



Meeting Minutes: Vermillion River Watershed Community Advisory Committee (CAC)

Date: May 14, 2025

Minutes prepared by: Brita Moore-Kutz

Location: In-person at the Dakota County Extension and Conservation Center, Farmington, MN, and virtual via Microsoft Teams

CAC Members in Attendance

- Josh Borton
- Brad Blackett
- Jim Kotz
- Andy Riesgraf (virtual)

VRWJPO Staff in Attendance

- Travis Thiel, Administrator
- Kelly Perrine, Senior Watershed Specialist
- Jeff Dunn, Water Resources Engineer
- Brita Moore-Kutz, Communications and Outreach Specialist

Others in Attendance

- Lindsey Albright, Monitoring and Outreach Coordinator, Dakota County Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD)
- Curt Coudron, Project Management Supervisor, Dakota County SWCD
- Samantha Berger, Natural Resources Coordinator, City of Apple Valley (virtual)
- Anne Sawyer, Board Conservationist, Minnesota Board of Water & Soil Resources (BWSR) (virtual)

Agenda Items

1. Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 4:32 p.m. by Chair Josh Borton.

2. Roll Call

Members Blackett, Borton, Kotz, and Riesgraf were present. Members Chamberlain, Hamrick, Nicolai, and Weber were absent.

3. Audience Comments on Items Not on the Agenda

None.

4. Approval of Agenda

Motion by Brad Blackett to approve the agenda, seconded by Jim Kotz. Motion carried on a 4-0 voice vote.

5. Approval of Minutes from the February 12, 2025, meeting

Motion by Brad Blackett to approve the minutes, seconded by Jim Kotz. Motion carried on a 4-0 voice vote.

6. Business Items

a. Dakota County Soil and Water Conservation District Presentation on the Landscaping for Clean Water Program

Lindsey Albright gave an in-depth overview of the Landscaping for Clean Water (LCW) program run by Dakota County SWCD, as well as other collaborative outreach projects in the work plan between the VRWJPO and SWCD.

The LCW program focuses on empowering landowners to create raingardens, native gardens, and shoreline stabilization projects. VRWJPO, other Dakota County watersheds, and city partners provide funding and assistance. The program consists of a series of classes: an Introductory course, Design course, and optional Maintenance workshop. SWCD staff provide one-on-one technical assistance for people whose projects are selected for the \$250 grants.

Lindsey also mentioned the Vermillion River Watch program with high school field biology classes; the Lawns Reimagined program, which provides information on varieties of turfgrass that may require less mowing and watering compared to standard Kentucky bluegrass; and Winter Salt Awareness Week in January, in partnership with Dakota County.

Andy Riesgraf asked if the SWCD contacts new homeowners to let them know about LCW. Lindsey said that sometimes, new owners find a sign for an LCW project already completed on the property and

reach out to the SWCD independently. Alternatively, if a past participant moves, they sometimes reach out to the SWCD and let them know to reach out to the new property owner. New owners often continue to maintain the gardens, but they may need education on their features and unique maintenance needs.

Information only.

b. Overview and Comments on Draft 2026-2035 Vermillion River Watershed Management Plan Implementation Table and Summary of Approval and Adoption Timeline

Kelly Perrine presented the draft Implementation Table for the 2026-2035 Vermillion River Watershed Management Plan (WMP). The table contains potential projects and partnerships that could help the VRWJPO achieve its WMP goals and objectives. It categorizes each action by Issue Category and includes a High, Medium, or Low priority indicator based on input from stakeholders. It also allocates funds for each action so the VRWJPO can plan ahead for its annual budgets and tax levies. Travis Thiel added that the planned tax levy in each year of the table was set to increase by 3% each year to account for inflation.

Staff asked the CAC to consider the following questions in reviewing the draft Implementation Table:

1. Are the proposed actions correct to address the WMP Goals?
2. Are the costs appropriate for the proposed actions?
3. Is the schedule appropriate to accomplish the proposed actions?

Anne Sawyer commented that she liked how the table factors in partnership opportunities and subwatershed analyses in identifying projects. She asked if there were any upcoming subwatershed assessments that weren't mentioned in the table and if that would precipitate the need for a WMP amendment if new projects arose from future assessments. Kelly said that yes, there are two subwatershed assessments forthcoming, and that staff had earmarked funds in each issue category for projects of opportunity. Travis added that amendments to the WMP might be possible to strengthen the VRWJPO's applications for state grants.

Anne said she'd like to see staff incorporate measurable goals and objectives into the table to demonstrate progress. Kelly discussed the challenging nature of predicting pollutant load reductions and asked if numbers of installed best management practices (BMPs) are acceptable measures of success. Anne said that BWSR is looking for as much quantitative information as possible to ensure transparency and accountability in the WMP's implementation. This could include numbers of installed BMPs.

Anne emphasized that BWSR is not looking to penalize watersheds that don't meet every single goal listed in their plans.

Information only.

c. Update on Proposed Revisions to the Vermillion River Watershed Joint Powers Organization Standards

Jeff Dunn presented the revised VRWJPO Standards planned to be adopted along with the 2026-2035 WMP.

Staff proposed a series of changes to the Standards based on feedback from stakeholders and their own experience and expertise. They then reviewed the Standards with the VRWJPO Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) for further feedback. The Standards shared with the CAC at this meeting incorporated the TAC's suggestions. Significant changes from the last published Standards include:

- Updating erosion and sediment control requirements to align with the Minnesota General Discharge Permit. This was done to help townships without their own permitting programs meet the VRWJPO Standards.
- Removing language already used in the WMP.
- Removing regulations being enforced by local government units (LGUs).
- Removing provisions on which VRWJPO does not have a direct regulatory role, such as agricultural practices.

Information only.

d. Presentation and Discussion of Vermillion River Watershed Joint Powers Organization 2025 Budget-Identified Capital Improvement Projects

Jeff Dunn and Kelly Perrine shared their progress on the following Capital Improvement Projects:

- Lakeville - East Lake Invasive Fish Barrier and Removals
- Lakeville - Launch Park Wetland Restoration
- Lakeville - Firelight Way Total Suspended Solids (TSS) Reduction
- Castle Rock Township - Mork Wetland Bank
- Farmington - 4th and Willow TSS Reduction
- Farmington - North Creek at Denali Way Stream Restoration and Culvert Improvements
- Hastings - 15th and Bailey TSS Reduction
- Empire - North Creek at MN Highway 3 Stream Restoration and Culvert Improvements
- Lakeville - Grand Prairie Park Water Recirculation and Stormwater Reuse
- Groundwater Conservation and Landscaping for Clean Water Marketing Campaign

7. Updates

a. Chairperson's Report

None.

b. Staff Updates

Brita Moore-Kutz

- Brita encouraged CAC members to plan to attend the VRWJPO Project Tour on September 25, 2025. She also handed out a summary report of the VRWJPO 2024 Annual Activity Report sent to BWSR in April 2025.

Curt Coudron

- The Dakota SWCD has been busy planning projects with landowners to improve soil health and nitrogen management. He said that project contracts in the VRWJPO are covering about 2,000 acres, including multi-year contracts from previous years and contracts signed this year.

8. Adjournment

Motion by Jim Kotz to adjourn, seconded by Brad Blackett. Motion carried on a 4-0 voice vote.

Next Meeting

Date: August 13, 2025

Time: 4:30 p.m.

Location: In-person at the Dakota County Extension and Conservation Center