



LOWER MINNESOTA RIVER WATERSHED DISTRICT

Executive Summary for Action

Lower Minnesota River Watershed District Board of Managers Meeting
Wednesday, February 19, 2025

Agenda Item

Item 8 A. – State of the Minnesota River Listening Session

Prepared By

Linda Loomis, Administrator

Summary

At the January 2025 Board of Managers meeting, the Board requested that staff refine the messaging to be shared with the public and other stakeholders. Staff sought individual feedback from managers and developed a plan to proceed.

Details of the plan are outlined in the Technical Memorandum – Public Listening Session – Summary Documents for Internal and External Purposes, dated February 13, 2025. The Board will need to authorize staff to proceed with the recommendations in the Technical Memorandum.

Staff has reached out to other watershed districts for the names of media consultants/PR firms that they have used. In addition, the LMRWD received a proposal from a firm, VeCoeur, through the solicitation of Education and Outreach proposals in 2024.

Attachments

Technical Memorandum – Public Listening Session – Summary Documents for Internal and External Purposes, dated February 13, 2025

Recommended Action

Motion to authorize staff to complete the post-event summary report through the deliverables outlined in Table 1 (of the Technical Memorandum) and to issue a Request for Proposals to onboard a media relations/PR firm to add capacity in developing and implementing the Public Engagement and Communication Strategy Document.

Technical Memorandum



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

From: Suzy Lindberg, Communications Manager
Della Schall Young, CTF, CPESC, PMP, Principal Scientist

Date: February 13, 2025

Re: Public Listening Session—Summary Documents for Internal and External Purposes

INTRODUCTION

After successfully hosting a Public Listening Session to hear input from partners and the public, the LMRWD Board of Managers provided post-event direction to create external messaging to share with those who gave testimony, event attendees, and additional core audiences who were not in attendance but are critical to future partnerships.

After synthesizing the feedback and input from the Board managers, we have compiled the following outlines to highlight the final reports that will be created for both internal and external purposes to close out the event. This also includes a forward-looking strategy to continue communication and relationship building with core stakeholders. As part of this process, we recommend exploring the hiring of a third-party public relations (PR) consultant that can provide objective insight into developing a public engagement and communication strategy.

The memo highlights the next steps to compile and release key findings from the Public Listening Session.

Board Feedback

Several managers provided feedback on next steps, including ways to summarize the event and information needed to move forward. Board managers provided the following high-level conclusions as part of their feedback. Table 1 presents the approach to summarize the event, and incorporates the Board's feedback, specifically in the Board Implementation Process, Public Engagement and Communication Strategy, and Policy and Legislative Considerations sections of the summary report.

Feedback included the following key points:

1. Board managers need to understand what additional funding or resources are needed for testimony requests and who would be involved. They are also interested in a strategy for where to find increased funding and resources.
2. Board managers need to understand their potential actions and avenues to react to the

testimony provided.

3. There needs to be a recognition of the request for increased educational programs about the LMRWD's work and the Minnesota River as well as increased involvement with related groups and associations.
4. There needs to be an exploration of advocacy for more water storage.
5. The Board needs to develop protocols for how and when to advocate, convene, or get involved in matters occurring upstream of the LMRWD's boundaries.
6. The LMRWD's need to do more work in the areas of advocacy, policy updates, and strategic planning.
7. The LMRWD needs to lead work that produces real action and measurable outcomes on behalf of the perspectives heard during the Public Listening Session to build momentum and collaboration.

Table 1. Outlines for Public Listening Session Summary Report Deliverables

Internal Summary Documents			External Summary Documents		
Reporting Item	Description	Format Requested	Reporting Item	Description	Format Requested
Process Summary	Summarize the process for event planning, providing a template for future events as well as an opportunity to visit lessons learned and continuously improve. This section will include key findings such as logistics, participation, and costs to complete.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Two-page report with after-action summary.Summarize direct and non-direct costs to host event, presenting recommendations for return-on-investment and ability to replicate in the future.	Testimony Aggregation	A core external output will be sharing the testimony received with the public through the LMRWD website. This includes testimony, transcripts, and written input received. A new landing page can house all materials, including the external-facing summaries, to provide a full overview of the event and action items.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Infographics to visualize stakeholder types and key themes at a glance (two to three graphics).Indexed testimony, slides, transcript, and video to be housed on the LMRWD website. Note: Staff will confirm ADA compliance with HDR.External-facing summaries on LMRWD website.
Board Implementation Process	This section will serve as an <u>internal</u> summary to outline specific requests and their correlation to policy or legislative suggestions. This step will highlight recommendations that align with ongoing initiatives (i.e. water storage), while identifying new ideas and their ranking for future consideration.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Transcript for analysis using AI exercise to analyze to pull out key themes and actions.Two- to four-page table with summary of specific requests from participants and categories to rank priorities into a work plan format.	Policy and Legislative Considerations	This section will serve as an <u>external</u> summary for what the Board of Managers heard during the session and what it plans to do with the requests. The summary will indicate whether the request has already been incorporated into an existing priority or whether there is a gap requiring an action to amend it.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Two to four-page report with a table summary of specific requests from participants along with the corresponding LMRWD response (i.e. policy, program, or legislative priority.)Partner with the legislative liaison for review.Release information through a MailChimp email and link to website.
Public Engagement and Communication Strategy	LMRWD staff will provide recommendations for an ongoing strategy to engage with the public and key stakeholders who were involved in with the session. The strategy will indicate materials needed, additional needs (i.e. media and public relations [PR] consulting), and timelines for next steps.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Two-page public engagement and communication strategy.Board presentation materials for future meetings with County commissioners.Proposal for additional consulting support.	Data and Evidence Supporting Testimony	Because the managers requested science-based data for the Public Listening Session, this summary will highlight data referenced for testimony and indicate any data gaps needing more research.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Two-page bibliography compiling quantitative data sources cited from the submitted testimony and presentations.Summary of qualitative themes and/or statements needing additional research or evidence.Identification of data gaps.

Next Steps and Recommendations

Following the approval of the outline, LMRWD staff will complete all assignments and present the final Public Listening Session summary documents for Board approval at the March meeting.

At this time, we would like the Board's approval on the following items:

- Complete the post-event summary report through the deliverables outlined in Table 1.
- Draft a request for proposal to onboard a media relations/PR firm to add capacity in developing and implementing the Public Engagement and Communication Strategy document.