Capital Improvement Watershed Partner Project Maintenance and Repair Financial Assistance Policy

The Vermillion River Watershed Joint Powers Organization (VRWJPO) regularly provides financial or in-kind assistance to partners to implement protection, restoration, and enhancement projects (Projects) throughout the Watershed.

These Projects often utilize grant funding for implementation. Grant funding policies typically require an operation and maintenance plan to ensure ongoing performance. Projects that don't have grant funding associated with them still require operation and maintenance to achieve their intended function. At present, it's common that the Projects delegate the ongoing operation, maintenance, and repair responsibilities of the Projects to the partners.

As part of its implementation of the 2026-2035 Watershed Management Plan (WMP), the VRWJPO desires to assist its partners with their ongoing Project operation, maintenance, and repair responsibilities. The VRWJPO will strive to (but has no obligation to) annually budget funds to be allocated for VRWJPO maintenance and repair activities (Activities) and to offer modest and equitable financial assistance to help partners offset costs associated with eligible Activities. The VRWJPO Administrator will have final discretion regarding Activity eligibility for financial assistance.

In addition, it is important to note that this annual funding is not exclusively reserved for partner use; it may also support Activities conducted independently by the VRWJPO.

Any financial assistance for the Activities will be drawn from annual funding allocated by the Vermillion River Watershed Joint Powers Board, following the criteria outlined below:

<u>Partner Eligible Activities:</u>

- BMP Maintenance could include, but is not limited to:
    - Vactoring of accumulated sediment from manufactured treatment devices, filtration media, or other locations
    - Filtration media raking, tilling, or replacement.
    - Repair or replacement of BMP structural components
    - Pipe cleaning and jetting
    - Modifications, changes, or installation of related infrastructure that directly support or improve the intended function and performance of the original practice
    - Other activities deemed eligible by the VRWJPO
- Vegetation management for wetland, riparian, and upland areas (herbicide treatment, mowing, brush removal, prescribed burn, supplemental seeding or plug installation, etc.).
- Addressing erosion and soil stabilization.
- Stream Habitat Restoration.
- Other activities will be reviewed on a case-by-case basis by VRWJPO staff.

Partner Ineligible Activities:

- Planning, reports, studies, preliminary design, final plans, specifications, contract procurement, or construction oversight/administration of or for the Activity.

Minimum Criteria for Partner Eligible Activities (All Criteria Must Be Met):

- The VRWJPO has previously provided funding or provided pass-through of outside grant funding for the design and/or construction of the Project that the Activity supports.
- The Activity is located on Public Property or within an easement dedicated of controlling, preserving, and providing for the flow or storage of stormwater runoff; or if the Activity is to be performed on private property (in whole or in part) the partner is responsible to obtain a right to access the private property and provide documentation of such access to the VRWJPO as part of the application process.
- The partner will provide funding for the Activity.
- The area of the Activity is within the project area or adjacent thereto and is deemed a beneficial relationship to the Project (e.g., an outlot adjacent to a previous stream restoration project that needs herbicide treatment).

What Assistance is Available for Partner Activities:

- The VRWJPO will make a fair and equitable attempt, subject to the amount available and number of applications received, in providing financial assistance to partners using the following criteria:
    a. No more than 50 percent of the proposed cost of the Activity if the Project was not funded in part by a grant.
    b. For Projects that received pass-through grant funding from the VRWJPO, an equitable cost share is determined by the amount of cash "match" provided for the Project by both the partner and VRWJPO. Example: If both the partner and VRWJPO provided an equal cash "match" for the Project, then the cost share for the Activity would be shared equally. This formulation applies to the specific Project for which the Activity is being applied.
- A funding request for an Activity may not exceed 50 percent of the VRWJPO's annual operation and maintenance budget.

When Assistance is Available for Partner Activities:

- Partner shall provide an application for assistance to the VRWJPO prior to May 1 of the calendar year when the Activity is programmed.
- Upon receipt of applications, VRWJPO staff will evaluate all requests based on Funding Prioritization set forth below.
- The VRWJPO will notify requestors whether funding will be available on or around June 1 of the calendar year.
- A written agreement will be required to facilitate the transaction when financial assistance is provided. Partners cannot request reimbursement for Activities completed before the written agreement is executed by the partner and VRWJPO for that Activity.

How Assistance is Provided for Partner Activities:

- Assistance will be provided in the form of cash reimbursement upon receipt of invoices from the partner. If a contractor is used for the maintenance activity, itemized invoices for the Activity are required to accompany the requesting partner's invoice.
- If available funding cannot fulfill all funding requests, the request may be denied, or the amount approved for each request may be less than the amount requested to accommodate the VRWJPO's available budget.
- If a funding request is denied due to ineligibility, a request for the same Activity cannot be resubmitted for consideration.
- If adequate funding is not available, then a request may be submitted for two years following the date of the Activity. Funding requests that are resubmitted will not receive greater prioritization.

Funding Prioritization of Partner Activities:

Based on limited resources, the VRWJPO staff must prioritize funding requests based on the goals of the WMP. Considerations include but are not limited to (bulleted items are not listed in order of priority):

- Amount requested by the partner
- Total funding percent of Activity cost assigned to the VRWJPO
- Type of Activity and estimated pollutant reduction capacity
- Activity proximity to impaired water resource or a cold-water stream.
- Age of the original practice
- Urgency of the activity to address health and human safety risks.
- Other benefits (not related to Water Resources) associated with the Activity
- Documented maintenance activities of original practice.
- VRWJPO investments for other Activities or Projects under contract with the partner
- Previous VRWJPO investment in the Activity

Review and Approval Process:

- Updated per Comments from TAC (7/23/25) and presented to TAC (8/14/2025)
- Approved by VRWJPB (9/25/25) Resolution #25-42