

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 resources	Holly Bushman Lower Minnesota River East Watershed Partnership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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 		Continue to partner on implementation of Comprehensive Watershed Management Plan while integrating programs for resources within the WMP and Water Resources Restoration Fund, which provides funding to partners completing projects with similar goals.
State policy to promote conservation practices	Holly Bushman Lower Minnesota River East Watershed Partnership	Policy Gap		Explore additional partnerships to promote conservation practices and grant opportunities upstream.

☒ Champion

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Request	Testimony	Alignment with Existing Efforts or Policy Gap	Priority	Policy Clarifications or Recommended Changes
State policy to promote long-term funding	Holly Bushman Lower Minnesota River East Watershed Partnership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Potential Policy Gap LMRWD Water Resources Restoration Fund 		Explore legislative agenda to build a coalition of funding in addition to existing LMRWD levy and Water Resources Restoration Fund for upstream projects.
State policy to allow long-term staffing commitments	Holly Bushman Lower Minnesota River East Watershed Partnership	Policy Gap		Explore opportunities to share staffing resources.
State policy for local government units' requirement to have certain goals	Holly Bushman Lower Minnesota River East Watershed Partnership	Policy Gap		The LMRWD WMP includes nine goals and strategies. The Lower Minnesota River East Comprehensive Management Plan and One Watershed, One Plan process requires the inclusion of targeting measurable goals.
State and local policy to address near channel sediment sources (ravines, bluffs, and streambanks)	Norm Senjem, Lake Pepin Legacy Alliance	Capital Improvement Projects (Work plans include: [1] Gully Prioritization and Restoration and [2] Spring Creek Restoration)		Explore continued opportunities for CIPs related to sediment sources. Advance additional public education related to the importance of sediment source identification.

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Request	Testimony	Alignment with Existing Efforts or Policy Gap	Priority	Policy Clarifications or Recommended Changes
State policy to support wetland restorations and cover crop establishment via incentives	Norm Senjem, Lake Pepin Legacy Alliance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Potential Policy Gap • LMRWD WMP Strategy 2.2.3 Cost Share Incentive Program • Capital Improvement Projects (Work plans include: Fen Management Plans) 		The cost share strategy provides the technical and financial assistance to landowners to implement projects with a fen or wetland restoration component Additional policies or strategies may be explored.
State legislation to fund water quality and storage at \$50 million	Scott Sparlin, Minnesota River Congress	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • LMRWD WMP Policy 6.1 Maintain Water Storage Areas and the Minnesota River Floodway • Project partnership with the US Army Corps of Engineers 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assess overlap with ongoing water storage efforts. • Consider letter of support for additional funding for water storage projects.
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).		This is not currently in the LMRWD's plans. Continue to find other ways to partner.

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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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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 		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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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 or policy in WMP update addressing upstream projects.

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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)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Water Resources Restoration Fund WMP Strategy 4.2.3 Provide Educational Opportunities 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> LMRWD WMP Policy 6.1 Maintain Water Storage Areas and the 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Explore as Capital Improvement Project for future Watershed Management Plan. Assess overlap with ongoing water storage

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outlet alteration to increase storage		Minnesota River Floodway		efforts. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Explore potential partnership or educational opportunity with Shakopee Mdewakanton Sioux Community.
Local policy to be a voice in review process for upstream projects	Lee Peterson, Citizen Advisory Committee member	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 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 		Assess LMRWD role in upstream strategy and potential to change existing role or policy in WMP update addressing upstream projects.
Local policy to advocate for the LMRWD's interests on upstream projects	Len Kramer, retired water resources engineer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Potential Policy Gap WMP Strategy 1.1.1 Work cooperatively with local, state, and federal government; other agencies, and non-government organizations on issues 		Consider letter of support for reviewing upstream projects or policy in WMP update addressing upstream projects.

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Local policy to utilize your authority to protect resources from upstream damages	Ted Suss, Friends of the Minnesota Valley	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Potential Policy Gap • WMP Strategy 1.1.1 Work cooperatively with local, state, and federal government; other agencies, and non-government organizations on issues 		Assess LMRWD role in upstream strategy and potential to change existing role or policy in WMP update addressing upstream projects.
Local policy to speak up on upstream projects requiring environmental review	Ted Suss, Friends of the Minnesota Valley	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Potential Policy Gap • WMP Strategy 1.1.1 Work cooperatively with local, state, and federal government; other agencies, and non-government organizations on issues 		Assess LMRWD role in upstream strategy and potential to change existing role or policy in WMP update addressing upstream projects.
State policy changes to make it easier to work with altered Minnesota Department of	Mike Schultz, LeSueur County	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Potential Policy Gap • LMRWD WMP Policy 6.1 Maintain Water Storage Areas and the 		Explore a Citizen Advisory Committee activity to research change needed.

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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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Water Resources Restoration Fund Municipal 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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 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 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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 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.

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		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Project partnership with the US Army Corps of Engineers 		
Continue local policy to cooperate on water quality improvement projects	Kirby Templin, City of Shakopee	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 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 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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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 National Wildlife Refuge	LMRWD Education and Outreach Program		Continue policy to fund Education and Outreach Program.

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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.