



Agenda

Vermillion River Watershed Planning Commission

November 15, 2023 – 4:30 p.m., In-person and Teleconference via MS Teams

1. Call to Order
2. Roll Call
3. Audience Comments on Items Not on the Agenda
(please limit audience comments to five minutes)
4. Approval of Agenda Action
5. Approval of Minutes September 13, 2023, Meeting Action
6. Business Items
 - a. Presentation on Agricultural Best Management Practices for Nitrate Reduction Information
 - b. Approval of 2024 Vermillion River Watershed Planning Commission Meeting Dates Action
 - c. Recommend Adoption of the Vermillion River Watershed Joint Powers Organization 2024 Final Draft Budget and Watershed Management Tax District Levy Action
 - d. Update on Vermillion River Watershed Planning Commission Member Terms and Status Information
 - e. Discussion of Watershed Planning Commission Engagement Improvements Information
 - f. Update on Watershed Plan Stakeholder Engagement Plan Information
7. Updates
 - a. Chairperson's Report
 - b. Staff Updates
8. Adjourn Action

Please note, the November 15, 2023, Watershed Planning Commission meeting will take place **in-person** in Conference Room A at the Extension and Conservation Center, 4100 220th Street West, Farmington Minnesota **and via teleconference** on the web-based application, Microsoft Teams.

Microsoft Teams meeting

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Other Information

Next Meeting Date: **January 10, 2024**, at 4:30 p.m.

Please confirm your attendance by contacting Travis Thiel at travis.thiel@co.dakota.mn.us by 12 p.m. on the day before. You will be notified if the meeting is cancelled due to an anticipated lack of quorum.



Minutes

Vermillion River Watershed Planning Commission (WPC) Meeting

September 13, 2023 – 4:30 p.m.

In-person and Microsoft Teams Videoconference

WPC Members in Attendance

Jim Kotz Brad Blackett
Josh Borton Andy Riesgraf
Steve Hamrick Sandra Weber
Kevin Chamberlain

VRWJPO Staff in Attendance

Travis Thiel, Watershed Administrator
Brita Moore-Kutz, Communications & Outreach Specialist

Others in Attendance

Curt Coudron, Dakota County Soil & Water Conservation District (SWCD) (Virtual)
Nikki Stewart, Dakota County (Virtual)
Valerie Neppl, Dakota County (Virtual)

1. Call to Order

The meeting was called to order by Chair Jim Kotz at 4:30 p.m.

2. Roll Call

All members present except Commissioner Larson.

3. Audience Comments on Items Not on the Agenda

No comments.

4. Approval of Agenda

*Motion by Commissioner Weber to approve the agenda, seconded by Commissioner Chamberlain.
Motion carried on a 7-0 vote.*

5. Approval of Minutes from the August 9, 2023 Meeting

Motion by Commissioner Borton to approve the August 9, 2023 minutes, seconded by Commissioner Blackett. Commissioner Weber abstained due to missing this meeting. Motion carried on a 6-0 vote.

6. Business Items

a. Update on 2023 Capital Improvement Projects

Travis Thiel presented information on the capital improvement projects the watershed is working on or has completed in 2023.

Information only.

7. Updates

a. Chairperson's Report

No updates.

b. Staff Updates

Brita Moore-Kutz

Brita is mostly focusing on public engagement for the watershed plan development process. She reminded members of the October 12, 2023 initial planning meeting and to RSVP to her if attending. The meeting is open to the public, and the watershed hopes to capture feedback from a wide variety of stakeholders.

Brita also pointed out that the end of the year means a few members' terms are expiring, which can be renewed if the member still has eligibility. She hopes to garner more applications for the new terms each year.

Travis Thiel

With his promotion to Administrator, Travis's next task is to hire new staff. He is continuing to look for a Water Resources Engineer and has some potential candidates.

Travis pointed out that most of Dakota County is under a "Severe Drought" classification and the Vermillion River gage on Blaine Avenue in Empire was showing a flow rate of nine cubic feet per second in early September, which is very low.

Valerie Neppi

There is a well clinic in Elko New Market on September 30, 2023, which will be staffed by members of the Dakota County Groundwater Protection unit, for private well owners. Water can be tested for nitrates, chlorides, and arsenic.

Curt Coudron

Curt said water monitoring and macroinvertebrate monitoring have been challenging with the drought, but they are adjusting as they can. He said the water has been even lower than it was last summer.

The SWCD has been working on projects with landowners, such as cover crops, grassed waterways, and sediment basins. The deadline is October 15, 2023 to seed the cover crops.

Nikki Stewart

Nikki thanked Travis for accepting the Administrator position and Valerie for her administrative support.

8. Adjourn

Motion by Commissioner Borton, seconded by Commissioner Riesgraf. Motion carried on a 7-0 vote.

DRAFT

6a. Presentation on Agricultural Best Management Practices for Nitrate Reduction

Meeting Date: 11/15/2023
Item Type: Regular-Information
Contact: Ashley Gallagher
Telephone: 651-480-7781
Prepared by: Travis Thiel
Reviewed by: N/A

N/A



PURPOSE/ACTION REQUESTED

- Information only. Provide a presentation on the agricultural best management practices for nitrate reduction.

SUMMARY

Nitrate pollution has the potential to be harmful to humans and other organisms. Problematic concentrations of nitrate are present in both surface and groundwater within the Vermillion River Watershed. Implementation of nitrate best management practices are needed to protect surface and groundwater resources.

The Groundwater Protection Rule (GPR) was adopted by the State of Minnesota in 2020 and is intended to minimize potential sources of nitrate pollution within public Drinking Water Supply Management Areas (DWSMAs). The Hastings DWSMA loosely aligns with the South Branch and Mainstem of the Vermillion River. The Dakota County Groundwater Plan and Agricultural Chemical Reduction Effort (ACRE) Plan were established to ensure protection of public and private drinking water sources through implementation activities. The implementation frameworks within these plans identifies prioritized, targeted, and measurable activities necessary to achieve the plan goals.

Local and state technical and financial assistance programs have been established to meet the requirements of the GPR and implement activities within the Groundwater and ACRE Plans. Ashley Gallagher from the Dakota County Soil and Water Conservation District will present information about agricultural best management practices for nitrate reduction as they apply to the Vermillion River Watershed's resources.

RESOLUTION

6a. Presentation on Agricultural Best Management Practices for Nitrate Reduction

Information only.

6b. Approval of 2024 Vermillion River Watershed Planning Commission Meeting Dates

Meeting Date: 11/15/2023
Item Type: Regular-Action
Contact: Travis Thiel
Telephone: 952-891-7546
Prepared by: Travis Thiel
Reviewed by: N/A

N/A



PURPOSE/ACTION REQUESTED

- Approval of 2024 Vermillion River Watershed Planning Commission (WPC) meeting dates

SUMMARY

In 2023, the WPC meetings were held on the second Wednesday of each month. Meetings are held in-person taking place in Conference Room A of the Dakota County Extension and Conservation Center. It is proposed that the 2024 WPC meetings continue the same schedule as 2023. Due to the Thanksgiving Holiday, and because the Joint Powers Board (JPB) meets on December 7, 2024, the November meeting is scheduled for the third Wednesday of the month. Traditionally, there is no December meeting of the WPC.

The 2024 VRWPC proposed meeting schedule is as follows:

- January 10
- February 14
- March 13
- April 10
- May 8
- June 12
- July 10
- August 14
- September 11
- October 9
- November 20

EXPLANATION OF FISCAL/FTE IMPACT

None

RESOLUTION

6b. Approval of 2024 Vermillion River Watershed Planning Commission Meeting Dates

WHEREAS, the Vermillion River Watershed Planning Commission (VRWPC) is required by its Bylaws to hold regular meetings; and

WHEREAS, regularly scheduled meetings of the VRWPC are required to complete its business in a timely and responsible manner.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that in calendar year 2024, the VRWPC will meet on the second Wednesday of the month (except in November and December) at 4:30 p.m., according to the following schedule:

- January 10
- February 14
- March 13
- April 10
- May 8
- June 12
- July 10
- August 14
- September 11
- October 9
- November 20

6c. Recommend Adoption of the Vermillion River Watershed Joint Powers Organization 2024 Final Draft Budget and Watershed Management Tax District Levy

Meeting Date: 11/15/2023
Item Type: Regular-Action
Contact: Travis Thiel
Telephone: 952-891-7546
Prepared by: Travis Thiel
Reviewed by: N/A

N/A



PURPOSE/ACTION REQUESTED

- Recommend adoption of the Vermillion River Watershed Joint Powers Organization 2024 Final Draft Budget and Watershed Management Tax District Levy

SUMMARY

At the August 24, 2023 Vermillion River Watershed Joint Powers Board (VRWJPB) meeting, the VRWJPB approved a draft VRWJPO Budget of 2,058,300 including cash reserves, Clean Water Fund grants, and Watershed-Based Implementation Fund grants. The draft budget reflected recommendations from VRWJPO staff, partners, and items from the implementation section of the Watershed Plan. In August, the draft VRWJPO 2024 Budget recommended a Watershed Management Tax District Levy of \$1,000,000: \$34,400 in the Scott County portion of the watershed and \$965,000 in the Dakota County portion. This total levy is unchanged from the overall Watershed Management Tax District levy compared to 2023. At the time of packet development, tax impact information was not yet available from the two counties and revisions to the budget document are still being made as a result. VRWJPO staff will provide a final draft 2024 VRWJPO Budget to the Vermillion River Watershed Planning Commission meeting for review and a recommendation to the VRWJPB.

An approved 2024 budget will remain “draft” until such time as the Vermillion River Watershed Joint Powers Board (VRWJPB) approves a final budget and the Dakota County and Scott County Boards approve the Watershed Management Tax District Levy in December of 2023.

RESOLUTION

6c. Recommendation to Adopt the Vermillion River Watershed Joint Powers Organization 2024 Final Draft Budget and Watershed Management Tax District Levy

WHEREAS, the Vermillion River Watershed Joint Powers Organization requires a budget and the subsequent levy to implement the programs and projects described in its Watershed Management Plan; and

WHEREAS, the Vermillion River Watershed Planning Commission has reviewed and discussed the VRWJPO 2024 Final Draft Budget and Vermillion River Watershed Management Tax District Levy.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the Vermillion River Watershed Planning Commission hereby recommends approval of the VRWJPO 2024 Final Draft Budget and recommends a Vermillion River Watershed Management Tax District Levy of \$1,000,000.

6d. Update on Vermillion River Watershed Planning Commission Member Terms and Status

Meeting Date: 11/15/2023
Item Type: Regular-Information
Contact: Travis Thiel
Telephone: 952-891-7546
Prepared by: Travis Thiel
Reviewed by: N/A

N/A



PURPOSE/ACTION REQUESTED

- Information only. Presentation on the current member terms and their status coming at the end of the calendar year

SUMMARY

Members of the Vermillion River Watershed Planning Commission (WPC) are appointed to serve three-year terms by the Vermillion River Watershed Joint Powers Board (JPB). Appointed members of the WPC are eligible to serve two consecutive terms. Members are sometimes appointed to an open incumbent seat on the WPC completing the previous incumbent’s existing term. In such cases fulfilling the previous incumbent term is not counted as a term of the newly appointed member thus retaining their eligibility to serve up to two full three-year terms in addition to completing the previous incumbent term.

There are nine citizen members seats for the WPC, eight from Dakota County and one from Scott County. Requirements to be eligible to serve on the WPC stipulate commission members must be, and remain, residents of the watershed and the County from which they are appointed. WPC members terms are staggered such that three members’ terms expire at the end of any given calendar year. When the three members’ terms expire those with remaining eligibility must reapply to the VRWJPB for appointment if they wish to continue to serve. Seats for those whose eligibility is completed become vacant and open for a new appointee. Members who complete their eligibility can return to the WPC by applying to a future open seat but are not allowed to continue in their existing position.

At the end of this calendar year 2023, first terms for Andy Riesgraf, Jim Kotz, and Steve Hamrick are expiring. If these members wish to continue serving on the WPC, they will need to contact the VRWJPO Administrator expressing their desire to serve a second term. An update will be provided at the meeting regarding where members are at in their respective terms.

RESOLUTION

6d. Update on Vermillion River Watershed Planning Commission Member Terms and Status

Information only.

6e. Discussion of Improvements to Watershed Planning Commission Engagement

Meeting Date: 11/15/2023
Item Type: Regular-Information
Contact: Travis Thiel
Telephone: 952-891-7546
Prepared by: Travis Thiel
Reviewed by: N/A

N/A



PURPOSE/ACTION REQUESTED

- Information only. Staff will facilitate a discussion to determine ways to improve engagement with the Watershed Planning Commission (WPC).

SUMMARY

Engagement is critical to obtaining participation and meaningful feedback that staff can use to guide development and implementation of the Vermillion River Watershed Joint Powers Organization’s (VRWJPO) Watershed Management Plan. Staff want to ensure the WPC’s expectations for engagement are being met and to discuss ways to improve engagement. Staff have performed a comparison of other watershed organizations’ citizen advisory committee meeting frequency and content of their meetings (Attachment A-Watershed Citizen Advisory Committee Comparison).

Below are some questions to be prepared to discuss regarding Watershed Planning Commission engagement:

- What types of information should be provided in order to feel engaged?
- How often should you meet to feel adequately engaged?
- What meeting times work best to accommodate meeting participation by WPC members?
- Of the various business the VRWJPO conducts, what business is most critical for the WPC to provide recommendations on?
- What do you currently dislike about current efforts to present information and engage the WPC?

RESOLUTION

6e. Discussion of Improvements to Watershed Planning Commission Engagement

Information only.

Citizen Advisory Committee Comparison Among Watershed Organizations

South Washington Watershed District

- As of 2023, scheduled to meet 4x/year or on an as-needed basis
- Covering content related to cost share project requests from local communities, watershed plan update

Scott WMO

- Appears to be scheduled monthly or bi-monthly
- Covering content related to program updates, budget/levy, tours, grant funding, cost share

Carver WMO

- Scheduled to meet monthly
- Covering content related to projects, cost share, budget/levy and funding, plans, water quality, education, and feasibility studies

Nine Mile Creek Watershed District

- Meets 4x/year
- Covering content related to budget/levy, policies, education, cost share, projects

Lower Mississippi River WMO

- Meets 1x/year
- Covering content related to the watershed plan development

Riley Purgatory Bluff Creek Watershed District

- Meets monthly
- Covering content related to program and project updates, and education and outreach

Black Dog WMO

- Meets on as-needed basis
- Covering content related to watershed plan development

Eagan-Inver Grove WMO

- Meets on as-needed basis
- Covering content related to watershed plan development

North Cannon River WMO

- Meets on as-needed basis

- Covering content related to watershed plan development

Valley Branch Watershed District

- Unknown how often they meet
- Communicated to cities and townships about projects, programs, and activities; represents and communicates the plans and activities of the cities and townships to Board Managers; provides input on projects and planning efforts to Board Managers; educates citizens and communities about actions in the watershed; organizes and facilitates efforts to protect and improve resources; collects water level and water quality data

Brown's Creek Watershed District

- Meets 4-6x/year
- Covering content related to supporting mission and goals; reviewing and commenting on reports, budgets, activities, programs, and projects; consider issues pertinent to watershed; raising concerns from public; provide community outreach; assisting in coordination of volunteer activities; reporting to Board of Managers on content of CAC meetings

Carnelian Marine St. Croix Watershed District

- Meets on as-needed basis
- Covering content related to the organizational structure and stakeholders, programs and projects, and watershed management plan

6f. Presentation of Stakeholder Engagement Plan for 2026-2035 Vermillion River Watershed Plan Development

Meeting Date: 11/15/2023
Item Type: Regular-Information
Contact: Brita Moore-Kutz
Telephone: (952) 891-7967
Prepared by: Brita Moore-Kutz
Reviewed by: N/A

N/A



PURPOSE/ACTION REQUESTED

- Information only.

SUMMARY

To ensure that the next generation Vermillion River Watershed Management Plan (Plan) reflects the concerns and priorities of the diverse communities in its jurisdiction and other stakeholders, watershed staff and consulting firm HKGi have prepared a stakeholder engagement plan for the Plan development. It sets forth the objectives for the public engagement process, demographics of the watershed, stakeholders to work with, types of engagement, and questions to be asked of engagement participants.

People will have both in-person and virtual opportunities to provide input and comment on the Watershed Plan development directly to staff, as well as use online tools to provide feedback on their own time. These will begin after the initial planning meeting on October 12, 2023. Attachment A includes the Stakeholder Engagement Plan for the Watershed Plan update process.

RESOLUTION

6f. Presentation of Stakeholder Engagement Plan for 2026-2035 Vermillion River Watershed Plan Development

Information only.

Vermillion River Watershed Management Plan Update

Final Public Engagement Plan

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1. Introduction

The Vermillion River Watershed Joint Powers Organization (VRWJPO) will be conducting stakeholder engagement as part of the Vermillion River Watershed Management Plan update. The public engagement process will provide the VRWJPO with timely, relevant, and candid feedback on public concerns and strategies proposed to be included in the Watershed Management Plan.

The Vermillion River Watershed encompasses 335 square miles in Dakota and Scott counties. The current 2016-2025 [Watershed Management Plan](#) and subsequent updates and amendments include a range of actions to protect and improve surface water and groundwater quality in the watershed. The Watershed Management Plan also provides an overview of the watershed's physical and biological conditions and water quality.

The Watershed Planning Commission (WPC), a citizen advisory committee, will be VRWJPO's primary advisory committee. Consulting services will be secured for development and facilitation of the Public Engagement Plan. The consultant will work closely with VRWJPO project team to develop, facilitate, organize, and summarize the public engagement process to inform the revision of the Watershed Management Plan. Public engagement efforts are projected to beginning in 2023 to support completion of the Watershed Management Plan update by the anticipated deadline.

This Public Engagement Plan guides the public engagement by involving all affected stakeholder groups and creating effective and inclusive engagement methods tailored to each group to motivate and involve stakeholders who may not normally be engaged. A successful Public Engagement Plan will produce meaningful and pointed feedback to guide the development of proposed Watershed Management Plan strategies.

2. Background

The VRWJPO was formed through a Joint Powers Agreement between Dakota and Scott counties in September of 2002. The purpose of the VRWJPO is to “exercise leadership in the development of policies, programs, and projects that will promote the accomplishment of the purposes found in Minn. Stat. § [103B.201](#), including the preparation, adoption and implementation of the plan required by Minn. Stat. § [103B.211](#) for the Vermillion River Watershed” and “guide and assist Dakota County and Scott County in acting jointly and individually to take actions that will promote the goals listed in Minn. Stat. § 103B.201 and fulfill their responsibilities under Chapter 103 B.”

The Vermillion River Watershed Joint Powers Board (VRWJPB) consists of one county commissioner from Scott County and two county commissioners from Dakota County. The VRWJPB is responsible for preparing, adopting and implementing a Watershed Management Plan that meets requirements of Minn. Stat § [103B.231](#). The WPC consists of eight members from Dakota County and one from Scott County. The WPC is responsible for advising the VRWJPB, which includes the review, comment and recommend upon the proposed Watershed Management Plan.

The Watershed Management Plan framework and goals are influenced by Minn. Stat. §[103B](#), and Minn. Rules [8410](#). The ten-year plan update is a comprehensive update of the Watershed Management Plan done not less than five years and not more than ten years after approval of the current plan by the Board of Water and Soil Resources (BWSR). The current Vermillion River Watershed Management Plan was approved in June 2016. The revised Watershed Management Plan is anticipated to be completed in February 2026. The following are Minn. Statute and Rule requirements to be incorporated into the public engagement and plan review process:

- Before development of a plan or ten-year plan amendment, the VRWJPO will send notifications to the plan review agencies, counties, cities, townships, soil and water conservation districts, and to known stakeholders, of plan initiation and request input on local water-related issues and information, water management goals, official controls, and programs. This step was completed by the VRWJPO April 3 to June 5, 2023.
- The VRWJPO will hold an initial planning meeting presided over the organization’s governing body to receive, review, and discuss input. This meeting is scheduled for October 12th, 2023.
- Upon completion, but before final adoption of the Watershed Management Plan by the VRWJPB, the VRWJPO will submit the draft plan for a 60-day review and comment period to all counties, the Metropolitan Council, the state review agencies, the Board of Water and Soil Resources, soil and water conservation districts, towns, and statutory and home rule charter cities having territory within the watershed. The VRWJPO will hold a public hearing no sooner than 14 days after the 60-day review period of the draft plan.
- After the review and comment period and any resulting changes to the document are incorporated and approved by the VRWJPB, the Watershed Management Plan will be submitted to the Metropolitan Council, the state review agencies, and the Board of Water and Soil Resources for final review. The VRWJPO will adopt and implement the plan within 120 days after approval by the Board of Water and Soil Resources.

3. Public Engagement Objectives and Approaches

The primary public engagement objectives are:

1. Collect data to best inform the VRWJPO staff and Board throughout the Watershed Management Plan revision process, including attitudes, behaviors, and priorities related to the watershed.
2. Discuss and receive feedback on any proposed Watershed Management Plan strategies with relevant stakeholder groups.
3. Request feedback, ideas, and opinions from the stakeholder groups to:
 - Identify and assess challenges within the watershed for groundwater and surface water restoration and protection and determine strategies for addressing those challenges.
 - Identify opportunities for and barriers to implement and/or to follow proposed Watershed Management Plan strategies.
 - Understand the level of support for prospective Watershed Management Plan strategies.
4. Provide accurate, relevant, and timely information to help all of those involved understand the Plan revision process and prospective strategies for them to make informed comments and recommendations.

The VRWJPO’s public engagement approach is designed to solicit ideas, responses, feedback, and opinions from a varied group of stakeholders. The public engagement process will bring together multiple points of view to inform decisions, give legitimacy to the Watershed Management Plan revision process, identify potential problems and solutions, and articulate and clarify key strategies. The engagement process will connect the VRWJPO with new collaborators and foster relationships with existing partners to encourage change and raise awareness of the Watershed Management Plan revision. The VRWJPO’s engagement process will include visibility, transparency of the process, and appreciation for a range of viewpoints, and it will employ multiple communication methods to engage stakeholders.

The stakeholder groups affected by the plan revision are varied, with different and occasionally conflicting drivers and

desired outcomes. Therefore, the VRWJPO with support of the consultant will use a broad range of engagement approaches, including:

- Creating an inclusive engagement process to encourage participation that reflects the demographics of the watershed and its various stakeholder groups
- Establishing, renewing, and maintaining relationships with stakeholders
- Providing a variety of opportunities using multiple engagement techniques for all stakeholders to share diverse ideas
- Informing, listening, inviting, and responding to feedback from stakeholders
- Incorporating feedback into the revision process or addressing it in other ways
- Providing opportunities for ongoing communication with stakeholders
- Updating stakeholders throughout the revision process
- Recognizing and thanking stakeholders for the contributions during the revision process

Supportive Work Efforts: The Vermillion River Watershed Management Plan update will be written by VRWJPO staff and the Dakota County Office of Planning, with assistance from the Environmental Resources Department. HKGi will advise and facilitate the public engagement process and provide summary reports to the VRWJPO of the outcomes of the various stakeholder engagement sessions.

4. Major Groups to Engage

A holistic public engagement process requires a diverse group represented by various populations that are involved from start to finish. A process that involves diverse stakeholders assists in achieving a project that is reflective of the VRWJPO's diverse interests and ever-changing population. However, in order to effectively reach and involve various stakeholders, different types of specific engagement methods need to be used as their effectiveness can vary from one group to another. Major groups to engage include the following:

1. **Residents:** Over 167,000 people live in the Vermillion River Watershed, based on the 2010 U.S. Census
 - Single-family residents
 - Multi-family residents
 - Underrepresented residents, including non-native English speakers, low-income households, older adults, racial/ethnic minorities, and people with disabilities
2. **Business and Industry:**
 - Agricultural and farming type businesses, industry, and operations
 - Commercial entities
 - Industrial businesses
 - Construction businesses
 - Business owners
 - Landlords and commercial property owners

- Chambers and trade associations
- Real estate developers and homeowner associations
- High volume water users
- Golf course operators
- Other landscape irrigators
- Underrepresented businesses, including those owned or managed by Black, Indigenous and People of Color

3. Nonprofits, advocacy and special interest groups (list is not all inclusive):

- Friends of the Mississippi River
- Nature Conservancy
- Izaak Walton League
- Freshwater
- MN Environmental Partnership
- Hastings Environmental Protectors
- Trout Unlimited
- Ducks Unlimited
- Pheasants Forever
- Conservation Minnesota
- Sierra Club
- Minnesota Farmers Union
- Minnesota Farm Bureau
- Hmong American Farmers Association
- Lakeville Friends of the Environment
- Apple Valley Eco-Advocates
- MN Center for Environmental Advocacy
- Prairie Island Indian Community

4. Technical Advisory Group (TAG): technical stakeholder representatives from cities, townships, counties, state agencies, environmental consulting firms, universities, and other interested partners

5. Cities and Townships: 20 Dakota County and Scott County cities (11) and townships (9) that lie entirely or partly within the boundaries of the Vermillion River Watershed

Cities	Townships
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Apple Valley • Lakeville • Burnsville • Rosemount • Farmington • Hastings • Elko New Market • Vermillion (city) • Coates • Empire • Hampton (city) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New Market Township • Nininger Township • Marshan Township • Eureka Township • Douglas Township • Ravenna Township • Castle Rock Township • Hampton Township • Vermillion Township

6. State and Regional Agencies:

- Minnesota Board of Water and Soil Resources (BWSR)

- Minnesota Department of Agriculture (MDA)
- Minnesota Department of Health (MDH)
- Minnesota Department of Natural Resources (DNR)
- Minnesota Department of Transportation (MnDOT)
- Minnesota Pollution Control Agency (MPCA)
- Metropolitan Council

7. VRWJPO staff will have responsibility to directly engage the following organizations:

- Vermillion River Watershed Joint Powers Board (VRWJPB): will be responsible for approving the Watershed Plan
- Watershed Planning Commission (WPC): will be responsible for providing committee advice and recommendation of issues, goals, and strategies to the VRWJPB
- Dakota County government leaders and County Departments
- Scott County government leaders and County Departments
- Dakota and Scott County Soil and Water Conservation Districts (SWCD)

Type of Engagement	Target Audience						
	Technical Advisory Group (TAG)	Watershed residents	Cities / Townships	VRWJPO Boards, County, SWCD	Under-represented Groups	Stakeholders (businesses, industry, non-profits)	Partner agencies
WPC and VRWJPO Meetings				✓			
City /TownshipBoard Meetings		✓	✓				
Electronic media (Project Website, Questionnaire, Social Pinpoint)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Community Conversations		✓		✓	✓		
Stakeholder Listening Sessions/focus groups	✓		✓		✓	✓	✓
Public events/pop-up meetings		✓			✓		

5. Engagement Methods

Electronic and Paper Questionnaires: Electronic and paper surveys for residents and stakeholders to provide opinions and ideas about the watershed, providing a framework for strategies. One questionnaire will be posted per round electronically, and hard copy surveys will be provided at local libraries in Farmington, Lakeville, Hastings, and Elko New Market to be collected and results tallied and compiled along with the digital surveys.

Map-based Online Engagement (Social Pinpoint): During Phase 1, an interactive online map will be embedded into VRWJPO’s website in order to collect comments about issues and opportunities tied to geographic locations throughout the watershed and within the subwatersheds. An “idea wall” will also be posted on the VRWJPO

website to provide a place for people to offer up thoughts related to the plan.

In-person Community Conversations: The public will be invited to attend 2 community conversations per phase to share thoughts on the Watershed Management Plan revision, and to provide comments on proposed issues and strategies. Multiple events are anticipated to cover the geographic area of the watershed.

Virtual Stakeholder Meetings: Six virtual meetings will be offered each phase to inform and fully engage stakeholders (businesses, NGOs, non-profits, agency partners, the TAG, underrepresented groups, and City/Township representatives) in the revision process, by inviting participation of all contributors while the draft strategies are being formed. A variety of meeting times will be offered, and meeting content/questions can be customized based on attendees, once representatives select a meeting to attend.

Intercepts at Existing Events/Meetings: Two opportunities to engage stakeholders at existing VRWJPO or County events will be scheduled per phase.

Two rounds of stakeholder engagement are anticipated to (1) receive input on perceptions of issues and thoughts on potential opportunities and solutions; and (2) receive feedback on draft plan goals and strategies.

6. Tools to Promote Participation in Stakeholder Engagement

Effectively promoting and advertising the engagement opportunities will be crucial to their success. Tools for promoting the plan engagement opportunities may include email marketing, social media, direct mail, counties' print newsletters, newspaper notices, direct outreach to community leaders, community events, etc. VRWJPO staff will help develop and distribute materials to explain the Watershed Management Plan revision process and potential strategies.

Type	Outlet	Contact/Distribution	Timing/Number
In Person	Community Conversations	Advertised on website and via press releases (2 weeks before events)	Phases 1 & 2 (2 per phase)
	Pop-up Intercepts	Advertised on website	Phases 1 & 2 (2 per phase)
	WPC and VRWJPO Meetings	Travis to attend (HKGi to provide engagement summaries as needed for updates)	Throughout project
	City and Township Board Meetings	Travis to split attendance with Matt Belanger (who attends two township meetings/month) and provide updates	Goal to interface with each at least once throughout the process (supplemented by email notification of engagement and invites to the stakeholder meetings).
Electronic	Stakeholder Meetings	6 separate meeting options emailed to stakeholders each phase to select one meeting to attend.	Phases 1 & 2 (6 per phase)
	VRWJPO Website	Brita to update with materials/notices (staff or HKGi provided)	As needed

Type	Outlet	Contact/Distribution	Timing/Number
	Social Pinpoint & SurveyMonkey	Posted on website and advertised on project materials. Brita to notify project partners and encourage them to distribute opportunities to their network.	Phase 1: October 12 th -December 2023
	Konveio	HKGi to provide link to draft document for review by stakeholder groups & the public	Phase 2 (summer-fall 2024)
Social Media	VRWJPO Social Media- Facebook, X, Instagram, etc.	Brita	As needed, in advance of open houses/events/on-line input
Print	Hardcopy Survey	Local libraries (Hastings, Farmington, Lakeville, Elko New Market). Have librarians collect and coordinate periodic pickup.	October-December and for Phase 2 (June-August)
	Mailed paper surveys	Business reply postage. Identify distribution to farmers/large landowners based on acreage	As needed (if rural resident response is lacking)
	Dakota county rural newsletter	Brita to prepare post each year	Once per phase

Type	Outlet	Contact/Distribution	Timing/Number
	Poster displays at parks: Spring Lake Park Reserve, Whitetail Woods	Katie Pata for distribution in DC parks	Once per community engagement phase
	Poster display at select churches, township halls, farm bureau and/or farmers union as needed (if participation is lacking)	TBD (reach out to Watershed Planning Commissioner who is part of Farmers' Union)	As needed
	Poster display at Libraries:	Local libraries (Hastings, Farmington, Lakeville, Elko New Market)	October-December and for Phase 2 (June-August)
	Press release	Brita to coordinate	2 weeks before Community Conversations

7. Key Questions to Ask

Asking the right question is exceptionally important in ensuring that the engagement of stakeholders leads to information that is valuable for the planning process. A mix of open-ended and quantitative questions will be asked of stakeholders through the various engagement methods described above, striving to answer these broad, overarching questions:

- Discuss mission of the VRWJPO and the plan update
- What goals and priorities exist around groundwater and surface water issues in the Vermillion River Watershed?
- What are perceived major issues in the Vermillion River Watershed, and what is the level of concern? What perceptions and misperceptions should be addressed?
- What are challenges and suggested changes to existing official controls and Standards?
- What are the barriers and opportunities to protect groundwater and surface quality and quantity (policy, legal, technical, operations, etc.)? What tradeoffs are willing to be made?
- What strategies could address challenges and support work toward goals? What are potential strategies

to overcome identified barriers?

- What financial, regulatory, and educational approaches should be considered to reach goals?
- What are the opportunities for collaboration and coordination?
- How much should be invested in watershed restoration and protection in the next 10 years?

These questions will be asked of all stakeholder groups in some form through both in-person and online opportunities. Where specialized knowledge or skillsets need to be called on (such as surface water management, economic development, natural resource preservation, etc.), additional questions will be asked.

8. Action Plan

The below are key project phases and milestones. Approval and adoption of the revised Watershed Management Plan should be completed by February 2026.

1. **Start-Up and Project Organization:** March – August 2023

- Receive authorization from VRWJPO to initiate Plan update process (Completed March 23, 2023)
- Provide notification of Plan update to review agencies, counties, cities, townships, soil and water conservation districts, and known stakeholders (Completed April 4 – June 5, 2023)
- Develop Draft Public Engagement Plan
- Post Request for Proposal (RFP) for public engagement consultant; and select preferred consultant to support public engagement

2. **Research on Issues and Stakeholder Needs:** September 2023– February 2024

- Meet with consultant and finalize the Public Engagement Plan and the implementation structure/schedule; develop engagement materials
- Hold Watershed Management Plan Update initial planning meeting per Minn. Rules 8410 (October 12, 2023)
- Conduct Round 1 Public Engagement to receive input on perceptions of problems and thoughts on potential opportunities and solutions (October 2023-February 2024 timeframe)
- Analyze and summarize technical research findings and stakeholder engagement sessions to inform development of the Watershed Management Plan goals and strategies

3. **Draft Goals and Strategies for the Plan:** February – December 2024

- Review technical research and stakeholder engagement findings with the TAG, WPC, and VRWJPO
- Develop draft goals and strategies based on stakeholder, TAG, WPC, and VRWJPO feedback
- Conduct Round 2 Public Engagement to receive input on draft goals and strategies (start July 2024 timeframe)

4. **Draft Plan Review and Adoption:** May 2025 – February 2026

- Present Plan to WPC and VRWJPB, seek recommendation on plan release for public review and comment (60-days)
- Conduct 60-day review with notification to all stakeholders (May – July 2025)
- Compile and summarize comments; identify needed changes; complete public hearing
- Present Plan to WPC and VRWJPB, seek recommendation for release for Metropolitan Council, the state review agencies, and the Board of Water and Soil Resources for final review and approval.
- Complete 90-day state review period (August – November 2025)
- Achieve Board of Soil and Water Resources approval and VRWJPO Final Plan adoption (February 2026)