



LOWER MINNESOTA RIVER WATERSHED DISTRICT

November 2024 Administrator report

From: Linda Loomis, Administrator

To: LMRWD Board of Managers

In addition to items on the meeting agenda, the following District projects and issues were addressed during the month:

Other Work

City of Eden Prairie Chloride Reduction Grant (Low Salt City Center)

The City of Eden Prairie requested a letter of support from the LMRWD for a grant application under the MPCA Chloride Reduction Grant Program. This item was included in the October Administrator Report. The letter provided to the City is attached for the Board's information.

FY 2022 Financial Audit

We are still waiting on the completion of the audit. There may be a verbal update at the meeting.

Metro Watersheds

On October 22, I attended the Metro Watershed Meeting. Julie Westerlund from BWSR previewed training modules for Watershed Managers. She asked for feedback from those present at the meeting. Watershed Specialist Training is being revived. This is an intensive program that covers the work of watershed districts. Managers Shirk and Hartmann both attended this training.

Rosseau River Watershed District is hosting the MN Watershed Summer Tour June 24-June 26, 2025, Pelican River will host in 2026, and Minnehaha Creek will host in 2027. Dues notices will be sent by the end of October (see item on November agenda). The 2024 Annual Conference will hold more workshops and breakout sessions because the venue has more room than was available at Arrowwood Resort.

State agencies provided updates. BWSR announced that money from 'Lawns to Legumes' has been peeled off for raingarden funding. They announced there will be more money for plan implementation. MPCA announced they are undertaking a chloride study focusing on road salt, where they will review BMPs and smart salting practices for effectiveness. MN DNR announced that they are engaged in eco-system restoration project through NESP (Navigation and Ecosystem Sustainability Program). The MN Stormwater Research Council announced that they were named one of four Stormwater Research Centers of Excellence nationally. This means that they are eligible for federal funding. They will be working with the University of New Hampshire Stormwater Center to conduct research of chlorides. To learn more about the Council visit its website: <https://wrc.umn.edu/msrc>. The group was reminded that financial support for the Council's work is important.

US Army Corps of Engineers

On October 22, 2024, I met with Tamara Cameron, Operations Division Chief, US Army Corps of Engineers. She was interested in discussing what the LMRWD sees as possible long-term downstream impacts from the Rapidan Dam failure. The USACE has not been involved with any discussion among the Mankato and Blue Earth County Officials. We spoke about who might be measuring sediment in the MN River so that sediment concentrations from before and after could be compared. We agreed to search for sediment monitoring efforts. I agreed to contact Joel Groten, USGS, who was involved in measuring sediment concentrations in the Minnesota River from 2010 until the 2019 flooding destroyed the monitoring pier at Fort Snelling. Replace of the pier was deemed cost prohibitive and partners could not be found to share the cost. USGS used acoustic monitors to sample for sediment and turbidity on the Blue Earth, Minnesota River in Mankato, St. Peter, Jordan, and Fort Snelling, the Mississippi River in St. Paul, Red Wing and Lake Pepin. Mr. Groten said funding for this monitoring dried up between 2019 and 2024. He referred me to Jon Lore of the MN DNR. I reached out to Mr. Lore and while the DNR is not monitoring for sediment they are looking at other impacts of the dam failure, such as documenting existing conditions with a profile of the channel bottom and water surface from the dam down to Blue Earth CSAH 90. This fall they are looking at fish utilization of the channel. He noted that MSU-Mankato professor Phil Larson has been collecting LiDAR data monthly to monitor changes in the reservoir. He was not sure any of the information they are collecting will help to understand the flux of sediment being transported to the lower Minnesota River. He promised to keep the LMRWD abreast of his work.

Dredging at Mouth of River

In 2023, the LMRWD was informed that dredging was needed at the mouth of the Minnesota River. Under the agreement the LMRWD has with the US Army Corps of Engineers, when dredging is necessary at the mouth, the LMRWD will pay for the cost to transport the material to the Vernon Avenue dredge placement site. The LMRWD never received an invoice for this. I reached out to my contact at the USACE and found that an agreement was to have been sent to the LMRWD, but it went to division for approval and never came back. Invoicing the LMRWD was forgotten. I am waiting for a decision from the USACE of how they plan to handle this. The estimate of the cost given to the LMRWD in 2023 was \$152,019.54.

Water Resource Conference

On October 15th and 16th, Manager Salvato and I attended the 2024 Water Resource Conference. There was lots of information presented. Flooding was a popular topic and the speaker at the Tuesday morning Plenary, was Ceil Strauss, State Floodplain Manager, Minnesota Department of Natural Resources. Her presentation was titled “Too Much Water – Understanding Minnesota’s Flood Risk and Management Strategies for Today and Tomorrow”.

This annual Conference is a good way to meet others in the water planning process in the State of Minnesota and to learn about what State Agencies, other watershed districts, municipalities, and others are doing to better manage water. It is a good way to network.

Upper Mississippi Waterway Association

On October 17th, the Upper Mississippi Waterway Association held its Annual meeting. I attended the meeting in person, as I have not been able to attend monthly meetings of the group for several months, either in-person or virtually. Aimee Andres, Executive Director of the Inland Rivers, Ports and Terminals (IRPT), spoke about the role IRPT plays in waterway

transportation. Kirstin Meira, Director of Government Affairs at American Cruise Lines also addressed the group. Coincidentally, Representative Rick Hansen sat next to me at dinner. Representative Hansen has been the chair of the Environment and Natural Resources Finance and Policy committee at the MN House of Representatives. Representative Hansen has been key to LMRWD legislative successes.

Ike's Creek Restoration Project update

On November 1, 2024, the LMRWD met with USFWS, the City of Bloomington and MN DNR, to discuss the permitting required for this project and if there is a way to streamline the permitting. A major concern of the LMRWD is the placing of excavated materials in the floodplain.

LMRWD Fen stakeholder meeting

On October 30th, Jennifer Mocol-Johnson, Young Environmental Consulting Group, Keylor Andrews, MN DNR, and I met to discuss plans for holding a LMRWD fen stakeholder meeting. The meeting will present the findings of the work done by the LMRWD and discuss a plan forward. No date has been set for the meeting, but we are trying for later in November or early December.

Bloomington Rain Garden

On Monday, October 28th, I met with Jack Distel, City of Bloomington, at the home at 11030 Girard Curve, Bloomington to discuss plans for a rain garden with the homeowners. The City provided guidance as to how the homeowner should proceed to get permission for curb cuts to direct stormwater to his front yard. It is likely the homeowner will apply for a Cost Share Grant, once he has plans in hand.

MPCA Surface Water Monitoring

On Monday, October 28th, the MPCA held a meeting provide an update on its plans for monitoring within the Lower Minnesota River HUC-8 and its surface water grant program. Della Young and I both attended the meeting and will be assessing the information learned. The LMRWD recommended a list of water resources that should be monitored. We will look at the sites approved and how the LMRWD should move ahead with this project.

Other work ordered by the Board of Managers

This is the ongoing list of items the Board has requested. The AI generated from the recording of the Board meeting list of action items plus meeting notes from the Board meetings are used to populate this list:

- Follow-up on our Board orientation re: Open meeting law

Update: The Board will meet before the November 6th Board meeting (at 5:30 pm) for a presentation of the Minnesota Open Meeting Laws, Minnesota law on the Gift Ban and Campaign Finance Disclosure Laws will be presented.

- Permits option Review

Update: Information will be presented to the Board of Managers at the November 6th Board meeting.

- Education/Outreach contractor request to change/plan/meeting/rebid. We had a clear motion on this in July, but I guess they don't want to or don't know how to implement?

Update: Workplans for 2025 have been developed and were presented to the Board at the October 9, 2024, Board of Managers meeting. The Board tabled approval of the workplans to the November 6th Board of Managers meeting.

- By-laws w/ Conflict of Interest policy?

Update: This item is on the November 6th meeting agenda. Staff is still working on a general conflict of interest policy for employee and contracted consultants.

Watershed Plan Projects

LMRWD Water Resource Restoration Fund: The LMRWD received an update on this project. The project has been bid and a cost share agreement between the City of Eden Prairie and the LMRWD is on the November 6th agenda. The deadline for next year's grant program will be the end of February 2025. This will be discussed with the cities at the municipal coordination meetings.

Eagle Creek Bank Restoration at Town & Country RV Facility: No new information to report on this project since last update.

Fen Private Land Acquisition Study: There is no new information to report since the last update on this project. This item was removed from the 2025 LMRWD Budget. If the LMRWD proceeds with land acquisition it will need to look for grants to fund the acquisition. This item is one of the topics that will be discussed at the upcoming fen discussion with stakeholders.

Spring Creek: Staff is working to obtain right of entry for properties that will be impacted by this project. Construction is expected to begin in November 2024. Execution of project documents is on the November 6th agenda.

Project website: <https://lowermnriverwd.org/projects/spring-creek>

Gully Inventory and Assessment: There is no new information report on this project since the last update.

Project website: <https://lowermnriverwd.org/projects/mn-river-corridor-management-project>

Minnesota River Study Area #3: A report on this project is on the November 6th agenda.

Project website: <https://lowermnriverwd.org/projects/study-area-3-eden-prairie>

Minnesota River Floodplain Modeling No new information to report since the last update.

Vernon Avenue Dredge Material Management: Bids were opened October 24, 2024. A report and request to award the bid is on the November 6, 2024, agenda.

Geomorphic Assessments (Trout Streams): There is no new information to report since the last update.

The following projects are projects that are planned by LMRWD partners. LMRWD partners are leading these projects, the LMRWD has agreed to contribute to the projects:

Seminary Fen Ravine Restoration Area C2: There is no new information to report on this project since the last update.

Here is a link to the [feasibility report](#) Area C-2.

Shakopee Riverbank Stabilization: On Tuesday, October 29th, the team from Young Environmental Consulting Group and I met with the City of Shakopee and its consultant to hear an update on the City's plan to stabilize the bank of the Minnesota River from slightly upstream

of Huber Park to the Marina. The City would like to restore the Marina for river access for car-top watercraft (canoes and kayaks). The LMRWD cautioned the City about the amount of sediment they may have to manage with a Marina. These plans are very preliminary and the next step is to develop the 30% design.

Project website: <https://www.shakopeemn.gov/living-here/street-infrastructure-projects/minnesota-riverbank-stabilization>

Carver Levee: There is no new information to report since the last update.

Project website: <https://www.cityofcarver.com/276/Levee-Certification>

Upcoming meetings/events

Managers are invited to attend any of these meetings. Most are free of charge and if not the LMRWD will reimburse registration fees. Please contact LMRWD administrator if you have any questions.

- LMRWD Citizen Advisory Committee meeting – Tuesday November 12, 2024, 4:30 pm, virtual on [Webex](#)
- UMWA (Upper Mississippi Waterway Association) – Thursday, November 21, 2024, contact Administrator Loomis for more details
- [MN Watershed Annual Conference](#) – December 4 through December 6, 2024, Grandview Lodge, 23521 Nokomis Avenue, Nisswa, MN
- River Resource Forum – Tuesday, December 10, 2024 12:30 pm to 4:30 pm and Wednesday, December 11, 2024 9:00 am to 11:30 pm, Upper Midwest Environmental Sciences Center-USGS Building, 2630 Fanta Reed Road, Lacrosse, WI or virtual using Webex: <https://usace1.webex.com/join/MVPCH2>



LOWER MINNESOTA RIVER
WATERSHED DISTRICT

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October 16, 2024

City of Eden Prairie

RE: MPCA Chloride Reduction Grant

Greetings,

The Lower Minnesota River Watershed (LMRWD) fully supports the City of Eden Prairie in its efforts to provide improved public safety while at the same time reducing its reliance on salt for winter de-icing.

The City of Eden Prairie, in its entirety lies within the Minnesota River Watershed. The LMRWD is responsible for protecting and improving the water resources within the LMRWD, which includes the Minnesota River. The Minnesota River is not yet impaired for chloride pollution, however, there are growing concerns about the amount of chloride being used and the increasing number of impairments found in the stream and creeks that are tributary to the Minnesota River.

While many think that the amount of water in the Minnesota River will dilute the salt enough that it does not harm the environment, even slight increases of Chloride in the water column will affect the ability of native species of aquatic life to survive, from phytoplankton to mussels and fish. Over 80,000 acres of the LMRWD is part of the MN Valley Wildlife Refuge and Fort Snelling State Park, home to many species of birds that rely on those aquatic species for food.

The LMRWD manages material dredged from the Minnesota River by the US Army Corps of Engineers to maintain the navigation channel used by Minnesota's agriculture and industry to transport commodities in and out of Minnesota. The LMRWD re-uses dredge materials for beneficial purposes. Materials have been re-used as construction fill and for top-dressing on agricultural fields. Sediments contaminated by salt will make beneficial re-use more difficult.

Lastly, there are calcareous fens located within the LMRWD, which are protected by MN Statute, that rely on upwelling of cold, oxygen poor, calcium-rich groundwater to support the unique plant species characteristic of calcareous fens. Chloride can find its way into groundwater and can upset the unique water chemistry found in the fens.

The City of Eden Prairie has been a partner with the LMRWD, working together to make the ecosystem of the Minnesota River healthier for all.

Sincerely,

Linda Loomis
Administrator
Lower Minnesota River Watershed District