



LOWER MINNESOTA RIVER WATERSHED DISTRICT

Executive Summary for Action

Lower Minnesota River Watershed District Board of Managers Meeting

Wednesday, May 21, 2025

Agenda Item

Item 7. E. – Education & Outreach - Public Relations Firm Subcontract and Public Listening Session

Next Steps

Prepared By

Linda Loomis, Administrator

Summary

The Lower Minnesota River Watershed District (LMRWD) remains committed to raising awareness about the insights gathered during the Public Listening Session held in January. In support of this effort, Young Environmental Consulting Group, on behalf of the LMRWD, issued a Request for Information (RFI) to qualified public relations firms.

Details regarding the scope of work expected from a public relations firm are outlined in the document titled Technical Memorandum – Education and Outreach – Public Relations Firm Subcontract and Public Listening Session Next Steps, dated May 8, 2025.

Young Environmental Consulting Group recommends that the Board of Managers authorize Tunheim to serve as a subcontractor to the LMRWD for this initiative.

Attachments

Technical Memorandum – Education and Outreach – Public Relations Firm Subcontract and Public Listening Session Next Steps, dated May 8, 2025

Recommended Action

Motion to authorize Tunheim to serve as a subcontractor to the LMRWD as proposed and schedule a kick-off meeting for June 2025 to provide direction to the PR subcontractor

Technical Memorandum



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

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

Date: May 8, 2025

Re: Education and Outreach—Public Relations Firm Subcontract and Public Listening Session Next Steps

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Young Environmental is continuing to implement the Board of Managers direction following the January Public Listening Session. The report is currently active on the Lower Minnesota River Watershed District (LMRWD) website, which will be released as an update through a mass email blast and social media post in conjunction with the release of the 2024 Annual Report. The website highlights the findings of the Public Listening Session and stands as an aggregation of the testimony and feedback shared through the event. [The full report can be viewed here.](#)

Another primary action item resulting from the Public Listening Session was the directive to onboard a public relations (PR) firm to build on the momentum of the public meeting and deliver key materials in response to the issues and themes identified by stakeholders. Following a request for information to qualified PR firms, Young Environmental selected Tunheim to serve as a subconsultant to perform this critical work. The subcontract is currently underway with Tunheim, with the goal to kick off the project work in June 2025.

Tunheim will work as an extension of the Young Environmental team, through an agreement made directly with the LMRWD. Suzy Lindberg and Della Schall Young will provide daily oversight, using funds already approved as part of the Education and Outreach 2025 work plan. Tunheim brings unique expertise in public relations, public affairs, digital marketing, and government services. They will bring an objective perspective to the team, allowing us to reframe our approach and strategically align on impactful campaigns around key issues. Their scope of work has been included as Attachment A.

Funds will be applied from the following tasks within the Young Environmental approved work plan:

- **Task 1.4:** Coordinate complementary communications.
- **Task 2.2:** Adaptable Community Outreach and Engagement for High-Profile Issues and Special Resources.
- **Task 2.3:** Maintain Social Media Accounts.

Next Steps

The subcontract process is being finalized with an agreement between Tunheim and the LMRWD. Young Environmental is tracking a project kick-off date for June 2025. Tunheim's work will continue through the summer, driving interest and momentum for public awareness through the fall 2025 Minnesota River Boat Tour.

Schedule to Subcontract PR Consultant and Implement Strategy:

1. **May 2025:** Reviewing scope of work and developing subcontract agreement. Submit selected subcontractor for final Board approval.
2. **June 2025:** Kick off project with a collaborative Immersion and Planning Session, led by Tunheim with the collaboration of Young Environmental. This meeting will include the Board of Managers and Administrator(s) to provide direction and visioning for Tunheim's successful execution.
3. **June-September 2025:** Develop, approve, and publish three campaigns identified in Communications and Engagement Strategy.
4. **September-October 2025:** Close out subcontract, revisit next steps to adaptively use Communications and Engagement Strategy moving forward. Discuss and memorialize lessons learned from strategy implementation and key data from campaigns to inform next steps.

Recommendations

We recommend the Board of Managers authorize Tunheim to serve as a subcontractor to the Lower Minnesota River Watershed District, employing funds through the existing Education and Outreach work plan, for a not-to-exceed cost of \$20,000. Deliverables from Tunheim will include stakeholder feedback review, an immersion and planning session, a customized communications and media strategy, material development for two to three campaigns, and assessment of results.

We request that the Board of Managers participate in the upcoming kick-off meeting to be scheduled for June 2025 and provide direction to the PR subcontractor to yield the best results. The Young Environmental team will circulate potential dates for the meeting following the final agreement.

Attachments

- Attachment 1—Tunheim Scope of Services

To: Suzy Lindberg

Re: Public Relations Support

Date: April 29, 2025

Tunheim will serve as a subconsultant to Young Environmental, operating under the existing approved Education and Outreach work plan for the Lower Minnesota River Watershed District (LMRWD). Our work will support efforts to interpret and respond to stakeholder input gathered during the January 8, 2025 Public Listening Session, with a focus on building awareness, engaging stakeholders, and supporting District communication priorities.

With over 35 years of experience in strategic communications and stakeholder engagement, Tunheim brings a collaborative, insights-driven approach to developing and executing communications strategies that align with public agency goals and community interests.

Our support approach follows these process steps:



IMMERSION

In this phase, we kick off the work and seek to go deep learning about your organization and defining success for our work together.



POSITIONING AND MESSAGING

Tunheim will develop a narrative arc and key messages for priority audiences.



MATERIAL DEVELOPMENT

Tunheim will develop materials to manage your communications.



DELIVER AND ASSESS

Tunheim will deliver the work at your speed. We assess and share results as we go. If something isn't performing, we adjust along the way.

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:

- **Pre-Immersion Preparation: Stakeholder Feedback Review:**

Timing: Week of June 2, 2025

Estimated Team Hours: 10

Before the immersion and onboarding session, our team will conduct a comprehensive review of the stakeholder feedback collected during the January 8, 2025, Public Listening Session. This work is essential to ensure we enter the onboarding process informed by the perspectives of key audiences and aligned with their concerns and aspirations.

As part of this phase, we will:

- Review meeting notes, comments, and input gathered during stakeholder sessions.
- Analyze and synthesize the feedback to identify key themes, recurring concerns, and potential opportunities for alignment or improvement.
- Prepare a summary document that highlights our findings and includes actionable recommendations to inform strategic next steps.

- **Immersion and Planning Session:**

Timing: Week of June 9, 2025

Estimated Team Hours: 5

Our work officially begins with a thoughtful kickoff meeting designed to establish a shared vision, set clear objectives, define roles and responsibilities, and review the project's scope, timeline, and key deliverables.

During this session, we will:

- Define the overall project scope, objectives, and key communication goals.
- Establish success metrics, identify key messages, and confirm target audiences.
- Outline expectations for media engagement, public involvement, and timeline alignment.
- Review any existing assets, tools, or data that can inform our approach and accelerate early progress

- **Positioning, Messaging, and Development of a Customized Communications & Media Strategy**

Timing: Draft plan to be presented week of July 7

Estimated Team Hours: 40

Following the immersion session, we will focus on developing the foundational narrative and communication tools that will guide all public-facing efforts. Our first deliverable is often a draft of the positioning narrative—an articulation of the overarching “story” and context that will drive the message strategy and position the project for success. Tunheim will draft this narrative arc along with recommended key messages and deliver it for your review and input. We include up to two rounds of edits to refine and finalize the content.

Building on this narrative foundation, our team will develop a customized Communications & Media Strategy that outlines a clear, structured approach to engagement. This strategy will:

- 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.
- Define outreach protocols for policy updates, strategic planning, and advocacy messaging.
- Provide a framework for ongoing media engagement and crisis communication, if needed.
- Includes up to three rounds of review, edits, and additions.

- **Material Development, Social Media & Public Engagement Support**

Timing: July – October 2025

With the communications strategy in place, our next phase focuses on the development and execution of high-impact public engagement campaigns. These efforts are designed to translate strategy into action by equipping your team with clear, compelling materials and an organized plan for engagement.

This work will include:

- Creation of tailored content for social media and online engagement.
- Development of visual assets such as graphics and infographics that support core messages
- Coordination with relevant stakeholders to amplify messaging and drive engagement

Each campaign will be scoped and priced based on specific deliverables, level of coordination required, and the timeline for execution. Based on our work with other watershed districts, including seasonal campaigns, we have found that costs typically range between \$2,500 and \$5,000 per campaign.

- **Deliver and Assess**

With this approach, we will ensure the campaign resonates with key audiences. Tunheim will plan, schedule, and monitor over a defined period (e.g., a one-month campaign). We continuously assess performance, share insights, and refine our approach as needed to maximize impact.

Proposed Budget

Task	Timing	Estimated Cost
Pre-Immersion Preparation: Stakeholder Feedback Review	Week of June 2, 2025	\$2,150
Immersion and Planning Session	Week of June 9, 2025	\$1,075
Positioning, Messaging, and Development of a Customized Communications & Media Strategy	Plan to be presented the week of July 7	\$8,500
Material Development and Social Media & Public Engagement Support	July - October	\$2,500 – \$5,000 per campaign
Deliver & Assess		
Total before fees		\$16,725 - \$26,725



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.

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.

Tunheim seeks to align its work plan and efforts with what is valuable to your organization. If anything on this work plan is handled internally, we can refine it to your desires.