

**BOARD OF WATER AND SOIL RESOURCES
520 LAFAYETTE ROAD NORTH
ST. PAUL, MN 55155
WEDNESDAY, APRIL 22, 2026**

AGENDA

9:00 AM CALL MEETING TO ORDER

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

ADOPTION OF AGENDA

MINUTES OF MARCH 25, 2026 BOARD MEETING

PUBLIC ACCESS FORUM (10-minute agenda time, two-minute limit/person)

CONFLICT OF INTEREST DECLARATION

A conflict of interest, whether actual, potential, or perceived, occurs when someone in a position of trust has competing professional or personal interests, and these competing interests make it difficult to fulfill professional duties impartially. At this time, members are requested to declare conflicts of interest they may have regarding today's business. Any member who declares an actual conflict of interest must not vote on that agenda item. All actual, potential, and perceived conflicts of interest will be announced to the board by members or staff before any vote.

REPORTS

- Chair & Administrative Advisory Committee – Todd Holman
- Executive Director – John Jaschke
- Audit & Oversight Committee – Joe Collins
- Dispute Resolution and Compliance Report – Travis Germundson/Kevin Wilson
- Grants Program & Policy Committee – Mark Zabel
- RIM Reserve Committee – Jayne Hager Dee
- Water Management & Strategic Planning Committee – Joe Collins
- Wetland Conservation Committee – Jill Crafton
- Buffers, Soils & Drainage Committee – LeRoy Ose
- Drainage Work Group – Neil Peterson/Tom Gile

AGENCY REPORTS

- Minnesota Department of Agriculture – Thom Petersen
- Minnesota Department of Health – Steve Robertson
- Minnesota Department of Natural Resources – Jason Garms
- Minnesota Extension – Joel Larson
- Minnesota Pollution Control Agency – Katrina Kessler

ADVISORY COMMENTS

- Association of Minnesota Counties – Brian Martinson
- Minnesota Association of Conservation District Employees – Mike Schultz
- Minnesota Association of Soil & Water Conservation Districts – LeAnn Buck
- Minnesota Association of Townships – Eunice Biel
- Minnesota Watersheds – Jan Voit
- Natural Resources Conservation Service – Troy Daniell

COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATIONS

Grants Program and Policy Committee

1. Managing Invasives for a Resilient Landscape FY27 program authorization – Erin Loeffler – ***DECISION ITEM***

Central Region Committee

1. Vadnais Lake Area Watershed Management Plan – Anne Sawyer – ***DECISION ITEM***
2. Vermillion River Watershed Management Plan – Anne Sawyer – ***DECISION ITEM***
3. Eagan-Inver Grove Watershed Management Plan – Anne Sawyer – ***DECISION ITEM***

Southern Region Committee

1. Minnesota River Mankato Comprehensive Watershed Management Plan – Shane Bugeja – ***DECISION ITEM***
2. Yellow Medicine River Comprehensive Watershed Management Plan Extension – Luke Olson – ***DECISION ITEM***

NEW BUSINESS

1. BWSR and MOSH Soil Health Updates – Jared House and Marcelle Lewandowski (U of M) – ***INFORMATION ITEM***

UPCOMING MEETINGS

- Dispute Resolution Committee Hearing is scheduled for April 23rd at 10:00 a.m. in St. Paul.
- Dispute Resolution Committee Hearing is scheduled for May 8th at 10:00 a.m. in St. Paul.
- BWSR Board meeting is scheduled for May 27, 2026 at 9:00 a.m. in St. Paul and by MS Teams.

ADJOURN

Benton and Morrison SWCDs, USFWS partnership drives wetland restorations



From left: Morrison SWCD technician Nathan Sanoski and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service private lands biologist John Riens discussed the project overview and scope of work for a wetland restoration project with a Benton County landowner. **Photo Credits:** Grayson Smith, USFWS



YOUR Clean Water
Fund AT WORK

Wetland restoration work in Morrison and Benton counties was funded in part by the Clean Water Fund.

In central Minnesota, a partnership among the Morrison Soil & Water Conservation District (SWCD), Benton SWCD and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) is quietly changing how wetland restorations are completed. Landowner interest is increasing as a result.

“We’ve never advertised this wetland restoration effort,” said Nathan Sanoski, Morrison SWCD technician. “Once we started going, it was all word of mouth. Landowners started talking, neighbors saw what was getting done, which led to new landowners calling or stopping by the office to see if anything could be done on their property.”

That growing landowner demand has helped expand the partnership and accelerate the work among the Morrison SWCD, Benton SWCD and USFWS’ Partners for Fish and Wildlife Program, supported in part by funding from the Minnesota Board of Water and Soil Resources (BWSR).

What began as a local collaboration has grown into a regional model that has restored more than 200 wetlands across central Minnesota, including more than 580 acres in Benton and Morrison counties in recent years. Additional work is underway in surrounding counties.

The partnership took shape in 2017, when Sanoski and USFWS





Left: USFWS private lands biologist John Riens (left) and Morrison SWCD technician Nathan Sanoski inspected a wetland restoration project in Benton County that was completed in 2025. **Middle:** Riens (right) installed polyvinyl sheet piling for the primary spillway on a wetland restoration project in Benton County with a local contractor. **Right:** Riens (standing) discussed the hybrid cattail scraping for a wetland restoration project in Benton County with a local contractor.

private lands biologist John Riens began working together to find a faster, less complicated way to complete wetland restorations.

Projects range from restoring wetlands at former beaver dam sites to restoring wetland basins to bring back natural water storage in areas no longer actively farmed but once drained, and improving sites affected by past drainage, including ditching.

“It doesn’t take an elaborate, engineered plan to get these done, and the building material is usually always on site,” Sanoski said. “So we can move them relatively quick that way ... get them done within the year.”

Sanoski is often the first point of contact. His conversations with landowners who have questions about drainage, ponds or permits might lead to discussions about wetland restoration. Riens leads the wetlands design and planning process.

Together, they visit potential restoration sites and walk through options with landowners, develop plans and cost estimates, handle permitting

requirements, coordinate bids with local contractors and oversee construction.

“Nathan and I do a great deal of work together and keep the bureaucracy behind the scenes,” Riens said. “We take on different tasks so that we can do more, supporting landowners at every stage. ... When we present this opportunity to participate it’s an easy yes.”

As projects began to take shape, interest quickly spread from neighbor to neighbor.

“This is the first time I’ve ever seen a true snowball effect happening with conservation,” Riens said.

“We saw a pattern in large operators being pressured by their local neighbors to also do these restorations. Now we have those same operators calling us,” Riens said.

Sanoski and Riens are currently working with about two dozen Morrison County landowners on about 45 projects to restore nearly 130 acres. Interest continues to grow, with a waiting list of more than 40 landowners, representing well over 100 additional potential wetland restorations.

Riens said Benton County saw similar levels of interest and restoration, where Sanoski helped build the foundation for this approach before moving to Morrison SWCD in April 2025.

While some landowners are initially drawn to the wildlife habitat benefits, the restorations also help to reduce downstream flooding and increase water storage.

“We’re getting more water back on the landscape, more storage, more water retention to help with drainage systems, better water quality and groundwater recharge,” Sanoski said.

In Benton County, wetland restoration projects led in part by Benton SWCD over a three-year period have added more than 144 million gallons of water storage back to the landscape, helping to slow runoff and reconnect natural hydrology.

In some cases, wetland restoration work can also enhance agricultural productivity.

“Some of these producers are actually taking that soil, we call it ‘black gold,’ and applying it back onto certain areas of their

fields to help increase nutrients, microbial activity and organic matter for their crop production,” Sanoski said.

Most project funding goes directly into construction. Local contractors often complete that work, which keeps conservation dollars in the community.

Behind each project is a coordinated effort to bring together multiple funding sources.

Support from BWSR, including Clean Water Funds, Conservation Delivery grants, Conservation Contracts Program grants and emerging peatland initiatives, plays a key role. Additional funding comes from the USFWS’ Partners for Fish and Wildlife Program, the USDA’s Natural Resources Conservation Service, The Nature Conservancy and private partners.

Project costs can range from \$500 to \$7,000 per acre, depending on the site. Funding sources vary by project, but partners work together to combine available resources, often covering up to 75% of project costs. The 25% landowner portion is not entirely an out-of-

pocket expense and can include in-kind services they provide, along with certain materials for the project.

“This is all a cohesive effort,” Reins said.

“We’re looking at the landowner’s best interest and goals,” Sanoski said. “We’re just a piece of the puzzle to help make that a reality. In a lot of cases, it

might be the landowner’s first time working with the district. After building that relationship and trust with these landowners, often time leads to the landowner looking into other conservation practices, program opportunities and working with other partners to see what else can be done on the property to achieve their goals and resource concerns.”

That approach carries through every step of the process.

“When we go talk to a landowner, I’m John and he is Nathan, I’m not Fish and Wildlife, and he’s not Soil and Water,” Riens said. “We’re just people trying to do things together. It’s the way this works.”

Additional projects using

this partnership model are underway in Todd, Mille Lacs, Kanabec, Sherburne, Chisago and Pine counties, with similar approaches being explored in other parts of the state representing hundreds of acres to be completed this year.

BWSR staff members write and produce Snapshots, a monthly newsletter highlighting the work of the agency and its partners.

Brainerd, Crow Wing SWCD's gully fix stanches erosion, benefits river



Left: Brainerd Public Works Director Mike Habighorst, left, and BWSR Board Conservationist Darren Mayers, who is now BWSR's easement programs and forestry coordinator, explored a rock-armored plunge pool on Oct. 23, 2025, in Brainerd. The pool filters stormwater runoff bound for Little Buffalo Creek. **Middle:** From left: Habighorst, Mayers, Crow Wing SWCD Manager Melissa Barrick and Brainerd City Engineer Jessie Dehn paused at one of 22 manholes, which were installed at every bend of a 1,300-foot-long pipe that runs the length of the gully. **Right:** Erosion control logs help to stabilize the gully, which developed in as the result of channelized flow created by a culvert installed under a road in the 1980s. **Photo Credits:** Ann Wessel, BWSR

BRAINERD — A Clean Water Fund-supported gully stabilization completed last summer in the city of Brainerd tamed the runoff that sent pollutants and fine sands into the Mississippi River, and curbed the erosion eating away at 13 properties perched on either side.

HR Green engineers estimated the gully had deposited more than 8,700 tons — nearly 700 dump truck loads — of sediment into Little Buffalo Creek since the Buffalo Hills neighborhood was developed in the 1980s.

Runoff enters the creek about 500 feet upstream from its confluence with the Mississippi River. That stretch of river, from the Pine River to the Crow Wing River, is impaired for total suspended solids. Sediment can carry pollutants, and can contribute to turbidity, which can hurt fish habitat. Much of the

upper watershed remains undeveloped. But the channelized flow created by a culvert installed under a road in the 1980s destabilized the sensitive soils and started the gully formation. Over time, those flows enlarged the gully and continued to send sediment downstream.

A \$975,000 Clean Water Fund grant the Minnesota Board of Water and Soil Resources (BWSR) awarded to the Crow Wing Soil & Water Conservation District (SWCD) in 2023 supported the work, which was managed by the city of Brainerd. The city's 25% match drew from its stormwater utility fund.

The \$1.2 million project replaced the oversized stormwater culvert, and installed 1,300 linear feet of pipe within the gully to handle the stormwater runoff. Following the gully's winding



YOUR Clean Water
Fund AT WORK

A \$975,000 Clean Water Fund grant BWSR awarded to the Crow Wing SWCD in 2023 supported the gully stabilization, which was managed by the city of Brainerd.

course required installing manholes at every bend — 22 of them in all.

To stabilize the 1.4-acre gully, contractors reshaped the slopes, installed erosion control logs to slow rainfall runoff, planted native shrubs at the base of the slopes, installed erosion control fabric and seeded deep-rooted native plants within the channel. A rock-armored plunge pool filters water from the pipe before it enters the creek.

This spring, plans were underway to install additional rock armoring as a reinforcement around the plunge pool.

“If you would look at the overall watershed, you would say, ‘Oh, this looks pretty good. They have trees. They have some wetlands,” said Melissa Barrick, Crow Wing SWCD manager. “But slope matters and the soils matter, too. Even though this area was wooded, the amount of (stormwater entering the ravine) plus the slopes and the sand created a bigger problem.”

Erosion made the site a priority for both the SWCD and the city. Because each sloughing exposed more soil, each subsequent sloughing led to increasingly large volumes of erosion and increasingly steep banks.

The site was a top contributor within the subwatershed that was sending the most sediment into this river reach. The project contributed to the daily 25% sediment reduction necessary to meet clean water standards.

“It was a big priority for the project to be able to stop that erosion and keep not only the stormwater system



From left: Dehn, Barrick and Mayers walked through the Brainerd gully that was repaired with support from a BWSR Clean Water Fund grant. Engineers estimated the gully had deposited more than 8,700 tons of sediment into Little Buffalo Creek, a Mississippi River tributary, since it formed in the 1980s as the result of a channelized flow from a culvert. The gully also had eroded the properties on either side.

clean but keep the sediment from continuing to wash into Little Buffalo Creek and then farther down into the Mississippi River,” said Brainerd City Engineer Jessie Dehn, who worked with HR Green on the project design and with SEH on the inspection.

Tom’s Backhoe Service of Brainerd was the contractor.

“We knew that we had to do something to not only channel that water differently but help protect those slopes to avoid losing people’s property,” Dehn said. “We were losing several feet every time those (slopes) would give way.”

The property owners voluntarily granted easements to allow construction and maintenance access. Marc Marshall was among those property owners. When he moved in about eight years ago, his backyard fence was about 2 ½ feet from the edge of the gully.

“There (were) just trees everywhere, downed trees in the gully, and during rain events there wasn’t anything on the bottom



other than a stream of water ... which would take sediment with it. You could see the sides cave down and replace what was taken away,” Marshall said.

“It’s just good to know that a good resolution for everybody was reached. The scope of the project shifted here and there, but overall, I think everybody is happy that it was completed and looks nice and was functional,” Marshall said. “I wish it was a little bit farther from our back gate, but it’s definitely solid.”

Steep banks and sandy soils restricted options and made the site difficult to access.

In 2021, the city hired HR Green to complete a feasibility study, lead stakeholder workshops, and complete survey and design work. That followed HR Green’s citywide stormwater retrofit analysis, funded by the city, the Mississippi Headwaters Board and the

North Central Minnesota Joint Powers Board.

The study considered several stabilization and treatment options. But the topography, soils and proximity to houses led to the conclusion that piping the relatively clean water from the upper watershed down to the river and stabilizing the ravine was the most effective solution.

In late October 2025, Barrick and Dehn toured the site with Brainerd Public Works Director Mike Habighorst and BWSR Board Conservationist Darren Mayers.

Plants flourished. A line of live stakes ran along the base of the slopes. Wooden stakes marked the erosion control logs. The scene was far different from pre-construction photos depicting a tangle of exposed tree roots, downed trees, bare soil and severely undercut banks. Barrick compared the current, more gently sloped site to a snowboarders’ half-pipe.

“Before, you couldn’t walk up the gully because it was so steep and there was so much erosion. It was very difficult terrain,” Barrick said. “(Now), it’s working. The water is able to infiltrate through the system. And it has eliminated the erosion along those (properties).”

The project withstood its first test while construction was still underway. Dehn said the site held up to a heavy rain after the pipe was installed but before the bank stabilization.

The city will handle necessary maintenance, including the occasional clean-out of the plunge pool.

BWSR staff members write and produce Snapshots, a monthly newsletter highlighting the work of the agency and its partners.

Revamped grant program aims to weed out invasive species



Non-native invasive plants commonly found in Minnesota include (clockwise from top left) black swallow-wort, poison hemlock, common tansy, purple loosestrife, narrowleaf bittercress and cutleaf teasel. **Photo Credits:** Minnesota Department of Agriculture

A revamped program administered by the Minnesota Board of Water and Soil Resources (BWSR) will provide local governments with more flexible options for managing invasive species.

The Managing Invasives for a Resilient Landscape (MIRL) program will support restoration of native plant communities in areas of Minnesota impacted by invasive or noxious weeds. The program replaces BWSR's Cooperative Weed Management Program, which shared similar goals focused on financially supporting Cooperative Weed Management Areas (CWMAs). Present in 43 of Minnesota's 87 counties, CWMAs are local organizations established to share invasive species management resources to achieve widespread prevention and control.

The MIRL program aims to be less restrictive, expanding eligibility beyond

CWMAs and increasing funding amounts for individual grants.

"Managing invasive species helps maintain the integrity of Minnesota's natural areas and conservation lands," said BWSR Executive Director John Jaschke. "This revamped effort will help us target areas of the state where management is most needed."

A request for proposals for the MIRL program opened on April 23 and will close on June 30. Eligible applicants include soil and water conservation districts, watershed districts, watershed management organizations, cities, counties, townships, joint powers organizations, nonprofit organizations, Tribal Governments and Tribal Consortia representing Tribal Governments. Eligible organizations can apply for a minimum of \$15,000 and a maximum of \$30,000 per grant.

Grants under the MIRL program can be used for a wide range of activities that help manage invasive species. Eligible expenses might include technical and engineering fees, project development, design services, site investigations and assessments, construction, forestry practices, urban stormwater practices, inspections and public engagement and outreach.

The MIRL program is funded by a \$200,000 appropriation from the state general fund. A 10% awardee match is required; activities that contribute to program goals are eligible to be counted toward an in-kind match. BWSR program managers said they anticipated awarding six to 12 grants during this round of funding.

Grants are slated to be awarded this summer. Learn more about the grant program and apply on the [Apply for BWSR Grants webpage](#).

10 ecological landscaping principles: Tips from BWSR's senior ecologist and vegetation specialist

First-time native habitat gardeners sometimes worry about doing things just right, or about throwing the ecological balance out of whack. Beginning an ecological garden — a garden that rebuilds biodiversity and environmental health — can feel daunting.

As an ecologist, I'm here to tell you that your ecological garden doesn't have to be perfect. The best way to begin is to start small and expand. Our natural systems are already out of balance. The sooner you start creating habitat, the sooner you can support declining populations of pollinators and make your yard resilient to climate change. The following 10 principles can help you achieve your vision of installing an ecological landscape:

Have your utilities marked: Before starting any project where you will be digging, it is essential to call Gopher State One Call, 651-454-0002. Marking the location of utilities such as electrical and gas lines ensures you can dig safely. It's also important to consider the location of cable lines, outdoor lighting and other homeowner-installed lines.

Start small: It's OK to start small! Even if you add a few native plants to your landscape, you will help pollinators and other wildlife. You can always add more plants each season. Native plant nurseries can help you select plants and plan small native pocket plantings to get started. Some nurseries offer starter kits.

During a hot, dry summer even tough native plants can benefit from supplemental watering to ensure that they provide high amounts of pollen and nectar for pollinators. Most plants need about an inch of water a week either through rainfall or watering.



BWSR Senior Ecologist and Vegetation Specialist Dan Shaw and his daughter Lily planted sedges in their ecological garden. **Photo Credit:** Dan Shaw

ABOUT THE AUTHOR: Dan Shaw started working in the ecology field about 30 years ago. Before joining BWSR, he worked with restoration companies, native plant nurseries, consulting firms and nonprofits. Over the past 19 years at BWSR, he's coordinated conservation programs focusing on native vegetation establishment, invasive species management, pollinator habitat, habitat-friendly solar and climate resiliency. Shaw has taught ecological design and restoration classes at the University of Minnesota for the past 25 years, and has written and illustrated several ecology-focused publications.

Identify unused areas of your yard: You don't necessarily need a detailed planting plan to get started. It's OK to have small projects in different areas of your yard. A helpful first step is to define unused areas, such as slopes, corners or moist drainageways — those can be great places to establish habitat. If you have concerns about bee stings, establishing habitat in low-

traffic areas is a good option.

Use lines in your designs: The human eye is attracted to straight lines, including landscape features such as walls, fences, edging and sidewalks — elements that can help create a sense of order. At times, ecological gardens can look somewhat messy. Lines can enhance and organize their beauty.

Keep it fun: Planning a pollinator project is an opportunity to involve the whole family in creating a refuge for wildlife. You can be a designer, craftsperson, gardener and steward of the land simultaneously. Tinkering in the garden — whether that means expanding existing plantings, separating plants in the spring or pruning shrubs — is always rewarding, and a great way to stay active.

Collaborate: One of the most rewarding aspects of ecological gardening is the collaboration among those passionate about flowers, pollinators, birds and spending time outdoors. If you're starting your first ecological gardening project, it's helpful to make connections with neighbors who garden. University of Minnesota Extension Master Gardeners, Master Water Stewards and Minnesota Master Naturalist volunteers are other experts who can offer advice. We are fortunate in Minnesota to have so many great mentors.

Make habitat connections: Identifying areas where you can expand existing plantings is another consideration in site selection. I like to round off corners in my yard to make it easier to mow. If you can connect areas of habitat on your property, you will create benefits for a wider range of species.



This pollinator meadow in Aurora was established by a gardener who received support from BWSR's Lawns to Legumes program, which offers coaching, funding and resources to help Minnesota residents establish new pollinator habitat. Contributed Photo

Connecting nesting areas with food sources can aid pollinators moving through the landscape.

Summer can be a good time to add containerized pollinator plants to gardens, but watch the forecast for periods of cooler temperatures and higher rainfall to give plants the best opportunity to thrive.

Watch the wonder: Because they change throughout the year, plantings attract a diverse array of bees, butterflies, beetles, dragonflies, birds and other species. Try

placing at least some of your habitat next to decks, windows or other areas where you can observe the wildlife diversity you've helped restore.

Keep learning: I've worked in the ecology field for more than 20 years, and I still learn something new about nature every day. Our natural world is amazingly complex. As you start your project, check out the wide range of resources developed by conservation partnerships on the [Lawns to Legumes webpage](#).

Experiment and make

mistakes: Finally, remember that it's OK to make mistakes. They're often more memorable — and sometimes more entertaining — than our successes. Making mistakes is how we learn to create better plantings. The beauty of an ecological landscape is that it will evolve over time. Making small adjustments to plantings over time is a great way to get outdoors and bring biodiversity to your landscape.

BWSR staff members write and produce Snapshots, a monthly newsletter highlighting the work of the agency and its partners.



March 24, 2026

John Jaschke
Executive Director
Minnesota Board of Water and Soil Resources
520 Lafayette Road
St Paul, MN 55155

Dear Mr. Jaschke,

Carver, Dakota and Scott Counties care about the quality of the Minnesota River and recognize the importance this riverway has on our history, landscape, environment, recreation and economy.

County Investments

Through our respective watershed management organizations and joint watershed districts, we have invested millions of dollars to fund capital projects over the years that hold back water or stabilize bluff ravines in the basin, which reduces riverbank and bluff erosion sediment into the Minnesota River.

Examples of these major capital projects include extensive ravine stabilization projects in the Blakeley Bluffs region in wake of the 2014 flooding, as well as more recent stabilization projects in key tributaries flowing into the Minnesota River (Sand Creek, Picha Creek) in Scott County; creek and ravine restorations and stabilizations in Carver County including West Creek re-meander, East Creek Sediment pool, Seminary Fen ravines, Bevens Creek dam failure restoration, and Carver Creek slope failure restoration.

County Support

In addition to these investments in our respective geographies along the Minnesota River, our three counties supported the original formation of the State Legislative-created Lower Minnesota River Watershed District (LMRWD) in 1959. In our board resolutions supporting the establishment of this new district, we cited its most valuable and primary purpose: to improve the channel of the Minnesota River for water storage, navigation and other public uses. Maintaining and dredging this navigation channel has been critical to the economic vitality of the Ports of Savage and U.S. Salt barge terminal in Burnsville.

County Concerns

While we continue to support LMRWD's original, primary purpose, today our three counties have growing concerns with the District's seemingly expanded mission and scope. Recent examples that have raised concern include the District's decision to bond for a capital improvement project without unanimous support from all counties, and its decision to pursue the acquisition of land around the Savage Fen without support from the City of Savage.

It also appears that to improve the quality of the Minnesota River we need to engage with partners upstream. The recent presentation of MnDOT's Trunk Highway 41 river gauge shows the flooding impacts. Between 1935 and 1990, there were 4 events hitting flood stage at the TH 41 crossing. From 1991 to 2025, there have been 12 events. Besides the water quality issues, we need to understand the impacts to major state and regional infrastructure as part of the discussion.

Next Steps

We think it's time for a change and time to think beyond the narrow scope and boundary of the LMRWD. On behalf of the Boards of Commissioners for Carver, Dakota, and Scott Counties, we respectfully request the State's support in exploring a fresh, coordinated, basin-wide approach to restoring the Minnesota River. The challenge facing the Minnesota River is not an urban issue, a rural problem, or a single watershed district's responsibility to address. It truly takes a collective response.

As the State's namesake river, the Minnesota River has needed collective attention for decades. Our counties recognize and appreciate the significant past efforts to protect this vital resource on a basin-wide approach, which provides a strong foundation for renewed action. Notably, the landmark 1994 study "*Working Together: A Plan to Restore the Minnesota River*" led to the creation of the Minnesota River Board (MRB) to address the river's challenges. A few of our current Commissioners were involved in the 1994-2014 effort to revitalize and reshape the MRB and its multi-county, multi-agency approach to basin-wide planning and funding. While we understand the challenges that ultimately ended that initiative, we firmly believe its core mission remains essential:

"To provide leadership, build partnerships, and support efforts to improve and protect water quality in the Minnesota River Basin."

It is time to renew this mission with a modern approach. We are asking the Minnesota Board of Soil and Water Resources to explore an effort that brings together cities, townships, counties, watershed districts, and other key stakeholders across the basin to

John Jaschke
March 24, 2026
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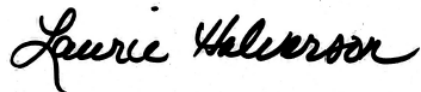
develop a new, collaborative strategy for improving water quality and protecting this critical resource.

Thank you for your consideration and commitment to the future of the Minnesota River.

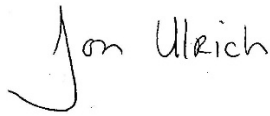
Sincerely,



Tom Workman, Chair
Carver County Board of Commissioners



Laurie Halverson, Chair
Dakota County Board of Commissioners



Jon Ulrich, Chair
Scott County Board of Commissioners

Lower Minnesota River
Watershed District

112 E. 5th Street, Suite #102
Chaska, Minnesota 55318



LOWER MINNESOTA RIVER
WATERSHED DISTRICT

April 16th, 2026

John Jaschke
Executive Director
Minnesota Board of Water and Soil Resources
520 Lafayette Road
St. Paul, MN 55155

CC: Scott Co., Dakota Co., Carver Co., Ramsey Co., and Hennepin Co. Commissioners
Todd Holman, BWSR Board Chair
Lori Cox, BWSR Board Member
Jill Crafton, BWSR Board Member

Dear Mr. Jaschke,

I am writing in response to the March 24, 2026 letter submitted to BWSR by Carver, Dakota, and Scott Counties regarding Minnesota River Basin governance and the role of the Lower Minnesota River Watershed District (LMRWD).

First, I want to note that the LMRWD Board has been deeply and continuously engaged in questions of effective, efficient, and durable watershed governance over the past year. We thank you and your staff for your ongoing support during this time. We agree with our county partners that the Minnesota River—given its scale, complexity, and dynamic hydrologic and ecological characteristics—is far larger than what any small number of counties can reasonably manage or finance on their own.

For that reason, we are encouraged that our county partners have expressed a strong interest in exploring a fresh, coordinated, basin-wide approach to restoring and protecting the Minnesota River. This shared interest presents an opportunity to move beyond fragmented or temporary adjustments and toward solutions that can endure across political, geographic, and funding cycles.

We invite the counties' active collaboration, as well as the insights, concerns, and needs of their constituents, to be brought directly into the LMRWD's Watershed Management Plan (WMP) process. The WMP is the District's primary statutory vehicle for integrating technical analysis, local knowledge,

partner priorities, and public input into a coherent, long-term framework. We view this process not as a closed exercise, but as an open platform for shared problem-solving and alignment. We also recognize that many of our neighboring WDs and WMOs are doing good work in their planning processes, and we hope to find synergies while avoiding inefficiencies in our implementation plans.

It is also important to recognize the structural context in which the LMRWD operates. The District was created by five counties to address a unique set of river-scale needs. Yet its core operations have never been funded, scoped, or staffed at a level commensurate with those responsibilities. This long-standing under-resourcing has constrained administrative capacity and program delivery. However, limiting or retreating from District activities does not resolve the underlying governance and coordination gaps affecting the river or the region. Nor does it negate the District's obligation to act where statutory authority exists.

In that regard, the District agrees that long-term resolution of basin-scale governance, funding, and mission alignment will require State leadership. The LMRWD's proactive work is intended to inform and support that outcome—by documenting gaps, building on previous studies and local expertise, testing implementation-ready approaches, and ensuring that when the State acts, it does so with a clear understanding of watershed-scale needs and on-the-ground constraints.

We respectfully request that BWSR convene with the LMRWD, along with administrators and commissioners from the District's five counties, to collaboratively integrate these governance discussions into the Watershed Management Planning process. Based on recent conversations with many of these same partners, I am confident that we can jointly establish a clear boundary of considerations, identify priority groups for engagement, agree on a practical timeline, and work toward consensus on a durable path forward.

Thank you for your continued leadership and engagement on behalf of Minnesota's namesake river. I appreciate the opportunity to contribute to a constructive, forward-looking dialogue.

Sincerely,

Kyle Bakkum

Manager, Lower Minnesota River Watershed District

Joseph Barisoni

Manager, Lower Minnesota River Watershed District

Carter McNew

Manager, Lower Minnesota River Watershed District

Vinatha Viswanathan

Manager, Lower Minnesota River Wat

BWSR Board Member Conflict of Interest in Grant Review – Disclosure Form

Meeting: _____ Date: _____

I certify that I have read and understand the descriptions of conflict of interest provided, reviewed my participation for conflict of interest, and disclosed any perceived, potential, or actual conflicts. As a BWSR Board member, appointed according to Minnesota Statute Section 103B.101, I am responsible for evaluating my participation or abstention from the review process as indicated below. If I have indicated an actual conflict, I will abstain from the discussion and decision for that agenda item.

Please complete the form below for all agenda items. If you indicate that you do not have a conflict for an agenda item, you do not need to fill out additional information regarding that agenda item.

Agenda Item	No conflict (mark here and stop for this row)	Grant applicant(s) associated with conflict (required if conflict identified)	Conflict Type (required if conflict identified)	Will you participate? (required if conflict identified)	Description of conflict (optional)
				Yes / No	
				Yes / No	
				Yes / No	
				Yes / No	

Printed name: _____

Signature: _____

Date: _____