

Executive Summary for Action

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

Agenda Item

Item 7. C. – State of the Minnesota River Listening Session

Prepared By

Linda Loomis, Administrator

Summary

On January 8, 2025, the LMRWD held a "Listening Session" where partners were invited to share their concerns about the Minnesota River with the Board of Managers. Since then, staff have been working on creating a forum to disseminate the testimonies and recommend actions the Board can take based on the information gathered, as well as share these insights with the public.

With the help of President Barisonzi, several Technical Memorandums have been prepared and are attached, as a package, for the Board's review.

- Review of Process Summary
- Aggregation of Testimony
- Policy and Legislative Considerations
- Data and Evidence Supporting Sources
- Board implementation Process
- Public Engagement and Communications Strategy

The Board is requested to review and approve the attached report documents, providing any final feedback or edits as necessary. Additionally, the Board should approve the aggregation of testimony and initiate the publication of a webpage on the LMRWD website. Sections 3 and 4 should be approved for public release on the website and distributed via mass email to participants. Lastly, the Board should review the information from PR firms in Section 6 and advise on the next steps.

A recording of the Listening Session can be accessed using the following link:

https://www.facebook.com/hashtag/publiclisteningsession

Attachments

Technical Memorandum – Public Listening Session Report Development dated March 13, 2025

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Recommended Action

- Motion to approve report documents.
- Motion to approve aggregation of testimony and publication on LMRWD website.
- Motion to approve Sections 3 and 4 for public release on website and through mass email to participants.
- Review information from PR firms in Section 6 and provide direction on next steps.

Technical Memorandum



To: Linda Loomis, Administrator

Lower Minnesota River Watershed District

From: Suzy Lindberg, Communications Manager

Date: March 13, 2025

Re: Public Listening Session Report Development

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Following January 8, 2025, Public Listening Session, staff compiled a report that documents the event in a way that supports future process improvement and guides next steps following this critical session.

The report follows the outline determined by the Board of Managers and includes both internal and external documents requested. The indexed sections are introduced below and combined within for review.

Report Contents

- 1. **Review of Process:** Internal-Facing Document that documents process, costs, and key lessons learned
- 2. **Aggregation of Testimony:** Internal-Facing Document, which will inform the Lower Minnesota River Watershed District (LMRWD) webpage
- 3. **Policy and Legislative Considerations:** External-Facing Document sharing recommendations
- 4. **Data and Evidence Supporting Testimony:** External-Facing Document sharing data sources
- 5. **Board Action Items and Implementation Plan:** Internal-Facing Document, with action items and recommendations
- 6. **Public Engagement and Communications Strategy:** Internal-Facing Document, with information from public relations firm(s) and plan for next steps of engagement

Next Steps and Recommendations

- Review and approve report documents, sharing any final feedback or edits as needed.
- Approve aggregation of testimony initiating the publishing of the webpage.
- Approve sections 3 and 4 for public release on website and through a mass email to participants.
- Review information from PR firms in Section 6 and advise on next steps.

Young Environmental Consulting Group, LLC

Technical Memorandum

To: Linda Loomis, Administrator

Lower Minnesota River Watershed District

From: Suzy Lindberg, Communications Manager

Della Schall Young, CTF, CPESC, PMP, Principal Scientist

Date: March 12, 2025

Re: Public Listening Session—Review of Process Summary

Young Environmental Consulting Group, LLC (Young Environmental) served as the consultant to plan and execute the event in collaboration with the district administrator and external consultants Steve Woods (moderator) and MCN 6 (public broadcaster). The following document includes a process summary and costs outline to serve as a framework for understanding the replicability of the event for future needs.

Event Planning and Execution

Event Format

The event included both an in-person and a virtual option to participate. The in-person event took place at the Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refuge Visitor's Center Auditorium in Bloomington, MN. Partners at the US Fish and Wildlife Services (USFWS) offered to let the Lower Minnesota River Watershed District (LMRWD) use the auditorium in their facility at no cost, which helped save on costs. Events need to be held within the watershed district boundary, but the virtual option was identified as a need to encourage upstream partners' participation. The virtual option was broadcast through Zoom, with a simultaneous broadcast on Facebook Live. Between the virtual and hybrid attendance, there were up to 80 participants tuning into the Public Listening Session. Preference to participate was given to in-person attendees per Board direction. Most attendees on Zoom did not volunteer to speak, although there was technology capability to accommodate that. Some participants were active in the chat, providing questions and comments to the moderator. Facilitating question and answer was not a primary goal of the event because it was focused on the Board listening to testimony and asking its own questions.

Communication with Attendees

The LMRWD staff sent out staged mass communications including the following:

- Save the Date event announcement; Call for Testimony (email, social media, website)
- Question and Answer session during the Call for Testimony (email and teams call)
- Reminder for the Call for Testimony deadline (email)
- Formal invitation (email, social media, website)

- Reminder email one week in advance of the event.
- Promotion through Citizen Advisory Committee (CAC) for testimony and volunteer opportunities
- Ongoing communication with presenters for logistics and slide compilation
- Ongoing communication with Board of Managers
- Ongoing communication with outside vendors (venue and public broadcaster)
- Press releases and one-on-one conversations with local reporters interested in coverage
- Outreach to various elected officials and representatives requesting their participation through speaking or attendance

We used an Eventbrite landing page to gather registrations and coordinate the participation of both in-person and virtual attendees. All communications featured event-specific branding that visually highlighted the 2024 flooding.

Breakdown of Attendance by Stakeholder Type

Attendance incorporated the following stakeholder types. The event had good diversity of representation, with a high volume of local and state government and non-governmental partners. Note: Because the event was open to the public, there are a handful of drop-ins both in-person and online that may not be captured under the correct group, largely noting "citizens" as a catch-all for participants who may have had an outside interest as a business owner or consultant that was not captured. Collecting more stakeholder data is another goal in continuously improving event planning and reporting.

- Citizens and non-affiliated attendees: 20
- Non-governmental organizations partners: 18
- State agency staff: 14
- County partners: 7
- Watershed district partners: 5
- City partners: 4
- Minnesota House of Representatives: 3
- Federal agency staff: 2
- Soil and water conservation district partners: 2
- Tribal government staff: 2
- County commissioners: 1
- Media: 1
- Minnesota Senate: 1
- US Senate: 1

Media Outreach Effectiveness

Prior to the event, the LMRWD staff released a press release to media contacts at local news outlets within the District. The team secured media coverage from the following:

- Jeff Strate of *EP Local News* attended the event and has been a reliable resource for covering LMRWD events. Mark Weber at *EP Local News* also requested to collaborate on a future article for the Area 3 Bank Stabilization project during the next major milestone as a follow-up to the Listening Session press release.
- Tad Johnson of *Sun This Week* and *Dakota County Tribune* shared the event to the print and online calendar of events.
- In a conversation with Mike Hanks, a freelance writer for *Sun Current Bloomington-Richfield*, he noted that he did not have the capacity to cover the event but that he would be interested in an ongoing relationship with the LMRWD with more lead time to cover resource stories, notably for the Bloomington community near the Minnesota River.

This outreach demonstrated the need to continuously build relationships with media contacts to gain coverage when needed. It is also important to note their publication release dates in our system so press advisories are timed to hit ideally for print and production schedules.

Outreach was also sent to neighboring watershed districts and water management organizations to amplify messaging on social media.

Based on attendance, this outreach appeared to help spread awareness and coverage of the event. The attendee list highlighted participation from neighboring watershed organizations, making the local and personalized outreach important for those partnerships.

Event Execution and Costs

A breakdown of event costs is shown in the table on the following page. This includes staff time and resources needed. For future events, efficiencies can be explored through the simplification of outreach steps, clarification of roles and responsibilities, and early planning to identify process improvements. With each event planned, the LMRWD continues to refine and build a contact list for its core audience. As these steps are defined, replication becomes simpler.

Cost Item	Description	Cost Incurred By:	Notes	Cost
Staff Time	Staffing included event planning, staffing, communications support, moderation, and reporting.	Young Environmental (Education and Outreach Consultant)	Staff expenses were focused on a large volume of outreach and coordination as well as event staffing and comprehensive reporting.	\$18,958
Expenses	Expenses were incurred including a Zoom subscription for the virtual option and printing.	Young Environmental (Education and Outreach Consultant)		\$215
Staff Time	Staffing included event planning, day-of staffing and presenting, and reporting.	Naiad Consulting (District Administrator)	The Administrator was a primary contributor to the event.	\$7,500
Expenses	Expenses for mileage to attend the event and site visits.	Naiad Consulting (District Administrator)		\$100
Staff Time and Equipment	MCN 6 provided staff and equipment to create a live broadcast and high-quality video.	MCN 6	Add notes if needed.	\$5,500
TOTAL	,		,	\$32,273

Process Improvement

The event had several moving parts and required a high level of outreach and coordination. For future events, we recommend an even more detailed definition of roles and phasing of messaging allowing both staff and the Board to divide and conquer.

Planning an event with a hybrid format had benefits and drawbacks. Multiple channels required more attention from those staffing the event, and we would suggest including one to two additional staff members or volunteers to fill behind-the-scenes roles if replicated. Having a dedicated moderator was extremely helpful to ensuring the flow of the event.

There are ongoing opportunities to improve engagement by reamplifying messaging on social media, especially through staff guidance to the Board of Managers and other stakeholders. Defining the channels used and assigning a lead for each channel could help improve the process and end results.

In the future, we recommend more up-front clarity in defining the Public Listening Session's core audience and goals. The format lent itself to more participation from non-profit organizations and advocacy groups with shared interests as well as citizens. However, government officials such as city, county, and agency partners seemed to express less comfort in defending testimony publicly. If replicated in the future, we recommend exploring ways to gain input from multiple audiences in a setting that fits their role. Some participants and media contacts noted confusion regarding the public component of the listening session; whether it meant the public listened and learned from experts or the public was participating in a forum. Holding the event during the day indicated it was primarily for industry professionals rather than a broad range of community stakeholders. While this mirrored the intent of the Board, there could be a need to solicit public input in another way simultaneously, such as a public survey with a less formal engagement method, such as collecting testimony.

Alternative Engagement Models

The event provided the opportunity for the Board of Managers to listen to both subject-matter experts and members of the community. The audience was able to observe the same information but with limited opportunity to ask questions or share insights outside of the testimony provided. To address this opportunity, we may consider the following additions to drive engagement.

- Roundtables: Following the formal testimony, roundtables could engage a wider spectrum of public engagement and promote deeper conversation around shared issues. Participants would have the opportunity to meet others in the audience, find commonalities, and share their perspectives on testimony and LMRWD work. The auditorium layout would not be amenable to adding in a roundtable component, so the venue would need to complement this vision in future events. Each table would be given a clearly identified goal and talking points to guide facilitated discussions, with a reporting activity to share what was discussed.
- Online Forums: Virtual attendees were able to listen but did not have a wide range of participation. Future events could explore more interactive features such as poll questions taken through a QR code (in-person) and shared link (virtually) to connect the hybrid audience. There could also be dedicated time for online question and answer session to be relayed or captured more formally for future analysis.
- Networking Events: A recurring theme at the Public Listening Session showed the LMRWD's role as a convener of various organizations and an advocate for the protection of the Minnesota River. Many attendees joined in person and casually networked during the breaks. However, there could have been a more intentional networking component included before or after the Public Listening Session, allowing for more time to make connections and share information. An icebreaker could be provided as a way to encourage important discussions and provide added value to attendees.



Technical Memorandum

To: Linda Loomis, Administrator

Lower Minnesota River Watershed District

From: Suzy Lindberg, Communications Manager

Date: March 12, 2025

Re: Public Listening Session—Aggregation of Testimony

Young Environmental Consulting Group, LLC (Young Environmental) has collected and organized all testimony received during the Public Listening Session. The following document outlines the content that will be housed on the Lower Minnesota River Watershed District (LMRWD) website in March 2025, once approved.

Testimony Aggregation

The following content and links will be included on a project page on the LMRWD website as shown.

Introduction Text

Following the critical flooding in 2024 in the Minnesota River Valley, the LMRWD Board of Managers proposed a public listening session to convene partners to build a shared legislative agenda, inform the next Watershed Management Plan Update, and highlight key projects and programs to prioritize.

In fall 2024, the LMRWD released an invitation to submit testimony, putting out a broad call for science-based information to be used to build a collective vision. The LMRWD received written testimony from partners, several of whom presented at the January 8, 2025, event. During the public event, several participants shared comments, including members of the LMRWD Citizen Advisory Committee and partner organizations.

The following reports summarize highlights from the Public Listening Session with the intent of informing the Board's next steps.

Links to Reports

The website will link to the external-facing products compiled as part of the report:

- 3. Policy and Legislative Considerations report.
- 4. Data and Evidence Supporting Testimony report.

Resources

The following resources will be housed on the website:

- Full video of the event
- Full transcript of the event
- Event agenda with speaker information
- Complete testimony packaged and indexed by issue (introduced below)
- Photos and video clips of the Board and presenters

Organization of Testimony Under Issues-Based Categories

Testimony will be cataloged under the following issues with a brief introduction statement.

Issue: Flood Impacts, Mitigation, Water Storage, and Costs of Solutions

Although there is a historic context for flooding on the Minnesota River, the issue has become more significant and destructive based on changing climate and altered hydrology. Flooding creates impacts to the river's navigability, adjacent property, and natural resources; and increases erosion and sedimentation in the river.

Testimony

- Holly Bushman, Lower Minnesota River East Watershed Partnership
- Norm Senjem, Lake Pepin Legacy Alliance
- Scott Sparlin, Minnesota River Congress
- Tom Worthington, Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refuge

Issue: Sediment Control, Erosion, and Water Quality

Erosion threatens water quality within the Minnesota River through increased sediment load. Removing sediment from the river is already a primary role of the LMRWD; however, the increased severity of flooding is compounding an already challenging issue, not only for the LMRWD but also for downstream communities and Lake Pepin.

Testimony

- Kirby Templin, City of Shakopee
- Norm Senjem, Lake Pepin Legacy Alliance

Issue: Upstream Water Management

Upstream drainage practices and projects can have a significant impact on downstream communities. Water storage on the landscape, initiated through cooperation with upstream partners, can have a positive effect downstream by slowing the flow and frequency of water and effectively controlling flooding.

Testimony

- Kirby Templin, City of Shakopee
- Scott Sparlin, Minnesota River Congress
- Norm Senjem, Lake Pepin Legacy Alliance
- Steve Knutson, Citizen

Issue: Financial Costs of Flooding and Benefits of Proposed Solutions

With any large-scale environmental concern, the price and scope of the solutions needed to address the challenges are costly and broad. Both flood control and flood damages are costly, but proactive solutions are needed and also offer multiple benefits.

Testimony

- Holly Bushman, Lower Minnesota River East Watershed Partnership
- Scott Sparlin, Minnesota River Congress
- Tom Worthington, Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refuge

Issue: Public Engagement and Education

Because of the basinwide scale of the LMRWD's challenges and work, there is a great need for education, outreach, partnership, coordination, and awareness. Many stakeholders requested an increase in the advocacy and legal responsibility of the LMRWD. Engaging stakeholders at various levels is complex but extremely important to success. Building momentum around shared resources and responsibility is increasingly necessary to combat large flooding concerns.

Testimony

- Scott Sparlin, Minnesota River Congress
- Tom Crawford, Friends of the Minnesota Valley
- Jenna Olson, City of Eagan
- Tom Fahey, Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refuge

Draft Infographics

Stakeholder Groups Providing Testimony









Policy and Legislative Considerations

This section provides a summary of requests made during the Public Listening Session as well as policy gaps and legislative priorities determined based on the Board of Manager's review of testimony.

Prioritization Method

As the Board reviews requests, the managers will consider future actions, such as policy changes; legislative activity; expanded programs and partnerships; or Watershed Management Plan (WMP) incorporation depending on the identified need and issue. While developing an implementation plan and action strategy, the following prioritization method may be used to assess and rank stakeholder requests.

The prioritization method includes the following ratings for each request to help the Board of Managers categorize the level of priority. For priorities scoring high (Coalition Member and above), the Lower Minnesota River Watershed District (LMRWD) will identify the avenue to advance the request (i.e., legislation or WMP).

- Champion: We support this initiative and will visibly cheerlead it publicly.
- Lead: We will invest the time and energy to lead partners and assets with this activity.
- Major Partner: We do not want or should not be the face of this, but we are interested in teaming.
- Coalition Member: We'll play a role on the team but not necessarily act as part of the core strategy group.
- **Support**: We will take an action, such as writing a letter of support for a concept.
- **Neutral**: We won't oppose or support.
- Do Not Support: We are not in support of this publicly and will not spend money or time on it.

This continuum is shown as a graphic in the footer of each page, in concert with the requests received and potential actions taken.







Summary of Testimony Requests and Specific Actions

Request	Testimony	Alignment with Existing Efforts or Policy Gap	Priority	Policy Clarifications or Recommended Changes
State policy to protect	Holly Bushman Lower	Lower Minnesota River		Continue to partner on implementation of
resources	Minnesota River East	East Comprehensive		Comprehensive Watershed Management Plan
	Watershed	Watershed Management		while integrating programs for resources within the
	Partnership	Plan (Joint		WMP and Water Resources Restoration Fund,
		Memorandum of		which provides funding to partners completing
		Agreement)		projects with similar goals.
		LMRWD WMP (Policy		
		2.1 Use of High Value		
		Resources Overlay		
		District to Manage		
		Water Resources)		
		LMRWD Water		
		Resources Restoration		
		Fund		
State policy to	Holly Bushman Lower	Policy Gap		Explore additional partnerships to promote
promote conservation	Minnesota River East			conservation practices and grant opportunities
practices	Watershed			upstream.
	Partnership			





Support





PUBLIC LISTENING SESSION WED. JANUARY 8, 2025

Request	Testimony	Alignment with Existing Efforts or Policy Gap	Priority	Policy Clarifications or Recommended Changes
State policy to	Holly Bushman Lower	Potential Policy Gap		Explore legislative agenda to build a coalition of
promote long-term	Minnesota River East	LMRWD Water		funding in addition to existing LMRWD levy and
funding	Watershed	Resources Restoration		Water Resources Restoration Fund for upstream
	Partnership	Fund		projects.
State policy to allow	Holly Bushman Lower	Policy Gap		Explore opportunities to share staffing resources.
long-term staffing	Minnesota River East			
commitments	Watershed			
	Partnership			
State policy for local	Holly Bushman Lower	Policy Gap		The LMRWD WMP includes nine goals and
government units'	Minnesota River East			strategies. The Lower Minnesota River East
requirement to have	Watershed			Comprehensive Management Plan and One
certain goals	Partnership			Watershed, One Plan process requires the inclusion
				of targeting measurable goals.
State and local policy	Norm Senjem, Lake	Capital Improvement		Explore continued opportunities for CIPs related to
to address near	Pepin Legacy Alliance	Projects (Work plans		sediment sources.
channel sediment		include: [1] Gully		Advance additional public education related to the
sources (ravines,		Prioritization and		importance of sediment source identification.
bluffs, and		Restoration and [2] Spring		
streambanks)		Creek Restoration)		





Support



		Alignment with Existing		
Request	Testimony	Efforts or Policy Gap	Priority	Policy Clarifications or Recommended Changes
State policy to	Norm Senjem, Lake	Potential Policy Gap		The cost share strategy provides the technical and
support wetland	Pepin Legacy Alliance	LMRWD WMP Strategy		financial assistance to landowners to implement
restorations and cover		2.2.3 Cost Share		projects with a fen or wetland restoration
crop establishment via		Incentive Program		component Additional policies or strategies may be
incentives		Capital Improvement		explored.
		Projects (Work plans		
		include: Fen		
		Management Plans)		
State legislation to	Scott Sparlin,	• LMRWD WMP Policy 6.1		Assess overlap with ongoing water storage
fund water quality and	Minnesota River	Maintain Water Storage		efforts.
storage at \$50 million	Congress	Areas and the		Consider letter of support for additional funding
		Minnesota River		for water storage projects.
		Floodway		
		 Project partnership with 		
		the US Army Corps of		
		Engineers		
State legislation to	Scott Sparlin,	Initiative was explored		This is not currently in the LMRWD's plans.
create Minnesota	Minnesota River	through the Minnesota		Continue to find other ways to partner.
River Basin	Congress	River Corridor		
Commission to		Management Plan project		
address systemic		(2022).		
issues				







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Request	Testimony	Alignment with Existing Efforts or Policy Gap	Priority	Policy Clarifications or Recommended Changes
State policy to address nitrogen and water flow from upstream tile drainage detrimental to downstream interests	Tom Crawford, Friends of the Minnesota Valley	Potential Policy Gap WMP Strategy 1.1.1 Work cooperatively with local, state, and federal government; other agencies, and nongovernment organizations on issues affecting the LMRWD's resources		Consider letter of support for state policy addressing nitrogen and water flow or policy in WMP update addressing upstream projects.
Local policy to increase chloride education	Tom Crawford, Friends of the Minnesota Valley	 WMP Strategy 4.2.3 Provide Educational Opportunities LMRWD Education and Outreach Program 		Continue policy to finance Education and Outreach Program.
Local policy to comment on upstream drainage proceedings as a harmed party	Tom Crawford, Friends of the Minnesota Valley	 Potential Policy Gap WMP Strategy 1.1.1 Work cooperatively with local, state, and federal government; other agencies, and nongovernment organizations on issues 		Board of Managers assess LMRWD role in upstream strategy and potential to change existing role or policy in WMP update addressing upstream projects.





Support



Request	Testimony	Alignment with Existing Efforts or Policy Gap	Priority	Policy Clarifications or Recommended Changes
		affecting the LMRWD's resources		
Continue local policy to partner on Ike's Creek Restoration Project	Tom Worthington and Vicki Sherry, US Fish and Wildlife Services (USFWS)	 Water Resources Restoration Fund WMP Strategy 4.2.3 Provide Educational Opportunities 		 Continue to finance Water Resources Restoration Fund and explore funding of completion of Ike's Creek Restoration Project. Explore continued Education and Outreach activities in cooperation with USFWS.
State or local policy to recoup damages from Rapidan Dam owner (Blue Earth County) for discharging 10- years' worth of dredged sediment	Greg Genz, Citizen Advisory Committee member	 Potential Policy Gap WMP Strategy 7.1.2 Erosion and Sediment Control Standard 		This is not in the LMRWD's plans currently. Continue to find other ways to partner on reducing sediment following large-scale release through flood reduction efforts.
Local policy to increase education of public on multiple topics	Judy Berglund, Citizen Advisory Committee member	LMRWD Education and Outreach Program		Continue policy to finance Education and Outreach Program.
Local policy to examine Deans Lake	Victoria Ranua, citizen	LMRWD WMP Policy 6.1 Maintain Water Storage Areas and the		 Explore as Capital Improvement Project for future Watershed Management Plan. Assess overlap with ongoing water storage





Support



Request	Testimony	Alignment with Existing Efforts or Policy Gap	Priority	Policy Clarifications or Recommended Changes
outlet alteration to		Minnesota River		efforts.
increase storage		Floodway		 Explore potential partnership or educational opportunity with Shakopee Mdewakanton Sioux Community.
Local policy to be a	Lee Peterson, Citizen	Potential Policy Gap		Assess LMRWD role in upstream strategy and
voice in review	Advisory Committee	• WMP Strategy 1.1.1		potential to change existing role or policy in WMP
process for upstream	member	Work cooperatively with		update addressing upstream projects.
projects		local, state, and federal		
		government; other		
		agencies, and non-		
		government		
		organizations on issues		
		affecting the LMRWD's		
Land adlanta	Lan Kanana antina d	resources		Considerate the of consent for an invited was transfer.
Local policy to	Len Kramer, retired	Potential Policy Gap		Consider letter of support for reviewing upstream
advocate for the	water resources	WMP Strategy 1.1.1		projects or policy in WMP update addressing
LMRWD's interests on	engineer	Work cooperatively with		upstream projects.
upstream projects		local, state, and federal		
		government; other		
		agencies, and non-		
		government		
		organizations on issues		







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		Alignment with Existing		
Request	Testimony	Efforts or Policy Gap	Priority	Policy Clarifications or Recommended Changes
		affecting the LMRWD's		
		resources		
Local policy to utilize	Ted Suss, Friends of	Potential Policy Gap		Assess LMRWD role in upstream strategy and
your authority to	the Minnesota Valley	WMP Strategy 1.1.1		potential to change existing role or policy in WMP
protect resources		Work cooperatively with		update addressing upstream projects.
from upstream		local, state, and federal		
damages		government; other		
		agencies, and non-		
		government		
		organizations on issues		
Local policy to speak	Ted Suss, Friends of	Potential Policy Gap		Assess LMRWD role in upstream strategy and
up on upstream	the Minnesota Valley	WMP Strategy 1.1.1		potential to change existing role or policy in WMP
projects requiring		Work cooperatively with		update addressing upstream projects.
environmental review		local, state, and federal		
		government; other		
		agencies, and non-		
		government		
		organizations on issues		
State policy changes	Mike Schultz, LeSueur	Potential Policy Gap		Explore a Citizen Advisory Committee activity to
to make it easier to	County	• LMRWD WMP Policy 6.1		research change needed.
work with altered		Maintain Water Storage		
Minnesota		Areas and the		
Department of				





Support



Request	Testimony	Alignment with Existing Efforts or Policy Gap	Priority	Policy Clarifications or Recommended Changes
Natural Resources protected waters and wetlands to re-create water storage		Minnesota River Floodway		
Continue local policy to partner on stabilization projects	Kirby Templin, City of Shakopee	Water Resources Restoration FundMunicipal Coordination		Continue to finance Water Resources Restoration Fund and collaborate with local municipalities on shared efforts.
State policy areas outside of metro to address flooding and erosion like what is currently done in urban areas	Kirby Templin, City of Shakopee	 Potential Policy Gap WMP Strategy 1.1.1 Work cooperatively with local, state, and federal government; other agencies, and nongovernment organizations on issues 		Board of Managers assess LMRWD role in upstream strategy and potential to change existing role or policy in WMP update addressing upstream projects.
State policy to pursue regional flood storage in basin like what is currently done in urban areas	Kirby Templin, City of Shakopee	LMRWD WMP Policy 6.1 Maintain Water Storage Areas and the Minnesota River Floodway		Explore additional funding avenues for large-scale flood storage and damage reduction projects.







Request	Testimony	Alignment with Existing Efforts or Policy Gap	Priority	Policy Clarifications or Recommended Changes
		 Project partnership with the US Army Corps of Engineers 		
Continue local policy to cooperate on water quality improvement projects	Kirby Templin, City of Shakopee	 Water Resources Restoration Fund Municipal Coordination 		Continue to finance Water Resources Restoration Fund and collaborate with local municipalities on shared efforts.
Local policy to improve railroad involvement with water management infrastructure	Jenna Olson, City of Eagan	 Potential Policy Gap WMP Strategy 1.1.1 Work cooperatively with local, state, and federal government; other agencies, and nongovernment organizations on issues 		Board of Managers assess LMRWD role in railroad coordination and potential to change existing role or policy in WMP update addressing railroad coordination.
Federal policy change to Farm Bill to make drain tile data public	Steve Knutson, citizen	Policy Gap		Consider letter of support for reviewing federal policy change in cooperation with partners.







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Request	Testimony	Alignment with Existing Efforts or Policy Gap	Priority	Policy Clarifications or Recommended Changes
State policy for	Steve Knutson, citizen	Policy Gap		Board of Managers assess LMRWD role in upstream
watershed districts or				strategy and potential to change existing role.
counties to have				
permit processes for				
drain tile projects				
Continue local policy	Tom Fahey	LMRWD Education and		Continue policy to fund Education and Outreach
to create awareness	master naturalist and	Outreach Program		Program.
about Ike's Creek	group volunteer			
	coordinator for			
	Bloomington			
	Neighbors Nurturing			
	Nature and Minnesota			
	Valley National			
	Wildlife Refuge			









Future Collaboration Process

Following the one-time Public Listening Session, it is important to keep communication open on ongoing data collection and action progress with community members.

1: Establish Feedback Channels

Use multiple methods to continuously collect input from partners and stakeholders. This may include online surveys, one-on-one meetings, and ongoing check-ins at regularly scheduled LMRWD Board meetings or custom work sessions.

2: Analyze and Prioritize Feedback

Use analysis method from the Public Listening Session report to continuously categorize and rank additional requests from partners. Identify common challenges and opportunities and use data visualization to summarize findings.

3: Develop Responsive Initiatives

Align findings with existing policies and strategic goals and continue to communicate decisions and progress with core audience and stakeholders. Create pilot programs or campaigns addressing top concerns. Engage stakeholders in co-developing solutions.

4: Implement and Communicate Progress

Launch initiatives and policy changes informed by feedback. Invite stakeholders into policy and legislative discussions or to participate in the Watershed Management Plan process. Provide transparent updates on what's being addressed and why. Use social media, newsletters, and meetings to share progress.

5: Evaluate and Adapt

Conduct quarterly check-ins to assess impact. Gather continuous feedback through open surveys and community discussions. Adjust strategies based on what's working and refine for future initiatives. Consider planning future listening sessions to adapt process and continue to learn and partner.



Major Partner





Listening Session Data and Evidence Sources

This section provides a summary of data referenced within testimony. Where there was no quantitative data provided with a source cited, we have identified a data gap for future reference.

Testimony	Speaker/Author	Key Topic Message	Data Source Provided:	Data Source Referenced
		Testimony with cited supporting	data	
Altered Hydrology, Flooding, and Funding Watershed Initiatives	Holly Bushman, Watershed Coordinator Lower Minnesota River East Watershed Partnership	Funding for protects incorporating climate resiliency measures to mitigate consequences of altered hydrology and flooding	Yes	Long Term Precipitation Patterns: Minnesota Department of Resources (MnDNR) State Climatology Office Lower Minnesota River Watershed Restoration and Protection Strategy Report (Minnesota Pollution Control Agency [MPCA] 2020) Climate Change Trends and Actions Plan (Board of Water and Soil Resources [BWSR] 2019) Why so much sand in the Lower Minnesota River? (Carrie Jennings 2016)
Minnesota River Flooding Causes, Impacts, and Amelioration through Water Storage	Norm Senjem Lake Pepin Legacy Alliance	This proposal promotes a "treatment train" approach to deal with high-rainfall events by implementing a set of practices within the ravine catchment, ravine head, ravine/cropland interface and in the ravine itself. Local technicians should design the treatment train to control runoff and ravine erosion from events which	Sources Referenced by not Provided in Writing	Minnesota River Channel Widening Figure (Wes Lauer, University of Washington) Ravine in Minnesota River Basin Figure (John Niebuhr, University of Minnesota)



Testimony	Speaker/Author	Key Topic Message	Data Source Provided:	Data Source Referenced
Testimony	Speaker/Author	Key Topic Message exceed the current WASCOB design standard. The goal is to integrate multiple conservation efforts to keep pace with the trend of higher, more intense, rainfall events.	Provided:	Treatment Train Approach (US Army Corps of Engineers [USACE]) MnDNR Rainfall Data (Note: date range of data not included) Metropolitan Council Environmental Services (MCES) Total Suspended Solids (TSS) Data (2005-2021) St. Croix Watershed Research Station TSS Data (Note: Timeframe and specific source unknown) No Till Agriculture Example Photo (Nicollet County Soil and Water Conservation District [SWCD])
				Field Office Technical Guide (Natural Resources Conservation Service [NRCS]) Modeling Study of Seven Mile Creek Watershed (USACE) Constructed Water and Sediment Control Basin WASCOB Example Photo (Goodhue County SWCD)



Testimony	Speaker/Author	Key Topic Message	Data Source Provided:	Data Source Referenced
				USACE Study On "Ground Cover Vegetation Reducing Sediment Load and Promoting Savannah Restoration"
Solutions for Ike's Creek	Tom Worthington and Vicki Sherry Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refuge	Provided information on and requested support for proposed Ike's Creek Restoration Project	Yes	Internal data from US Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) project Ike's Creek Restoration- Proposed Work Areas A and B (Inter-fluve)
Agricultural Drain Tile: Contributor to Water Quality and Flooding Issues in the Minnesota River	Steve Knutson	In order to fully understand and develop solutions to the impact of agricultural drain tile systems on the Minnesota River, the two issues described above need to be addressed and resolved. Issues identified: 1. Lack of information 2. Lack of tools required to implement solutions	Yes	Federal Farm Bill Chapter 103E of Minnesota Drainage Law



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Ike's Creek, the	Tom Fahey	Awareness and support of this fragile ecosystem	Yes	Environmental Assessment (MVNWR
Only Stream in	Master Naturalist and	(Ike's Creek), is needed before water quality		2024)
Hennepin County	Group Volunteer	deteriorates to the point that it no longer		
with Trout, is At	Coordinator for	supports the resident brook trout		Natural Resources Inventory of the City of
Risk.	Bloomington			Bloomington, Minnesota - 2007.
	Neighbors Nurturing			
	Nature (BNNN) &			Presentation by Vicki Sherry (2023)
	Minnesota Valley			
	National Wildlife			
	Refuge (MVNWR)			



Testimony	Speaker/Author	Key Topic Message Testimony with some cited supporti	Data Source Provided: ng data	Data Source Referenced
Tools for Minnesota River Health: Water Quality and Storage Program and Minnesota River Commission	Scott Sparlin, Coordinator and Facilitator Minnesota River Congress	Two recommendations: 1. Join others currently legislatively advocating for appropriations for our new state Water Quality and Storage Program. 2. Join efforts currently underway in creating a Minnesota River Basin Commission/ Management Board.	Partial	Minnesota River Assessment Project (MPCA 1988) Minnesota River Implementation Project (1990)
Solutions for Clean Water Advocacy	Tom Crawford, River Watch Program Coordinator Friends of the Minnesota Valley	 Three recommendations for the LMRWD: The LMRWD takes on responsibility as the legal advocate for the well-being of the downstream communities on the county, and state levels. Further expand funding for educational programs related to the hydrology of the Lower Minnesota River and its tributaries. Become the primary advocate for reducing the negative effects of chloride on the Minnesota River, with a specific 	Partial: Water quality information is based in fact. Recommendations on the function of the LMRWD are based on professional opinion, which highlights a gap.	Schottler, Shawn P. Et al. "Twentieth Century Agricultural Drainage Creates More Erosive Rivers." Hydrological Processes. (2013) Wiley Online Library 2022 US Department of Agriculture (USDA) Survey Percentage of County Drainage by Subsurface Tile Figure



Testimony	Speaker/Author	Key Topic Message focus on getting local organizations into the Smart Salting training by the MPCA.	Data Source Provided:	Data Source Referenced
	Tes	stimony without data, but where relevant LIV	1RWD sources exi	ist
Historic Changes in the Minnesota River and Implications of Rapidan Dam Failure	Greg Genz Citizen Advisory Committee (CAC) Member	 Flood surges move more quickly River width is expanding Sediment transport downstream is a huge issue. Dredging efforts need to be continual to prevent undue strain on flood mitigation structures Determining who is responsible for maintaining flood mitigation infrastructure. Determining who pays for impacts in the case of its failure. 	No sources provided, anecdotal information.	Stories and opinions provided were observations from personal experiences. The LMRWD has internal references that validate the information of the speaker: "The Minnesota River is Growing", (Freshwater Society). "Sediment Accumulation in the Floodplain of the Lower Minnesota River Watershed" (Freshwater Society): Page 29 of 34.
Dean's Lake Water Storage	Victoria Ranua Citizen	Expressed the importance of storing water on the landscape, specifically on Dean's Lake. Dean's Lake levels are lower in comparison to preoutlet structure installation. Speaker expressed the need to re-evaluate the purpose of the structure and its relationship to storing water on the landscape.	No sources provided, anecdotal information.	Stories and opinions provided were observations from personal experiences. The LMRWD has internal references that validate the information of the speaker: Historical Water Quality, Ecological Change, and Sedimentation in Dean Lake (Hobbs and Edlund, 2015).



Testimony	Speaker/Author	Key Topic Message	Data Source Provided:	Data Source Referenced
Downstream Impacts on the Minnesota River (LMRWD and Lake Pepin)	Lee Peterson CAC Member	Upstream practices may have adverse effects on downstream river segments. The LMRWD Board should be an active voice when projects are occurring upstream.	No sources provided, anecdotal information.	Stories and opinions provided were observations from personal experiences. The LMRWD has internal references that validate the information of the speaker: • Sediment Accumulation in the Floodplain of the Lower Minnesota River Watershed (Jennings, et. al): "Changes in river flow have been documented by gauging efforts (Wilcock et al., 2009; Groeten et al., 2016).
		Testimony that lacks data and requires ful	rther research	
Water Quality Impairments of the Minnesota River and Policy Needs for Flood Storage Projects	Kirby Templin, PE, Water Resource – Environmental Manager City of Shakopee	 Three recommendations: Provide continued partnership and funding of projects to mitigate Minnesota River streambank erosion. Advocate for policy changes in the greater Minnesota River Basin at the state level to reduce Minnesota River flooding and erosion. Advocate for regional flooding solutions in the greater Minnesota River Basin. Support communities through partnership and funding. Where impairments exist, work with community partners on projects to reduce 	No sources provided	



Testimony	Speaker/Author	Key Topic Message	Data Source Provided:	Data Source Referenced
		pollutants and work towards achieving any state required reduction goals. Support communities through partnership and funding.		
Railroad Coordination	Jenna Olson City of Eagan	Our request is for the Lower Minnesota River Watershed District to help facilitate a better working relationship between the railroad and the communities that border it within the District.	No	Cited struggles of the City when coordinating with the railroads, which is qualitative/experiential data
Education and Outreach for Stormwater Runoff, Flooding, and Erosion	Judy Berglund CAC Member	Sharing information with/educating our neighbors as to what they can do to help control stormwater runoff and erosion, mitigate flooding, and preserve water quality of our lakes and streams is a real motivator. It makes everyone feel included in making a real difference. Young people are increasingly concerned about protecting lakes and streams, and they are concerned about chloride use and its impact on aquatic species.	No sources provided, anecdotal information.	Stories and opinions provided were observations from personal experiences.
		Expressed the importance of the educator minigrant program in keeping youth engaged.		



Testimony	Speaker/Author	Key Topic Message	Data Source Provided:	Data Source Referenced
Advocate for Drainage Authorities to Decrease Sediment and Nutrient Loads	Len Kramer Retired Water Resources Engineer	Groups should work with project proposers and drainage authorities to ensure projects don't have an impact on increased nutrient or sediment loads or on volume.	No sources provided, anecdotal information	Stories and opinions provided were observations from personal experiences, notably working with drainage authorities. More information on specific drainage authorities could be requested.
Minnesota River Solutions	Ted Suss Friends of the Minnesota Valley	LMRWD Board should use legal authority to protect the water resources in the Lower Minnesota River Basin as well as upstream. A basin-wide entity must be created that has planning authority and provides guidance to the counties and the other watershed districts. A cooperative feeling and philosophy amongst governmental districts must accompany this.	No sources provided, anecdotal information	Stories and opinions provided were observations from personal experiences.
Manipulating Ordinary High Water (OHW) Levels to Look at Water Storage to Reduce Downstream Flooding Impacts	Mike Schultz LeSueur County	Manipulating OHW elevations has rippling ecological effects, but we need tools to look at everything that's out there if we're trying to make a difference in the state of Minnesota and flood storage.	No sources provided, anecdotal information	Stories and opinions provided were observations from personal experiences.





Summary of Claims

Data-Supported Claims

Flood surges move more quickly

To fully understand and develop solutions to the impact of agricultural drain tile systems on the Minnesota River, the two issues described above need to be addressed and resolved.

Issues identified:

- 1. Lack of information
- 2. Lack of tools required to implement solutions

Awareness and support of this fragile ecosystem (Ike's Creek), is needed before water quality deteriorates to the point that it no longer supports the resident brook trout

Local technicians should design the treatment train to control runoff and ravine erosion from events which exceed the current WASCOB design standard, in order to keep pace with the trend of higher, more intense, rainfall events.

River width is increasing

Sediment transport downstream is a huge issue. Dredging efforts need to be continual to prevent undue strain on flood mitigation structures

Dean's Lake levels are lower in comparison to pre-outlet structure installation

Upstream practices may have adverse effects on downstream river segments





Data-Limited Claims and Recommendations

Data-Limited Claims

Manipulating OHW elevations has rippling ecological effects, but we need tools to look at everything that's out there if we're trying to make a difference in the state of Minnesota and flood storage.

Sharing information with/educating our neighbors as to what they can do to help control stormwater runoff and erosion, mitigate flooding, and preserve water quality of our lakes and streams is a real motivator. It makes everyone feel included in making a real difference.

Young people are increasingly concerned about protecting lakes and streams, and they are concerned about chloride use and its impact on aquatic species

Recommendations

Join others currently legislatively advocating for appropriations for our new state Water Quality and Storage Program.

Join efforts currently underway in creating a Minnesota River Basin Commission/ Management Board.

The LMRWD takes on responsibility as the legal advocate for the well-being of the downstream communities on the county, and state levels.

The LMRWD Board should be an active voice when projects are occurring upstream.

The LMRWD Board should use legal authority to protect the water resources in the Lower Minnesota River Basin as well as upstream.

Further expand funding for educational programs related to the hydrology of the Lower Minnesota River and its tributaries.

Become the primary advocate for reducing the negative effects of chloride on the Minnesota River, with a specific focus on getting local organizations into the Smart Salting training by the MPCA.

Determine who is responsible for maintaining flood mitigation infrastructure. Determine who pays for impacts in the case of its failure.





The speaker expressed the need to re-evaluate the purpose of the structure (Dean's Lake outlet) and its relationship to storing water on the landscape.

Where impairments exist, work with community partners on projects to reduce pollutants and work towards achieving any state required reduction goals. Support communities through partnership and funding.

Provide continued partnership and funding of projects to mitigate Minnesota River streambank erosion. Advocate for policy changes in the greater Minnesota River Basin at the state level to reduce Minnesota River flooding and erosion.

Advocate for regional flooding solutions in the greater Minnesota River Basin. Support communities through partnership and funding.

LMRWD should help facilitate a better working relationship between the railroad and the communities that border it within the District.

Groups should work with project proposers and drainage authorities to ensure projects don't have an impact on increased nutrient or sediment loads or on volume.

A basin-wide entity must be created that has planning authority and provides guidance to the counties and the other watershed districts.

Young Environmental Consulting Group, LLC

Technical Memorandum

To: Linda Loomis, Administrator

Lower Minnesota River Watershed District

From: Suzy Lindberg, Communications Manager

Della Schall Young, CTF, CPESC, PMP, Principal Scientist

Date: March 12, 2025

Re: Public Listening Session—Board Implementation Process

This memorandum serves as an internal tool to summarize and outline specific requests made during the Public Listening Session with each one's correlation to policy or legislative suggestions. This summary document provides a table with categories for the Board to rank their level of involvement and formulate a potential work plan to incorporate feedback into existing and new efforts.

We have noted whether a recommendation aligns with an ongoing initiative already adopted (i.e. water storage) or whether it's a new idea requiring incorporation into future strategic considerations.

Prioritization Method

As the Board reviews requests, the managers will consider future actions, such as policy changes; legislative activity; expanded programs and partnerships; or Watershed Management Plan (WMP) incorporation depending on the identified need and issue. While developing an implementation plan and action strategy, the following prioritization method may be used to assess and rank various stakeholder requests.

The prioritization method includes the following ratings for each request to help the Board of Managers categorize the level of priority. For priorities scoring high (Coalition Member and above), the Lower Minnesota River Watershed District (LMRWD) will identify the avenue to advance the request (i.e. legislation or WMP).

- **Champion:** We support this initiative and will visibly cheerlead it publicly.
- Lead: We will invest the time and energy to lead partners and assets with this activity.
- **Major Partner**: We do not want or should not be the face of this, but we are interested in teaming.
- Coalition Member: We'll play a role on the team but not necessarily act as part of the core strategy group.
- **Support**: We will take an action, such as writing a letter of support for a concept.
- Neutral: We won't oppose or support.
- **Do Not Support**: We are not in support of this publicly and will not spend money or time on it.

Summary of Testimony Requests and Specific Actions

The following table introduces specific requests, alignment with existing efforts, recommended actions and responsibilities. The Board of Managers should add the priority ranking in order to phase the actions. Requests from testimony have been grouped by major themes for clarity.

Request	Testimony	Alignment with Existing Efforts	Priority	Recommended Actions/Timeline
Upstream Water M	lanagement			
State policy to protect resources	Holly Bushman Lower Minnesota River East Watershed Partnership	 Lower Minnesota River East Comprehensive Watershed Management Plan (Joint Memorandum of Agreement) LMRWD WMP (Policy 2.1 Use of High Value Resources Overlay District to Manage Water Resources) LMRWD Water Resources Restoration Fund 		Staff: Explore shared resources in Comprehensive Management Plan and identify progress and resources to shared goals (complete by end of Q2).
State policy to promote conservation practices	Holly Bushman Lower Minnesota River East Watershed Partnership	Policy Gap		CAC: Explore additional partnerships to promote conservation practices and grant opportunities upstream (Q2). Board of Managers: Advise on changes to policy and direction (Q3).







Support

Request	Testimony	Alignment with Existing Efforts	Priority	Recommended Actions/Timeline Referral to CAC for review Legal review or briefing Direct Board action Direct Staff action
State policy to promote long-term funding	Holly Bushman Lower Minnesota River East Watershed Partnership	 Potential Policy Gap LMRWD Water Resources Restoration Fund 		Board of Managers: Explore legislative agenda to build a coalition of funding in addition to existing LMRWD levy (Q1). Staff: Reiterate Water Resources Restoration Fund for upstream projects (Q1).
State policy to allow long-term staffing commitments	Holly Bushman Lower Minnesota River East Watershed Partnership	Policy Gap		Staff: Meet with partners upstream to determine needs and identify opportunities (Q2). Explore opportunities to share staffing resources and define what is needed (Q3).
State policy for local government units requirement to have certain goals	Holly Bushman Lower Minnesota River East Watershed Partnership	Policy Gap		Staff: Meet with partners upstream to better understand the goals and what needs clarification (Q2). Board of Managers: Advise on changes to policy and direction based on meeting outcomes (Q3).
State policy to address nitrogen and water flow from upstream tile drainage detrimental	Tom Crawford, Friends of the Minnesota Valley	 Potential Policy Gap WMP Strategy 1.1.1 Work cooperatively with local, state, and federal government; other agencies, 		Board of Managers: Consider letter of support for state policy addressing nitrogen and water flow or policy in WMP update addressing upstream projects (Q3).







Support

Request	Testimony	Alignment with Existing Efforts	Priority	Recommended Actions/Timeline Referral to CAC for review Legal review or briefing Direct Board action Direct Staff action
to downstream interests		and non-government organizations on issues affecting the LMRWD's resources		
Local policy to comment on upstream drainage proceedings as a harmed party	Tom Crawford, Friends of the Minnesota Valley	 Potential Policy Gap WMP Strategy 1.1.1 Work cooperatively with local, state, and federal government; other agencies, and non-government organizations on issues 		Board of Managers: Assess LMRWD role in upstream strategy and potential to change existing role (Q3).
Local policy to be a voice in review process for upstream projects	Lee Peterson, Citizen Advisory Committee Member	Potential Policy Gap WMP Strategy 1.1.1 Work cooperatively with local, state, and federal government; other agencies, and non-government organizations on issues affecting the LMRWD's resources		Board of Managers: Assess LMRWD role in upstream strategy and potential to change existing role (Q3).
Local policy to advocate for the LMRWD's interests on upstream projects	Len Kramer, retired water resources engineer	 Potential Policy Gap WMP Strategy 1.1.1 Work cooperatively with local, state, and federal 		Board of Managers: Assess LMRWD role in upstream strategy and potential to change existing role. Consider a letter of support to Len's organization or







Support

Request	Testimony	Alignment with Existing Efforts	Priority	Recommended Actions/Timeline Referral to CAC for review Legal review or briefing Direct Board action Direct Staff action
		government; other agencies, and non-government organizations on issues affecting the LMRWD's resources		partnership in their group (Q3).
Local policy to utilize your authority to protect resources from upstream damages	Ted Suss, Friends of the Minnesota Valley	 Potential Policy Gap WMP Strategy 1.1.1 Work cooperatively with local, state, and federal government; other agencies, and non-government organizations on issues 		Board of Managers: Assess LMRWD role in upstream strategy and potential to change existing role (Q3).
Local policy to speak up on upstream projects requiring environmental review	Ted Suss, Friends of the Minnesota Valley	 Potential Policy Gap WMP Strategy 1.1.1 Work cooperatively with local, state, and federal government; other agencies, and non-government organizations on issues 		Board of Managers: Assess LMRWD role in upstream strategy and potential to change existing role (Q3).
Sediment Control &	Erosion	<u> </u>		
State and local policy to address near channel sediment sources	Norm Senjem, Lake Pepin Legacy Alliance	Capital Improvement Projects (Work plans include: [1] Gully Prioritization and Restoration and [2] Spring Creek		Staff: Explore continued opportunities for CIPs related to sediment sources. Incorporate suggestions into 2026 work







Request	Testimony	Alignment with Existing Efforts	Priority	Recommended Actions/Timeline Referral to CAC for review Legal review or briefing Direct Board action Direct Staff action
(ravines, bluffs, and streambanks)		Restoration)		plan (Q3-Q4). Staff: Advance additional public education related to the importance of sediment source identification (Q3).
State or local policy to recoup damages from Rapidan Dam owner (Blue Earth County) for discharging ten-years' worth of dredged sediment	Greg Genz, Citizen Advisory Committee member	Potential Policy Gap WMP Strategy 7.1.2 Erosion and Sediment Control Standard		CAC: Explore data on increased sedimentation and challenges created by Rapidan Dam failure and changing river width (Q2). Board of Managers: Consider legislative support or policy letter based on additional research on sedimentation (Q3).
Continue local policy to partner on stabilization projects Continue local	Kirby Templin, City of Shakopee Kirby Templin, City	 Water Resources Restoration Fund Municipal Coordination Water Resources 		Staff: Coordinate with Shakopee on the Water Resources Restoration Fund and explore funding of stabilization projects (Q2). Staff: Coordinate with Shakopee on the
policy to cooperate on water quality improvement projects	of Shakopee	Restoration Fund • Municipal Coordination		Water Resources Restoration Fund and explore funding of water quality improvement projects (Q2).







Request	Testimony	Alignment with Existing Efforts	Priority	Recommended Actions/Timeline Referral to CAC for review Legal review or briefing Direct Board action Direct Staff action
Flood Mitigation and	d Storage			
State policy to support wetland restorations and cover crop establishment via incentives	Norm Senjem, Lake Pepin Legacy Alliance	 Potential Policy Gap LMRWD WMP Strategy 2.2.3 Cost Share Incentive Program Capital Improvement Projects (Work plans) include: Fen Management Plans) 		CAC: Explore additional policies or strategies needed for wetlands restoration and cover crops (Q3). Board of Managers: Advise on changes to policy and direction (Q4).
State legislation to fund water quality and storage at \$50 million	Scott Sparlin, Minnesota River Congress	 LMRWD WMP Policy 6.1 Maintain Water Storage Areas and the Minnesota River Floodway Project partnership with the US Army Corps of Engineers 		Staff: Assess overlap with ongoing water storage efforts (Q2). Board of Managers: Consider letter of support for additional funding for water storage projects (Q2).
Local policy to examine Dean's Lake outlet alteration to increase storage	Victoria Ranua, citizen	• LMRWD WMP Policy 6.1 Maintain Water Storage Areas and the Minnesota River Floodway		Staff: Explore as Capital Improvement Project for future Watershed Management Plan. Plan a follow-up meeting with citizens and the Shakopee Mdewakanton Sioux Community (Q2-Q3)







Request	Testimony	Alignment with Existing Efforts	Priority	Recommended Actions/Timeline Referral to CAC for review Legal review or briefing Direct Board action Direct Staff action
				CAC: Assess overlap with ongoing water storage efforts (Q3).
State policy changes to make it easier to work with altered Minnesota Department of Natural Resources (MnDNR) protected waters and wetlands to re-create water storage	Mike Schultz, LeSueur County	 Potential Policy Gap LMRWD WMP Policy 6.1 Maintain Water Storage Areas and the Minnesota River Floodway 		CAC: Research MnDNR standards for ordinary high-water marks to understand if a change is feasible or necessary (Q3).
State policy areas outside of metro to address flooding and erosion like what is currently done in urban areas	Kirby Templin, City of Shakopee	 Potential Policy Gap WMP Strategy 1.1.1 Work cooperatively with local, state, and federal government; other agencies, and non-government organizations on issues 		Board of Managers: Assess LMRWD role in upstream strategy and potential to change existing role (Q3).







Request	Testimony	Alignment with Existing Efforts	Priority	Recommended Actions/Timeline Referral to CAC for review Legal review or briefing Direct Board action Direct Staff action
State policy to pursue regional flood storage in basin like what is currently done in urban areas	Kirby Templin, City of Shakopee	 LMRWD WMP Policy 6.1 Maintain Water Storage Areas and the Minnesota River Floodway Project partnership with the US Army Corps of Engineers 		Staff: Explore additional funding avenues for large-scale flood storage and damage reduction projects (Q2).
Public Engagement	and Education			
State legislation to create Minnesota River Basin Commission to address systemic issues	Scott Sparlin, Minnesota River Congress	Initiative was explored through the Minnesota River Corridor Management Plan project (2022).		No action at this time.
Local policy to increase chloride education	Tom Crawford, Friends of the Minnesota Valley	 WMP Strategy 4.2.3 Provide Educational Opportunities LMRWD Education and Outreach Program 		Board of Managers: Continue policy to fund Education and Outreach Program (Q1). Staff: Continue working with partners to understand ongoing need for chloride education and ways to increase (Q3).

Coalition Member







Request	Testimony	Alignment with Existing Efforts	Priority	Recommended Actions/Timeline Referral to CAC for review Legal review or briefing Direct Board action Direct Staff action
Continue local policy to partner on Ike's Creek Restoration Project	Tom Worthington and Vicki Sherry, US Fish and Wildlife Services (USFWS)	 Water Resources Restoration Fund WMP Strategy 4.2.3 Provide Educational Opportunities 		Staff: Coordinate with USFWS on the Water Resources Restoration Fund and explore funding of completion of Ike's Creek Restoration Project (Q2).
				Board of Managers: Make a recommendation on funding of Ike's Creek Restoration Project (Q2). Staff: Explore continued Education and Outreach activities in cooperation with USFWS (Q2).
Local policy to increase education of public on multiple topics	Judy Berglund, Citizen Advisory Committee member	LMRWD Education and Outreach Program		CAC: Advise on messaging and educational materials that best align with public needs (Q2). Staff: Continue to implement Education and Outreach program in coordination with CAC (2025).







Request	Testimony	Alignment with Existing Efforts	Priority	Recommended Actions/Timeline Referral to CAC for review Legal review or briefing Direct Board action Direct Staff action
Local policy to improve railroad involvement with water management infrastructure	Jenna Olson, City of Eagan	 Potential Policy Gap WMP Strategy 1.1.1 Work cooperatively with local, state, and federal government; other agencies, and non-government organizations on issues 		Board of Managers: Assess LMRWD role in upstream strategy and potential to change existing role (Q3). Staff: Meet with Eagan to discuss opportunities for more coordination (Q3).
Federal policy change to Farm Bill to make drain tile data public	Steve Knutson, citizen	Policy Gap		Board of Managers: Consider letter of support for reviewing federal policy change in cooperation with partners (Q3).
State policy for watershed districts or counties to have permit processes for drain tile projects	Steve Knutson, citizen	Policy Gap		Board of Managers: Assess LMRWD role in upstream strategy and potential to change existing role.
Continue local policy to create awareness about Ike's Creek	Tom Fahey, Master naturalist and group volunteer coordinator for Bloomington Neighbors Nurturing Nature and Minnesota Valley	LMRWD Education and Outreach Program		CAC: Advise on messaging and educational materials that best align with public needs (Q2). Staff: Continue to implement Education and Outreach program in coordination with CAC (2025).







Request	Testimony	Alignment with Existing Efforts	Priority	Recommended Actions/Timeline Referral to CAC for review Legal review or briefing Direct Board action Direct Staff action
	National Wildlife Refuge			

Young Environmental Consulting Group, LLC

Technical Memorandum

To: Linda Loomis, Administrator

Lower Minnesota River Watershed District

From: Suzy Lindberg, Communications Manager

Della Schall Young, CTF, CPESC, PMP, Principal Scientist

Date: March 12, 2025

Re: Public Listening Session—Public Engagement and Communications Strategy

On January 8, 2025, Young Environmental helped Lower Minnesota River Watershed District (LMRWD) coordinate a public listening session that gathered insight and feedback from dozens of stakeholders regarding issues, challenges, and opportunities facing the Minnesota River. The LMRWD Board of Managers has identified a need to respond to this feedback while producing strategic actions and measurable outcomes for upcoming advocacy, communications planning, and policy updates.

To address this need, Young Environmental has drafted a preliminary public engagement and communication strategy and contacted several specialized public relations firms to provide on-call support for additional strategy implementation. The goal would be to build momentum and collaboration among the general public, municipal agencies, and local governments.

Finalizing and Releasing Public Listening Session Report

The draft Public Listening Session report will be submitted to the Board of Managers at the March 19, 2025, meeting. The managers will review and approve the report, recommending any final changes to its content. The following activities must be completed to finalize and release the report:

- 1. **Board of Managers:** Review and advise on the recommended prioritization of requests in both **3: Policy and Legislative Considerations** (external audience) and **5: Board Action Items and Implementation Plan** (internal audience). Complete review by April 2 and return feedback to staff to finalize the action plan.
- 2. **LMRWD Staff:** Build LMRWD webpage with **2: Testimony Aggregation**, once approved. House public-facing reports: **3: Policy and Legislative Considerations** and **4: Data and Supporting Evidence** on the website. Complete by April 9, 2025.
- 3. **LMRWD Staff:** Develop a mass email with the content from the website page summary to drive traffic to the Public Listening Session report. Release by April 9, 2025.
- 4. **LMRWD Staff:** Explore contracting with a public relations firm based on Board recommendations, to be completed in April 2025. Begin working on key milestones and roles to implement the **6: Public Engagement and Communications Strategy**,

introduced below.

5. LMRWD Staff: Document internal-facing documents on a shared site for future reference, including 1: Review of Process, 5: Board Action Items and Implementation Plan, and 6: Public Engagement and Communications Strategy.

Communications and Public Engagement Strategy

For: Lower Minnesota River Watershed District

Focus: Traction on Communications and Public Engagement Related to Key Water and Natural

Resource Management Challenges and Opportunities

Duration: January– December 2025

Goals

1. Build on momentum from the Public Listening Session to continue conversations and progress on shared issues and solutions.

- 2. Increase public awareness about water-related issues (e.g., flooding and water quality) and natural resource protection.
- 3. Foster collaboration with stakeholders (including elected representatives and government officials, nongovernmental organizations, state and federal agencies, cities and counties, partner water management organizations, businesses, community groups, and educational institutions).
- 4. Encourage public participation in water and natural resources protection initiatives while creating awareness about challenges and issues facing the watershed district.
- 5. Establish transparent communication between upstream and downstream partners. Promote policy compliance and behavior change toward water resources protection.

Engagement Methods

The following engagement methods should be considered as primary avenues to continue the public engagement and communication strategy:

- **Digital Outreach:** Website updates, social media campaigns, and email newsletters. Led by Young Environmental with key campaigns developed in collaboration with the third-party public relations consultant. The Citizen Advisory Committee (CAC) is also interested in creating content to be released through digital methods through their quarterly article assignments.
- Community Events: Public tabling events, tours of key resources, additional listening sessions and workshops on key topics, and community cleanup events, such as buckthorn removal at fens or along the Minnesota River, to build cohesion and ownership of unique resources. Led by Young Environmental with support from the CAC and potentially a public relations firm (e.g., to design pop-up events).

- Stakeholder Collaboration: Partner meetings, technical advisory committee check-ins, and meet-and-greets on joint initiatives. Primarily led by the Board of Managers and the District Administrator with content creation and support from Young Environmental and/or the public relations firm. Finalize a Board of Managers presentation and leave-behind for key outreach meetings. Create a digital video for broader reach, particularly upstream and downstream.
- Educational Programs: Continue outreach to schools and educators, bolstering the minigrant program with additional resources like webinars, handouts/infographics, and/or curriculum design. Led by Young Environmental with support from the CAC.
- **Traditional Media:** Press releases, TV/radio spots, and brochures. Potentially led by a public relations firm, preferably as strategic campaigns based on key topics.

Draft Public Engagement and Communication Strategy

The following strategy can be employed by Young Environmental in coordination with LMRWD leadership and a third-party public relations/media specialist to respond to key feedback in the Public Listening Session and to build momentum around shared priorities. It is intended to provide high-level structured engagement methods with a clear responsiveness to stakeholders and coalition-building, and, with enough flexibility for adaptation.

Stage 1: Listening to Stakeholders (January – March 2025) Goal: Understand public concerns, priorities, and stakeholder perspectives. January – Stakeholder Outreach & Public Listening

• Method: Request testimony and hold Public Listening Session

February - Community Engagement & Research

• **Method:** Compiling key themes from the Public Listening Session for next steps. Soliciting additional capacity from PR consultants.

March – Data Review & Key Themes Identification

• **Method:** Finalize Public Listening Session report with key data and findings.

Stage 2: Responding Through Key Campaigns (April – July) Goal: Develop and implement targeted communication campaigns addressing stakeholder input.

April – Campaign 1: Key Theme 1

• **Method:** Publish the Public Listening Session report, and launch public awareness campaign on Listening Session Key Theme 1.

- **Channels:** Use website, social media, infographics, video testimonials from local leaders, and in-person meetings with Board and County Commissioners to introduce overview of campaigns.
- **Press:** Release media feature on Listening Session Key Theme 1.

May - Campaign 2: Key Theme 2

- Method: Launch of public awareness campaign on Listening Session Key Theme 2.
- **Channels:** Use website, social media, infographics, in-person meetings with other identified stakeholders or partners.
- **Press:** Release media feature on Listening Session Key Theme 2.

June – Campaign 3: Key Theme 3

- **Method:** Launch of public awareness campaign on Listening Session Key Theme 3.
- Channels: Use website, social media, webinars, and printed brochures for outreach events.
- **Press:** Conduct interview with expert on Key Theme 3.

July - Campaign 4: Policy Awareness & Compliance

- Method: Public education on policy and legislative stances and opportunities.
- Channels: Use FAQ section on website, and interactive quizzes on social media.

Stage 3: Building Coalitions & Partnerships (August – October)

Goal: Strengthen collaboration among government, community groups, businesses, and nongovernmental organizations.

August – Strengthening Stakeholder Collaboration

- Method: Establish working groups to tackle key concerns and shared initiatives.
- Channels: Use website hub for coalition resources, and stakeholder email updates.
- **Event:** Host the Minnesota River Boat Tour.
- Press: Release an announcement of coalition-building efforts and event promotion.

September-October – Grassroots and Volunteer Engagement

Method: Continue ongoing initiative to engage partners following river tour.

- Channels: Use outreach emails, LinkedIn articles, and social media posts of event.
- **Press:** Release media story on partner contributions to conservation.

Stage 4: Revisiting, Analyzing, and Adapting (November – December) Goal: Evaluate progress, share impact, and plan for 2026.

November - Measuring Impact and Public Feedback

- **Method:** Conduct post-engagement survey and collect case studies.
- **Channels:** Website impact report, and social media recap.
- **Press:** Year-end reflection article.

December - Strategy Adaptation and Future Planning

- Method: Conduct an internal review and refine strategy based on findings. Develop work
 plan for 2026, and evaluate partnership with Young Environmental and PR/media
 consultant.
- Channels: Use website update on 2026 priorities, and thank-you messages to stakeholders.
- **Press:** Release an announcement of 2026 engagement roadmap.

Recruiting and Onboarding a Public Relations Firms

To add capacity and specialization to the Education and Outreach strategy, Young Environmental staff circulated a request for information (RFI) to gauge the range of costs and level of interest to support the existing team with additional communications and public engagement activities. The RFI was circulated to the following firms:

- Tunheim: Liz Tunheim Sheets
- Goff Public: Jennifer Hellman (CEO) and Heidi Larson (CFO/COO)
- **Clear Edge:** Michelle Meek
- Zan Associates: Joy Miciano

We received responses and interest from three of the four firms contacted. The next page includes a summary of information received through the interview process with recommendations for next steps. The responses received have been included in the package for reference.

Range of Costs and Specializations for Public Relations and Media Consulting

Firm Name	Services	Range of Costs	Available Staff and Rates	Specialties	Interested in Contract
Clear Edge					Did not respond to request
Goff Public	 Public relations Creative services 	 Customized communications and media strategy: \$15,000 On-call support for media and communications campaigns: \$5,000 per month Drafting and circulating press releases: \$3,000 Total Range of Costs: \$15,000-\$39,000 	 Sarah Swenson Madeleine Rush Cali Torell Grace Rose Caroline Burns James Schueneman Jenny Alvermann Kamilah Jester Nate Kass Chris Beeth Liv Hultgren Adam Darragh 	 Public sector, local government clients Creative storytelling and campaigns Experience with Minnesota Association of Soil and Water Conservation Districts and Natural Resources Conservation Service 	Yes
Tunheim	 Review stakeholder feedback from Public Listening Session Immersion meeting with LMRWD team Develop customized communications 	 Develop customized communications strategy: \$11,725 On-call retainer: \$2,500-4,500 per month On-call media and communications support can be 	 Liz Sheets, Project Manager Charlie Vander Aarde Ashley Pettingill Miles Plueger, Associate 	• Liz is the Natural Resources Commissioner in Mendota Heights	Yes

Firm Name	Services	Range of Costs	Available Staff and Rates	Specialties	Interested in Contract
	and media strategy	provided on a monthly basis (\$2,500-\$4,500) or a campaign basis depending on preferences - Media relations and messaging support: \$1,750-\$3,500 per campaign - Social media and public engagement support: \$2,500-\$5,000 per campaign - Strategic communications: \$4,500-\$8,500 per campaign - Drafting and circulating press releases: \$1,000-\$2,250 per release Total Range of Costs: \$11,725-31,975			

Firm Name	Services	Range of Costs	Available Staff and Rates	S pecialties	Interested in Contract
Zan Associates	 Project management Scoping workshop for communications and engagement plan with media strategy Draft and final plan Media strategy 	 Project management: \$5,368.70 Scoping workshop for communications and engagement plan with media strategy: \$1,889.80 Draft and final plan: \$5,221.00 Media strategy: \$9,325.20 Total Project Cost: \$21,804.70 	 President: \$232.95 Vice President: \$216.30 Senior Associate 3: \$201.35 Senior Associate 2: \$184.80 Senior Creative 2: \$184.80 Senior Associate 1: \$148.40 Senior Creative 1: \$148.40 Associate 2: \$115.80 Associate 2: \$115.80 Associate 1: \$99.30 Creative 1: \$99.30 Admin: \$80.40 Intern: \$80.40 Media Specialist: \$258.15 	Not highlighted	Yes

Recommendations

Three qualified public relations and media firms are available to provide support to Young Environmental and the LMRWD to build momentum surrounding the communications and public engagement strategy. We recommend a meeting to discuss the level of support needed and finalize the budget available to bring on added capacity and welcome initial recommendations from the Board.



March 12, 2025

Suzy Lindberg, Communications Manager Young Environmental Consulting Group, LLC Lower Minnesota River Watershed District

RE: Public Relations On-Call Support 2025

Thank you for the opportunity to provide our qualifications for assisting the Lower Minnesota River Watershed District (LMRWD) with public relations services. Goff Public is deeply experienced in the public relations and media outreach services LMRWD is seeking. Our firm also brings special expertise supporting public sector clients like county governments, tribal governments, soil and water conservation districts, and other organizations in communicating about environmental initiatives. We are expert communications and community engagement practitioners – helping our clients connect with a diverse array of stakeholders through creative and captivating campaigns.

As an independent communications agency, we offer full-scale public relations services backed by an in-house creative team. We are also trusted advisors in public affairs and crisis communications. This blending of services gives us an unmatched perspective, allowing us to tackle communications, community engagement, government relations and reputational issues in a multifaceted way to benefit clients. Our firm would be enthusiastic about supporting the LMRWD in its efforts to increase storytelling in 2025 and beyond as part of its larger strategy around advocacy for water resources in the region.

Highly respected and trusted in the industry, the Goff Public team includes talented, motivated professionals with unsurpassed public relations and media relations expertise. We collaborate across disciplines to create holistic and effective communications. As a Goff Public client, you would have access to the collective knowledge and passion of our entire firm. A dedicated project team would be assembled from the list below, based on your anticipated needs and goals. In addition to the professionals listed here, Goff Public plans to add two new roles in Q2 2025 to further support public relations clients.

The Goff team

Public relations

- Sara Swenson: Vice President
 - 16 years of experience
- Madeleine Rush: Director
 - 15 years of experience
- Cali Torell: Senior Account Manager/Lead Writer
 - 12 years of experience



- Grace Rose: Senior Account Manager
 - 10 years of experience
- Caroline Burns: Senior Account Executive/Public Affairs Communications Lead
 - 9 years of experience
- <u>James Schueneman</u>: Account Executive
 - 4 years of experience
- Jenny Alvermann: Writing Specialist
 - 2 years of experience
- Kamilah Jester: Assistant Account Executive
 - 1 year of experience

Creative services

- Nate Kass: Director of Digital and Creative
 - 17 years of experience
- Chris Beeth: Multimedia Producer
 - o 9 years of experience
- <u>Liv Hultgren</u>: Digital Communications Specialist
 - 6 years of experience
- Adam Darragh: Graphic Designer
 - 5 years of experience

Relevant experience

We believe in the power of telling stories that inspire action. We start with an understanding of your goals and audiences, pairing them with the right messages and illustrative stories on the channels they frequent. By partnering with Goff Public, you have access to a multidisciplinary team that can manage every detail of your public relations – from establishing a robust plan and managing media outreach to creating eye-catching multimedia and collateral materials.

Goff Public has represented the Minnesota Association of Soil and Water Conservation Districts (MASWCD) for eight years. During this time, we have been the primary contract public relations and government relations firm for the association, with work ranging from direct lobbying to member newsletters, outreach and activation. Our combined communications and advocacy strategy helps the association effectively demonstrate its value to members, conservation partners, state and federal agencies, and lawmakers. We manage its monthly e-newsletter to more than 1,400 subscribers as well as social media and advocacy communications.

In 2023, we launched a new storytelling series in partnership with the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), elevating the voices of landowners who have partnered with SWCDs to access and



implement federal conservation programs. The series includes longform stories distributed directly to landowners across the state and a dedicated e-newsletter, as well as a video series.

You can find additional examples of our work in our online portfolio.

- Newgate School
- Spectro Alloys
- Native Farm Bill Coalition

Cost estimates

We pride ourselves on delivering excellent service – always on time and on budget. We are committed to working with you to determine a scope of work that is respectful of your budget and needs.

For the services identified in your request, we estimate the following fees and retainers.

- A customized communications/media strategy for the LMRWD: \$15,000 fee
- On-call support for media and communications campaigns (i.e., implementing the communications/media strategy): \$5,000 per month
- Drafting and circulating press releases: \$3,000 per month

If you have questions about our qualifications and experience as you seek public relations support in 2025, Sara Swenson from Goff Public will serve as your point of contact. Please contact her at sara@goffpublic.com or 952-221-5368.

Thank you for the opportunity to share our team's qualifications and ideas. We look forward to a potential partnership with you.

Jennifer Hellman CEO/President

Janifer Gleena

Goff Public



Public Relations On-Call Support 2025

Prepared for the Lower Minnesota River Watershed District (LMRWD)

March 12, 2025



March 12, 2025

Suzy Lindberg
Communications Manager
Young Environmental Consulting Group, LLC
ATTN: LMRWD PR Support
112 E. 5th Street, #102
Chaska, MN 55318

Dear Suzy,

Thank you for the opportunity to participate in your proposal process. Tunheim is pleased to submit our response to the Public Relations On-Call Support 2025.

Tunheim's core credo is to help clients' programs be understood by audiences critical to success. As outlined in the proposal, we will help you build from the insights and feedback from your stakeholders to design a curated communications strategy that leads to measurable outcomes for upcoming advocacy, communications planning and policy updates.

For 35 years, Tunheim has been honored as one of the region's most respected integrated communications firms. Our reputation comes from our focus on delivering results that lead to organization success. It also illustrates our professionalism and ability to deliver on our commitments.

This RFP is particularly meaningful to me as a current natural resources commissioner in the City of Mendota Heights and a former placemaking commissioner in the City of Bloomington, two communities that are part of the LMRWD. As a leader in our organization, I will not be assigned to the work, but I have perspective and care for what you do to share with our team. The Minnesota River is important to all the communities that surround it—in my role as a commissioner, I have come to realize that many people do not know they are not protecting and caring for their natural resources in ways that our team can quickly begin to impact important education and behavior changes. We would love the opportunity to partner with you to strengthen stakeholder relationships.

This proposal, including pricing, is effective for a period of ninety (90) days or the date the contract takes effect, whichever is later. Tunheim does not have an actual or perceived conflict of interest regarding this RFP or in the submission of this proposal.

I am the primary contact for the proposal—you can reach me via email at Isheets@tunheim.com. If you have any questions regarding this proposal, please do not hesitate to contact us. We thank you for the opportunity to respond to this solicitation and anticipate the prospect of working with you.

Sincerely,

Liz Sheets

Chief Growth Officer









Estimated Budget

This cost overview outlines the proposed scope and estimated costs for communications and media support for the LMRWD. The services detailed below aim to enhance public engagement, improve media outreach, and ensure strategic communication alignment with project goals. These efforts will support LMRWD in building momentum with key stakeholders, responding effectively to public testimony, and increasing visibility for surface water storage initiatives and related policy developments. The outlined costs and time commitments are based on prior experience with similar projects and tailored to LMRWD's specific needs.

1. Customized Communications/Media Strategy

This scope includes research, stakeholder engagement, and strategy development to ensure effective public outreach, messaging, and policy advocacy.

Key Deliverables & Estimated Time Requirements:

- Review of Stakeholder Feedback from January 8, 2025 \$2,150
 - Review meeting notes, comments, and input gathered during stakeholder sessions.
 - o Identify key themes, concerns, and opportunities.
 - o Deliverable: Summary document with insights and recommendations.
 - Estimated Time: 6 hours (Charlie), 4 hours (Ashley)
- Immersion Meeting with Young Environmental & LMRWD Representatives \$1,075
 - o Define project scope, objectives, and communication goals.
 - o Establish success metrics, key messages, and target audiences.
 - o Outline expectations for media engagement, public involvement, and timeline alignment.
 - Estimated Time: 3 hours (Charlie), 2 hours (Ashley)
- Development of a Customized Communications & Media Strategy \$8,500
 - Create a structured plan for public engagement, media relations, and stakeholder collaboration.
 - Identify opportunities to increase awareness of surface water storage efforts, municipal partnerships, and public testimony responses.
 - o Define outreach protocols for policy updates, strategic planning, and advocacy messaging.
 - o Provide a framework for ongoing media engagement and crisis communication, if needed.
 - o Includes up to three rounds of review, edits, and additions.
 - Estimated Time: 20 hours (Charlie \$4,500), 20 hours (Ashley \$4,000)

2. Option 1 – Retainer-Based On-Call Support for Media and Communications Campaigns

Ongoing, as-needed support to implement the communications and media strategy, ensuring real-time engagement with stakeholders, media, and community partners.

Scope of On-Call Services:

- Media relations and response coordination.
- Social media content development and monitoring.
- Advising on public-facing messaging and crisis response.
- Strategic assistance in real-time campaign adjustments.
- Regular check-ins and progress updates.
- A retainer is a more efficient and cost-effective option for LMRWD.

Estimated Retainer:

- Suggested monthly retainer: \$2,500 \$4,500, depending on expected media activity.
- Includes up to 15 hours per month of on-demand support. Additional hours billed at \$175/hour.



2. Option 2 - Project-Based On-Call Support for Media and Communications Campaigns

This scope provides targeted, project-specific communications and media support to implement elements of the customized communications/media strategy as needed. Services will be structured on a per-project basis, ensuring flexibility while maintaining strategic alignment.

Scope of Services (Billed Per Project):

Each project will be defined in collaboration with LMRWD, with costs estimated based on scope, timeline, and required deliverables.

- Media Relations & Messaging Support \$1,750 \$3,500 per campaign
 - Development of talking points and key messages.
 - o Assistance in preparing responses to media inquiries.
 - o Guidance on public engagement strategies related to a specific project or policy.
 - o Includes up to 10-20 hours of support, depending on complexity.
- Social Media & Public Engagement Support \$2,500 \$5,000 per campaign
 - o Creation of tailored content for social media and online engagement.
 - Development of visual assets (graphics, infographics, etc.).
 - o Coordination with relevant stakeholders to amplify messaging.
 - o Includes content planning, scheduling, and monitoring over a defined period (e.g., one-month campaign).
- Strategic Communications Campaigns \$4,500 \$8,500 per campaign
 - o Comprehensive support for a public outreach or advocacy initiative.
 - o Development of campaign messaging, materials, and outreach plans.
 - Execution of multi-channel communications efforts (press, digital, stakeholder engagement).
 - Includes planning, implementation, and performance review.

Additional On-Call Support:

For needs outside predefined project scopes, support is available at \$150-\$225 per hour, depending on the team engaged, scoped in advance per engagement.

3. Drafting and Circulating Press Releases

Develop and distribute press releases to inform the public and media about LMRWD initiatives, policy updates, and community engagement efforts.

Scope of Press Release Services:

- Drafting a clear, compelling press release based on project updates, events, or policy changes.
- Coordinating with LMRWD and Young Environmental to ensure accurate messaging.
- Circulating to relevant media outlets, municipal agencies, and stakeholder groups.
- Optional: Targeted media pitching and follow-ups for increased coverage.

Estimated Cost Per Release:

- Basic Release (Drafting & Circulation): \$1,000
- Expanded Outreach (Media Outreach & Follow-ups): \$1,250
- Turnaround Time: 3-5 business days



Summary of Estimated Costs

Comico	Fatimated Cost
Service	Estimated Cost
1. Customized Communications/Media Strategy	\$11,725
2. Opt. 1: Retainer On-Call Media & Communications Support	\$2,500 – \$4,500 per month
2. Opt. 2: Project On-Call Media & Communications Support	
Media Relations & Messaging Support	\$1,750 – \$3,500
Social Media & Public Engagement Support	\$2,500 – \$5,000
Strategic Communications Campaigns	\$4,500 – \$8,500
3. Drafting & Circulating Press Releases	\$1,000 – \$2,250 per release

Out-of-pocket fees

All out-of-pocket expenses including wire services, social media placement, and media influencers are to be paid directly by you. If you wish Tunheim to submit payment for any out-of-pocket expense on your behalf, you agree to pay Tunheim prior to any order getting placed. In such situation, Tunheim will access an administration fee of two percent (2%) for the processing, managing, purchasing, and tracking all out-of-pocket expenses. For any out-of-pockets purchased by Tunheim on your behalf without prior payment, we will charge an additional 17.65% for processing.

Technology fee

Tunheim includes a technology fee of eight percent (8%) on top of professional fees (excluding out-of-pocket fees) to cover technology expenses incurred for our clients (i.e., media and social media monitoring tools, online media intelligence and insights aggregators, cross-media database and buying resources, cloud applications, photo, and design subscriptions). If required, we can back it out of the above budget so it is encompassed in the project fee.

Key Personnel

Our commitment to a "collective best" philosophy means we look across the talent pool to ensure that each client is served by a team whose members are specifically selected for their background and expertise. Our nimble approach to building our teams has enabled us to optimize talent, pricing and overall value for this assignment.

We present a team with the expertise to develop and implement a targeted, effective outreach and education program. Tunheim recommends the following core team based on their experience in public engagement, strategic communication, and stakeholder collaboration to support the success of the LMRWD.



Charlie Vander Aarde, Director of Public Affairs and Change Management Hourly Rate - \$225

Charlie Vander Aarde brings his 16 years of experience in government communications and public policy advocacy, as well as a large network of city officials, legislators, state agency officials, and the Metropolitan Council to help our clients address their short-term and long-term needs.

Charlie recently worked with the City of Forest Lake to explain the City's long-range budget plan and that year's proposed operating and capital budget to residents. He developed resident engagement and outreach tools including messaging, a social media toolkit, video content, and visuals of city resources and assets for a public open house.

Prior to joining Tunheim, Charlie worked for the Association of Metropolitan Municipalities (Metro Cities) where he served as a Government Relations Specialist. He was an effective state lobbyist for eleven legislative sessions,



building coalitions to advance shared agendas, as well as providing counsel to the association's executive director, board of directors, and city governments. He is an effective convener and collaborator with state and regional government partners, community partners, private sector and nonprofit stakeholders, and elected and appointed city officials.

An experienced writer and speaker, Charlie has spoken on a range of policy and budget areas, including community and economic development, state and local government partnerships, housing, and regional governance.

With his deep expertise in government relations and stakeholder engagement, Charlie is well-positioned to support LMRWD. His ability to navigate complex policy landscapes and build coalitions ensures that outreach efforts align with local and state priorities. Charlie's strong relationships with government officials and community leaders will help drive collaboration and foster public buy-in, making him a key asset in advancing education and advocacy around surface water storage.



Ashley Pettingill, Account Supervisor Hourly Rate - \$200

With a focus in public relations and digital content creation, Ashley is always adding her creative and strategic perspective to her work. Ashley brings extensive political field work and research experience to her public affairs and communications work at Tunheim. Her method is strategic and leads with a calm focus and attention to detail.

Ashley is passionate about understanding her clients' needs and helping them communicate their unique stories. As an account supervisor at Tunheim, she has the

opportunity to handle social media strategy, media relations, and public affairs on a variety of accounts including the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, Energy Foundation, the Manova Global Summit, and Minnesota Hospital Association, giving her the opportunity to show her adaptiveness, strong client relations skills, and commitment to client success.

Ashley served as the Account Lead for Environmental Protection Agency managing and executing creative and visual design, communications materials development and outreach strategy for three, multimillion-dollar, community-based projects. This led to a 400% increase in attendance to a recent virtual public meeting from previous meetings they have held. As well as, delivering more coverage than scoped including an indigenous newspaper promoting a public notice, who traditionally only run Band member related news and rarely ever publish or share materials from outside of their community.

In addition, Ashley has developed strategic digital campaigns with our clean energy clients to influence policymakers and the public about clean energy initiatives. From the ground up, she has designed graphics, drafted content, conducted research and targeted key stakeholders across social media, radio, streaming services, and traditional communication outreach. Ashley has also managed weekly newsletters and ICYMI recaps for clean energy partners in the state.

With her proven experience in environmental communications and community engagement, Ashley is well-equipped to support LMRWD. She understands how to tailor messaging to diverse audiences, ensuring that outreach efforts resonate with local residents while reinforcing the efforts around surface water storage. Her ability to craft compelling, research-based communication strategies—paired with her expertise in digital outreach and public engagement—makes her an invaluable asset in driving awareness for the initiative.





Miles Plueger, Associate Hourly Rate - \$150

With prior internship experience in media relations, creative marketing, strategy and insights, research and politics, Miles brings a diverse range of skills to his role at Tunheim. Miles started as a Media Relations intern in February 2023 and was promoted to Associate just several months later. Over two years with Tunheim, he has impacted projects spanning media relations, digital marketing, public affairs and crisis communications. He approaches every project with precision, and his writing is

adaptable to multiple formats and styles.

Miles is driven to produce results for his clients through his writing skills and relationships with reporters. He leads calmly and confidently in moments of crisis and is ardent in telling his clients' stories effectively. Miles has already gained experience in a wide variety of industries through work with numerous clients, including Accra, Minnesota Sports and Events, Dominium, Connexus Energy and Pace Analytical.

With adaptability being one of Miles' strengths, his writing fits a range of styles from creative to business-oriented to technical writing; he has shown his versatility through his work with Accra. He's written thought leadership pieces, content for the company's annual report and monthly newsletter for case managers, as well as numerous client feature stories. Miles is a storyteller, frequently conducting virtual interviews with Accra clients and responsible parties, producing blog articles and optimizing them for the web.

For Pace Analytical, Miles is an avid technical writer on various topics ranging from Legionella to disaster recovery, emergency response and new methods or standards. Miles has written several articles for various trade publications including Disaster Recovery Journal, Pipeline & Gas Journal, Water Conditioning and Purification Magazine, and Facility Executive. He has written copy for Pace's website and developed internal and external key messages, interviewed Pace executives for website content and thought leadership.

Miles' expertise in media relations and strategic writing helps clients enhance engagement with key groups and advocacy efforts. His experience in policy communications and public involvement ensures clear, impactful messaging tailored to diverse audiences.



Qualifications & Experience

General Overview

Founded in 1990, Tunheim is a certified Disadvantaged Business Enterprise (DBE) and small, woman-owned business (WBE, WOSB) focused on the core competencies of developing and leading communications and media strategies, public relations, public affairs and advocacy campaigns, digital content and crisis/change consulting.

A full-service marketing agency, Tunheim uses communications and public relations strategies to help public, private, and nonprofit organizations be understood. Our firm is recognized as one of the most respected strategic communications firms in the U.S. by industry associations and by our many clients, including large to small nonprofit, for-profit, and government organizations. We take on our clients' challenges as our own and customize communications efforts to deliver results.



Tunheim was awarded the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) Administrator's Award for Outstanding Accomplishments by a Woman-Owned Small Business Contractor in 2023.

Tunheim's 34 years of success have focused on delivering meaningful, targeted results to our clients. As an innovative marketing and communications partner, Tunheim brings relevant experience developing and leading contracts for a broad range of exceptional clients.

You are seeking an agency that will partner to make your goals its own, that right-sizes and right-talents your team throughout the project and will help you develop a comprehensive and engaging communications plan that delivers business success. Look no further than the team at Tunheim.

Our full range of services includes:

- Advocacy
- Brand Strategy
- Business Strategy
- Coalition Building
- Content Strategy
- Crisis Communications
- Data, Analytics and Listening
- Design and Creative
- Digital Marketing
- Events and Sponsorships
- Influencer Partnerships
- Integrated Marketing Strategy
- Internal Communications
- Management Consulting
- Media Relations

- Messaging
- Positioning
- Reputation Management
- Research and Trends
- SEO and Paid Advertising
- Social Media
- Stakeholder Engagement
- Website Design & Development

Experience

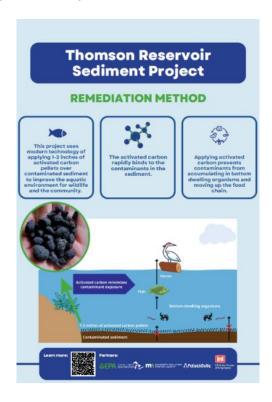
Tunheim's relevant experience includes communication and stakeholder engagement for the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency; The State of Minnesota, including the Minnesota Department of Revenue, Minnesota Department of Health, Minnesota Department of Natural Resources, the Governor's Office and the Metropolitan Council; Capitol Region Watershed District; and direct support for metro counties including Dakota County, Hennepin County, Ramsey County and Washington County. Tunheim has also provided crisis and stakeholder communications counsel to City of Bloomington, City of Brooklyn Center, City of Minneapolis, City of St. Paul, and City of Woodbury, among others.

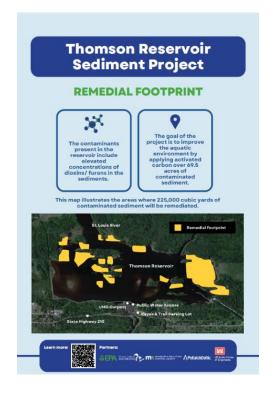
U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)

Tunheim worked with the EPA on a large-scale outreach campaign in Minnesota and its border areas, providing strategic communications support for the Minnesota Red Sites in the St. Louis Area of Concern project. This critical initiative surrounds protecting the Great Lakes, which are home to over 35 million people who rely on the lakes for drinking water, recreation, and commerce.

Tunheim developed and executed outreach strategies, including community engagement and communication plans, asset development and dissemination, mailings, public meeting coordination, and hosting, design and copywriting of in-depth fact sheets and informational packets, social media and newspaper notices, signage, and overall planning and executing each outreach tactic.

Our efforts led to a 400% increase in attendance to a recent virtual public meeting from previous meetings they held. As well as delivering more coverage than scoped including an indigenous newspaper promoting a public notice, which traditionally only runs Band member-related news and rarely ever publish or share materials from outside their community. In 2023, Tunheim was awarded the **EPA Administrator's Award for Outstanding Accomplishments by a Woman-Owned Small Business Contractor** for our work efforts on this contract.







Capitol Region Watershed District

The Capitol Region Watershed District (CRWD) is a local government agency responsible for protecting and managing water resources across 40 square miles, including parts of Falcon Heights, Lauderdale, Maplewood, Roseville, and St. Paul in Ramsey County. Serving a population of approximately 225,000, CRWD oversees key water bodies like the Mississippi River, Como Lake, Crosby Lake, Loeb Lake, and Lake McCarrons. To enhance internal coordination, engage key audiences, and prioritize community outreach efforts, CRWD sought assistance in developing a comprehensive five-year Communications and Engagement Plan.

Tunheim partnered with CRWD through a structured, multi-phase process. We began by conducting an in-depth audit of CRWD's existing communications channels, engagement activities, and programs. This audit pinpointed gaps and opportunities, providing insights into the audiences CRWD serves and informing the creation of targeted engagement initiatives. Next, we led a brainstorming session to craft measurable communication strategies, refine internal coordination, and strengthen cross-divisional collaboration.

In the Plan Development phase, we honed messaging and created a detailed communications and engagement plan. This plan outlined key strategies, a clear timeline, budget recommendations, and staff responsibilities, all aligned with CRWD's mission. Finally, to ensure effective implementation, Tunheim developed an online resource hub, including a concise elevator pitch, a one-page overview, Q&A, key messages, a media list, and a priority community partner list—empowering CRWD with the tools needed to execute the plan successfully.

Tunheim's comprehensive approach helped CRWD align its communications strategies with its goals, ensuring the plan would support its mission for years to come. Given the evolving nature of communications, Tunheim advised that the plan be reviewed and updated every three years to remain adaptable and effective.





Capitol Region Watershed District (CRWD) is committed to improving water quality in Como Lake, a beloved water resource in Saint Paul for over a century.

Despite efforts to address the water quality in the lake over the years, decades of stormwater runoff and pollution have made a new Como Lake plan necessary.

Como Lake Plan

The biggest challenge facing Como Lake today is too much phosphorus, a pollutant carried to the lake through runoff in storm drains. Over time, high levels of phosphorus—three times higher than Minnesota standards—have led to algae blooms that choke the oxygen from the lake and lead to fish kills. While CRWD and its partners have already worked to reduce phosphorus levels by 20% in the past two decades, water quality in the lake remains poor.

The other main concern in Como Lake is an invasive aquatic plant known as curlyleaf pondweed. The plant is dominating Como Lake's ecosystem, making it difficult for native plants to survive. Decaying curlyleaf pondweed adds more phosphorous to the water when it dies off, so management is key to achieving CRWD's water quality goals.

CRWD, with guidance and support from the City of Saint Paul, Ramsey County and the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources (DNR) have outlined the new Como Lake Water Management Plan implementing the industry's best practices, science and technology. The Como Lake plan identifies strategies to address the water quality issues, which includes treatment of the water over the course of several years, beginning in the spring of 2020 with herbicide and alum treatments.



Frequently Asked Questions

What is alum?

Alum (also called aluminum sulfate) is a chemical compound that has historically been used in drinking water treatment and as a scientifically proven lake management tool.

Alum is safe for humans, pets and other aquatic wildlife. It has no known adverse effects.

What is an alum treatment?

An alum treatment consists of applying liquid alum below the surface of the water from a barge. When the alum comes into contact with the water, it turns into a fluffy non-toxic substance, or floc, called aluminum hydroxide. The floc settles to the bottom of the lake, it binds to phosphorus in the water and forms a barrier that prevents it from being consumed by algae.

When will this happen at Como Lake?

In the early spring, after the first thaw, when the lake is not being used as much for recreation.

It takes roughly 4-10 days to complete a whole-lake treatment of alum, depending on weather.

How will lake visitors and users be impacted?

Visitors can expect an immediate change in Como Lake with clearer water and fewer algae blooms.

Visitors will see the lake being treated this spring, and access to the lake for recreation may be restricted at times.

Water quality monitoring will occur throughout the treatment to ensure it is being applied safely and correctly for the best results.

Photo credit: Nine Mile Creek Watershed District





Dakota County Ground Water Collaborative

The Dakota County Ground Water Collaborative wished to reduce water use and was seeking a campaign to more effectively reach and connect with residents to reduce water use for their lawns, engage in water conservation programs overall, and to increase participation in the Landscaping for Clean Water program. Tunheim and Blue Key Media were hired to create the Lawn Watering Wisdom campaign, including compelling, humorous videos, a toolkit and targeted advertising. *This campaign is still in development and will launch in the first quarter of 2025.* There are video and toolkit materials with messaging specific to two audience groups: Young

Homeowners/Families and Retirees/Empty Nesters. Toolkits include a Campaign Overview, Key Messaging, Tools & Resources, a Checklist (EPA's WaterSense Checklist), FAQs, Social Media Graphics and Suggested Posts. Tunheim will manage all campaign advertising and targeting in Q1 2025. View our example here. Please note this video is confidential and not to be shared as it is still under development and will air June 2025.





Hennepin County

In a continuing effort to ensure that Hennepin County was providing best-in class services, Tunheim was enlisted to undertake a review of County communications efforts. The county had navigated significant changes in recent years, much of it impacting the way communications efforts were managed both by Public Affairs and across other County departments. The findings of the review allowed Hennepin County to develop a well-informed plan to close the gap between current communications management expectations and service delivered.

Washington County

In a continuing effort to ensure that Washington County was providing effective communication to both internal and external stakeholders, Tunheim was enlisted to undertake a review of County communications practices to align communications goals and practices with the County's strategic objectives. Tunheim's recommendations served as a roadmap for increasing communications output on behalf of the County in a strategic and coordinated effort in order to increase the understanding of the County's efforts among employees, residents and other key stakeholders. Executing some or all of these recommendations would improve the County's communications results and lead to improved satisfaction with Washington County among both internal and external audiences.

Why Tunheim?

We are eager to explore contracting opportunities in this area for 2025 and beyond. With over three decades of experience in public relations and stakeholder engagement, Tunheim has successfully developed and executed initiatives that drive awareness, education, and behavioral change. Our team's expertise in environmental communications and our ability to craft persuasive narratives and implement results-driven outreach make us the ideal partner to support LMRWD.

We welcome the opportunity to collaborate with partners who share our commitment to impactful, results-driven work and look forward to discussing how our expertise can contribute to this initiative and future projects.





THANK YOU

We're enthusiastic about the opportunity to work with you on this important effort. Please reach out with any questions. We aim to meet and exceed your expectations.

8009 34th Avenue South, Suite 1100, Minneapolis, MN 55425 Isheets@tunheim.com | 952-851-1600



Zan Associates Cost Proposal



Total Expenses

Project Name: LMRWD Public Relations On Call - High Level Cost Estimate
Estimated PoP: TBD
Anticipated Start Date: TBD
Anticipated End Date: TBD
Date of submission: 2025-03-12
Rate Sheet: 2025 Standard
Assumed Inflation: 3,00%

					President	Vice President	Senior Associate 3	Sr. Associate 2	Sr. Associate 1	Associate 2	Associate 1	Sr. Creative 2	Sr. Creative	Creative 2	Creative 1	Admin	Intern	Mktg Coord				
WBS	Tasks	Assumptions	Start Date	End Date	\$ 232.95	\$ 216.30	\$ 201.35	\$ 184.80	\$ 148.40	\$ 115.80	\$ 99.30	\$ 184.80	\$ 148.40	\$ 115.80	\$ 99.30	\$ 80.40	\$ 80.40	\$ 258.15	Hours	Fee	Escalation	Total Labor
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1.2	administration					3.00		3.00											6.00	1,203.30	0.00	
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Task	2: Communications and	Engagement Plan w/Media Strategy			0.00	0.00	4.00	18.00	0.00	23.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	3.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	36.00	84.00	16,436.00		16,436.00
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					-		Senior Associate 1 \$148.40				Intern		\$80.40									
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