



# 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. B. – State of the Minnesota River Listening Session**

#### **Prepared By**

Linda Loomis, Administrator

#### **Summary**

LMRWD staff are still trying to find a catchy more descriptive title for this event. The team at Young Environmental Consulting Group has been working with the Administrator to plan this event. We met with President Barisonzi on Tuesday, August 15, 2024, to confirm we were on the right track.

An update of planning efforts so far is attached. The biggest obstacle so far is determining a date to hold the event.

#### **Attachments**

Technical Memorandum – Flood Listening Session – Event Planning dated August 15, 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  
Della Schall Young, PMP, CPESC, CTF, Principal Scientist

**Date:** August 15, 2024

**Re:** Flood Listening Session—Event Planning

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At the July Board of Managers meeting, Manager Barisonzi introduced a proposal for a public hearing on flooding in the Lower Minnesota River Watershed District. The Board of Managers requested Young Environmental respond to the proposal by summarizing a vision to host the event in October 2024. On August 13, 2024, the Young Environmental team met with Manager Barisonzi and Linda Loomis, administrator, to clarify the vision for the event and discuss logistics.

## Event Goals

Based on the proposal and discussion, three goals were identified:

1. Reach targeted audience (county boards, soil and water conservation districts, and other relevant policy-makers) to gain traction on legislative progress following a high-impact flood;
2. Receive sufficient information from participants to create a report that summarizes recommendations based on science-based information; and
3. Convert the hearing to a legislative agenda while building partnership across overlapping management strategies.

## Legislative Direction

Through our discussion, we determined that a legislative liaison would be a critical contributor in this process. The LMRWD plans to advertise for the position and can prioritize hiring in conjunction with the planning of this event. Based on the need for this collaborator, the barge tour scheduled for September, industry conferences in October, and the November election, it was determined that targeting January 2025 may be the best time to activate participation from the desired audience and build momentum around a shared legislative agenda for the next session.

Manager Barisonzi highlighted the need for a replicable process for this type of event that can be activated quickly to respond to future needs and issues.

### **Format of Event and Audience Definition**

The event would follow the format of a legislative-style public hearing, where targeted participants are invited to attend and present findings to the Board of Managers through a brief presentation, followed by a round of Q&A. Participants identified include relevant researchers, legislators, subject-matter experts, and local government partners. Participants could also provide written testimony to be included in the meeting records. Young Environmental's role would include defining a list of participants to submit information for the LMRWD legislative agenda; coordinating communication with participants and compiling received data; setting an agenda for the event; releasing event information to media contacts; collaborating with the defined team (including legislative advisor); and moderating and documenting the event.

We will explore the best timeframe to hold the session given the intended audience, considering whether a morning or an afternoon session would be preferable to an evening session to ensure attendance. The new legislative liaison would be a sounding board for and key driver in the design and execution of the event and follow-up activities.

### **Considerations and Next Steps**

Young Environmental is available for and dedicated to supporting the LMRWD's vision to plan and execute this January 2025 event as it relates to our role as technical consultant and education and outreach coordinator. We understand the critical need to guide messaging related to flood impacts and resilience. We look forward to the opportunity to build a narrative arc, weaving input from the listening session into a collaborative and compelling story to be presented to gain legislative support of flood resilience strategies.