



LOWER MINNESOTA RIVER WATERSHED DISTRICT

Executive Summary for Action

Lower Minnesota River Watershed District Board of Managers Meeting

Wednesday, March 20, 2024

Agenda Item

Item 8. B. – 2024 Legislative Activities Update

Prepared By

Linda Loomis, Administrator

Summary

Lisa Frenette has been following the items identified on the LMRWD Board of Managers legislative priorities list.

- **Voluntary Certification with Limited Liability for Commercial Winter Maintenance Applicators and other legislation to reduce salt entering the natural environment:**

Bills have been introduced to study the amount of salt purchased by MnDOT, HF 4624 (Hansen) -passed out of Environments Finance and Policy Committee and sent on to Transportation; Its companion in the Senate, SF 4850 (Morrison) – no hearing has been scheduled.

Liability for Commercial Salt Applicators – HF 3565 (Hollins) and its companion SF 3954 (Putnam). On March 6, 2024, I received an update on this legislation at the MN Association of Watershed District Administrators meeting. The legislation as written will not pass either body. A coalition of organizations; MN Watersheds, MN Center for Environmental Advocacy, MN Association for Justice, Stop Over Salting and Freshwater, have come together and agreed in principle to support any legislation the would include language defining a standard for negligence, require applicators attend training, that would result in certification by the MPCA and would require recertification no longer that every five years. At this stage in the legislative session, new bills cannot be introduced, but legislation already introduced can be modified. The Coalition was working to have the bill authors modify the legislation. This may end up waiting until 2025.
- **Invasive Carp Species:**

HF 3377 (Hansen) requests \$1.21 million in funding from the ENR (Environmental and Natural Resources) Trust Fund; House file passed; SF 3507 (Hawj) – waiting for action.
- **Support funding for statewide River Watch Programs:**

HF 2796 (Brand) – No hearing has been scheduled; SF 3946 (Kunesh) – bill hearing scheduled for Tuesday March 19, 2024. The LMRWD sent a letter to the author, committee Chair and Committee members (copy attached). The bill will most likely be laid over for inclusion in the Legacy Bill.
- **Support Native Fish Protection:**

Legislation has been introduced which would define native fish; it includes provisions to deny licenses for native fish, protect native fish from being harvested in a natural environment but would allow aquaculture farming. Two bills have been introduced in each body and are similar if not identical. HF 4015 (Jordan) -second reading on floor; Its companion SF4898 (Hoffman) – passed from Environments Finance and Policy committee to State and Local Government Committee.

HF 4420 (Hansen) – Referred to House Environment Finance and Policy Committee for possible inclusion in Omnibus bill; Its companion SF4142 (Hawj) – Passed out of Environment Finance and Policy committee to State and Local Government.

- **Support Water Storage Initiatives:**

No language has been discussed this year to include support for MN River hydrology studies that identify and prioritize areas that provide the most beneficial and cost-effective implementation for storage; BWSR received \$17 million in 2023 to work in collaboration with constituencies to implement storage upstream.

- **Support legislative requests of partners of the LMRWD:**

Capital Investment committees are going through the motions hearing from all the agencies on their requests. No single-issue items have been moved for possible inclusion in the bills.

Carver Levee Improvement Project

HF 3727 (Harder); Its companion SF 3897 (Gruenhagen) - referred to the committee on Capital Investment in both bodies; no hearings scheduled.

Shakopee River Bank Stabilization

HF 243 (Tabke); Its companion SF 38 (Pratt) - referred to the committee on Capital Investment in both bodies; no hearings scheduled.

Merriam Junction Regional Trail

HF 3936 (Tabke); Its companion SF 3628 (Pratt)- referred to the committee on Capital Investment in both bodies; no hearings scheduled.

- **Lower Minnesota River Landfill Remediation Projects**

There has been no discussion of landfill remediation. Language is moving forward to ensure that money can't be taken out of the Closed Landfill Program to offset deficiencies in the state budget.

There is a BWSR Technical bill modifying watershed and soil and water conservation district provisiond – HF 3550 (Hansen) – referred back to Environment Finance and Policy Committee and its companion SF 3559 (Hawj) which is on the Senate floor. MN Watersheds recommended that watershed districts should have legal counsels look at these bills to see what impacts its enactment will have.

Attachments

River Watch Funding Letter of Support

Recommended Action

No action recommended



LOWER MINNESOTA RIVER
WATERSHED DISTRICT

Carver

Lauren Salvato
Secretary

Dakota

Theresa Kuplic
Vice President

Hennepin

Joseph Barisonzi
President

Laura Amundson
Treasurer

Scott

Apollo Lammers

March 17, 2024

Chair Hawj, Senator Kunesh, and Committee Members:

The Lower Minnesota River Watershed district writes this letter in support of the River Watch program (SF 3946) for the Minnesota River.

The Lower Minnesota has a valuable partnership with the Friends of the Minnesota Valley (FMV) in promoting water quality. This funding will allow the FMV to continue and expand the existing water quality and watershed monitoring river watch activities in schools in the Minnesota River Valley.

This River Watch works directly with teachers and students in the 13 major watersheds that comprise the Minnesota River basin to work with high school science classes to collect water quality data across the Minnesota River Basin. The data collected by the students is submitted to the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency. The program not only gives these students the opportunity to get outside and monitor the environment but it offers valuable information to the MPCA by allowing them to monitor the health of less studied waterways. It also has potential to introduce students to careers in engineering and science.

This particular River Watch program has four goals:

- **Knowledge:** Develop an understanding of the factors affecting water quality, in general, and the Minnesota River Basin, in particular.
- **Practice:** Collect water quality data at field testing sites to assist the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency in monitoring the health of understudied waterways in the Minnesota River Basin.
- **Investigation:** Reflect on what the data can tell us about the overall health/quality of the waterway, identifying issues facing the water; as well as solutions to reduce pollutants.
- **Stewardship/Community:** Foster a sense of responsibility towards improving the health of the local water resources we all rely on for our well-being and survival.

On behalf of the Lower Minnesota River Watershed District, we appreciate this hearing and your support.

Linda Loomis
Administrator
Lower Minnesota River Watershed District

Linda Loomis, Administrator
Home/Office: (763) 545-4659
Cell: (763) 568-9522

112 East 5th Street
Suite 102
Chaska, MN 55318

E-mail:
admin@lowermnrivewd.org