



LOWER MINNESOTA RIVER WATERSHED DISTRICT

Executive Summary for Action

Lower Minnesota River Watershed District Board of Managers Meeting

Wednesday, February 21, 2024

Agenda Item

Item 9. D. - MPCA Lower Minnesota River Watershed Surface Water Monitoring Request Guidance

Prepared By

Linda Loomis, Administrator

Summary

On October 31, 2023, the MPCA held a kick-off meeting for Cycle 2 of the Lower Minnesota River Monitoring and WRAPS Update. The MPCA explained that they would be looking for partners to identify monitoring locations and to conduct the actual monitoring. President Barisonzi expressed interest in becoming a monitoring partner after the October meeting.

A second meeting was held January 31, 2024, to explain the monitoring process and grant availability for partners. Young Environmental Consulting Group attended the January meeting on behalf of the LMRWD and has developed recommendations. The MPCA made it clear that this round of assessment will not consider monitoring of the Minnesota River. The current recommendation from Young Environmental will develop and analysis of possible monitoring locations. Once an analysis has been done, the Board can decide if it wants to actually conduct the monitoring.

Attachments

Technical Memorandum – Minnesota Pollution Control Agency Meeting and Lower Minnesota Watershed Surface Water Monitoring Requests dated February 14, 2024

Recommended Action

Motion to complete an assessment of Cycle 1 intensive watershed monitoring report (2013) compare to the proposed monitoring sites for Cycle 2 (2025) as they relate to the LMRWD and identify monitoring gaps that should be addressed according to LMRWD goals (as identified in the LMRWD Comprehensive Watershed Management Plan)

Technical Memorandum



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

From: Jess Norby, Senior Water Resources Scientist
Della Schall Young, CPESC, PMP, CTF, Principal Scientist

Date: February 14, 2024

Re: Minnesota Pollution Control Agency Meeting and Lower Minnesota Watershed
Surface Water Monitoring Requests

The Minnesota Pollution Control Agency (MPCA) hosted a meeting on January 31, 2024, to prepare for the next round of Intensive Watershed Monitoring (IWM) for the Lower Minnesota River Watershed. The meeting outlined the monitoring plan for Cycle 2 of statewide watershed monitoring for the larger Lower Minnesota River Watershed, which spans from Ottawa, MN, (south of Le Sueur) to Mendota Heights, MN, where LMRWD has been identified as a local partner. The MPCA has selected preliminary surface water monitoring site locations (streams and lakes) that fit location criteria and will be used to inform the Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) studies and Watershed Restoration and Protection Strategy (WRAPS) updates. Local partners can review the preliminary sampling locations and propose additional sampling locations that fit local priorities before April 1, 2024. Monitoring in the watershed will start in spring of 2025 and continue through approximately October 2026.

BACKGROUND

The MPCA takes a watershed approach to statewide monitoring with the primary goal of evaluating the condition of surface water to inform management decisions. The information is used to track water quality status and trends, identify stressors associated with impairments, determine effectiveness of monitoring, inform on WRAPS strategies, and address permitting needs. The watershed approach evaluates all of Minnesota's 80 major watersheds over a 10-year cycle. Cycle 1 of Intensive Watershed Monitoring was completed for the Lower Minnesota River in 2013. The full Cycle 1 report (published in 2017) is available on the [MPCA website](#).

For Cycle 2, the goal is to measure progress and fill in monitoring data gaps to inform WRAPS and local planning efforts. The MPCA is reducing biological and chemistry monitoring points from Cycle 1 based on sites that did not work well, utilizing data from other existing monitoring efforts, and choosing fewer headwater sites where biology isn't reflective of the overall watershed. Since the number of monitoring sites are being reduced, the MPCA is asking for local partners to submit requests for monitoring sites to inform management strategies.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on what was discussed in the Surface Water Monitoring Request meeting, Young Environmental staff recommend that the LMRWD complete an assessment of the Cycle 1 intensive watershed monitoring report (2013), compare the proposed monitoring sites for Cycle 2 (2025) as they relate to LMRWD, and identify monitoring gaps that should be addressed according to District goals.