



LOWER MINNESOTA RIVER WATERSHED DISTRICT

Executive Summary for Action

Lower Minnesota River Watershed District Board of Managers Meeting
Wednesday, March 18, 2020

Agenda Item

Item 6. B. - Proposal from Friends of the Minnesota Valley

Prepared By

Linda Loomis, Administrator

Summary

i. River Watch

At the February Board meeting the Managers authorized staff to meet with Ted Suss, the executive director of Friends of the MN Valley (FMV). FMV is asking for \$10,000 to fund its River Watch. A budget for the program has been provided and two schools within the LMRWD have signed on the the program - Bloomington Kennedy and Shakopee. They are hoping to have Bloomington Jefferson and Prior Lake/Savage High School sign up. A progress report is also attached. FMV is looking for \$10,000 from the LMRWD. The LMRWD has \$30,000 in its 2020 budget for Education and can fund this project through that budget.

I suggested that FMV develop a curriculum for this project, so that teachers in all the school are following the same protocols. Mr. Suss thought that was a good idea.

ii. County Fair Project

This project will be similar to the project FMV and the LMRWD did in 2017. The final report was made to the Board in May of 2018. An excerpt from the LMRWD May 2018 meeting minutes is attached. A proposal is also attached with an estimate of the cost of the project. A copy of the invoice from the 2017 project is also attached for the Board's information.

FMV is looking for the LMRWD to commit \$10,000 for this project. There is money in the 2020 budget, however the cost could be split and some paid in 2020 and some in 2021. The total amount could also be placed in the 2021 budget.

Attachments

River Watch proposed budget
FMV River Watch Progress report
FMV 2020 County Fair proposal
May 2018 LMRWD meeting minutes excerpt
Invoice from FMV for 2017 County Fair project

Recommended Action

Motion to approve contribution to River Watch
Motion to authorize partnership with FMV to conduct 2020 County Fair project

Proposed 2020-2021 School Year River Watch Budget

Full program of 20 teams

Expense Title	Category	Amount	Description
Program Coordinator,	Salary, Benefits	\$ 5,000.00	Program Coordinator, Planning, Oversight of Teams, MN PCA
Monitoring teacher/Leader	Salary, Benefits	\$ 35,000.00	Direct service to teams, classroom teaching, leading on site team
Consumable Testing Supplies	Supplies	\$ 5,000.00	Chemicals consumed in testing and maintenance of test equipment
Mileage	Expenses	\$ 5,000.00	Travel reimbursement for on site teaching and testing
Student Transportation	In Kind Schools Transportation	\$ 10,000.00	Busing of students to and from school to monitoring sites
Printing/mailing	Expenses	\$ 3,000.00	Brochures, handouts, mailing
Office expense	In Kind FMV	\$ 6,000.00	River Watch share of phone, internet copy machine and office supply provided by FMV @\$500 per month
Annual Student Forum	Misc	\$ 5,000.00	All students are brought together to report on finding and experiences local officials invited , Food and hall rental
Program Oversight	IN Kind FMV Salary, Benefits	\$ 10,000.00	In Kind provided by FMV
Program total		\$ 84,000.00	
In Kind Total		\$ 23,000.00	
Fundraising need		\$ 61,000.00	
Raised to date		\$ 20,000.00	
remaining need		\$ 41,000.00	

River Watch Summary and Progress Report

The River Watch Program consists of high school based teams of students who are trained by our staff to conduct water quality monitoring on the Minnesota River and other rivers in southern Minnesota. Our River Watch Coordinator recruits teams, typically a class or group of classes, works in the classroom with the team leader to educate students on water quality monitoring and its uses, and accompanies the team to the monitoring site for regular and periodic monitoring at specific sites.

Students learn, in an experiential manner, what constitutes pollutants in water and why each is harmful, how to use the electronic monitoring equipment, how to record and report data to the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency, and the role of water quality monitoring as a part of environmental protection.

Our overall goal is three fold; 1) to teach students about water quality monitoring, 2) to collect and report data, 3) to build a greater environmental awareness within the students.

River Watch began during the 2017-2018 school year on a pilot basis with four schools funded by the Friends of the Minnesota Valley using its own very limited cash reserves. The success of this pilot program and a growing list of high schools wanting to participate led to a one-time grant from the state of Minnesota to continue to expand and operate the program in 2018-2019 and 2019-2020. 14 high schools were participating by the fall of 2019, with another four and possibly five teams joining in spring of 2020.

River Watch Teams are operating in the following high schools:

Waseca

Lac Qui Parle Valley

Shakopee

Belle Plaine

New Ulm High School

Sleepy Eye High School

Redwood Valley

Cedar Mountain

Yellow Medicine East

Mankato East

Mankato West

Bloomington Kennedy - Committed to begin Spring 2020

Faribault Alternative High School - Committed to start spring 2020

Marshall

The following schools are in discussion and expected to begin monitoring in spring 2020 or fall 2020

Bloomington Jefferson

Owatonna

Austin

Friends of the Minnesota Valley (FMV)
Lower Minnesota River Watershed District (LMRWD)
Public Education Partnership

Based on notes from March 13, 2020

Friends of the Minnesota Valley will contract with the LMRWD to provide a public education program during the summer of 2020.

The program will consist primarily of establishing a presence through an information booth/table that is placed and staffed at Community Celebrations, County Fairs, and similar public gatherings in the Minnesota River Basin. Special efforts will be made to place the booth at locations upriver as far as Big Stone Lake. The booth will be co-labeled as Friends of the Minnesota Valley and Lower Minnesota River Watershed District.

The initial planning objective is to have the booth in place each weekend from Memorial Day through Labor Day. Some placements, especially at county fairs, will be three or four day placements, others might only be one day. For planning purposes, it is estimated that the booth will be on display and staffed for approximately 30 days during the summer season.

The main purpose of the booth will be to educate the viewing public on the Minnesota River. Topics will include improving soil health, pollinator habitat and chloride pollution. We plan to reach out to the MN Soil Health Coalition, County SWCDs and the University of MN Forever Green Initiative. All of this; improving soil health, using cover crops and improving water storage can help to improve water quality in the MN River and reduce sediment.

We are gathering information to be handed out and displays that can be distributed.

FMV will pay for all expenses and request reimbursement from the LMRWD at the end of the project, once a final report has been received.

FMV will hire or contract an individual, likely an intern to travel to county fairs throughout the MN River Basin to set up and staff the booth. FMV will attempt to secure volunteers from SWCDs, the MN Soil Health Coalition and the MN River Congress to assist in staffing. Estimated staff cost \$3,500-\$4,500 (based on \$12.50 to \$15.00 per hour).

Mileage will be reimbursed as will lodging when necessary. Estimated travel and lodging costs- \$3000

LMRWD will pay directly for any costs incurred in preparing the booth and handout materials. There may be additional costs to design handouts, but we believe there is plenty of information already developed that can be used.

Estimated costs for booth rental \$1,000-1,500 There will be a staff time expense to make contact and secure spaces at festivals.

Friends of the Minnesota Valley will provide oversight including engaging and supervision of the booth staff, will assist in development of display and handout materials, and will provide ongoing and a final report.

All of the above expenses would be reimbursed based on the actual expense with an estimated cap of \$10,000. This amount may change as planning proceeds and the program expectations become more detailed.

Fairs are already booking space for the summer of 2020.

Booth/Space rental	\$2,000
Staffing of booth	\$4,500
Mileage & Lodging	\$3,000
Display Development and reproduction expense	\$500
TOTAL	\$10,000

Presentation by Ted Suss from Friends of the Minnesota Valley

Ted Suss began by asking that the LMRWD support the work of the Water Resource Center and the Minnesota River Data Center. He said that is no other repository of information about the Minnesota River like the Data Center.

Mr. Suss explained that he serves as the Director of the Friends of the Minnesota Valley on a volunteer basis. He told the Board about the project the LMRWD and Friends did in 2017, where a booth was staffed at County Fairs throughout the MN River Basin to present to the public information about a variety of issues. Mr. Suss detailed the project and identified the County Fairs that were attended. He noted the difficulty in getting to Fairs because many of them fell on the same weekend. He said a booth was staffed at 9 County Fairs; Hennepin, Redwood, Watonwan, Scott, Blue Earth, Sibley, Carver, Brown and LeSueur. He said that former Congressman David Minge and Tim Lies a former Mayor of Belle Plaine were handing out information at the LMRWD booth in Scott County.

He reported on his experiences working with the intern that was hired for this project, Karl Schmidtke and told of some personal experiences he had over the course of the summer.

He spoke about the hand out Field to Stream by Dr. Les Everett of the U of M. and how he felt, that if we could get every farmer in the Basin to read that hand out, a lot of progress could be made in managing the flow of water. He noted that he is sensing a change in the attitudes of farmers and the public. President Shirk asked if Friends was planning to replicate the project again this summer and Mr. Suss said no, he thinks there are other activities he thought would be more effective.

Friends of the Minnesota Valley

PO Box 20697
Bloomington, MN 55420

Invoice

Invoice #: 2017-001

Invoice Date: 1/16/2018

Due Date: 1/16/2018

Project:

P.O. Number:

Bill To: *LINDA Loomis*

Lower Minnesota River Watershed District
112 E. 5th Street, #102
Chaska, Minnesota 55318

Description	Hours/Qty	Rate	Amount
Booth Setup/Checks	15.5	12.15	188.33
Event Planning/Scheduling	13	12.15	157.95
Booth Coverage	350	12.15	4,252.50
Mileage	3,720	0.535	1,990.20
Booth Rental Blue Earth County Fair	1	65.00	65.00
Booth Rental Brown County Fair	1	105.00	105.00
Booth Rental Carver County Fair	1	325.00	325.00
Booth Rental Chippewa County Fair	1	40.00	40.00
Booth Rental Hennepin County Fair	1	225.00	225.00
Booth Rental LeSeuer County Fair	1	95.00	95.00
Booth Rental Nicollet County Fair	1	90.00	90.00
Booth Rental Redwood County Fair	1	100.00	100.00
Booth Rental Scott County Fair	1	250.00	250.00
Booth Rental Sibley County Fair	1	135.00	135.00
Booth Rental Watonwan County Fair	1	75.00	75.00
Administrative Overhead	1	1,000.00	1,000.00
Total			\$9,093.98
Payments/Credits			\$0.00
Balance Due			\$9,093.98