



Meeting Minutes

Vermillion River Watershed Joint Powers Board (VRWJPB) Meeting

Thursday, April 24, 2025, 1 p.m., in-person at the Dakota County Extension and Conservation Center and virtual via Microsoft Teams

VRWJPB Members in Attendance

Dakota County Commissioner Bill Droste

Dakota County Commissioner Mary Liz Holberg

Scott County Commissioner Tom Wolf

Vermillion River Watershed Community Advisory Committee (CAC) Members in Attendance

Brad Blackett

John Nicolai

Sandy Weber

Others in Attendance

Nikki Stewart, Dakota County, Environmental Resources Department Director

Travis Thiel, Dakota County, Vermillion River Watershed Joint Powers Organization (VRWJPO) Administrator

Kelly Perrine, Dakota County, VRWJPO Senior Watershed Specialist

Jeff Dunn, Dakota County, VRWJPO Water Resources Engineer (virtual)

Brita Moore-Kutz, Dakota County, VRWJPO Communications and Outreach Specialist

Brian Wisdorf, Dakota County, Assistant County Attorney, VRWJPO legal counsel

Joe Barten, Dakota County Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD), Senior Resource Conservationist (virtual)

Bruce Johnson, Dakota County SWCD, Board of Supervisors Member

Josh Murphy, Dakota County, Financial Analyst Lead (virtual)

Henry Stelten, Prairie Island Indian Community (virtual)

Valerie Neppl, Dakota County, Groundwater Protection Unit Supervisor (virtual)

1. Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 1 p.m.

2. Roll Call

Commissioners Wolf, Droste, and Holberg were present.



3. Audience Comments on Items Not on the Agenda

None.

4. Approval of Agenda

Res. No. VRW 25-08: Motion by Commissioner Holberg to approve the agenda, seconded by Commissioner Droste. Motion carried on a 3-0 voice vote.

5. Approval of Minutes from the January 23, 2025, Meeting

Res. No. VRW 25-09: Motion by Commissioner Holberg to approve the minutes, seconded by Commissioner Droste. Motion carried on a 3-0 voice vote.

6. Approval of Consent Agenda

- a. **Acceptance of Treasurer's Reports**
- b. **Authorization to Submit the 2024 Vermillion River Watershed Joint Powers Organization Annual Activity Report and Financial Statement to the Minnesota Board of Water and Soil Resources**

Res. No. VRW 25-10: Motion by Commissioner Droste to approve the consent agenda, seconded by Commissioner Holberg. Motion carried on a 3-0 voice vote.

7. Approval of Expenses

There were four expense reports on the agenda. Travis Thiel presented the following:

- Final expense report for December 1-31, 2024, totaling \$72,448.74
- Expense report for January 1-31, 2025, totaling \$43,864.17
- Expense report for February 1-28, 2025, totaling \$42,818.20
- Expense report for March 1-31, 2025, totaling \$53,339.95

Res. No. VRW 25-11: Motion by Commissioner Holberg to approve the expenses, seconded by Commissioner Droste. Motion carried on a 3-0 voice vote.

8. Business Items

- a. **Approval of Vermillion River Watershed Joint Powers Organization Community Advisory Committee Bylaws**

Travis noted that when the CAC reviewed the bylaws at their last meeting, they expressed desire to include language reflecting that existing CAC members whose terms had expired could remain on the CAC in the interim, until a new candidate could be appointed by the VRWJPB.



Res. No. VRW 25-12: Motion by Commissioner Holberg to approve the CAC bylaws, seconded by Commissioner Droste. Motion carried on a 3-0 voice vote.

b. Authorization to Execute a Joint Powers Agreement with Dakota County for 2025 Legal Services

Travis noted that the \$25,000 is factored into the VRWJPO 2025 budget for legal services.

Res. No. VRW 25-13: Motion by Commissioner Droste, seconded by Commissioner Holberg. Motion carried on a 3-0 voice vote.

c. Approval of Proposed Amendments to the Vermillion River Watershed Joint Powers Organization 2025 Budget

Travis presented proposed amendments to the 2025 budget, including increases in miscellaneous expenses and staff time for the Watershed Management Plan development. Both expenses and revenues are now at about approximately \$2.8M.

Res. No. VRW 25-14: Motion by Commissioner Droste to approve the budget amendment, seconded by Commissioner Holberg. Motion carried on a 3-0 voice vote.

d. Approval to Procure a Vermillion River Watershed Joint Powers Organization Insurance Policy from the Minnesota Counties Intergovernmental Trust

With the recent revisions to the joint powers agreement between Dakota and Scott counties forming the VRWJPO, and under advice from the Dakota County Attorney's Office and Risk Management, the VRWJPO is picking up its own insurance policy rather than being covered by the two counties. Minnesota Counties Intergovernmental Trust (MCIT) is the only provider of this type of policy, given the risks the VRWJPO carries. Obtaining the policy requires the VRWJPO to become a member of MCIT. Joining MCIT requires an existing member to sponsor the new member. Scott County is a member of MCIT and passed a resolution on April 15 in support of VRWJPO joining. The VRWJPO is only procuring what is required in the policy and forgoing any optional stipulations.

Commissioner Wolf asked about the deductible for various coverages, noting that he has higher deductibles for his personal policy and wondered if we could raise the deductible to get a better insurance premium. Legal counsel Brian Wisdorf said he didn't know if there were other options, since the Risk Management department at Dakota County had procured the policy. Commissioner Holberg suggested revisiting the policy at a later date and considering higher-deductible, lower-premium options.

Res. No. VRW 25-15: Motion by Commissioner Holberg to approve procuring the insurance policy, seconded by Commissioner Droste. Motion carried on a 3-0 roll call vote.



e. Discussion and Board Direction on Wetland Bank Credit Values and Revisions to Vermillion River Watershed Joint Powers Organization Wetland Banking Policy

Travis shared that the Dakota County Assessor's Office had updated its agricultural land values, which form the basis for determining wetland bank credit sale prices under the VRWJPO's current wetland bank policy. Credit prices are set at 5.5 times the estimated average market value for class 2A agricultural lands graded A, B, or C in Dakota County, up to a maximum of \$50,000 per acre. The new land values from the Assessor would put the 5.5 times estimated average market value above \$50,000.

One option proposed was to raise the cost to \$60,000 per acre or higher. Another option is to use the Minnesota Board of Water & Soil Resources (BWSR)'s annually calculated median values for bank service areas in the Twin Cities Metropolitan area as the base numbers.

The Board agreed the credit price should be raised, but wanted to study more about land valuation before making a final decision. They tabled the issue for the next meeting when staff will provide a draft revised policy.

Information only.

f. Discussion and Board Direction on a 2025 Vermillion River Watershed Tour

Brita Moore-Kutz shared the rationale for hosting a watershed project tour every other year, as it provides meaningful public outreach about the VRWJPO. The Dakota County Manager, Heidi Welsch, has expressed a desire to see the watershed's projects as well.

Board members agreed they'd like to see the VRWJPO's most recently completed projects this year. They suggested Thursday, September 25, 2025, with a backup date of October 23. The tour would take place in the morning and be followed by that month's regular meeting of the VRWJPB. Staff will pursue Sept. 25 for a tour date and discuss logistics and potential sites over the coming months.

Information only.

9. Staff Reports

Brita Moore-Kutz

- Brita will be at the City of Lakeville's Earth Day Celebration on Saturday, April 26.

Kelly Perrine

- The East Lake electric fish barrier has been activated, its low-voltage current deterring invasive fish from entering or leaving the lake. Fish removals will begin in the next week.



Travis Thiel

- Staff are seeking the Board's input on potential high-water users (such as data centers) in the watershed that are subject to state environmental review. Some community members have asked about what the VRWJPO knows of such high-water users and the potential impact on the Vermillion River, which is fed by groundwater springs. The VRWJPO can provide comments to the environmental review, but there is no regulatory role defined. The Board ultimately decided to table this topic for further research.
 - Commissioner Holberg said she didn't want to be heavy-handed, but there is an opportunity for education and outreach with water conservation. She wanted to talk more with the City of Lakeville about the issue.
 - Commissioner Droste asked what expertise the VRWJPO has that could affect a state agency's decision to approve a high-water user or not. Travis said they could suggest methods that reduce water use, for example. Droste also noted that companies can be very proprietary about what information they will release to the public before building.
 - Kelly noted that several of these proposed centers want to use municipal water supplies from the city they'd be in, so the onus would be on the city government to apply for a water appropriation permit increase from the Department of Natural Resources.

10. Adjourn

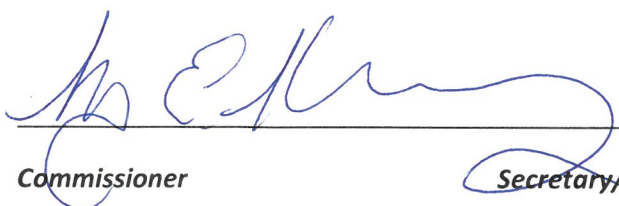
Motion by Commissioner Droste to adjourn, seconded by Commissioner Holberg. Motion carried on a 3-0 voice vote.

Next Meeting Date: Thursday, May 22, 2025, at 1 p.m. in Conference Room A at the Dakota County Extension and Conservation Center, 4100 220th Street West, Farmington, MN, and via teleconference on Microsoft Teams.


Respectfully submitted by:

Brita Moore-Kutz, Communications & Outreach Specialist for the Vermillion River Watershed Joint Powers Organization

Attest



Commissioner



Secretary/Treasurer

5/22/2025

Date