

Section 7

Plan Implementation and Evaluation



A. The Next Challenge: Implementation – An Overview

Perhaps the most critical component of any plan is the part that describes how it will be implemented. The purpose of this section is to provide the reader with an outline of the organizational, coordinative, and financial aspects that should be considered for the successful implementation of the SRCL Lakeshed Management Plan.

SRCL Implementation Approach

Listed in Sections 3 – 6 there are a total of 13 goals, 62 objectives and 263 action items. The planning and technical committees could have easily created even more.

So how is all of this work going to get done?

The following is generalized or step-by-step approach that the Planning Committee recommends be used to prepare the SRCL as it works to meet its next challenge, the successful implementation of this Plan:

- Review the SRCL organizational structure.
- Build volunteerism.
- Collaborate with the resource agencies.
- Prioritize the goals
- Refine the objectives and action items.
- Secure financing.
- Do the work.
- Evaluate progress.
- Communicate the results.



B. Re-organizing for Effective Implementation

While the current organizational structure of the SRCL has accomplished a great deal in the past twenty years as described in Section 1, this Plan outlines a substantially increased workload for the SRCL. Given the increased awareness and expectations raised in this planning process, the SRCL should consider reviewing and re-organizing its organizational structures to effectively implement this Plan.

Board of Directors

The SRCL by-laws (**Appendix F**) established that the Board of Directors shall consist of at least three and not more than thirteen members, a majority of whom must be adults. Directors serve two-year terms, staggered with one-half of the terms expiring each year. Throughout its history, the Board has been the primary group of SRCL members that have worked on the majority of the projects and events.

One optional structure discussed by the Planning Committee was to reduce the number of board members to a total of seven with a President, Vice President, Secretary and Treasurer plus three other Board members. This would allow for more people to work on implementation projects rather than serve on the Board. To be sure, there are a number of other options that the Board can consider.

Some sources that the SRCL may wish to review as they consider board structures include: "Managing Lakes and Reservoirs" (North American Lake Management Society) and "The Lake Pocket Handbook" (Terrene Institute). Organizations to contact include Minnesota Lakes Association, the Rivers Council of Minnesota, and the North American Lake Management Society. The SRCL may also wish to contact other lake associations in the state to review their board structures.

Working Subcommittees or Implementation Teams

The Planning Committee recommended the creation of working subcommittees to get more people involved in the implementation process. The current SRCL by-laws allow the creation of committees that have the authority of the Board, "in the management of the business of the corporation". The by-laws do not require that members of the committees be Directors, but they do serve at all times to the direction and control of the Board. The Planning Committee suggested four working subcommittees or implementation teams be established by the Board:

- Water Quality Implementation Team.
- Fisheries and Aquatic Vegetation Implementation Team.
- Land Use Implementation Team.
- Administration/Finance Implementation Team.

One of the benefits of having developed a lengthy outline of goals, objectives and action items in Sections 3, 4, 5 and 6 of this Plan is that SRCL Board has a detailed description of what it would like to see accomplished. Delegation of tasks to subcommittees is much easier with a detailed policy framework.

The following is a description of the purpose and initial structure suggested by the Planning Committee for the implementation teams:

"The purpose of the Implementation Teams will be to undertake and complete the specific actions noted in this Plan. One of the non-executive Board members will head each of the Implementation Teams, with the exception that Administration/Finance will be headed by either the Treasurer or Vice President. Members of the Implementation Teams can include Lake Leaders, Board members and other Lake Association members."

The implementation teams should be designed to actively perform and carry out the implementation of the Plan while encouraging as many people to get actively involved in the detailed implementation activities.

Lake Leaders

Given the fact that the SRCL represents not just one lake but fourteen (14) lakes, it faces more difficult communication challenges than most other lake associations. The task of maintaining the cohesiveness of members from multiple lake neighborhoods is significant.

In response to this situation, the Planning Committee recommended the creation of "Lake Leaders". A lake leader would be an individual from each of the 14 lakes represented in the SRCL. These lake leaders could take on many of the communication and membership building challenges that the SRCL faces. The lake leaders could also help organize and mobilize the volunteer force of SRCL members and landowners in the SRCL Sublakeshed.

Increased Membership and Volunteerism

Approximately ___ percent of the lakeshore landowners around the Chain of Lakes are members of the SRCL. While this membership rate is good, there are other lake associations in the state with higher levels of membership. The Planning Committee has recommended a number of actions to increase membership in Section 6.

Developing a good plan is always a beneficial step to mobilizing volunteers. Good plans help organizational leaders clarify the wide range of activities that need to be completed to achieve the organization's goals. The uncomfortable and difficult task of delegating tasks to volunteers becomes that much easier when leaders refer back to their plans.

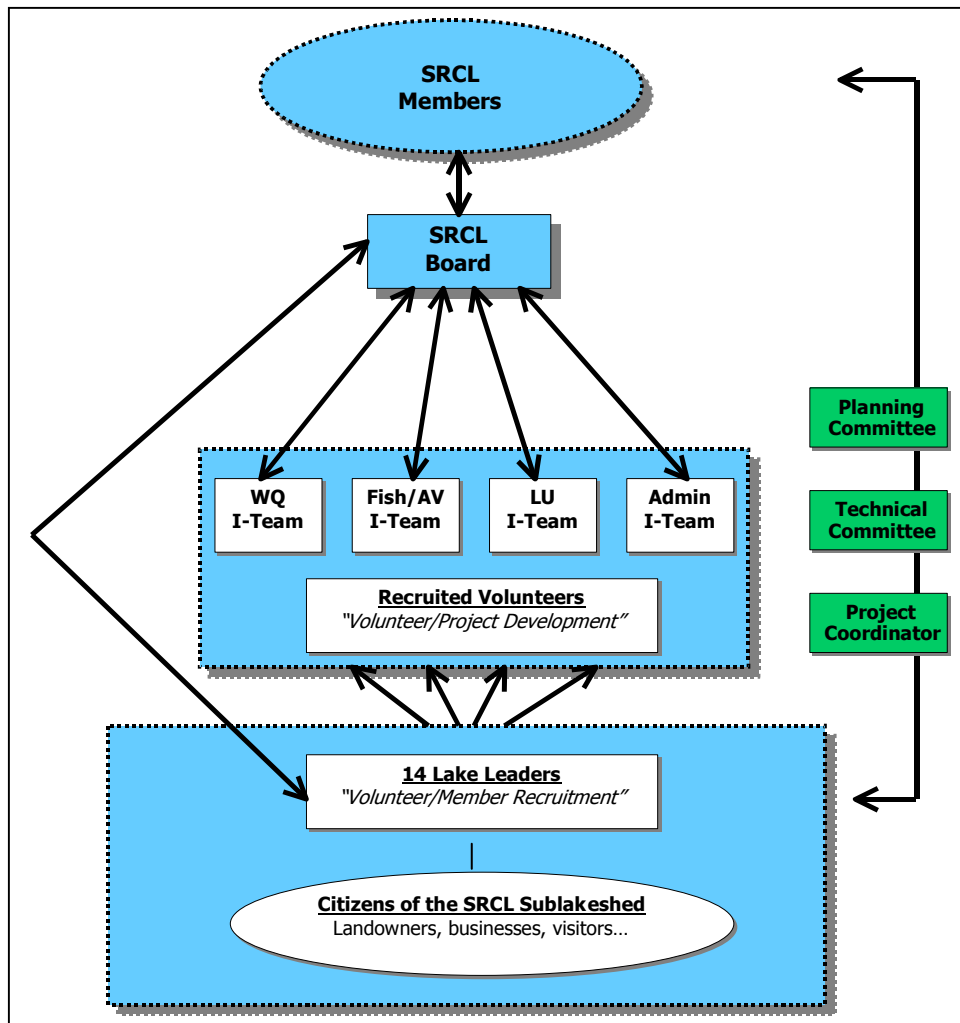
And perhaps most importantly, good plans provide volunteers greater opportunities to pick and choose the tasks and activities that they feel comfortable about. With ever increasing pressures and competing demands for personal and family time, organizations like the SRCL need to find creative and flexible ways to get more people involved. The organizational structures suggested by the Planning Committee reflect a good start.

The objectives and action statements developed by the Planning Committee provide a comprehensive array of opportunities for volunteerism and citizen participation in the implementation of this Plan.

SRCL Organization Chart

So what would a restructured SRCL organization look like on paper? The following diagram illustrates the initial organizational structure with the lake leader and implementation team concepts.

**Figure 5
SRCL Organization Chart**



The Planning Committee recognizes that while the desired actions recommended in this Plan are lengthy, they also acknowledge that within Sauk River Chain of Lakes area, there are many people with tremendous enthusiasm, skills and talents that when mobilized in a coordinated manner, can make many good things happen.

Organizational Recommendations

1. Review the Planning Committee’s recommendations for re-organization of the SRCL and revise the by-laws as needed.
2. Appoint members to the Board, Implementation Teams and Lake Leaders.

C. Coordination

Clarify and Communicate the Specific and Unique Roles of the Resource Agencies In Implementing the SRCL Lakeshed Management Plan

Over the past twenty years, a series of partnerships and collaborations have evolved in the Sauk River Chain of Lakes area. These partnerships, as recognized in the summer of 2004 by Commissioner Corrigan of the MPCA, have been key to improved management of land and water resources in the Sauk River watershed. The SRCL has played critical role in working with its partnering agencies on many of these efforts.

To effectively implement this Plan as well as the other resource management plans in the SRCL Lakeshed, the SRCL believes that these partnerships must be enhanced and strengthened. Further, these relationships will need more private sector support due to the continuing local, state and federal budget dilemmas we are facing.

The previous sections of this Plan have greatly clarified the roles and responsibilities that the SRCL intends to take over the next five or more years. To help improve coordination and minimize duplication of service amongst the resource agencies working in the SRCL Lakeshed, the SRCL offers the following list of primary roles for the resource agencies. This list should be viewed as a starting point in expanding the working relationships between the SRCL and the agencies. More discussions will be needed to further expand this list in delineating agency roles and responsibilities.

- Stearns County Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD) – conservation practices, water quality projects, education, water resources monitoring, research.
- Stearns County Environmental Services Department (ESD) – land use authority, zoning, subdivision, permitting, land use planning.
- Sauk River Watershed District (SRWD) – financial assistance, regulatory and volunteer programs, water monitoring, education, water quality projects.
- Minnesota Board of Water and Soil Resources (BWSR) – technical assistance, financial assistance, regulatory (wetlands conservation act or WCA).
- Minnesota Pollution Control Agency (MPCA) – technical assistance, financial assistance, regulatory (feedlots, wastewater treatment plants, water quality).
- Minnesota Department of Natural Resources (MN DNR) – technical assistance, financial assistance, regulatory (shoreland, floodplain, work in the waters, groundwater appropriations).
- Minnesota Department of Health (MDH) – technical assistance, financial assistance, regulatory (groundwater management, wellhead protection).

Coordination Recommendations

There are at least three major groups of agencies and organizations that the SRCL should consider in their efforts to expand the coordination of water quality and land management activities. They include the following:

- Water Resource Management Agencies.
- County and Municipal Land Use Authorities.
- Foundations and Non Profit Organizations.

The following are recommendations for expanding coordination and collaboration efforts with each of these three groups:

Water Resource Management Agencies

1. Stearns and Meeker County SWCDs. Partner with the SWCDs to communicate and deliver resource management programs to landowners in the SRCL Lakeshed.
2. SRWD. Increase the cooperative working relationships with the Sauk River Watershed District (SRWD). Participate in District work group meetings on items such as TMDLs. Some of the other areas to work on expanding relations with the District include monitoring, assessments, incentive programs, improvement projects, ditch maintenance, wetland restorations, financing, etc. Other areas are addressed in the goals and objectives within the strategic policy framework.
3. Stearns County Water Planning. Increase the cooperative working relationships with the Stearns and Meeker county planning programs for projects and programs operating in the SRCL Lakeshed. Promote the adoption of this Plan as an amendment or appendix to the appropriate county water plans.
4. State and Federal Agencies. The Planning Committee recognized that there are a large number of state and federal agencies with expertise and resources available for assistance in implementing the lakeshed management plan. Continue to build working relationships with these organizations (BWSR, NRCS, MPCA, MN DNR, etc.) to better manage the water and other natural resources.

County and Municipal Land Use Authorities

1. Local Planning and Zoning Staff. The Land Use Implementation Team should explore building stronger working relationships with the appropriate local planning and zoning officials to help coordinate in the review and comment of new development proposals.
2. County and Municipal Planning Commissions. The Land Use Implementation Team should build stronger working relationships with the county and municipal planning commissions and encourage them to develop land use policies in their comprehensive plans that are reflective or sensitive to water resource protection.
3. Elected Officials. The cities and townships in the SRCL Lakeshed have similar land use powers and authorities granted to them as do the counties (planning, zoning, subdivision regulations, etc.) The overlapping land use authorities vested by the State have resulted in an all too often confusing patchwork of regulations and requirements causing misunderstandings and frustration. The SRCL should actively support the revising of land use controls that impact water resources along with the consistent application of the regulations. The SRCL should also support legislative efforts to simplify and coordinate the state statutes regarding land use planning and implementation through their local officials.

Foundations and Non Profit Organizations

1. Initiative Foundation. Maintain a working relationship with the Initiative Foundation throughout the plan implementation stage. Encourage committee members to attend workshops and training sessions offered or sponsored by the Initiative Foundation.

2. MLA and RCM. Encourage committee members and citizens to join and participate in the Minnesota Lakes Association (MLA) and the Rivers Council of Minnesota (RCM). Collaborate with MLA and RCM on legislative issues and education programs.
3. Other Foundations. Explore opportunities to work with other foundations and non-profit organizations that have complimentary missions as the lake associations. Seek funding opportunities through and from these organizations.

Note to Readers: Please also review the agency recommendations in Section 8.

D. Financial Management

Potential Funding Sources

How are all of the projects listed in this Plan going to be paid for? The short answer is, by many sources and over a long period of time. In fact, the SRCL has already proven itself as an organization capable of finding ways to fund important projects. As noted in Section 1, the SRCL has contributed over \$125,000 since its formation in 1982 to address water quality issues, not to mention the investment by agencies such as the SRWD and the Stearns County SWCD. Continuing this fund raising capacity is critical.

One of the first tasks from a financial management perspective is to identify potential funding sources. In general, there are numerous funding sources available to the SRCL for implementing this Plan. The following is a non-inclusive list of potential sources:

Private Sector Sources – Individual Citizens and Businesses

- Membership Dues – lake association members.
- Cash Donations – individuals, businesses, organizations, etc.
- Charitable Fundraising – banquets, dinners, pull tabs, etc..
- In-Kind Labor – volunteer time.
- Equipment Donations – monitoring, tree planting, no-till drills, etc.
- Land Gifts – fee title, easements, etc.

Non Profit and Foundation Sources – Initiative Foundation, Blandin Foundation, others.

- Planning Grants.
- Implementation Grants.
- Training or Educational Grants.
- Land and Water Conservation Organizations – TNC, MLT, etc.

Public Sector Sources

- County Water Plan Programs – five counties in the Lakeshed.
- Watershed District Sauk River Watershed District.
- Lake Improvement Districts.
- Municipalities.
- Counties.
- Conservation Agencies – SWCDs, NRCS, FSA, RC & Ds, etc.
- Resource Agencies – BWSR, MN DNR, MPCA, MDH, MDA, etc.

The above list provides leaders from the SRCL with an initial list of potential funding sources. Since successful organizations tend to be active in pursuing alternative funding sources, the Administration/Finance Implementation Team should actively explore and evaluate these and other potential funding sources over the life of this Plan to help pay for the cost of implementing the various projects and programs. Section 6 includes a number of action items to help guide efforts by the Administration/Finance Implementation Team.

Comparison of Potential Financial Resources

Each financing mechanism or source has its own unique factors that affect or limit the amount of funds that can be generated, the amount of control over the use of the funds, and the amount of energy or effort required to obtain the desired funding. All organizations, to be more successful in implementation, need to consider the advantages and disadvantages of alternative financial resources and prioritize their efforts to obtain the funds.

To further assist the SRCL pursue necessary financial sources; the consultant developed some additional information on four primary financing tools. The four finance tools include charitable fundraising, lake improvement districts, stormwater utility, and special taxing districts. The following list provides an initial assessment of the advantages and disadvantages of these financing tools:

Private Sector Sources

Advantages

- Voluntary participation by citizens.
- Would not be either a tax or a user fee.
- Is not another layer of government.
- Does not require county or watershed district approval.
- Gives lake associations greater flexibility on spending.
- Could be organized to provide tax deduction benefits (501c3).
- Can be dedicated to specific projects. Best used on specific tangible projects.
- Could potentially attract or leverage “large” donations.
- Could accept cash or land.
- Allows the lake associations to think “Big” and pursue endowment status.
- Extends state / local partnership to private sector.

Disadvantages

- Requires constant fund raising effort.
- Likely to be uneven, less consistent cash flow.
- Gives lake associations maximum responsibility.
- More difficult to spend these funds on staffing.
- May require up front training.
- Does not directly promote watershed management concept.
- Does not directly tie land use and water quality impacts.

Lake Improvement District (LID)

Advantages

- Statutory authority to create LIDs already exists, granted by the state legislature.
- Can be organized for shoreland and near shore areas.
- Can provide a regular revenue stream.
- Can be adjusted from year to year to reflect revenue needs.
- Raises awareness of a lake association's role in managing water quality issues.

Disadvantages

- Would result in another layer of government managing water and land related resources (state agencies, counties, townships, cities, SWCDs, watershed district, LIDs).
- Would exist within a watershed district.
- Would require either county board or DNR support to establish.
- Would require county board approval of operating budget and use of funds.
- Often not established on a watershed basis.

Stormwater Utility (organized under Watershed District laws)

Advantages

- Statutory authority already granted to watershed districts.
- Utilizes the existing watershed district structure and Board.
- Once developed, it doesn't require a lot of administrative maintenance.
- Promotes the "Polluter Pays" concept.
- Promotes the "everyone contributes runoff, and everyone pays" concept.
- Provides steady income stream.
- Can be adjusted from year to year to reflect revenue needs.
- Raises awareness of watershed district in managing water quality issues.

Disadvantages

- A utility fee may be seen by some as "just another tax".
- Not voluntary.
- Higher front-end organizational costs.
- Requires coordination with county auditors / assessors offices.
- New tool, not well known, requires up front education.
- Would need to be coordinated with the watershed district and in the Overall Plan.

Special Tax District (organized under County Water Planning)

Advantages

- Statutory authority already granted to counties through county water planning law.
- Would be associated with broadly accepted county water plans.
- Can be watershed based.
- Could be restricted to shoreland and near shore areas.
- Provides a steady revenue stream.
- Low front end organizational costs.
- Low in administrative maintenance costs.
- Can be adjusted from year to year to reflect revenue needs

- Doesn't require establishment of another board, or layer of government.
- Easy to dissolve (public hearing after noticing).
- Raises awareness of counties in managing water quality issues.

Disadvantages

- Is a special tax, not a user fee.
- Not voluntary.
- Would require up front, and annual county board approval to levy.
- Project must be in county water plan.
- Requires coordination with county auditors / assessors offices
- New tool, not well known, requires up front education.
- Doesn't directly tie land use and water quality impacts (as the utility does).

Current SRCL Financial Resources

Like some lake associations in the state, the SRCL has been able to generate substantial revenues internally. The investment into projects over the past twenty years by the SRCL reflects this commitment and fund raising ability.

The following list summarizes some of the major financial resources that the SRCL has currently or in the near term future for implementation:

- Over the years of 1996 to 2002, the SRCL has received an average of **\$8,966** in membership dues annually. This seven-year period generated \$62,762.
- As a part of this planning process, the SRCL has committed **\$25,000** to the implementation of the Plan.
- As a participating organization in the Healthy Lakes Program (HLP), the SRCL may apply for up to **\$5,000** in the implementation grant.

Funding Resources from the Resource Agencies

In addition to the funding resources described above, the SRCL should collaborate with the resource agencies (including the SWCDs, RC & Ds, NRCS, BWSR, MN DNR, MPCA and others) to obtain additional funding sources. Although the state budget crisis continues to be a factor at the time this Plan is being prepared, there will be funding available through the state and federal agencies.

Some of these sources include the BWSR Challenge grants, the NRBG grants to county water planning programs, SWCD State Cost-Share program, MPCA programs such as Clean Water Partnerships, LCMR, federal agency grants and loans such as EQIP, CRP, WHIP, and 319. For more information on agency grants and loans, the lake associations should contact the resource agencies directly.

Finance Management Recommendations

1. HLP Implementation Grant from the Initiative Foundation. Apply for and obtain the implementation funding (\$5,000) offered by the Initiative Foundation as a part of the Healthy Lakes Partnership (HLP) program after the approval of this Plan.
2. Inventory and Assess Potential Funding Sources. Throughout the life of this Plan, the Administration/Finance Implementation Team should continually seek new funding opportunities to implement the Plan. In concert with the SRCL Board, the Administration/Finance Implementation Team should periodically inventory and assess the status of potential funding sources. The list of potential funding sources should be regularly updated and distributed to the Board and the other working subcommittees for their use and consideration.
3. Funding Resources from the Resource Agencies. Work with resource agencies to obtain funding through available programs to support water quality projects in the SRCL Sublakeshed.
4. Financial Collaborations. Work with and support efforts by the resource agencies to implement water quality projects within the SRCL Sublakeshed.
5. Non Profit Organization. The SRCL should consider creating a non-profit organization that focuses on the implementation of projects and programs listed in this Plan. By establishing a 501 (c) 3 organization, interested citizens and businesses would be able to contribute tax deductible donations.

E. Plan Maintenance and Evaluation

Over the next five to ten years, the Planning Committee anticipates that there will be many changes to the environmental, economic, and social conditions in the SRCL Lakeshed. These changes may require amendments or significant revisions to this Plan. Therefore, the SRCL will need to maintain and update the Plan over time.

In addition, it is important that the SRCL monitor results from the implementation efforts to gauge their effectiveness and to develop a sense of accountability. The purpose of this section is to provide a brief description of the steps to evaluate and maintain the Plan over time.

To maintain this Plan as a meaningful and useful document, the SRCL must:

- Develop measurable criteria to evaluate progress and success on the goals and objectives in the Plan.
- Take the initiative to regularly review the status of planning issues in the SRCL Lakeshed and evaluate the goals and objectives in the Plan.
- Amend or modify the goals or objectives as appropriate.
- Identify goals that are high priority for the Lakeshed but unattainable because of lack of available resources and communicate those needs with property owners as well as with regional, state, and federal representatives.
- Update the Plan every 5 years.

Developing specific measurable indicators in a first generation plan is extremely difficult and has limits to its usefulness. Nonetheless, it is still a worthy effort for an organization to monitor and record data. Over time, the monitoring and evaluation stages of a planning process become more meaningful.

Table 7 provides an initial outline of potential monitoring indicators or targets that the SRCL and the Implementation Teams could use to monitor the results of the resource management actions. The first year for this table was set for 2006 in order to allow time for the projects and programs to get initiated.

SRCL and agency officials should recognize that the plan evaluation process will take several years to get established. Further, the SRCL should meet with resource agencies each year to review and refine these targets and assess the general directions or trends that are occurring in each topic.

Table 7
Potential Monitoring Indicators

Category/Topic	Targets	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010
Water Quality						
Sauk River	See page 3 – 2.					
Non Flowage Lakes	See page 3 – 2.					
Flowage Lake	See page 3 – 2.					
Fisheries/Aquatic Vegetation						
Protected emergent veg.	Projects completed					
Restored natural shoreline	Projects completed					
Land Use						
Acres Tillage Management	Percent of total					
Percent Streams Buffered	Percent of total					
Non Complying Septics	Percent of total					
Non Complying Feedlots	Percent of total					
Administration/Finance						
Membership	New members joined					
Volunteer hours	Hours worked					
Local funds raised	\$ raised					
Outside funds obtained	\$ awarded					

As the plan evaluation process becomes more established it will be important that the SRCL inform its members along with citizens and landowners of SRCL Lakeshed of the progress and accomplishments made in the implementation process (Annual Report, newsletters, web site, etc.).