



LOWER MINNESOTA RIVER WATERSHED DISTRICT

Executive Summary for Action

Lower Minnesota River Watershed District Board of Managers Meeting

Wednesday, October 18, 2023

Agenda Item

Item 6. F. – 2024 Legislative action

Prepared By

Linda Loomis, Administrator

Summary

Information provided to the Board at the September meeting is attached again. I have asked Lisa Frenette to join/attend the meeting. In speaking with Lisa, it may be that the LMRWD just monitor activity at the Legislature and be on the defense or if anything comes through that we might partner on. I suggest that we (Ms. Frenette and I) meet with Rita Weaver, Chief Engineer at BWSR, as she has been in charge of the Water Storage Initiative.

Attachments

Executive Summary for 2024 Legislative Action from September 20, 2023 Board of Managers meeting

Recommended Action

Provide direction to staff



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Lower Minnesota River Watershed District Board of Managers Meeting

Wednesday, September 20, 2023

Agenda Item

Item 7. F. – 2024 Legislative Action

Prepared By

Linda Loomis, Administrator

Summary

At the August 16, 2023, Board of Managers meeting, the Board asked for information regarding the history of LMRWD legislative action. Most of the legislative action in the past 10 years was around securing state funding to assist with the management of dredge material.

2013	Efforts were to secure funding for dredge material management or relieve the LMRWD as local sponsor responsibilities
2014	No legislative activities were undertaken
2015	<p>LMRWD introduced SF2204 to establish a Minnesota River Basin Commission. This was met with some opposition in int Basin.</p> <p>LMRWD supported legislation to store more precipitation on the land and the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Require that engineers’ reports for drainage projects and repairs under Minnesota Statutes §§103E.245, 103E.705 and 103E.715 evaluate impacts of proposals on wetlands, flow conditions, water storage and pollution, consistent with drainage system requirements. • Provide statutory confirmation in Minnesota Statutes §103E.011, subdivision 5, that drainage authorities are eligible to receive external sources of funding for local watershed-based planning and implementation. • Establish ad valorem levy authority for counties which serve as drainage authorities. The up-front cost of implementing multipurpose drainage may otherwise prove prohibitive. <p>Designate Clean Water Funds to share the costs incurred by drainage authorities in designing and installing multi-purpose drainage systems.</p>
2016	<p>In addition to supporting 2015 requests, the LMRWD introduced HF3677/SF2563 asking for the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Make the Board of Water and Soil Resources (BWSR) as the agency responsible for setting goals and strategies for reducing sediment, flow and nutrients by the end of 2017 • Set a goal to complete plans (One Watershed, One Plan) for each of the 13 major watersheds that make up the basin by the end of 2020. • Provides authority for BWSR to establish watershed district under chapter 103D, if plans are not completed or once completed, a plan is not implemented.

2016 (cont.)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establishes a local advisory committee to work with BWSR in developing goals and strategies. Appropriates \$1,250,000 in fiscal year 2017 to BWSR to implement, setting aside \$250,000 for local government units to initiate comprehensive watershed management plans.
2017	<p>HF821/SF701 Appropriation: sites for Minnesota River Dredge Spoil. Requests \$480 in 2018 and \$480,000 in 2019 – appropriation of \$480,000 was appropriated per biennium: HF 1498/SF1131 Minnesota River Basin Management</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> BWSR must coordinate development and implementation of goals & strategies for sediment reduction, flow reduction and nutrient reduction Ensure use of sound science with hydrologic and hydraulic modeling Comprehensive watershed management plans throughout MN River Basin Establish Advisory Committees and biannual reporting <p>Appropriation to accomplish the above</p>
2018	The LMRWD supported MN River Basin Management and then weighed in on multiple legislation that was introduced by other this session;
2019	In 2019 the LMRWD continues to ask the State to reauthorize funding to manage dredge material management, fund the MN River Basin Center at Minnesota State University Mankato, address liability issues related to winter maintenance, fund spin-off studies from the MN River Basin Integrated Watershed Study, establish water quality goals for the Minnesota River, and address clean-up of Freeway Dump and Landfill.
2020	Authorize LMRWD to redirect dredge assistance funding to Seminary Fen Ravine stabilization project. (the LMRWD did not receive the second half of a CWF grant and used dredge assistance funding to replace the lost grant.
2021	Reauthorize funding for assistance with dredge management; Received authorization to redirect \$110,500 to Seminary Fen Ravine project
2022	Request state assistance to fund Area #3 riverbank stabilization
2023	LMRWD secured \$2,750,000 of State funding to stabilize riverbank at Area #3
2021	Reauthorize funding for assistance with dredge management; Received authorization to redirect \$110,500 to Seminary Fen Ravine project
2022	Request state assistance to fund Area #3 riverbank stabilization
2023	LMRWD secured \$2,750,000 of State funding to stabilize riverbank at Area #3

BWSR has asked how much longer the LMRWD wants assistance managing dredge material. The LMRWD has asked BWSR if dredge assistance could be used to reduce sediment. BWSR is not responsive when asked. It may be that the LMRWD should consider asking the legislature to amend the language that authorized the dredge material management assistance. Funding.

Lisa Frenette recommended that the LMRWD may want to consider membership if [Agri-Growth](#). The Board asked for more information as to why Ms. Frenette made that recommendation. Ms. Frenette said that Agri-Growth shares many of the same priorities as the LMRWD and they are not viewed negatively by agricultural interests in the MN River Basin. She it would be good for the LMRWD to partner with another organization. She cautioned that the Board should not put off by the name of the organization.

Manager Barisonzi offered other organizations that the LMRWD may want to support. Here is a list provided by Manager Barisonzi: [Sustainable Farming Association](#) (membership), [Land Stewardship Project](#) (membership), [CURE](#) (Clean Up the River Environment) (donation), MCEA (Minnesota Center for Environmental Advocacy),

(donation), Citizens for a Clean Minnesota River (I assume this is the [Coalition for a Clean Minnesota River](#), as I could not find any organization called “Citizens for a Clean Minnesota River”).

The LMRWD does support the Coalition for a Clean Minnesota River. The LMRWD has provided matching funds for its efforts to secure funding for Water Storage. The LMRWD has supported the MN River Congress since 2014, which is organized by the Coalition for a Clean Minnesota River.

Some of the organizations suggested by Manager Barisonzi are not membership organizations. Support would be in the form of a donation to the organization. There are numerous other organizations besides the ones listed. The last time the Board considered supporting watershed organizations (other than MN Watersheds) was in 2015. The organizations considered at that time were [Freshwater](#) (membership), [Blue Thumb](#) (partnership), [Watershed Partners](#) (now Clean Water Minnesota – partnership), and [Metro Blooms](#) (donation). The Board did not authorize membership in any of the organizations at that time.

The LMRWD has contracted with Freshwater to conduct studies, such as the [altered hydrology study](#), the [nonylphenol and its ethoxylates study](#), [landslide study](#), and [paleolimnology study of floodplain lakes](#). The LMRWD has supported Freshwater by purchasing a table it is annual fundraising galas (prior to COVID).

If the Board is interested, there are other organizations to consider, such as [Adopt a Drain](#), [MN Soil Health Coalition](#) (membership or partner), [Conservation Minnesota](#) (donation), [Environmental Initiative](#) (donation), [Great River Greening](#) (donation) and more.

Manager Salvato has expressed interest in a strategic planning session, which may help to decide whether to support any organization. The Watershed Management is the strategic Plan for the LMRWD. Manager Salvato, Della Young and I have been meeting with Dara Wald from Texas A & M to develop key messaging and determine how to reach target audiences. The work with Ms. Wald may help to inform what organizations the LMRWD want to partner with. The project that Manager Salvato has arranged with Ms. Wald, is a project done by students at the University and other than time commitments from Manager Salvato, Young Environmental Consulting Group and myself, there is no cost to the LMRWD.

Attachments

No attachments

Recommended Action

No recommendations