

Memorandum

Lower Minnesota River East - Advisory Committee



To: Lower MN River East Watershed Advisory Committee
From: Bailey Griffin, Project Manager; Sarah Boser, Watershed Planner - ISG
Date: October 14th, 2022
Subject: Priority Issues

The following memo provides a summary of take-away items from the September meeting and describes the initial steps in developing priority issue statements. The initial development of the priority issue statements will be discussed and reviewed in detail during the Advisory Committee meeting on October 14th, 2022.

SEPTEMBER MEETING SUMMARY

Meeting Expectations

These are the expectations we have for ourselves and others on the committee regarding meetings and dedication to the planning process. These expectations are anticipated to continue into plan implementation.

1. Open dialogue with everyone actively participating and remaining engaged throughout the meeting
 - a. Respect all perspectives and work to understand differences
2. Come to meetings prepared
3. Regular meeting attendance, arrive on time
4. Follow-through on tasks and commitments

Setting Ourselves Up for Future Success

The goal of the planning process is to develop a comprehensive watershed management plan that partners, decision-makers, and citizens support and are committed to implementing. By engaging in the planning process through the list of action items below, we are setting ourselves up for success when it comes time to implement the plan and strengthening our partnership in the process.

1. Understanding essential components of 1W1P program
 - a. Watershed Based Implementation Funding (WBIF)
 - b. Work planning and process
2. Understanding Plan Document
 - a. Priorities
 - b. Goals (realistic)
 - c. Project selection
 - d. How plan impacts stakeholders
3. Commitment to Process and Plan Document
 - a. Come prepared
 - b. Contribute ideas
 - c. Communicate early and often
 - d. Understand capacity (current and potential for future)

SWOT Analysis

An important component of getting where we are going is understanding where we have been. The SWOT analysis below provides an overview of our partnership and watershed management strategies. Keeping these items in mind as we move through the planning process will help us address weaknesses and threats/challenges, while enhancing our strengths and maximizing the opportunities before us.

Strengths

- Diverse experience
- Wealth and variety of data and information
 - Reports and strategies
 - Expertise and educational resources
- Soil Health
- Stream Restoration Expertise aid
- Partnerships
 - Strong relationship between LGUs, existing relationships, and commitment to project, diverse group
 - Strong relationships with private landowners
- Technical Assistance
- Existing Programs such as NFMP, Groundwater Protection, Water Quality Monitoring (MDA)
- Water Storage / Water storage money
- Staff have a good understanding of issues
- Monitoring capacity (staff capacity)
- Drainage Systems

Weaknesses

- Staffing / capacity
- Education and outreach
- Many issues - hard to narrow down
- Diverse partners
- Lack of groundwater data
- Lack of funding
- Legislative constraints

Opportunities

- New funding and consistent funding
- More funding available
- Big picture / larger projects
- Collaboration
- Increased collaboration and partnerships / shared services/resources
- Diverse partners
- Lessons learned from other watershed planning groups/efforts
- Soil health, climate change, and MAWQP programs
- Work in areas that were previously ignored
- Local priorities

Threats/Challenges

- Increase development / populations
- Diverse partners
- Climate change
- Increased/increasing precipitation and flows
- Emerging concerns - pollutants and climate change
- Conflicting landowner wants / landowner buy in / wishes of the public

Memorandum

Lower Minnesota River East - Advisory Committee



- The need to implement projects on private property (landowner buy-in)
- Staffing / capacity
- Conflicting goals / political will / changing decision makers
 - County Boards (tax base) vs what is good for conservation
- Changing political leadership
- Different watershed management requirements or obligations (metro vs non-metro)

Visioning

Visioning is an exercise used to help groups create a shared mission and goal. This vision can serve as a guide throughout the planning process and may be used as a vision statement in the plan document, though formal approval and edits should come from the Policy Committee. This exercise also provides ISG with an understanding of how the partners are viewing the overall plan concept, which will help with facilitation as the planning process progresses. Here are the visioning concepts that were provided by the partners during the September Advisory Committee meeting:

- Leverage partnerships and resources to benefit the watershed together
- Identify and discuss everything → narrow it down → go implement
- Using local knowledge and expertise to strategize and target priority areas to improve the overall health of the watershed
- Protect, preserve, and restore through education, action, and implementation
- The vision of the Lower Minnesota River East Advisory Group is to strive to meet water quality goals utilizing all resources and partners.
- Clearly articulated resources to address and prioritized approaches.
- Participation and engagement from all partners in order to develop a 10-year plan that prioritizes issues and concerns that are supported by data and staff expertise.
- Stewardship of water resources to protect and enhance our communities.

Overall Vision:

The development of a comprehensive watershed management plan that is based on science and professional expertise and focuses on the protection, preservation, and restoration of the watershed's water resources through strong partnerships and shared priorities.

Other Key Takeaways from September Meeting:

These items came up during discussion at the September Advisory Committee meeting and may influence plan content moving forward. As such, we are noting these items here to serve as a reminder and to guide conversations at key points during the planning process.

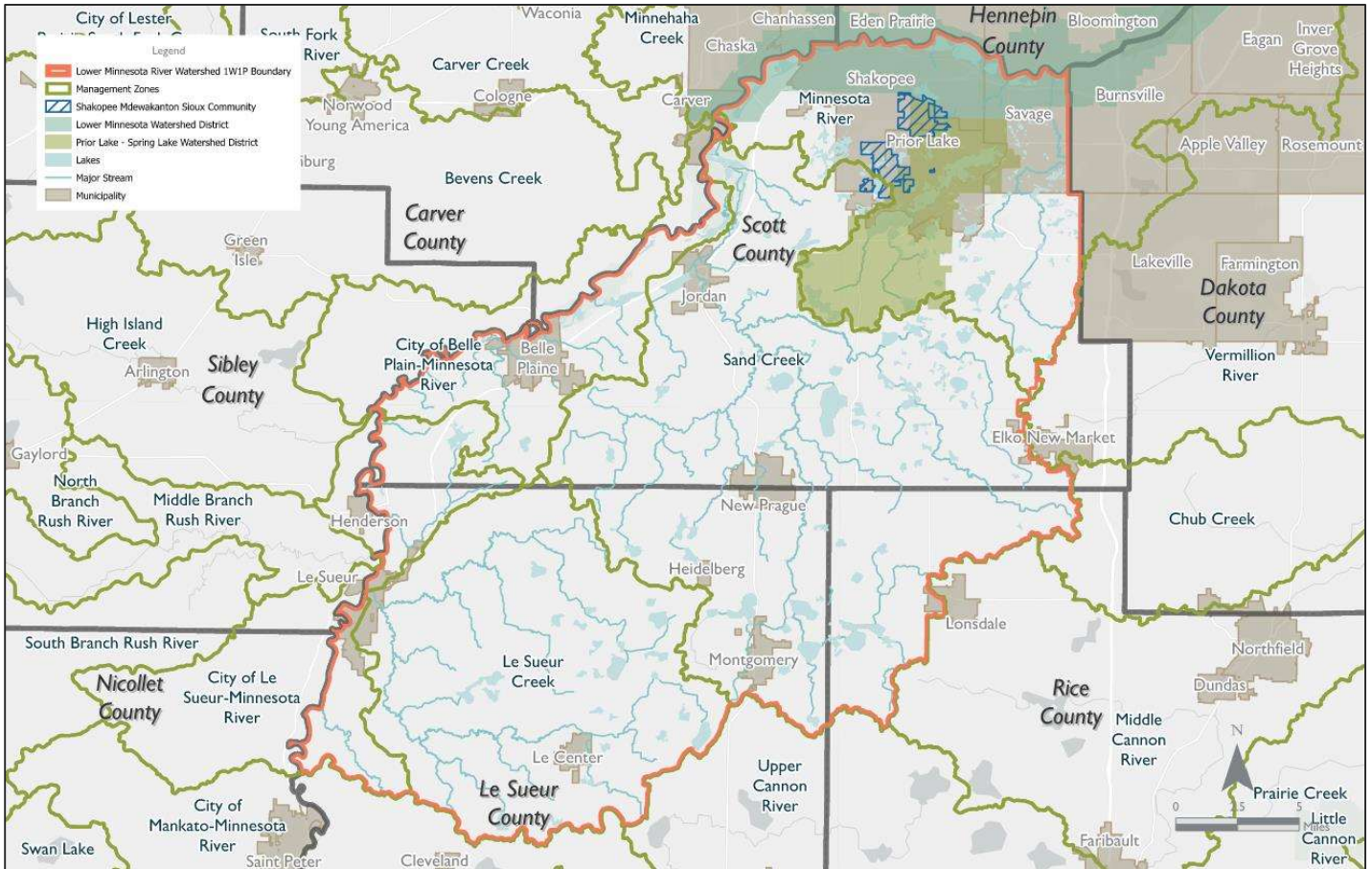
1. Enforcement of ordinances is challenging for staff due to lack of political will, ease of obtaining variances, and capacity
2. Current staff capacity may be a limiting factor
3. Opportunity through Education and Outreach
4. Need to keep in mind other plans and reduction goals for MN River, incorporate whenever possible

Memorandum

Lower Minnesota River East - Advisory Committee

ISG

MANAGEMENT ZONES



To assist with organizing priority actions, it is beneficial to develop management zones or subwatersheds within the overall watershed. The above map is an example of possible management zones for the Lower MN River East watershed. Edits and suggestions from the partners are welcome.

PRIORITY CATEGORIES AND SUBCATEGORIES

Based on the aggregated data, feedback from the public input meeting, initial comment letters, and discussion during the August 2022 Steering Committee and September 2022 Advisory Committee meetings, the following categories were identified as priority categories for the watershed. These categories and subcategories may be adjusted as deemed appropriate by the committee.

1. Surface Water
2. Groundwater
3. Habitat & Natural Resources

Several subcategories that would be nested under each of the priority categories were also identified. Those subcategories include:

1. Outreach & Education
2. Policy & Regulation
3. Emerging Concerns
4. Data, Studies, & Monitoring

Additionally, subcategories specific to each priority category were identified.

1. Surface Water
 - a. Rivers and Streams
 - b. Lakes
 - c. Wetlands & Fens
 - d. Water Quantity/Water Storage & Retention (Altered Hydrology)/Flooding
 - e. Nutrients
 - f. Erosion and Sedimentation, Bluffs
 - g. Bacteria
 - h. Chloride
 - i. Land Use/Land Management
2. Groundwater
 - a. Wells
 - b. Groundwater Quantity
 - c. Groundwater Quality
 - d. Drinking Water & DWSMAs
3. Habitat & Natural Resources
 - a. Loss of important habitat
 - b. Habitat Connectivity (dams/weirs)
 - c. Restoration of habitat
 - d. Protection of existing habitat
 - e. Aquatic Habitat
 - f. Aquatic Invasive Species (AIS)

Memorandum

Lower Minnesota River East - Advisory Committee

The logo for ISG (Institutional Support Group) is located in the top right corner. It consists of the letters "ISG" in a white, sans-serif font, centered within a dark gray square.

The next step is to create a list of concerns for each subcategory. To do so, the Advisory Committee will split into three groups (see recommendations below, feel free to edit as necessary to match expertise, keeping in mind that groups should be roughly the same size), and each group will be responsible for a category.

1. Surface Water
 - a. Joe Mulcahy
 - b. Brittany Faust
 - c. Meghan Darley
 - d. Steve Pahs
 - e. Mike Schultz
 - f. Barb Peichel
2. Groundwater
 - a. Travis Hirman
 - b. John Freitag
 - c. Vanessa Strong
 - d. Troy Kuphal
 - e. Brad Behrens
 - f. Sarah Boser
3. Habitat & Natural Resources
 - a. David DePaz
 - b. Melissa Bokman
 - c. Linda Loomis
 - d. Holly Kalbus
 - e. Bailey Griffin
 - f. Joni Giese

During the meeting, these small groups will be utilized to refine the list of subcategories, review the data aggregation memo from September and come up with a list of concerns for each subcategory, and begin drafting issue statements. ISG will facilitate activities during the meeting to complete these tasks.