



# LOWER MINNESOTA RIVER WATERSHED DISTRICT

## Executive Summary for Action

Lower Minnesota River Watershed District Board of Managers Meeting  
Wednesday, August 21, 2024

### **Agenda Item**

#### **Item 9. A. – Minnesota River Boat Tour**

#### **Prepared By**

Linda Loomis, Administrator

#### **Summary**

Staff has been working to plan for the Minnesota River Tour, September 10, 2024. Suzy Lindberg and the team from Young Environmental Consulting Group have been working with Administrator Loomis to confirm the details of the program.

We are waiting for confirmation from the rest of the speakers and from two groups that have been invited to table.

RSVP are being received. Food has been ordered. Music has been confirmed. There may be further updates to report at the Board of Managers meeting.

#### **Attachments**

Technical Memorandum – Minnesota River Barge Tour September 10, 2024 – Event Planning Update dated August 14, 2024

#### **Recommended Action**

No action recommended – for information only

# Technical Memorandum



**To:** Linda Loomis, Administrator  
Lower Minnesota River Watershed District (LMRWD)

**From:** Suzy Lindberg, Communications Manager

**Date:** August 14, 2024

**Re:** Minnesota River Barge Tour September 10, 2024 —Event Planning Update

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As part of the January workshop with the Board of Managers and Citizen Advisory Committee (CAC), an experiential river tour was identified as a priority project to connect with key partners throughout local government (both within the LMRWD and upstream), state agencies, nonprofit organizations, and members of legislation. Board Managers, CAC members, and LMRWD consulting staff will play key roles in hosting the event and building awareness, partnership, and outreach through the barge tour event. Below is a summary of activities completed and planned for the barge tour.

## Board of Managers Survey

To begin the planning process, Young Environmental had the Board of Managers complete a survey to solicit input for the vision of the event. This survey helped to prioritize themes, speakers, additional entertainment, and tabling groups. Many common topics and themes emerged, including the following:

- Nutrients, contaminants, and total maximum daily loads (TMDLs)
- Sedimentation in the Minnesota River at various downstream points
- Examples of water storage projects for various land uses
- Geological history of the Minnesota River
- Effects of climate change on the natural river system
- Increase in the occurrence and severity of flooding and strategies to reduce river flows
- Infrastructure damage due to erosion
- Impacts of land development on natural systems and associated costs related to management
- Changing landscapes and climate resiliency

Using the results of the survey, Young Environmental staff worked with Linda Loomis, LMRWD administrator, to design a program complete with speakers and activities that address the vision of the Board of Managers. To implement the vision of the Board, the tour will include educational and experiential components, with subject-matter experts, live music, highlights of LMRWD points of interest, and networking opportunities. The next section highlights how themes were developed to meet survey feedback and guest speakers were aligned with key topics of interest.

## Board of Managers Survey Integration in Program Planning



In discussing the themes and topics for the barge tour, the LMRWD consulting staff organized the messaging to share the basinwide approach needed to successfully manage the LMRWD. Linda reached out to her network to secure speakers on relevant topics who bring credibility and different perspectives to the barge tour. The program was designed to open with a welcome and history of the Minnesota River, move into a big-picture discussion of climate and how the changes are affecting systems we manage, and delve deeper into key topics of water quantity (both urban and agricultural) and water quality. As the funnel goes from a high level to local impacts, the tour will end with representatives from the

LMRWD detailing key work to date with projects, day-to-day management activities (e.g. dredge site), and our vision for future work to be done. The program is intended to communicate the LMRWD's position at the bottom of the funnel and build partnership around shared management and accountability.

The program is also designed to set the stage for the next Watershed Management Plan update. We discussed drafting a follow-up email for participants to reiterate the messaging from the barge tour, keeping key topics and opportunities top of mind beyond a one-day experience. This follow-up message will be crafted as planning continues as we identify key messaging and calls to action to impart during the barge tour. Based on the Board of Managers' survey, it is also of strong importance to not only educate and inform but also maintain a theme of celebration and partnership.

The program of speakers includes:

**MINNESOTA RIVER  
BARGE TOUR**

**TOUR  
the  
RIVER**

**09.10.2024  
2:30PM-7PM**

Hosted by  
**LOWER MINNESOTA RIVER  
WATERSHED DISTRICT**

The Lower Minnesota River Watershed District (LMRWD) is hosting a Minnesota River barge tour on Tuesday, September 10, 2024! Join us to view the current conditions on the Minnesota River, learn about important projects, and hear from guest speakers on flood impacts, river sediment, and climate resiliency. Enjoy live music, appetizers, beautiful views of the Minnesota River Valley, and resource booths from local organizations.

*special guest*  
**SPEAKERS**

- Welcome and Watershed News  
Speaker to Be Announced**  
Lower Minnesota River Watershed District
- History of the Minnesota River  
Michelle Stockness, Executive Director**  
Freshwater Society
- Climatology  
Ken Blumenfeld**  
Senior Climatologist  
Minnesota State Climate Office
- Urban Flooding and Drainage  
Andy Erickson, PhD, PE**  
Research Manager  
St. Anthony Falls Laboratory
- Agricultural Flooding and Drainage  
Speaker To Be Announced**
- Water Quality  
Rita Weaver**  
Chief Engineer and State Drainage Engineer  
Minnesota Board of Water and Soil Resources

*free event*  
**SCAN TO REGISTER**  
Register by August 30, 2024

### Tabling Groups

Based on the Board of Managers' input, it was key to invite groups to table and provide additional relevant resources to accompany speakers. The LMRWD consulting staff determined that with the space available on the boat, tabling will be limited to 4-5 partner organizations, focusing on the groups with a high impact and relevance to the selected topics. Groups were invited based on recommendations from the Board of Managers and their relevance to the program. We have currently confirmed three tabling organizations: (1) Friends of the Minnesota Valley, (2) Lake Pepin Legacy Alliance, and (3) Minnesota Soil Health Coalition. Our team will also reach out to the LMRWD CAC to gauge the group's interest in tabling versus attending the event as guests.

The goal for the tabling groups is to create meaningful interaction and share resources that align with LMRWD's mission and partnerships, creating a more robust experience. The LMRWD planning committee has furthered this request by contacting groups and coordinating their participation.

## Attendees

Because of the nature of the tour, the event will be invite-only and not open to the public. LMRWD consulting staff compiled a comprehensive list of local and regional partners from the watershed district, municipalities, counties, partner organizations and more. Research was compiled to create a list of ~350 participants to receive an electronic invitation. A full list of recipients is available upon request.

## Communication with Attendees

A **save-the-date email** was circulated to the list of attendees on Wednesday, July 17, with an open rate of 50 percent. A follow-up email was sent on Tuesday, July 23 to advertise the date change required to coordinate with county commissioner guests.

A **full invitation email** was drafted and circulated to the attendee list on Wednesday August 14 with a deadline to RSVP by August 30. Our team will continuously monitor registrations and meet weekly to discuss final logistics. The mailing list will receive a reminder email in advance of the deadline.

We established an Eventbrite landing page to capture registrations, which can be viewed here:

[Minnesota River Barge Tour Tickets, Tue, Sep 10, 2024 at 2:30 PM | Eventbrite](#)

## Next Steps

As we monitor attendance through the Eventbrite site, the planning team will continue to refine a detailed agenda as well as roles and responsibilities to manage the tour on the day of the event. We will define roles and expectations for members of the LMRWD staff, Board of Managers, and CAC members. We will continue to communicate with the groups regarding tabling and communicate with speakers to ensure their talking points align with desired messaging. The LMRWD consultant staff can establish talking points as needed to ensure the shared information aligns with the LMRWD's goals and vision.

We ask the Board of Managers to mark their calendars for this event, promote attendance with partner organizations in your network, and reach out to the LMRWD consultant staff if you have a specific area of interest to participate in during the barge tour program. We would like our guests to be visibly hosted by our representative Board of Managers to share an important message about the Minnesota River's health and the ongoing work of the LMRWD to address issues such as flooding, climate resilience, and water quality.