



LOWER MINNESOTA RIVER WATERSHED DISTRICT

Executive Summary for Action

Lower Minnesota River Watershed District Board of Managers Meeting

Wednesday, November 15, 2024

Agenda Item

Item 5. C. – Set 2024 Meeting Schedule

Prepared By

Linda Loomis, Administrator

Summary

Every year the Board of Managers sets its meeting schedule for the following year. In addition, the Board should consider setting a date for

Dates for regular meetings in 2024 are:

- Wednesday, January 17, 2024
- Wednesday, February 21, 2024
- Wednesday, March 20, 2024
- Wednesday, April 17, 2024
- Wednesday, May 15, 2024
- Wednesday, June 19, 2024
- Wednesday, July 17, 2024
- Wednesday, August 21, 2024
- Wednesday, September 18, 2024
- Wednesday, October 16, 2024
- Wednesday, November 20, 2024
- Wednesday December 18, 2024

Managers should check their schedules to see if there are any known conflicts that preclude them from being able to attend a meeting either in person or remotely. In addition, the 2024 work plans called for a board workshop in early 2024 to gain the Board's input and set direction for messaging and priorities for the year. Young Environmental Consulting Group will facilitate a discussion to inform Education & Outreach program task for 2024 which will include the Citizen Advisory Committee (CAC), social media activities, signage development, school engagement efforts and community outreach and engagement activities. Young Environmental would like to get this meeting on the calendar so that planning for the meeting can begin. The 2024 Public Education and Outreach Plan is attached for the Board's review.

Lastly, adjacent watershed districts, Nine Mile Creek WD, and Riley, Purgatory, Bluff Creek WD, have met to plan an education event for local elected officials. It has not yet been determined whether this will be a workshop on the water or some other type of activity. The LMRWD has not hosted a tour of the River since 2019, before COVID. The 2019 tour partners were the Burnsville and Savage Chambers of Commerce.

Attachments

2024 Public Education and Outreach Plan

Recommended Action

Determine meeting dates and motion to set 2024 meeting schedule as determined

LOWER MINNESOTA RIVER WATERSHED DISTRICT

2024 Public Education and Outreach Plan

Work Plan—September 1, 2023

Young Environmental continues to administer the Lower Minnesota River Watershed District's (LMRWD's) public education and outreach program. The tasks below fulfill Goal 9 in the Watershed Management Plan: Public Education and Outreach, which functions to increase public participation and awareness of the Minnesota River and its unique natural resources.

Summary

<i>Outcome:</i>	2024 Public Education and Outreach Plan
<i>Project Partners:</i>	City Partners, Residents, and Businesses of the LMRWD; US Fish And Wildlife Service; And Nongovernmental Organizations (NGOs); Public and Private Schools
<i>Timeline for Completion:</i>	January 2024–December 2024
<i>Total Fees:</i>	\$70,000
<i>Total Expenses:</i>	\$5,000
<i>Total Project Budget:</i>	\$75,000

Objective 1. Project Management and Board of Managers Coordination

Task 1.1: Project plan development and project management. Finalize the work plan, assign project tasks, determine whether additional resources are needed, set dates for deliverables, generate and maintain project schedule, and perform monthly invoicing.

Task 1.2 Board Workshop. To begin 2024 Education and Outreach in alignment with LMRWD priorities, our team will lead a Board Workshop in early 2024 to gain input and inform the direction of messaging and priorities for the year. Young Environmental will lead a workshop to discuss Education and Outreach priorities for 2024. We will facilitate a conversation to understand the 2024 goals and determine how to align the various program components to reach the intended audience and share key messages.

Task 1.3. Quarterly Updates. Young Environmental will provide quarterly updates on Education and Outreach program tasks and deliverables to keep the Board of Managers informed on progress, evolving needs, and lessons learned from the community.

Timeline for Completion: January 2024–December 2024

Deliverables: Board of Managers Kick-Off Workshop and Quarterly Updates

Estimated Budget: \$5,000

Objective 2. Citizen Advisory Committee (CAC)

Young Environmental supports the CAC by preparing meeting agendas and minutes, securing educational presentations, tours, and learning opportunities, creating educational materials, coordinating attendance at local events, and increasing membership. In 2023, three new CAC members joined the committee. To boost this membership, targeted recruitment materials were sent to 15 partner cities and counties to be used as handouts, posting in facilities, inclusion in newsletters and/or on social media platforms. Recruitment postings were also shared quarterly on the LMRWD social media platforms. Eight meetings have been held so far this year with topics and tours ranging from the fish of the Minnesota River to wastewater treatment. CAC members have also been invited to additional learning opportunities such as salt reduction and best practices for pollinators. In 2024, Young Environmental hopes to continue the momentum with the CAC through the following tasks.

Task 2.1: Maintain a CAC of five members or more and focus on retaining existing members. Young Environmental will continue to search for CAC members using the LMRWD website and social media as well as through outreach at local tabling events. Current CAC members, municipal partners, and other groups within the LMRWD will also be asked to assist in reaching interested members of the community. Retaining our existing CAC membership is important so recognition of their impact and regular thanks will be incorporated. Young Environmental will continue to suggest and facilitate opportunities for unique and engaging educational experiences for CAC members to participate in on their own time to further their learning of water and natural resources.

Task 2.2: Plan and facilitate CAC meetings. Young Environmental will develop monthly meeting agendas with input from the LMRWD and the CAC. As part of agenda development, Young Environmental may also organize speakers and visits to projects and high-value resource sites.

Task 2.3: Monitor and assist the CAC. Young Environmental will draft a meeting summary or notes with the secretary, provide technical information, and support and host the virtual and/or in-person meetings.

Task 2.4: Develop educational materials as directed by the CAC. Over the course of the year, the CAC may need to have materials developed to convey the work of the LMRWD or to address recurring questions it has encountered. Young Environmental will draft up to four educational items in cooperation with the CAC and LMRWD Administrator.

Deliverables: CAC membership roster, list of education opportunities attended, meeting agendas, summaries, and CAC-guided educational materials

Estimated Budget: \$15,000

Objective 3. Social Media

We understand that it can be difficult to measure return on investment with social media efforts. We have provided an attachment with summarized 2023 analytics to date where we compare LMRWD metrics with neighboring watershed districts and provide context to understand the progress we've made and future adjustments needed. From this data, we do fall behind our neighbors in terms of followers; however, the number of "likes" is very comparable and do have a wide reach (a reach an estimated number of people who saw any content from your page or about your page). There has also been a 26% increase in our Instagram reach since last year. We have not seen an increase in Facebook or Twitter so far in 2023, but still feel that social media is the best way to let people know about the LMRWD even though the complexity of measuring the influence of social media exists.

Example: Twitter post to the left. While it received only one "like" by the NRCS_Minnesota but it has received 19 views in under 24 hours. It has three links. One to University of Minnesota-Extension, one to the LMRWD resident webpage, and one to the LMRWD rain garden and native plant handout. This drives people to our site regardless of how many followers we have or how many likes it gets.

Through our analytics, we have identified topics that perform well: salt, yard care, the CAC, and stormwater seem to be the topics most viewed across all platforms. In 2024, Young Environmental hopes to continue social media with the modifications to the program as noted below.

To maximize the proposed budget, we will make adjustments to focus energy on Instagram (which is performing well), grow our followers through partnership posts with neighboring collaborators and through our own internal network (CAC), and create targeted content pillars that align with our audiences' proven interests.

Task 3.1: Maintain social media sites. LMRWD Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter accounts were established in 2021. Young Environmental will continue to create quarterly content calendars and post content. Content will be based on trends noted with high engagement. Young Environmental will continue to gather and take photos of LMRWD resources/projects and perform weekly monitoring of all sites for partner content, follower comments, and analytic tracking. Because Instagram is performing well, we will focus on creating content that works well on this platform, including "how-to" conservation videos provided by CAC members.

Task 3.2: Enhance social media messaging. Young Environmental suggests adjustments to grow the social media audience and target unique users by enriching our social media messaging. In addition to best practice content, social media posts will include more posts about what makes the LMRWD special and its unique resources. Targeted campaigns may include personal connections to the Minnesota River,



recreation, and LMRWD project highlights. We will share knowledge and foster a sense of pride and ownership in the community and talk about the work LMRWD has done to protect resources through work on specific projects.

Task 3.3: Grow social media following. To continue intentionally growing the social media audience, we will explore partnerships for joint content with local organizations, tapping into existing networks. We will also research active neighborhood associations or conservation groups on Facebook who may have shared interests and invite them to follow our accounts. We will create signage for tabling events with links to the LMRWD website and an invitation to follow our social media accounts.

Deliverables: Quarterly content calendar, weekly posting to social media accounts, monitoring and maintenance of accounts, and image gathering, and design creation

Estimated Budget: \$10,000

Objective 4. LMRWD Signage

Young Environmental continued work on interpretive signs near high-value resource areas and at LMRWD project sites in 2023. Design is complete for Courthouse Lake (shown below) and a similar sign is currently being drafted for Quarry Lake. These signs will be fabricated over the fall and winter months for spring 2024 installation. Other sign projects that are progressing include conversations with the City of Burnsville for interpretive signs at the Rudy Kraemer Nature Preserve, interpretive and resource protection signs for Ike’s Creek in partnership with the City of Bloomington and the Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refuge, and a co-branded creek crossing sign for Riley Creek in cooperation

ABOUT COURTHOUSE LAKE

Courthouse Lake sits in what was one of three open-pit clay mines in the City of Chaska, located within the Lower Minnesota River Watershed.

During the late 1800s and early 1900s, the brick-making industry excavated cream-colored clay here. The unique, yellow-colored bricks were used in many buildings.

With the clay removed, high-quality groundwater filled the mine and created a lake with cold and well-oxygenated water. These conditions are ideal for stream trout, leading the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources to take interest in it as a "put-and-take" fishery. The stream trout do not reproduce in lakes so annual stocking is required to maintain the fishery.

Other recreation at the lake includes a 0.7-mile path around the lake that meanders through areas of restored native plants. Native plants do well in the soils and climate of their original location. They typically need less water and pesticides, and their deep roots infiltrate water, maintain healthy soils, and reduce soil erosion. Sections of the lawn around Courthouse Lake were restored to native plants, increasing the pollinator corridor along the Minnesota River and reducing polluted runoff from entering Courthouse Lake.

Lake Specs

SIZE: 12 acres
DEPTH: 57 feet

WHAT ARE POLLINATORS?

Pollinators are bees, wasps, butterflies, moths, birds, bats, beetles, flies, and other insects that travel among flowering plants to help produce many of the fruits, vegetables, and nuts we eat.

FACT Pollinators are responsible for one out of every three bites of food you eat!

WHAT CAN YOU DO?
Help keep this lake clean & cool

KEEP STORM DRAINS CLEAN: Pick up pet waste and keep storm drains clear of litter, leaves, grass clippings, and other debris. Water from rain and snowmelt washes off lawns and enters drains on your street. This water is not treated before it enters the lake.

USE SIDEWALK SALT MINIMALLY: Shovel snow early and often so deicers are not needed. One teaspoon of salt permanently pollutes five gallons of water and harms freshwater systems, including the trout that are susceptible to changes in chloride.

REDIRECT YOUR DOWNSPOUT: Angle downspouts toward your lawns or gardens. This will help filter and cool rain and snowmelt before it enters the groundwater that supplies Courthouse Lake.

Create pollinator habitats

REDUCE PESTICIDE USE: Broad-spectrum insecticides used to kill unwanted pests often eliminate or harm a wide range of non-targeted insects as well. Be selective and reduce reliance on pesticides.

INCORPORATE NATIVE PLANTS INTO YOUR YARD: Attract bees, butterflies, and birds to your garden with native plants that provide color to your landscape and food and shelter for pollinators.

INSTALL A BAT OR NATIVE BEE HOUSE: Now that you have pollinators coming to your yard and garden, why not give them a place to call home?

WHAT ARE NATIVE PLANTS?

Native plants are the type of flowers and vegetation that grow naturally in a particular area without human interaction. These types of plants are the indigenous species that have evolved and occur naturally in an ecosystem and habitat.

WHAT IS A "PUT-AND-TAKE" FISHERY?

A put-and-take fishery means that hatchery-raised fish are stocked for fishing. Put-and-take management typically does not create a self-sustaining population of trout because few of the stocked fish reproduce.

ABOUT THESE RESOURCES:
Lower Minnesota River Watershed District (LMRWD) has partnered with communities, cities, and counties locally to preserve and protect water and natural resources.
Learn more at lowerminnriver.org.

Logos for Carver County, City of Chaska, and Lower Minnesota River Watershed District are included at the bottom of the sign.

with the Riley Purgatory Bluff Creek Watershed District. Young Environmental also continues

communication with Dakota County Parks for potential signage opportunities along the Minnesota River Greenway/Big Rivers Regional Trail. Young Environmental hopes to keep this successful program moving in 2024 through the following tasks.

Task 4.1: Interpretive signage. Young Environmental will continue to identify sites for LMRWD project and LMRWD resource signage and will make recommendations for proposed interpretive sign locations. Young Environmental will continue to work with local partners on locations and messaging and with the current signage contractor for design and fabrication. The Board of Managers will receive estimates for the cost of up to five signs annually.

Task 4.2: Resource identification and protection signs: In 2023, Young Environmental designed in-house graphics for Riley Creek crossing sign and Ike's Creek clean water starts here sign. In 2024, Young Environmental will continue to investigate opportunities for in-house sign graphic design for small-scale resource signs.

Deliverables: Recommendations for LMRWD sign locations, design, and fabrication cost coordination

Estimated Budget: \$10,000 (design and fabrication costs not included)

Objective 5. Schools Engagement

Young Environmental continued outreach to local schools. As part of this outreach, programming coordination with the Dakota County Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD), the City of Burnsville, and Burnsville High School resulted in a request for proposal (RFP) for a consultant to develop in class curriculum and a field component for 9th grade science classes. The curriculum will be centered on water chemistry and testing. The RFP went out to consultants in May and this fall Bolton & Menk will deliver programming to three applied biology classes at the high school. This program may be replicable for other schools in LMRWD. The second round of the Educator Mini-Grant Program was also released in early 2023. Direct emails were sent to over 600 educators and organizations by Young Environmental about this program. The announcement was also shared on social media and city and county partners. Unfortunately, there were no applicants. For the 2023-24 school year direct mailing with information and a promotional handout went out to 106 schools in all partner cities in May before the end of the school year with hopes that more advance notice might increase applications. This fall an email blast and social media posts will be used to solicit applicants. With any new program, we understand the difficulty in start-up. In conversations with neighboring watershed districts, we understand these programs often take a year or so to gain interest and participants. We hope that in this round of educator grants, our second year of the program, we see increased interest. If necessary, Young Environmental will reevaluate engagement methods before proceeding with the winter/spring round of funding.

Task 5.1: Partnerships. Young Environmental will continue to explore educational opportunities for students within our partner cities to grow and expand our relationship with schools. Young Environmental will develop education plans for interested partners for the 2023–24 academic year. With any successful partnership, we will make sure to share the story on the website and social channels.

Task 5.2: Grant program. In 2022, Young Environmental developed the Educator Mini-Grant Program, providing schools, non-profits, educators, and students with funding opportunities. As part of this program, Young Environmental will assist in evaluating proposals, awarding grants, and compiling reports and reimbursement requests.

Deliverables: Relationship-building with partners, education plans, mini-grant outreach and promotion, and website updates

Estimated Budget: \$15,000

Objective 6. Community Outreach and Engagement

Young Environmental continued outreach to local organizations and participated in conversations to reach the community with water quality and natural resource messaging. As part of that, Young Environmental participated in a workgroup made up of stakeholders from Hennepin County to discuss and share ideas for a portable aquatic invasive species (AIS) hands-on display. This display would be available for all partners to bring to local events throughout the county and would promote best practices when dealing with AIS. Young Environmental also developed a low-maintenance landscapes handout to bring to local events and for sharing on the LMRWD website. This handout encourages residents to adopt less intense lawn care practices for water conservation and pollinator habitat. In 2023, Young Environmental coordinated several tabling events for CAC members to provide outreach to the community. This is the first year the LMRWD has attended farmers markets. Young Environmental staff assisted at several of these events:

- Everything Spring Expo: Eden Prairie
- Arbor Day Walk & Green Fair: Eden Prairie
- Burnsville Native Plant Market
- Eagan Market Fest
- Chaska Farmers Market
- Bloomington Farmers Market
- Buzz Fest: Bloomington



These events provided one-on-one interaction with residents in several LMRWD communities. Informational handouts on cost-share and clean water practices were handed out and personal connections were made. Young Environmental looks forward to continuing this outreach in 2024.

Task 6.1: Partnership. Young Environmental will continue to evaluate existing and established education and/or sustainability program partnerships with local cities, counties, nonprofits, and NGOs in 2024.

Task 6.2: Local events. In 2022, Young Environmental developed criteria to help determine participation in events and programming and the CAC a list of potential events and programs based on these criteria. In 2024, Young Environmental and the CAC will revisit criteria and list of existing events to assess effectiveness and adjust if necessary. Young Environmental will coordinate participation in events and programs as directed and will support the CAC in the events that meet those criteria. We believe local events are a way to also grow our audience and community and solicit input from the public. These events will also help us grow our audience on social media by providing an accessible follow-up.

Task 6.3: Tabling materials. Young Environmental developed several handouts that may be brought to community tabling events. Based on guidance from the CAC, Young Environmental will continue to develop additional handouts and/or other materials and investigate the purchase of interactive displays and present cost findings to the board.

Deliverables: Event criteria, list of events, local event participation, handout development, and interactive display memorandum

Estimated Budget: \$15,000

Meeting Goals of the LMRWD Watershed Management Plan

The Watershed Management Plan informs the day-to-day work of the LMRWD. Below, we have included the goals and strategies identified for the Education and Outreach program. These strategies have informed all the proposed objectives and will drive our ongoing work in this area.

Issues	Goals	Strategies
Issue 8: Public Education and Outreach	Goal 9: Public Education and Outreach: To increase public participation and awareness of the Minnesota River and its unique natural resources	Strategy 1.2.1: Provide public information services Strategy 4.2.3: Provide educational opportunities Strategy 8.1.1: Promote safety education Strategy 9.1.1: Maintain Citizen Advisory Committee Strategy 9.1.2: Develop an outreach program Strategy 9.1.3: Engage volunteers Strategy 9.1.4: Provide opportunity for public input Strategy 9.2.1: Produce scientific studies and work products Strategy 9.2.2: Promote a variety of education programs Strategy 9.2.3: Use multiple outlets to distribute information

Facebook

112 followers | 83 pages like our page

- Facebook reach decreased 20.5% in 2023 from 2022.
 - 2023 - January 1, 2023 - August 28, 2023
 - 2022 - January 1, 2022 - December 31, 2023

Reach: the number of people who saw any content from your Page or about your Page. This metric is estimated.

Best Performing Facebook Post of 2023

Join the CAC	229 - reach	1 - link click	1 - share	June 14, 2023
<p>Do you care about the Minnesota River, lakes, streams, wetlands, and groundwater in your community? Do you wonder how you might help protect and restore them? The LMRWD is seeking interested residents, just like you, to join its Citizen Advisory Committee (CAC). The CAC is a volunteer advisory group appointed annually by the District's Board of Managers. You do not need to be an expert to apply. All you need is an interest and concern for our shared water and natural resources. Applications can be found here: bit.ly/LMRWDCAC.</p> <p>Lower Minnesota River Watershed District</p>				

With Facebook we are:

- **Reaching** people with Salt, Volunteering (CAC), Educator Grants, District Learning
- People are **clicking** on **links** to Recreation, CAC, Yard Care
- People are **sharing** content about People, CAC, Yard Care, Stormwater

Comparing Facebook with our neighbors.

Watershed District	Number of Facebook Followers	Number of Last 5 Post Likes	District Size
Lower Minnesota	112	1, 1, 2, 3, 2	80 square miles
Nine Mile	922	1, 0, 4, 2, 17 (+1 share) - tag with 3 Rivers Park District	50 square miles
Riley Purgatory Bluff Creek	427	1, 2, 2, 3, 2	50 square miles

Instagram

250 followers

- Instagram reach increased 26.2% in 2023 from 2022.
 - 2023 - January 1, 2023 - August 28, 2023
 - 2022 - January 1, 2022 - December 31, 2023

Reach: the number of people who saw any content from your Page or about your Page. This metric is estimated.

Best Performing Instagram Post of 2023

Order a rain barrel	102 - reach	14 - likes	6 - share	March 1, 2023
---------------------	-------------	------------	-----------	---------------

With Instagram we are:

- **Reaching** people with Yard Care, Stormwater, Volunteering (CAC), Recreation
- People are **liking** content about Yard Care, Stormwater
- People are **sharing** content about Yard Care, Stormwater

Comparing Instagram with our neighbors.

Watershed District	Number of Instagram Followers	Number of Last 5 Post Likes	District Size
Lower Minnesota	250	3, 9, 2, 2, 4	80 square miles
Nine Mile	1,057	1, 0, 5, 23 (tag with 3 Rivers), 9	50 square miles
Riley Purgatory Bluff Creek	467	9, 12, 22, 17, 26 *use videos/questions	50 square miles

Twitter

92 followers

- Twitter impressions decreased 12% in 2023 from 2022
 - 2023 - January 1, 2023 - August 28, 2023
 - 2022 - January 1, 2022 - December 31, 2023

Impressions: how many total times a Tweet has been seen.

Best Performing Tweet of 2023

Lawn care	824 - impressions	2 -likes	1 - retweet	3 - user profile clicks	4 - detail expands
-----------	-------------------	----------	-------------	-------------------------	--------------------

User profile click: how many times a user clicked on your username leading them to your Twitter page.
 Detail expand: how many times a user clicks on the Tweet to view more details.



With Twitter we are:

- Making an **impression** with Yard Care, Recreation, Salt, Stormwater
- People are **liking** content about Salt, Stormwater, Yard Care
- People are **liking** content about Salt, Stormwater, Yard Care

Comparing Twitter with our neighbors.

Watershed District	Number of Twitter Followers	Number of Last 5 Post Likes	District Size
Lower Minnesota	92	0, 1, 1 (with retweet), 1, 0	80 square miles
Nine Mile	116	0, 1, 0, 2, 1	50 square miles
Riley Purgatory Bluff Creek	246	1, 2, 1, 1 (with retweet), 1	50 square miles