



LOWER MINNESOTA RIVER WATERSHED DISTRICT

Executive Summary for Action

Lower Minnesota River Watershed District Board of Managers Meeting

Wednesday, October 9, 2024

Agenda Item

Item 8. B. – 2025 Legislative agenda

Prepared By

Linda Loomis, Administrator

Summary

Two proposals have been received by the LMRWD from firms to fill the Government Relations Consultant position; Park Street Public and Flaherty|Hood P.A. The Board's Personnel Committee will hold interviews with each firm in the next two weeks. They will bring a recommendation to the Board at the November 6th meeting. The proposals from each firm were shared with the Board as they came in. There was not deadline for submissions. The advertisement posted by the LMRWD said the position would remain open until it was filled. These firms will help the LMRWD develop its legislative agenda for the next legislative session.

At the September Board of Managers meeting, the Board asked to see the legislative agenda from the last session. It was forwarded to the Board between meetings, and it is attached to this summary. One of the priorities for this session will be to continue State Funding for dredge material management. This funding will be needed to pay for the Vernon Avenue Project.

Attachments

Proposal from Park Street Public

Proposal from Flaherty|Hood, P.A.

Item 7.B. LMRWD Executive Summary – 2024 Legislative agenda dated February 21, 2024

Recommended Action

No action recommended

PROPOSAL FOR

Lower Minnesota River Watershed District

PRESENTED TO

Linda Loomis
Administrator
Lower Minnesota River Watershed District

PRESENTED BY

Joe Birkholz
Principal
joe@parkstreetpublic.com
651-757-0920

Molly Jansen
Principal
molly@parkstreetpublic.com
952-207-4775



OVERVIEW

The bipartisan government relations team at Park Street Public has decades of experience working in and with the Minnesota Legislature, Executive Branch, and across local government units. We have been deeply engaged in some of Minnesota's most significant environmental, conservation, and water issues over the last two decades and have built lasting relationships with the key lawmakers and decision-makers in Minnesota's environment space. Our networks on both sides of the aisle and long-term relationships in state government mean we are well-positioned to achieve the Lower Minnesota River Watershed District's (LMRWD) legislative and strategic goals.

Our team has focused specifically on issues of water sustainability, climate resiliency, and built infrastructure. We understand how these complex issues play in the halls of the Capitol and at state agencies, and we are well-equipped and well-positioned to help LMRWD attain its policy goals.

SCOPE OF SERVICES

Our team of lobbyists represent a wide variety of clients with interests in Minnesota with extensive experience across state agencies and committee jurisdictions. We are well-versed in the legislative and state contracting process and work closely with key legislators, staff, and administration officials to advance client interests.

Specifically, we will:

- Provide strategic assistance and direction developing a legislative policy agenda for the 2025 legislative session and assist in development of a legislative, communications, and outreach plan for LMRWD.
- Plan, coordinate, and attend meetings with key legislators and administration officials across state agencies and within the Governor's Office.
- Provide leadership on drafting legislative priorities in bill form, securing bill authors and co-authors, bill introductions, and securing and coordinating hearings.
- Monitor agendas and meetings as needed for the Drainage Work Group, Clean Water Council, LCCMR, and the legislative Subcommittee on Water Policy and monitor relevant proposals, committee hearings, floor action, and conference committees.
- Monitor DNR, MPCA, and BWSR budget proposals, legislative committee hearings, floor action, and conference committees. Monitor bill introductions and relevant committee hearings.
- Assist with testimony and hearing preparation.
- Include LMRWD on PSP email newsletters including All Things Environment and the PSP Download.
- Provide written legislative updates (once or more per month during session), action alerts, an end of session summary report, and other items as needed.
- Conduct weekly meetings and check-ins with LMRWD during the legislative session.

Joe Birkholz

Principal

@ joe@parkstreetpublic.com

(651) 757-0920

Joe Birkholz is a Principal at Park Street Public. He has spent nearly a decade working at the State Capitol on a variety of environment, outdoor recreation, and economic development issues in positions both within and outside of state government.

Immediately prior to joining Park Street Public in 2024, Joe served as a Policy Advisor in the Office of Governor Tim Walz and Lt. Governor Peggy Flanagan from 2022-2024. In his capacity as a Policy Advisor, Joe advised the Governor on environmental, climate, mining, and energy issues; managed and negotiated the Governor's legislative agenda through the legislative process; and worked closely with legislative, agency, and stakeholder partners to accomplish goals. Prior to joining the Governor's Office, Joe spent six legislative sessions as a legislative associate at Conservation Strategies, Inc.

Joe's experience and relationships in Saint Paul help him strategically advise clients, develop and execute plans, and build relationship with key decision makers. Joe earned his B.A. in History from the University of Minnesota-Twin Cities.

Molly Jansen

Principal

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(952) 207-4775

Molly Jansen is a Principal at Park Street Public. Molly has nearly a decade of experience working at the State Capitol as a policy expert in government relations for two Minnesota-based organizations and a Minneapolis-based law firm.

Before joining the team at Park Street Public in 2023, Molly started her career at the State Capitol working on the government relations team at Lockridge Grindal Nauen in 2018-19. She also worked at Minnesota Farmers Union where she championed a grassroots policy agenda and organized legislative Days at the Capitol. More recently, Molly worked on the government relations team at The Nature Conservancy (TNC), where she advocated for nonpartisan and science-based environmental policies and gained deep knowledge of the state's water policy, climate and energy issues, and conservation programs.

Molly earned her B.A. and M.A. from the University of Edinburgh in Edinburgh, Scotland. Molly serves as a board member of the Minnesota Conservation Federation.

PROPOSED BUDGET

Project Area	Proposed Retainer
State Government Relations	\$2,500/Month for Oct. 2024-Sept. 2025 (12-month contract, \$30,000 total for the year)

Thank you for the opportunity to propose government relations services. We believe our firm, with a strong understanding of LMRWD's needs and an exceptional track record at the State Capitol is an excellent fit.

CONFLICT ANALYSIS

PSP believes it is free of direct and positional conflicts. For your convenience, we have included our entire current client list below.

CURRENT CLIENTS

American Fuel and Petrochemical
Manufacturers
American Forest and Paper Assn
American Sportfishing Assn
Artspace Projects Inc
ASM Global
Circle of Life Home Care
Comcast Cable Communications
Connected Commerce Council
Drug Policy Alliance
Flint Hills Resources
Freshwater
Greater Minneapolis Building Owners and
Managers Assn
Hmong Home Health Care
Independent Payroll Providers Assn
Justice Action Network
LS Power Midcontinental LLC
Marathon Petroleum
Marriott Hotels International
McDonald's
MINDEPENDENT
MN Assn of Exterior Specialists
MN Harness Racing Inc
MN Humanities Center
MN-FISH Coalition
National Marine Manufacturers Assn (NMMA)
The Nature Conservancy (TNC)

ONEOK
Oppfi
Orange Barrel Media
Palo Alto Networks
Pangea World Theater
Ramsey County
Red River Watershed Management Board
REM Minnesota
Summit Academy OIC
Teaching Strategies
The Joyce Foundation
The Toro Company
USG Interiors Inc
Water Sports Industry Assn (WSIA)
The Woman's Club of Minneapolis
Zillow Group
Zurn Elkay

September 29, 2024
Linda Loomis, District Administrator
112 East 5th Street, #102
Chaska, Minnesota 55318

VIA EMAIL ONLY
info@lowermnriverwd.org

Re: Request for Qualifications – Government Relations Consultant for the Lower Minnesota River Watershed District

Dear Ms. Loomis,

Thank you for considering Flaherty & Hood, P.A. (“Firm”) to provide government relations consulting services to the Lower Minnesota River Watershed District (“LMRWD”). I am pleased to submit the following proposal for consideration in response to your Request for Qualifications.

Flaherty & Hood is a distinctive law and government relations firm specializing in serving local governments and other public organizations in Minnesota. Our extensive experience working on water, natural resources, and other environmental issues at the Minnesota Legislature and state agencies makes us the ideal candidate to develop, promote, and advance the LMRWD’s legislative agenda.

If you would like to discuss anything contained in this proposal in more detail, please reach out at any time to Elizabeth Wefel at ewefel@flaherty-hood.com or (651) 492-3998. Thank you for your consideration, and I look forward to hearing from you soon.

Firm History, Qualifications, and Expertise

Flaherty & Hood, P.A. is a comprehensive government relations and law firm based just steps away from the state Capitol in St. Paul and has served clients from across Minnesota since 1992. Our firm employs more than 30 attorneys, lobbyists, communications specialists, analysts, consultants, and administrative professionals dedicated to providing exceptional service to our clients. Flaherty & Hood works with a diverse set of clients with a primary focus on local governments including cities, counties, joint powers entities and other governmental subdivisions. We also have a strong and successful history of working with and building coalitions and associations, representing thousands of individual members and hundreds of organizational members. We know how to meaningfully engage members, partners, and other key stakeholders to accomplish legislative goals. Flaherty & Hood is adept at considering and representing the unique needs of public entities and membership organizations at the legislature and state agencies.

Our team has extensive experience working on environmental and natural resources issues at the Legislature and we have developed relationships with key leaders of both parties in the relevant committees. We work closely with members of the Governor’s administration and with key agencies such as the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency, Department of Natural Resources and the Board of Water and Soil Resources. In addition, we have supported clients on a range of issues that affect government entities including property taxes, land use, data practices, and open meeting laws.

The government relations team at Flaherty & Hood has more than 150 years of combined experience at the Capitol and includes four licensed attorneys and two former state legislators. In addition to our traditional lobbying capabilities, our in-house media and communications personnel, policy analyst, and dedicated organizational and administrative staff coordinate with lobbyists to provide comprehensive support to our clients. For all clients, we stress a team-based approach to service. We make sure that every team member understands every client’s mission, so that there’s someone dedicated to securing

your policy agenda during every committee hearing, floor vote, and stakeholder meeting, even during the busiest days of the legislative session. Flaherty & Hood lobbyists are frequently the first to sound the alarm and the first to act on proposals that would affect our client's priorities.

Plan to Represent LMRWD

Flaherty & Hood's lobbying team serves as the eyes and ears at the Capitol for our clients. We will work closely with you to identify LMRWD's specific needs, craft legislation, and monitor bill introductions and committee hearings for impacts to your policy priorities. Throughout session, our team will be in frequent communication to provide relevant, timely updates and ask for your input on legislative and regulatory issues and other advocacy opportunities. And when session wraps up, our work doesn't stop. The legislative interim is an incredibly valuable opportunity for collaborative reflection, outreach, and preparation to set you up for long-term success.

Our plan to provide quality, cost-effective, and professional services to LMRWD will include, but is not limited to, the following:

- In partnership with the LMRWD Board of Directors and staff, develop and implement an annual legislative policy agenda that supports LMRWD's strategic priorities and provides a framework for lobbying efforts.
- Create and implement a communication plan for regular check-ins and updates with LMRWD staff and stakeholders before, during, and after the legislative session, including attendance at LMRWD events and meetings as requested.
- Monitor bill introductions, committee activity, legislative hearings, and administrative activities relevant to LMRWD's priorities.
- Collaborate with Flaherty & Hood's team of policy and legal experts as needed to thoroughly analyze and report the potential impact of any bill, regulation, or rulemaking action on the LMRWD.
- Draft necessary legislation and amendments and secure bill authors.
- Directly lobby committee chairs, key legislators, state agencies, and the Governor's administration in support of LMRWD priorities.
- Facilitate LMRWD's participation in committee hearings, meetings with legislators, state agencies, and/or other stakeholders, and support representatives of LMRWD during their visit to the Capitol.
- Represent LMRWD in committee hearings, stakeholder meetings, and other policy meetings.
- Create and/or update handouts, fliers, issue briefs, written testimony, and other materials as needed to support LMRWD's lobbying efforts.
- Provide media relations and communications support.

Recent & Relevant Accomplishments

Throughout more than 30 years of providing legislative advocacy services, Flaherty & Hood has demonstrated a proven record of success. Some of our recent accomplishments in the area of environmental advocacy include:

- Assisted multiple cities and other clients in obtaining millions of dollars state funding for critical water infrastructure projects.
- Successfully advocated to create a new funding stream for regional parks in Greater Minnesota.
- Assisted a sanitary district with obtaining funding to implement a pilot chloride reduction program.

- Successfully advocated for legislation that improved cities’ participation rights in wastewater permitting.
- Negotiated a permit on behalf of a sanitary district that included an innovative adaptive management strategy for water quality and obtained legislative funding to implement a pilot project.
- Helped a city negotiate an agreement between legislators and the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency to initiate a process to explore alternative water quality management and a stakeholder process for portions of the Minnesota River.
- Actively participated in a stakeholder process organized by the Legislative Water Commission and its successor, and successfully advocated for the adoption of legislative recommendations including increased funding for water infrastructure and assistance for municipal chloride reduction strategies.

Firm Personnel & Qualifications

Elizabeth Wefel, Darrin Lee, and Daniel Marx will be the primary Flaherty & Hood staff responsible for serving the LMRWD.

- **Elizabeth Wefel (Senior Attorney/Lobbyist)** will serve as the primary point of contact for LMRWD at Flaherty & Hood. Elizabeth is an attorney and senior lobbyist that has been with the firm since 2008. She represents clients at the Legislature and before administrative agencies focusing on environmental, energy, land use, parks and recreation, and bonding issues. Elizabeth is an active member of the Minnesota political and civic community. She served for eight years on the Metropolitan Council’s Land Use Advisory Committee, formerly chaired the St. Paul Neighborhood Star Board, and helped establish the Sustain Saint Paul organization, serving as its first board co-chair. Elizabeth holds a degree in speech communications from Macalester College in St. Paul and a law degree from the University of Minnesota Law School, where she was a member of the Minnesota Law Review editorial board. She is also the proud adoptive parent of two St. Paul storm drains.
- **Darrin Lee (Lobbyist)** will support Elizabeth in providing lobbying and monitoring services to LMRWD. Darrin joined Flaherty & Hood in 2023 after 11 years working for the Minnesota Senate, most recently serving as Committee Administrator for the Energy and Utilities Finance and Policy Committee from 2018 to 2022. Darrin works primarily on transportation, environment and natural resources, energy, and infrastructure issues for Flaherty & Hood clients. Prior to his career in government relations, Darrin worked on various political campaigns. Darrin graduated from the University of Minnesota – Duluth with a degree in finance.
- **Daniel Marx (Shareholder Attorney)** leads Flaherty & Hood’s environmental law practice and will provide counsel to Elizabeth, Darrin, and LMRWD as needed to support of lobbying efforts. Daniel practices environmental and administrative law and focuses his practice on representing local governments and businesses on a range of environmental legal and regulatory matters, with special expertise solving complex Clean Water Act regulatory and permitting issues.

As needed, Elizabeth, Darrin, and Daniel may draw on other firm staff to best serve the LMRWD, including:

- **Bradley Peterson (Shareholder Attorney/Lobbyist)** leads the firm’s government relations practice and works on a diverse set of legislative issues in the areas of bonding, economic development, property taxes and other tax issues, environmental regulation, energy, and annexation and land use.

- **Cooper Silburn (Associate Attorney)** works in the firm’s environmental practice and helps clients navigate a wide range of regulatory and policy issues, including PFAS, wastewater and water quality, and environmental policymaking.
- **Alex Wildfang (Media & Communications Specialist)** provides media outreach, content creation, communications, and public relations services to Flaherty & Hood clients.

Cost & Terms of Services

The fee for the services specified in the Request for Qualifications is \$25,000. This is a flat fee rate that will be billed in installments throughout the duration of the contracted period on a schedule mutually agreed upon by Flaherty & Hood and the LMRWD. Additional reasonable expenses incurred during the execution of LMRWD business and approved by the LMRWD, such as printing, postage, travel, meal, and/or lodging expenses, will be billed separately.

If selected to provide services to the LMRWD, representatives of Flaherty & Hood, P.A. will work with the LMRWD to develop a complete contract for services that is suited to your needs. If you have any questions about the contract cost, terms, or scope of services, please reach out to Elizabeth Wefel at any time.

Conflicts of Interest

Like other contract lobbying firms, Flaherty & Hood lobbies on a wide range of clients that may have significant and similar interests. While Flaherty & Hood does lobby on behalf of other entities and local units of government related to water and environmental issues, we are not aware of any specific conflicts of interest with LMRWD. We do not currently lobby for any governmental jurisdictions fully or partially located within the LMRWD. If a conflict of interest between clients does arise, Flaherty & Hood will immediately notify and engage all parties to come to a mutually satisfactory resolution.


A full list of firm clients within the last twelve months is available in Attachment A.

Conclusion

We look forward to helping LMRWD advance its goals through a robust advocacy program. Our rigorous, team-based approach to complex issues has a proven record of success for our current and past clients. I have no doubt that we can be equally successful in helping the Lower Minnesota River Watershed District.

If you have any questions about this proposal or the services Flaherty & Hood can provide, please contact Elizabeth Wefel at ewefel@flaherty-hood.com or (651) 492-3998, or Bradley Peterson at bmpeterson@flaherty-hood.com or 651-225-8840.

By:



Bradley Peterson, Shareholder Attorney

Attachment A: List of Recent Firm Clients

Flaherty & Hood's government relations practice has served the following clients in the past 12 months:

Advanced Engineering and Environmental Services, LLC
Aggregate & Ready Mix Association of Minnesota
Albert Lea, City of
Alexandria Lake Area Sanitary District
Beltrami County
Brainerd Public Utilities Commission
Central Minnesota Community Empowerment Organization
Coalition of Greater Minnesota Cities
Cottage Grove, City of
Coalition of Utility Cities
Duluth Seaway Port Authority
Granite Falls, City of
Greater Minnesota Partnership
Greater Minnesota Parks & Trails Coalition
Highway 14 Partnership
Independent Lifestyles, Inc.
Initiative Foundations
Itasca County
Luverne, City of
Mankato, City of
Marshall, City of
Metropolitan Center for Independent Living
Missouri River Energy Services
Minnesota Association of Centers of Independent Living
Minnesota Association of Rehabilitation Providers
Minnesota Child Care Association
Minnesota Deer Hunters Association
Minnesota Environmental Partnership
Minnesota Environmental Science & Economic Review Board
Minnesota School Bus Operators Association
Monticello, City of
Moorhead, City of
Oakdale, City of
Populus Financial Group
Red Lake Falls, City of
Red Rock Rural Water System
Red Wing, City of
Sartell, City of
St. Joseph, City of
The Infinity Center
Virginia, City of
Waite Park, City of
Western Governors University
Wright County



LOWER MINNESOTA RIVER WATERSHED DISTRICT

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Wednesday, February 21, 2024

Agenda Item

Item 7. B. - 2024 Legislative Action

Prepared By

Linda Loomis, Administrator

Summary

The Legislature convened Monday, February 12, 2024. Lisa Frenette has been meeting with legislators and attending committee meetings. Her perception is that not much is planned this session, other fixing some legislation passed last session and then a small bonding bill. We went through the MN Watershed Legislative Action Plan and there is much in there that the LMRWD can support and a few things that the LMRWD would not support.

There is no legislation that the LMRWD plans to introduce this session, the LMRWD will only be ensuring that dredge management funding continues and that in any year that the LMRWD does not use funding for dredge management left over funds can be used to address sediment reduction projects.

In addition to the dredge management funding, the LMRWD plans to support the following issues if legislation is introduced:

- Voluntary Certification with Limited Liability for Commercial Winter Maintenance Applicators and other legislation to reduce salt entering the natural environment;
- Invasive Carp Species – support actions to control the movement of invasive carp species;
- Support funding for statewide River Watch Programs;
- Support Native Fish Protection - "Respecting and protecting Minnesota's diverse native fish" - update regulation verbiage and adopt bag limits for ALL species;
- Support Water Storage Initiatives – this includes support for MN River hydrology studies that identify and prioritize areas that provide the most beneficial and cost-effective implementation for storage;
- Support legislative requests of partners of the LMRWD; Carver Levee Improvement Project, Shakopee River Bank Stabilization, etc.;
- Lower Minnesota River Landfill Remediation Projects.

Representative Hansen has introduced [House File 3550](#) relating to natural resources; modifying provisions for watersheds, soil and water conservation districts, and wetland management on the first day of the session. The bill was referred to the Committee on Environment and Natural Resources Finance and Policy. I have not yet reviewed the Bill.

Attachments

No attachments

Recommended Action

Motion to adopt legislative priorities