



LOWER MINNESOTA RIVER WATERSHED DISTRICT

Executive Summary for Action

Lower Minnesota River Watershed District Board of Managers Meeting

Wednesday, June 16, 2021

Agenda Item

Item 5. A. – Report on Water Storage Initiative

Prepared By

Linda Loomis, Administrator

Summary

This item was on the Consent Agenda for the May 19, 2021 Board meeting. The item was tabled and the Board requested that Mr. Scott Sparlin be asked to come to the June meeting since Managers Salvato and Mraz are new to the Board since this project was approved.

As reported in May, Mr. Scott Sparlin from the Coalition for a Clean Minnesota River (CCMR) made a presentation to the Board of Managers, in July of 2019, regarding his plans to introduce legislation that would encourage water storage in the Minnesota River Basin and provide funding for such efforts. The Board of Managers agreed to provide funding for this initiative by providing matching funds.

The Board agreed to provide a one to one match up to \$5,000 in 2019 and 2020. The first \$5,000 was requested and paid in February 2020. The second year match is now being requested. Mr. Sparlin has provided information regarding the hours spent on the initiative and the financial support raised. He has also provided a report of the work that was done.

Funds for the project are in the LMRWD budget under Education.

Mr. Sparlin is planning to seek federal support for water storage initiatives and has provided a letter sent to Minnesota's US Senators and copied to the Congressional delegation.

Mr. Sparlin will join the meeting to talk to the Board about this project and next steps.

Attachments

Excerpt from July 2019 meeting minutes

Match Statement

CCMR Work Plan - Timeline

Letters to Senators Smith and Klobuchar

Recommended Action

Motion to authorize payment o second half of match to Coalition for a Clean Minnesota River

Manager Raby asked if other money has been raised. Mr. Sparlin said they have raised about \$3,000 for this effort and they will continue to seek additional funding.

Administrator Loomis asked if it would be easier for Mr. Sparlin to raise money if there were a match. The board discussed contributing funds as matching funds. Manager Raby said he would be comfortable matching up to \$5,000 each year. Manager Raby asked if this was in the LMRWD budget. Administrator Loomis said that funding was in the budget for a different project in the MN River Basin that could be redirected to this project. Mr. Sparlin said a match would help and he mentioned some of the groups that he is speaking to about supporting this initiative.

Mr. Sparlin asked for an endorsement letter saying the LMRWD board is in support of seeking funding from the state of MN to create a significant water storage program.

Manager Raby made a motion to agree to match up to \$5,000 in 2019 and 2020 based upon a 1 to 1 match and write a letter of endorsement. The motion was seconded by President Hartmann. The motion carried unanimously.

Manager Hartmann asked where the water comes from for irrigation. Mr. Sparlin said groundwater wells, but there are a few permits that do come from tributaries.

Manager Frey asked if Mr. Sparlin has spoken to Ducks Unlimited. Mr. Sparlin said that is in progress. Manager Frey said he thinks there would a lot of support for this proposal from the hunting community if the proposal will increase habitat.

Manager Raby asked that the LMRWD submit a resolution to MAWD.

C. Remote meeting participation

Administrator Loomis said this is for the Board's information. Manager Raby asked if there was schedule to complete. Administrator Loomis said there was not a schedule. She said she will ask for a timeframe.

D. Dredge Management

i. Review Process for funding of maintenance of Navigation Channel

Administrator Loomis said she received communication from MNDOT that attorneys for MNDOT do not believe the LMRWD qualifies for funding under the Port Development Assistance Program. She and Lisa Frenette are arranging a meeting with Patrick Phenow, Navigation Director for MNDOT.

ii. Vernon Avenue Dredge Material Management site

Administrator Loomis said the hearing for the amendment to the Conditional Use Permit (CUP) is tomorrow night. Manager Raby said it looks like the condition for removing material when there is a flood was not being removed from the permit. Ms. Della Young stated that the site is being designed so that there will be no rise in the flood elevation. The city has received a no rise certification from LMRWD engineers and the CUP will be worded so that removal of material from the site will not be necessary.

The condition that a three day notice be given to the City when material is being removed from the dredge site will be removed from the CUP.

iii. Private Dredge Material Placement

Private slips have not yet been dredged. Last year's material is in the process of being removed.

E. Watershed Management Plan

Statement for Match Funding to The Lower Minnesota River Watershed District
 From The Coalition for a Clean Minnesota River (CCMR)

By Scott Sparlin Coordinator/Facilitator Minnesota River Congress/ Ex. Dir. CCMR

Hours specific to **Water Storage Initiative** for Minnesota River Congress @ \$40 hr.

2020

January	35 hrs.
February	40 hrs.
March	46 hrs.
April	40 hrs.
May	30 hrs.
June	4 hrs.
July	0 hrs.
August	0 hrs.
September	0 hrs.
October	0 hrs.
November	10 hrs.
December	0 hrs.

2021

January	50 hrs.
February	45 hrs.
March	40 hrs.
April	20 hrs.

Total Hrs. 360 = \$14,400

In person meetings

Mileage @ .52 per mile

St. Paul (2) 440, Mankato (2) 140, Henderson (1) 90, St. Peter (3) 180

Nicollet 70,

Total 920 miles = \$478,40

Total WSI expenses from January 2020 thru April 18, 2021 \$14,878.40

Money secured and designated for **Water Storage Initiative** to date

Nicollet Conservation Club	\$1500
New Ulm Area Sport Fishermen	1000
Fundraiser American Legion	970
CCMR	1500
CURE	100
Mn Ag Water Resource Center	100
Crystal Waters Project	100
Minnesota Wastewater Operators Assn.	100
Friends of Pool 2	100
Southern Minnesota Beet Sugar Coop.	100
Mankato Paddling and Outing Club	100
Doug Thomas	100
Darby and Geri Nelson	500
Total	\$6,270.00

Minnesota River Congress/CCMR Water Storage Legislative Initiative
Work Plan-Timeline 7-1-19 to 7-1-21

Final Report
accomplishments are highlighted in yellow.

July 1, 2019 to December 31, 2019

Continue to solicit, collect, compile and adapt input to be used to develop the various components of the bill. This requires face to face meetings and communicating with the potential implementers of the legislation including SWCD's, Watershed Districts, BWSR, State Agencies and numerous others. This will also be an on-going communication task given the nature of bill creation and perpetual negotiations with legislators. I will also meet with bill authors to share the compiled input in order to create first version of the bill in this time frame. This also requires face to face consultations. The bill is projected to be introduced this upcoming session of the legislature as previously indicated to me and other members of the Minnesota River Congress by the authors in both the State House and Senate.

I will continue to work with Minnesota State University Mankato Water Resources Center staff to compile and create a packet of existing data and associated documentation from various compelling studies. This will be made to distribute to legislators and partners for use in proving the need for water storage and securing support for the legislation from all parties and the public.

Do comprehensive targeted outreach, meet, as well as communicate with key water related, conservation, natural resource and agricultural entities to secure all levels of backing such as partnerships, resolutions and letters of support. This task is a focus of this time frame but will continue to be a task for the entire time as well.

I have met and will be meeting in person with Governor's past federal staff. I am confident I will ultimately obtain a meeting with Governor through those contacts and my past relationship with the Governor during his time in the U.S. House of Representatives. I will attempt to persuade the Governor to champion the water storage legislation and the river system in general going forward. He has close ties to Mankato and served as the House of Representatives chair of the "Sportsman's Caucus"

In consultation with authors we will also explore the potential for working within existing legislation to modify content which will likely take the same route of activity and actions by myself and others as laid out here.

Total \$3500 Includes on-going full 2-year period tasks from above

December 1, 2019 to May 15, 2020

Meet in person and continue distribution of created information packets to legislators from both political parties in both houses of the legislature to obtain sponsorship and sign on to the bill.

Continue meetings with SWCD's for advancement of basin resolutions in support of a water storage bill to be taken to the state level for confirmation vote.

Work with bill authors to introduce the bill and obtain first hearings in both house and senate and foster progress.

When hearings are scheduled, we will arrange for testimony from important key affected individuals and entities such as agricultural producers, farming organization representatives, The Lower Minnesota River Watershed District, conservation organizations, city, county and state entities that deal with infrastructure maintenance.

We will develop an infrastructure protection awareness document and identify and secure point communication persons able to articulate the potential for infrastructure damages if something is not done on a larger scale such as we propose.

We will work with key partners to develop regular press releases and other means of media communications to increase public awareness about the nature and status of the bill.

We will participate in and work with organizers of "Water Action Day" at the State Capitol to include it as a priority talking point with all state legislators and see that information about it is included in the packet handout for the day by participants.

We will solicit and request statements in support from the Governor. To accomplish this task, I will set up a meeting with staff, provide information and consultation as to what we want to convey to the greater public.

Time frame total \$2000

May 15, 2020 to December 31, 2020

I will work with the bills authors and sponsors to obtain committee hearings and consult with them to make any critical changes to ensure progress.

I will continue to foster the progress of the bill and advocate for its enactment. I will also seek out additional member support. This task requires trips to St. Paul and face to face meetings with legislators.

I will meet in person with federal elected house and senate members to explore options for federal partner funding if the state were to sign a water storage bill. The bill will be under more serious consideration at this time and federal funding opportunities can become a critical incentive for the state to enact a water storage bill if significant dollars are accessible at the federal level. Given that circumstance we will work to communicate these opportunities to the public and work in consultation with federal legislators and staff to develop the communication strategy and plea for public support at the state level to access the federal funding.

I will explore the potential for private foundation funding by meeting face to face with officers to discuss the feasible possibilities if the state were to enact the water storage bill.

I will explore the potential for Legacy Amendment funding through the LSOHF and Clean Water Fund by meeting with officers and discussing face to face the feasible possibilities if the state were to enact the water storage bill.

I will explore and compile other forms of funding to partner with by meeting with organizations and businesses who may want to play a part in creating and or enhancing water storage.

Time frame total \$2500

January 1, 2021 to July 1, 2021

I and the authors of the bill will continue to shepherd and monitor the bill through the next critical final phases. This task involves trips to the capitol for hearings and meetings to strategize with various legislators, staff and other key partners and people. I will set up and help coordinate testimony people in consultation with legislative staff as needed.

Working with bill authors and sponsors we will secure committee hearings and get a vote on a final water storage bill passage.

I will work with federal partners to strategize on process for accessing federal dollars available after the legislation is passed and enacted.

I will provide a final report on the initiative **Time frame total \$2000**

4/6/21

Senator Tina Smith
60 Plato Blvd Suite # 220
St. Paul, MN 55107

Senator Amy Klobuchar
1200 South Washington Ave #250
Minneapolis, MN 55415

Dear Honorable Senators Tina Smith, Amy Klobuchar,

We have reached a water management crisis in Minnesota, certainly not limited to anywhere in the state, but especially evident in the Minnesota River Watershed. Due to land use practices both urban and rural we have now reached the point that if we do not begin to both temporarily and permanently store more water, we will continue to experience increased collective, infrastructural, health and societal, as well as business losses at an unacceptable rate putting many Minnesotans at risk. Exacerbating this condition is the climatic trend and future prediction of increased rainfalls in short periods of time. The combination of all these factors leads first to small and medium streambank erosion. The dislodged sediments combined with increased flows enable sediment and nutrient delivery to our lakes, major tributaries, and main stems where they then flow downstream all the way to the Mississippi, Lake Pepin and ultimately the Gulf of Mexico.

We are a water blessed state and the time to invest in a major water storage initiative is upon us. The compelling data concerning the need, especially in the Minnesota River Basin, has been thoroughly studied and is well documented. The fact is, most of society has observed and intuitively known this for a long time. We have engineered ourselves into this condition and we also have the technical knowhow to mitigate it. We now need the commitment, and the significant financial resources, to accomplish the goal. In many cases our government (all of us) paid to create the challenges we are faced with. The time is now for all of us to come together for the greater good of future generations of Minnesotans. This is not an investment we can ignore, or we will pay much higher prices in short years to come.

It is our belief that we need specifically targeted temporary and permanent water storage funds to be directed to the implementers such as Soil and Water Conservation Districts, Watershed Districts, local units of government including native first nations and participating willing landowners.

Scientific Background

Extensive scientific data collected over decades shows clearly that we need to put more water storage on the landscape. Additional water storage can protect infrastructure and improve water quality. Diverse water storage practices, such as replacing historically drained lakes and wetlands and increasing soil health, will all help to achieve this goal. The climatic trend and future prediction of increased rainfalls in short periods of time will only exacerbate the issue.

The Minnesota River Congress is using the Collaborative for Sediment Source Reduction (CSSR see attached) and Management Options Simulation Model (MOSM) study recommendations in conjunction with the rich datasets available through state agency monitoring, assessment and conservation targeting (WRAPS, TMDLS, 1W1P) to support the case for the need for more water storage.

Currently we have enlisted the help of several Minnesota State Legislators on both sides of the aisle to introduce and advance legislation that would create a program which would incentivize landowners to store water on the landscape. The incentives would also include the adoption of best management practices for landowners to increase the ability of topsoil to retain water. A by-product of that practice is the recharge of our ground water supplies. With that said it is not going to be enough for Minnesota to try to do this on its own. We simply do not have the resources to implement this program on the scale it needs to be done to be completely effective. That is why we are asking you to help us begin to secure the resources at the national level. Minnesota will do its part, but with a federal partnership this could provide an inspiration across the country that when we work together nothing is insurmountable.

After over 3 years and 25 basin-wide meetings attended by a diverse cross section of the population, it has become very apparent that any way water storage in any form can be accomplished is of the utmost priority. Over and over from every part of the basin we heard water storage has to be addressed if we are going to be serious about protecting our infrastructure and improving our surface water. The good news is it can be achieved without adversely affecting agri-business or community development. We simply need it to be realistically funded to the degree it needs to be effective. It already has been prioritized by the implementers.

In closing, Senator Klobuchar, and Senator Smith, as members of the Senate Agriculture Committee you can formulate policies as well as develop funding through new or current USDA programs that can help to deal with these issues.

We (a small group of coalition members) would like to meet as soon as possible to discuss next steps to work with you to address these matters.

Most Sincerely, on behalf of the Minnesota River Congress supporters and cooperators
Scott Sparlin, Coordinator/Facilitator
PO Box 488, New Ulm, MN 56073
sesparlin@gmail.com

Mayor Robert Beussman
City Hall, 11 North Minnesota St.
New Ulm MN 56073

Mayor Dave Smiglewski
641 Prentice St.
Granite Falls, MN 56241

The following entities have provided written support for our Water Storage Initiative:

City of Henderson (signed endorsement and resolution)
City of Granite Falls (signed endorsement and resolution)
City of Eden Prairie (signed resolution)
City of Arlington (signed endorsement)
City of Amboy (signed endorsement)
City of New Ulm (passed resolution)
City of Mankato (signed resolution)
City of St. Peter (signed endorsement)
City of Olivia (signed endorsement)
City of Nicollet (signed endorsement and resolution)

City of Redwood Falls (signed resolution)
City of Springfield (signed endorsement and resolution)
City of Winthrop (signed resolution and endorsement)
Minnesota Association of Watershed Districts (resolution passed and signed)
Lower Minnesota River Watershed District (resolution passed and signed)
Blue Earth County SWCD (signed endorsement)
Brown County SWCD (signed endorsement)
Martin County SWCD (signed endorsement)
Faribault County SWCD (signed resolution)
Cottonwood County SWCD (signed endorsement)
McCloud County SWCD (verbal will endorse)
Nicollet Conservation Club (signed endorsement)
MASWCD (relative resolution)
Area 6 SWCD (11 Counties) (in principle)
Area 5 SWCD (10 Counties) (in principle)
Lake Pepin Legacy Alliance (signed endorsement and resolution)
Izaak Walton League MN State Chapter (resolution passed)
Friends of Pool 2 (signed endorsement)
Crystal Waters Project (signed endorsement)
Minnesota River Congress (signed endorsement)
New Ulm Area Sport Fishermen (signed endorsement)
Rural Advantage (signed endorsement)
Clean Up the River Environment-CURE (signed endorsement)
The Coalition for a Clean Minnesota River (signed endorsement and resolution)
Redwood Country Farmers Union (resolution passed and signed) (State Pending)
Friends of the Minnesota Valley (signed endorsement)
Izaak Walton League MN Valley Chapter (signed resolution)
Minnesota Center for Environmental Advocacy (signed endorsement)
Anglers for Habitat (signed endorsement)
Minnesota Conservation Federation (signed endorsement)
Fish and Wildlife Legislative Alliance (signed endorsement)
Blue Earth Project (signed endorsement)

cc: Governor Tim Walz
Rep. Jim Hagedorn
Rep. Angie Craig
Rep. Dean Phillips
Rep. Betty McCollum
Rep. Ilhan Omar
Rep. Tom Emmer
Rep. Michelle Fischbach
Rep. Pete Stauber
Rep. Paul Torkelson
Senator Gary Dahms
John Jaschke BWSR
Sarah Strommen MNDNR
Thom Petersen MDA