



LOWER MINNESOTA RIVER WATERSHED DISTRICT

Executive Summary for Action

Lower Minnesota River Watershed District Board of Managers Meeting
Wednesday, April 16, 2025

Agenda Item

Item 5. E. - Authorize reimbursement of Educator Mini-grant for Pilot Knob STEM Magnet School

Prepared By

Linda Loomis, Administrator

Summary

At the December 11, 2025, Board of Manager meeting, an educator mini-grant was approved for the Pilot Knob STEM Magnet School in Eagan was approved. Educator Michele Link-Valenstein is now requesting reimbursement.

The grant requested money to purchase handheld microscopes for student use. Ms. Link-Valenstein has prepared a report with pictures and provided a receipt for the purchase of the microscopes.

Attachments

- Excerpt from minutes of December 11, 2024, Board of Managers meeting
- Educator Mini-Grant Program Application from Pilot Knob STEM Magnet School
- Pilot Knob STEM Magnet School Reimbursement and Reporting Request Form
- Receipt for Purchase of handheld microscopes dated February 6, 2025
- Pictures of microscopes in use

Recommended Action

Motion to authorize reimbursement of \$380.64 to Pilot Knob STEM Magnet School

Ms. Young noted that the LMRWD has the ability to implement any kind of requirement with a permit like this. She explained that they may need to look through their rules to see what requirements are needed.

President Barisonzi stated he would like direction from Ms. Young on how this work plan can be adjusted to add initial analysis before they ask legal counsel what rules need to be changed.

Manager Kuplic made a motion to approve a permit for LTS MSP Lateral 2 (LMRWD No. 2024-014) with the special stipulation that the contractor contact the LMRWD immediately upon the discovery of disturbed ground water or the release of lubricant fluid. Manager Lammers seconded the motion. Upon a vote being taken the motion was carried unanimously.

7. ACTIONS ITEMS

A. 2025 Legislative Agenda

President Barisonzi introduced this item and shared the request to move this item to the January meeting.

The Board suggested laying this item over to the January 15, 2025 Board of Managers meeting. Hearing no objections, the item was laid over.

B. Education & Outreach

o Approve Educator mini-grants

President Barisonzi introduced this item. He explained that the last time they approved mini-grants, he identified an issue that they were approving of the purchase of things that had been paid for elsewhere. He asked to what degree all the organizations that they invest in are communicating with each other for sharing resources.

Administrator Loomis shared that they do not necessarily know what River Watch is using their funding for. She also noted that once a school has the equipment it can be re-used year after year. She questioned whether it was reasonable to expect schools to borrow equipment from River Watch. She some of the schools have chosen to connect with River Watch in the past to share resources and they the LMRWD will continue to try make the connection.

President Barisonzi stated he is uncomfortable with the mini-grant; however, he will not be voting against it as it is a relatively small amount and he does not want to undermine the CAC process.

Manager Lammers made a motion to approve Educator Mini-Grants as recommended by the Citizen Advisory Committee: Shakopee High School for \$449.95; Chaska High School for \$500; Minnesota Valley Refuge Friends for \$500; and Pilot Knob STEM Magnet School for \$479.84. Manager Kuplic seconded the motion. Upon a vote being taken the motion was carried unanimously.

C. Administrative Services Update

This item was moved to 4. C. on the agenda.

D. Authorize payment to US Army Corps of Engineers for dredging at mouth

President Barisonzi introduced this item.

Administrator Loomis shared that Manager Salvato asked her why they are paying for this and asked if they had paid for other dredging in the past. She said they have never paid for dredging in the past and the explanation is that dredging in the mouth of the river occurs once every 25



Educator Mini-Grant Program Application

Name of School/Organization: **Pilot Knob STEM Magnet School**

First Name: **Michele**

Last Name: **Link-Valenstein**

Email: michele.linkvalenstein@isd197.org

Phone: **651-428-1634**

Describe your current role? **K-4 STEM Teacher and Magnet Facilitator**

Address of School/Organization

Street Address: **1436 Lone Oak Rd**

Address line 2:

City: **Eagan**

State: **MN**

Zip Code: **55121**

What age(s) are the participants?

K–5th grade 6–12th grade 18+ years Senior Estimated number of participants: 384

Describe your proposed activity or project and how it relates to water resources and wildlife habitat education. Include project goals and learning objectives for participants.

I would like to order 16 handheld microscopes to support the Wondering Walk initiative at Pilot Knob this year. The goal behind Wondering Walks is to encourage curiosity, observation, and a sense of wonder about the natural world. As a building, we are working hard to help our students notice and take in the details of the natural world. We want to help them learn how to ask questions and notice the things around them that they might sometimes overlook or ignore. Our hope is that taking students on Wondering Walks will help them develop a deeper connection to the natural world.

Handheld microscopes are an ideal match for Wondering Walks, because they allow students to observe tiny details that are often overlooked. Our students can use them to study the pond water in the woods behind our school and examine the soil more closely.

They can look at plant anatomy more closely and observe bark, sand, and rocks in a deeper way. They can find evidence of animals living in the woods and look at things like footprints more carefully. The use of these microscopes on some of our Wondering Walks will likely lead to deeper questions, stronger observations, and discovery about the natural world.

Ultimately our goal this year is to help students rediscover a sense of wonder about the natural world. Sometimes in the world of STEM, the study of the natural world is lost and we don't want that to be the case for our students. One of our goals this year is to teach our students about the history of the land Pilot Knob sits on (Dakota Land) and to help them envision how to be good stewards of the land for future generations. The first step is to give them an appreciation for what is right in front of their eyes.

When is this activity/project scheduled to take place? **The use of the handheld microscopes will be ongoing.**

Total requested amount (maximum \$500): **\$479.84**

Specify how funds will be allocated (e.g. supplies, materials, and transportation):

This will purchase 16 handheld microscopes for kids.

https://www.amazon.com/dp/B0D56Q3BFN?ref=cm_sw_r_cso_em_apin_dp_JZPB1T1YNB208KAHSQYF_1&ref=cm_sw_r_cso_em_apin_dp_JZPB1T1YNB208KAHSQYF_1&social_share=cm_sw_r_cso_em_apin_dp_JZPB1T1YNB208KAHSQYF_1&starsLeft=1&skipTwisterOG=1&th=1

I understand that if my funding request is approved, I must complete and submit the Program Project Reporting and Reimbursement form to receive payment. Any photos submitted may be used by the LMRWD in future communications.

Signature:



Date: **10/14/2024**

Please submit your application to
info@lowermnriverwd.org.



Educator Mini-Grant Program Reimbursement and Reporting Request Form

Name of School/Organization: **Pilot Knob STEM Magnet School**

First Name: **Michele**

Last Name: **Link-Valenstein**

Email: michele.linkvalenstein@isd197.org

Phone: 651-403-7933

Address of School/Organization

Street Address: **1436 Lone Oak Rd**

City: **Eagan**

State: **MN**

Zip Code: **55121**

When and where did the activity/project take place? **The microscopes were used in STEM class with students in Kindergarten-4th grade in April 2025. They will continue to be used in STEM class.**

Describe how your activity or project engaged participants? **This has been the most fun week! The addition of handheld microscopes to our Wondering Walks proved to be a transformative element in student engagement. This initiative, designed to encourage intentional seeking of awe and wonder in nature, was powerfully amplified by the ability of students to explore the micro-world. The microscopes unlocked hidden details, sparking a level of curiosity that far exceeded our previous experiences. The remarkable excitement witnessed as students examined everything from the inside of a blade of grass to the textures of bark and soil underscores the success of this approach in capturing their interest in the natural world.**

Total number of participants: **381**

List your relevant expenses: **\$380.64**

Refund amount (cannot be more than the original award amount): **\$380.64**

Please provide information for the check recipient:

Pilot Knob STEM Magnet School

1436 Lone Oak Rd

Eagan, MN 55121

Please submit photos of your activity or project in action. Include the photographer's name in the photo file name and email to admin@lowermnriverwd.org.



Final Details for Order #112-6185770-9233866

Order Placed: February 5, 2025
Amazon.com order number: 112-6185770-9233866
Order Total: \$380.64

Business order information
Location: Pilot Knob

Shipped on February 6, 2025	
Items Ordered	Price
16 of: Microscope for Kids - Mini Pocket Handheld Microscope for Toddlers-Educational Science Kit Toys for Christmas Birthday G	\$23.79
ifts Toys for 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 Year Old GirlsPurple	
Sold by: Judiantech (seller profile)	
Condition: New	
Shipping Address: Michele LV PILOT KNOB ELEMENTARY 1436 LONE OAK ROAD EAGAN, MN 55121 United States	Item(s) Subtotal: \$380.64 Shipping & Handling: \$2.99 Free Shipping: -\$2.99 ----- Total before tax: \$380.64 Sales Tax: \$0.00 ----- Total for This Shipment: \$380.64 -----

Payment information	
Payment Method: Visa I Last digits: 9248	Item(s) Subtotal: \$380.64 Shipping & Handling: \$2.99 Promotion applied: -\$2.99 -----
Billing address Thomas Benson 1897 DELAWARE AVE SAINT PAUL, MN 55118-4338 United States	Total before tax: \$380.64 Estimated Tax: \$0.00 ----- Grand Total: \$380.64 -----
Credit Card transactions	Visa ending in 9248: February 6, 2025: \$380.64

To view the status of your order, return to [Order Summary](#) .











