and WMO board members.
- No dues and the JPE can't compel parties to pay.
- There is little additional liability due to the JPE structure.
- You can leave the JPE any time.

### **Cons of joining the JPE**

- Meeting prep & attendance time for your representative and staff.
- Joining another organization may seem like adding another layer of gov't, however the JPE agreement is careful to strictly limit the new entity to a shell insulating parties from liability and a forum to make joint decisions.