Meeting Agenda

Vermillion River Watershed Community Advisory Committee

November 19, 2025 – 4:30 p.m., in-person and virtually via Microsoft 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 from the August 13, 2025, meeting	Action
6.	Business Items	
	a. Recommend Adoption of the Final Vermillion River Watershed Joint Powers Organization 2026 Budget and Watershed Management Tax District Levy	Action
	b. Approval of 2026 Vermillion River Watershed Community Advisory Committee Meeting Dates	Action
	c. Update on terms of Vermillion River Watershed Community Advisory Committee Members	Information
	d. Summary of Comments Received from the 60-Day Review of the Draft 2026-2035 Vermillion River Watershed Management Plan	Information
7.	Updates	
	a. Chairperson's Report	
	b. Staff Updates	
8.	Adjourn	Action

Please note that the November 19, 2025, Community Advisory Committee (CAC) meeting will take place in person in Conference Room A at the Dakota County Extension and Conservation Center, 4100 220th Street West, Farmington, Minnesota, and virtually via Microsoft Teams. CAC members may participate in the meeting via interactive technology.

Microsoft Teams information

Click to join the meeting now
Meeting ID: 238 541 410 095 9
Passcode: Y4V2Pw6v
Dial in by phone:
+1 651-273-3070,,825537040# United States, Hastings
Find a local number
Phone conference ID: 825 537 040#

Other Information

Next meeting date: Wednesday, February 11, 2026, at 4:30 p.m.

Please confirm your attendance by contacting Brita Moore-Kutz at brita.moore-kutz@co.dakota.mn.us or (952) 891-7967 by noon on the day before. You will be notified via email if a meeting is canceled due to an anticipated lack of quorum.

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

Date: August 13, 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

- Brad Blackett
- Josh Borton
- Steve Hamrick
- Andy Riesgraf
- John Nicolai

Vermillion River Watershed Joint Powers Organization (VRWJPO) Staff in Attendance

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

Agenda Items

1. **Call to Order**

The meeting was called to order at 4:40 p.m. by Chair Josh Borton.

2. **Roll Call**

Brad Blackett, Josh Borton, Steve Hamrick, John Nicolai, and Andy Riesgraf were present. Kevin Chamberlain, Jim Kotz, and Sandy 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 Andy Riesgraf. Motion carried on a 5-0 voice vote.

5. **Approval of Minutes from the May 14, 2025, Meeting**

Motion by Brad Blackett to approve the minutes, seconded by Andy Riesgraf. Motion carried on a 5-0 voice vote.

6. **Business Items**

    a. Recommend Adoption of the Draft Vermillion River Watershed Joint Powers Organization 2026 Budget and Watershed Management Tax District Levy

Travis Thiel presented the draft budget and levy. Based on direction from the Joint Powers Board (JPB), staff proposed raising the levy by 5 percent from the 2025 levy, which is collected through the Dakota and Scott County property tax levy processes. However, the projected expenses are set to match a 3.5 percent levy increase. This is to allow flexibility for financial changes between August and December, when the final budget and levy must be approved. The JPB may not increase the levy in the final budget from what they approve in the draft, but they may lower it.

Brad Blackett said he appreciated the hard work staff have put in to drafting the 2026-2035 Vermillion River Watershed Management Plan and significantly adjusting budget targets after unforeseen expenses arose. He said he strongly encourages approving a 5 percent levy increase in the final budget.

Motion by Steve Hamrick to recommend adoption of the draft budget and levy as presented, seconded by Andy Riesgraf. Motion carried on a 5-0 voice vote.

    b. Vermillion River Watershed Joint Powers Organization Draft Watershed Partner Project Maintenance and Repair Financial Assistance Policy Presentation

Jeff Dunn presented the draft policy, which is intended to allow the VRWJPO's Capital Improvement Program (CIP) project partners to receive financial assistance from VRWJPO to maintain the effectiveness of their projects. State grant agreements often require recipients to make commitments for project operation and maintenance. Frequently, this falls to the local government unit (LGU) which partnered with the VRWJPO on the grant and project.

The policy includes criteria for eligibility and how to apply. Staff reviewed the policy with the VRWJPO Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) prior to sharing with the CAC and have included the estimated expenses for it in the draft 2026-2035 Vermillion River Watershed Management Plan. It is subject to JPB approval before partners can apply for funding.

Committee members responded positively to the proposal. Jeff noted that the program could help strengthen relationships with project partners and generate more ideas for future initiatives.

Information only.

7. **Updates**

    a. Chairperson's Report

Josh said he enjoyed visiting the VRWJPO table at the Dakota County Fair and attending a Landscaping for Clean Water introduction class in Farmington earlier in the summer.

b. Staff Updates

Travis Thiel

- The Minnesota Open Meeting Law has been revised to allow virtual attendance at all public meetings, including ones where members make formal recommendations and other required votes. The CAC is required to follow Open Meeting Law, but there are no other provisions restricting virtual attendance. Staff hope that more virtual options could help with recruiting new members. Virtual attendees must have their cameras turned on and reliable microphone access. At least one person is required to be on-site. All votes must be conducted by roll call, and meeting minutes must reflect who attended virtually and the reason for their virtual participation. Travis asked that if the CAC decides to move forward with adopting this meeting format, members decide amongst themselves who will be at the meeting in-person.

  The CAC agreed to move forward with open meeting law allowing for virtual attendance at business meetings with a formal motion.

Motion by Steve Hamrick to adopt virtual attendance in accordance with Minnesota Open Meeting Law, seconded by Andy Riesgraf. Motion carried on a 5-0 voice vote.

- Travis reminded members to RSVP for all meetings, regardless of whether they are attending in-person or virtually. This is necessary to ensure a quorum of five members will be present for the meeting to take place.

Kelly Perrine

- The draft 2026-2035 Vermillion River Watershed Management Plan is nearly complete. Staff plan to release it for the official 60-day comment period to state review agencies, LGUs in the watershed, counties, and soil and water conservation districts at the end of August.

8. Adjournment

Motion by John Nicolai to adjourn, seconded by Brad Blackett. Motion carried on a 5-0 voice vote.

Next Meeting

Date: November 19, 2025

Time: 4:30 p.m.

Location: In-person at the Dakota County Extension and Conservation Center and virtually via Microsoft Teams

6a. Recommend Adoption of the Vermillion River Watershed Joint Powers Organization 2026 Final Budget and Watershed Management Tax District Levy

Meeting Date: 11/19/2025
Item Type: Regular-Action
Contact: Travis Thiel
Telephone: 952-891-7546
Prepared by: Travis Thiel

PURPOSE/ACTION REQUESTED

- Recommend adoption of the Vermillion River Watershed Joint Powers Organization 2026 Final budget and Watershed Management Tax District Levy

SUMMARY

At the August 28, 2025, Vermillion River Watershed Joint Powers Board (VRWJPB) meeting, the VRWJPB approved a draft VRWJPO 2025 budget of $2,836,148 including Clean Water Fund Competitive Funding grants, Clean Water Fund Watershed-Based Implementation Funding grants, Conservation Partners Legacy Grants, and the Watershed Management Tax District levy (attachment A). The draft budget reflected recommendations from VRWJPO staff, partners, and items from the implementation section of the draft 2026-2035 Vermillion River Watershed Management Plan. In August, the draft VRWJPO 2026 budget recommended a Watershed Management Tax District levy of $1,078,225: $40,532 in the Scott County portion of the watershed and $1,037,693 in the Dakota County portion.

The proposed VRWJPO Final 2025 budget is $2,836,148. A recommended Watershed Management Tax District Levy of $1,078,225 is proposed; $40,532 in the Scott County portion of the watershed and $1,037,693 in the Dakota County portion. This amount represents a five-percent increase in the overall Watershed Management Tax District levy compared to 2025 (attachments B and C).

An approved VRWJPO 2025 Final Budget will remain “draft” until such time as the VRWJPB approves a final budget and the Dakota County and Scott County Boards approve the Watershed Management Tax District levy in December of 2025.

EXPLANATION OF FISCAL/FTE IMPACT

The draft VRWJPO 2026 budget proposes a five-percent increase in the Watershed Management Tax District levy compared to 2025. The proposed 2026 tax impact on the median value residential property in Dakota County is $10.06, up from $9.73 in 2025. The proposed 2026 tax impact on the median value residential property in Scott County is $13.18, up from $12.68 in 2025. The proposed levy amount represents the maximum levy amount the VRWJPO will receive from Dakota County and Scott County, but the VRWJPB could recommend a lower levy amount before adopting a final budget in December of 2025.

Supporting Documents:
Attachment A. VRWJPO Final 2026 Budget
Attachment B. Dakota County 2026 Tax Impact Statement
Attachment C. Scott County 2026 Tax Impact Statement

RESOLUTION

6a. Recommend Adoption of the Vermillion River Watershed Joint Powers Organization 2026 Final Budget and Watershed Management Tax District Levy

WHEREAS, the Vermillion River Watershed Joint Powers Organization (VRWJPO) 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 Community Advisory Committee has reviewed and discussed the VRWJPO 2026 final budget and Vermillion River Watershed Management Tax District levy.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the Vermillion River Watershed Community Advisory Committee hereby recommends approval of the VRWJPO 2026 Final Budget totaling $2,836,148 and recommends a Vermillion River Watershed Management Tax District levy of $1,078,225 ($40,532 in the Scott County portion of the watershed and $1,037,693 in the Dakota County portion of the watershed).

VRWJPO Final 2026 Budget

EXPENSES

Budget Category	Budget Activity	Operations and Programs	CIP	Budget Total
Administration and Operations				
	Dakota County VRW Staff	$ 227,000		$ 227,000
	Scott County VRW Staff	$ 15,000		$ 15,000
	Legal Support	$ 25,000		$ 25,000
	Miscellaneous Expenses (per diems, mileage, postage, insurance, etc.)	$ 11,000		$ 11,000
	Training, Conferences, and Certifications	$ 6,000		$ 6,000
Planning				
	Dakota SWCD Incentive Program Policy Assistance	$ 1,500		$ 1,500
	VRW Staff	$ 30,000		$ 30,000
Inventory, Assessment, & Research				
	Monitoring	$ 100,000		$ 100,000
	USGS and DNR Flow Gaging	$ 20,000		$ 20,000
	VRW Staff	$ 20,000		$ 20,000
	General GIS support (Dakota SWCD)	$ 1,500		$ 1,500
	Equipment/Supplies	$ 1,000		$ 1,000
	Enhanced Street Sweeping Assessment	$ 45,000		$ 45,000
Communications, Outreach, and Public Relations				
	VRW Staff	$ 108,000		$ 108,000
	Dakota SWCD Outreach and Education	$ 40,000		$ 40,000
	Scott County SWCD Outreach and Education	$ 2,300		$ 2,300
	Communication and Outreach Materials and Supplies, Signage	$ 7,500		$ 7,500
	Local Standards/Ordinance and Turf/Salt Workshops	$ 2,500		$ 2,500
	Children's Water Festival Support	$ 600		$ 600
	Watershed Partners	$ 5,000		$ 5,000
	Digital Accessibility Requirement Assessment and Improvements	$ 9,000		$ 9,000
	Stewardship Grant Program	$ 25,000		$ 25,000
Regulation				
	VRW Staff-Permitting, Standards Assistance, Engineering/Environmental Review	$ 45,000		$ 45,000
Feasibility & Preliminary Engineering				
	Preliminary Design, Technical Assistance and Marketing for Capital Improvements (Dakota SWCD)	$ 20,000		$ 20,000
	Preliminary Design, Technical Assistance and Marketing for Capital Improvements (VRW staff)	$ 40,000		$ 40,000
	Preliminary Design, Technical Assistance and Marketing for Capital Improvements (Consulting)	$ 20,000		$ 20,000
CIP and Maintenance				
	Cost Share Programs in Dakota County (SWCD)		$ 60,000	$ 60,000
	Cost Share Programs in Scott County (SWCD)		$ 12,500	$ 12,500
	VRW General Cost-share or Miscellaneous Grant Match		$ 40,000	$ 40,000
	Past projects maintenance/repair		$ 30,000	$ 30,000
	VRW staff construction oversight and grant development and admin		$ 60,000	$ 60,000
East Lake Fish Management				
	VRWJPO cost share		$ 10,000	$ 10,000
FY24 CWF Alimagnet Alum Treatment				
	Alimagnet Alum Treatment		$ 121,423	$ 121,423
	VRWJPO cash match		$ 17,331	$ 17,331
FY24-25 WBIF Lakeville Firelight Way TSS				

	Firelight Way TSS Reduction grant pass-through		$ 165,870	$ 165,870
	VRWJPO cash match		$ 10,000	$ 10,000
FY24-25 WBIF Hastings 15th & Bailey TSS				
	15th & Bailey TSS Reduction grant pass-through		$ 177,350	$ 177,350
	VRWJPO cash match		$ 111,000	$ 111,000
FY24-25 WBIF Farmington 4th & Willow TSS				
	4th & Willow TSS Reduction grant pass-through		$ 63,912	$ 63,912
	VRWJPO cash match		$ 39,207	$ 39,207
FY25 CWF Alimagnet Alum Treatment Phase 2	Alimagnet Alum Treatment Phase 2		$ 52,000	$ 52,000
	VRWJPO cash match		$ 5,500	$ 5,500
FY25 CPL North Creek at Denali Way				
	FY25 CPL North Creek at Denali Way		$ 364,155	$ 364,155
	VRWJPO cash match		$ 25,000	$ 25,000
FY25 CPL North Creek at Hwy 3				
	FY25 CPL North Creek at Hwy 3		$ 500,000	$ 500,000
	VRWJPO cash match		$ 25,000	$ 25,000
Apple Valley EVR-P55 Stormwater Pond Retrofit				
	VRWJPO cost share		$ 18,000	$ 18,000
Wetland Bank Credit Sales				
	Braun Wetland Bank Credit Sales		$ 100,000	$ 100,000
Subtotal of Expenditures		**$ 827,900**	**$ 2,008,248**	**$ 2,836,148**
REVENUES				
Braun Wetland Bank Credit Revenue				$ 100,000
Use of Fund Balance				$ 388,913
Grant Revenue				$ 1,218,010
Fees for Permitting Activities				$ 1,000
Dakota County Levy				$ 1,037,693
Scott County Levy				$ 40,532
Investment Earnings				$ 50,000
Total Revenues				**$ 2,836,148**

2025 Ending (Combined)				**$ 1,735,475**
2026 Use of Fund Balance (Combined)				**$ 388,913**
2026 Available Fund Balance (Combined)				**$ 1,346,562**
Cash Reserve Balance				**$ 709,037**
Unallocated Fund balance				**$ 637,525**
Target Cash Reserve Balance			**25% of Expenses**	**$ 709,037**

Residential HomesteadProperty

Market Value	Tax Capacity	Proposed 2026 Levy								2025 Actual	2024 Actual	2023 Actual	2022 Actual	2021 Actual	2020 Actual	2019 Actual	2018 Actual	2017 Actual	2016 Actual
		$300,000	$400,000	$500,000	$750,000	$990,832	$1,037,693	$1,250,000	$1,500,000	$990,832	$965,600	$964,900	$967,500	$966,650	$966,000	$912,900	$887,900	$861,700	$821,140
Rate		0.05629%	0.08523%	0.11416%	0.18649%	0.25617%	0.26973%	0.33116%	0.40349%	0.2714%	0.2703%	0.2870%	0.3470%	0.3480%	0.3990%	0.4030%	0.4290%	0.4490%	0.4490%
Various Values																			
$150,000	1,170	$0.66	$1.00	$1.34	$2.18	$3.00	$3.15	$3.87	$4.72	$3.17	$3.41	$3.62	$4.06	$4.07	$4.67	$4.71	$5.02	$5.25	$5.25
$170,000	1,388	$0.78	$1.18	$1.58	$2.59	$3.55	$3.74	$4.59	$5.60	$3.77	$4.00	$4.25	$4.81	$4.83	$5.54	$5.59	$5.95	$6.23	$6.23
$185,000	1,551	$0.87	$1.32	$1.77	$2.89	$3.97	$4.18	$5.14	$6.26	$4.21	$4.44	$4.72	$5.38	$5.40	$6.19	$6.25	$6.65	$6.96	$6.96
$190,000	1,606	$0.90	$1.37	$1.83	$2.99	$4.11	$4.33	$5.32	$6.48	$4.36	$4.59	$4.87	$5.57	$5.59	$6.41	$6.47	$6.89	$7.21	$7.21
$200,000	1,715	$0.97	$1.46	$1.96	$3.20	$4.39	$4.62	$5.68	$6.92	$4.65	$4.89	$5.19	$5.95	$5.97	$6.84	$6.91	$7.36	$7.70	$7.70
$210,000	1,824	$1.03	$1.55	$2.08	$3.40	$4.67	$4.92	$6.04	$7.36	$4.95	$5.18	$5.50	$6.33	$6.35	$7.28	$7.35	$7.82	$8.19	$8.19
$225,000	1,987	$1.12	$1.69	$2.27	$3.71	$5.09	$5.36	$6.58	$8.02	$5.39	$5.62	$5.97	$6.89	$6.91	$7.93	$8.01	$8.52	$8.92	$8.92
$250,000	2,260	$1.27	$1.93	$2.58	$4.21	$5.79	$6.09	$7.48	$9.12	$6.13	$6.36	$6.75	$7.84	$7.86	$9.02	$9.11	$9.69	$10.15	$10.15
$275,000	2,532	$1.43	$2.16	$2.89	$4.72	$6.49	$6.83	$8.38	$10.22	$6.87	$7.09	$7.53	$8.79	$8.81	$10.10	$10.20	$10.86	$11.37	$11.37
$290,000	2,696	$1.52	$2.30	$3.08	$5.03	$6.91	$7.27	$8.93	$10.88	$7.32	$7.54	$8.00	$9.35	$9.38	$10.76	$10.86	$11.56	$12.10	$12.10
$300,000	2,805	$1.58	$2.39	$3.20	$5.23	$7.18	$7.56	$9.29	$11.32	$7.61	$7.83	$8.32	$9.73	$9.76	$11.19	$11.30	$12.03	$12.59	$12.59
$371,600	3,585	$2.02	$3.06	$4.09	$6.69	$9.18	$9.67	$11.87	$14.46	$9.73	$9.94	$10.56	$12.44	$12.48	$14.30	$14.45	$15.38	$16.10	$16.10
$384,800	3,729	$2.10	$3.18	$4.26	$6.95	$9.55	$10.06	$12.35	$15.05	**$10.12**	$10.33	$10.97	$12.94	$12.98	$14.88	$15.03	$16.00	$16.74	$16.74
$400,000	3,895	$2.19	$3.32	$4.45	$7.26	$9.98	$10.50	$12.90	$15.71	$10.57	$10.78	$11.44	$13.51	$13.55	$15.54	$15.69	$16.71	$17.49	$17.49
$425,000	4,167	$2.35	$3.55	$4.76	$7.77	$10.67	$11.24	$13.80	$16.81	$11.31	$11.51	$12.23	$14.46	$14.50	$16.63	$16.79	$17.88	$18.71	$18.71
$450,000	4,440	$2.50	$3.78	$5.07	$8.28	$11.37	$11.97	$14.70	$17.91	$12.05	$12.25	$13.01	$15.41	$15.45	$17.71	$17.89	$19.05	$19.93	$19.93
$475,000	4,712	$2.65	$4.02	$5.38	$8.79	$12.07	$12.71	$15.60	$19.01	$12.79	$12.99	$13.79	$16.35	$16.40	$18.80	$18.99	$20.21	$21.16	$21.16
$500,000	4,985	$2.81	$4.25	$5.69	$9.30	$12.77	$13.44	$16.51	$20.11	$13.53	$13.72	$14.57	$17.30	$17.35	$19.89	$20.09	$21.38	$22.38	$22.38

Median Value as of:		10/08/25
Net Tax Capacity		345,622,458
2025	Median Value	$371,600
2026	Median Value	$384,800
	Percent Change	3.55%

Pay 2025 Fiscal Disparity Distribution:	$ 105,436.00

WHAT IF TAX COMPARISON PAY 2025 vs Pay 2026

REVISED
9:56 am, Nov 14, 2025

FISCAL YEAR 2025			
12,591,637	GROSS TAX CAPACITY	**$ 36,050**	**FINAL CERTIFIED LEVY**
(10,423)	10% KV TRANS LINE (-)		
(728,879)	FISCAL DISPARITY (-)	$ (2,710)	FISCAL DISPARITY (-)
11,852,335	NET TAX CAPACITY	$ 33,340	TAX LEVY OR SPREAD LEVY
	Tax Rate	**0.281%**	

FISCAL YEAR 2026			
14,436,527	GROSS TAX CAPACITY	**$ 40,532**	**PROPOSED LEVY OR CERTIFIED LEVY**
(10,223)	10% KV TRANS LINE (-)		
(930,067)	FISCAL DISPARITY (-)	$ (2,632)	FISCAL DISPARITY (-)
13,496,237	NET TAX CAPACITY	$ 37,900	TAX LEVY OR SPREAD LEVY
	Tax Rate	**0.281%**	

RESIDENTIAL IMPACTS

											Pay 2025	Pay 2026			Median & Average Values			
	% Value Range Inc/Dec	# of affected Properties	Average Market Value 2025	Average Market Value 2026	Value Exclusion 2025	Taxable Market Value 2025	Value Exclusion 2026	Taxable Market Value 2026	Taxable % Chg 2025 - 2026	Net Payable 2025	Net Payable 2026	Net Inc/Dec 2025 vs 2026	Net Difference % Change	**2025** Median Values	**2026** Median Values	**2026** Average Values	**2026** Value % Change
Elko New Mrkt City 1,650	+15.01+%	24	$ 393,524	$ 452,553	$ 11,133	$ 382,392	$ 5,820	$ 446,733	16.83%	$ 10.76	$ 12.55	$ 1.79	16.6%	$ 396,000	$ 419,400	$ 418,000	5.9%
	+10.01-15.00%	28	$ 393,524	$ 442,715	$ 11,133	$ 382,392	$ 6,706	$ 436,009	14.02%	$ 10.76	$ 12.24	$ 1.49	13.8%				
	+5.01-10.00%	1,113	$ 393,524	$ 423,039	$ 11,133	$ 382,392	$ 8,477	$ 414,562	8.41%	$ 10.76	$ 11.64	$ 0.89	8.2%				
	+0.01-5.00%	450	$ 393,524	$ 403,363	$ 11,133	$ 382,392	$ 10,247	$ 393,115	2.80%	$ 10.76	$ 11.04	$ 0.28	2.6%				
	No Change	9	$ 393,524	$ 393,524	$ 11,133	$ 382,392	$ 11,133	$ 382,392	0.00%	$ 10.76	$ 10.74	$ (0.02)	-0.2%				
	-0.01-5.00%	25	$ 393,524	$ 383,686	$ 11,133	$ 382,392	$ 12,018	$ 371,668	-2.80%	$ 10.76	$ 10.44	$ (0.32)	-3.0%				
	-5.01-10%	0	$ 393,524	$ 364,010	$ 11,133	$ 382,392	$ 13,789	$ 350,221	-8.41%	$ 10.76	$ 9.83	$ (0.92)	-8.6%				
	-10.01-15%	1	$ 393,524	$ 344,334	$ 11,133	$ 382,392	$ 15,560	$ 328,774	-14.02%	$ 10.76	$ 9.23	$ (1.52)	-14.2%				
	-15.01+	0	$ 393,524	$ 334,496	$ 11,133	$ 382,392	$ 16,445	$ 318,050	-16.83%	$ 10.76	$ 8.93	$ (1.83)	-17.0%				
New Market Twp 1,173	+15.01+%	43	$ 644,240	$ 740,876	$ -	$ 644,240	$ -	$ 740,876	15.00%	$ 19.14	$ 22.50	$ 3.36	17.6%	$ 615,900	$ 663,800	$ 691,900	7.8%
	+10.01-15.00%	274	$ 644,240	$ 724,770	$ -	$ 644,240	$ -	$ 724,770	12.50%	$ 19.14	$ 21.93	$ 2.79	14.6%				
	+5.01-10.00%	443	$ 644,240	$ 692,558	$ -	$ 644,240	$ -	$ 692,558	7.50%	$ 19.14	$ 20.80	$ 1.66	8.7%				
	+0.01-5.00%	410	$ 644,240	$ 660,346	$ -	$ 644,240	$ -	$ 660,346	2.50%	$ 19.14	$ 19.67	$ 0.53	2.8%				
	No Change	2	$ 644,240	$ 644,240	$ -	$ 644,240	$ -	$ 644,240	0.00%	$ 19.14	$ 19.10	$ (0.03)	-0.2%				
	-0.01-5.00%	0	$ 644,240	$ 628,134	$ -	$ 644,240	$ -	$ 628,134	-2.50%	$ 19.14	$ 18.54	$ (0.60)	-3.1%				
	-5.01-10%	0	$ 644,240	$ 595,922	$ -	$ 644,240	$ -	$ 595,922	-7.50%	$ 19.14	$ 17.41	$ (1.73)	-9.0%				
	-10.01-15%	0	$ 644,240	$ 563,710	$ -	$ 644,240	$ -	$ 563,710	-12.50%	$ 19.14	$ 16.28	$ (2.86)	-14.9%				
	-15.01+	1	$ 644,240	$ 547,604	$ -	$ 644,240	$ -	$ 547,604	-15.00%	$ 19.14	$ 15.71	$ (3.42)	-17.9%				
County Wide		**47,859**	**$ 456,254**	**$ 473,200**	**$ 5,487**	**$ 450,767**	**$ 3,962**	**$ 469,238**	**4.10%**	**$ 12.68**	**$ 13.18**	**$ 0.50**	**3.922%**	**$ 403,500**	**$ 415,200**	**$ 473,200**	**2.9%**

6b. Approval of 2026 Vermillion River Watershed Community Advisory Committee Meeting Dates

Meeting Date:	11/19/2025
Item Type:	Regular-Action
Contact:	Travis Thiel
Telephone:	952-891-7546
Prepared by:	Travis Thiel

PURPOSE/ACTION REQUESTED

- Approval of 2026 Vermillion River Watershed Community Advisory Committee (CAC) meeting dates

SUMMARY

In 2025, the CAC meetings were held quarterly on February 12, May 14, August 13, and November 19, 4:30-6:30 p.m. Historically, meetings have been held in-person taking place in Conference Room A of the Dakota County Extension and Conservation Center.

It is proposed that the 2026 CAC meetings continue the same schedule as 2025. Based on recent changes in Minnesota Statute Ch. 13D. Open Meeting Law, participation and voting on recommendations can be provided virtually. However, there are still requirements that must be met to conduct business virtually (Attachment A).

Due to the Thanksgiving holiday, and because the JPB is projected to meet on December 3, 2026, the November meeting is scheduled for the third Wednesday of that month.

The 2026 CAC proposed meeting schedule is as follows:

- February 11
- May 13
- August 12
- November 18

Per the requirements noted in Attachment A, it is hereby stated that CAC members have the ability to attend through interactive technology.

EXPLANATION OF FISCAL/FTE IMPACT

None

Supporting Documents:
Attachment A: Guidance on Vermillion River Watershed Meetings Conducted via Interactive Technology

RESOLUTION

6b. Approval of 2026 Vermillion River Watershed Community Advisory Committee Meeting Dates

WHEREAS, the Vermillion River Watershed Community Advisory Committee (CAC) is required by its Bylaws to hold regular meetings; and

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

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that in calendar year 2026, the CAC will meet on the second Wednesday of the month (except in November) at 4:30 p.m., according to the following schedule:

- February 11
- May 13
- August 12
- November 18

MEETINGS CONDUCTED VIA INTERACTIVE TECHNOLOGY
AS IT APPLIES TO THE VRWJPO

Minnesota Statutes § 13D.02 subd. 1 (revised)
VRWJPB meetings can be conducted by interactive technology so long as:

(1) At least one board/committee member is physically present at the regularly meeting location; and
(2) All board/committee members wherever their physical location can hear and see all discussion and testimony presented at any location at least one board/committee member is present; and
(3) Members of the public present at the regular meeting location can hear and see all discussion and testimony and all votes of the board/committee members; and
(4) All votes are conducted by roll call.

Minnesota Statutes § 13D.02 subd. 3

To the extent practical, the board/committee shall allow a person to monitor the meeting electronically from a remote location.

Minnesota Statutes § 13D.02 subd. 4 (revised)

The VRWJPO shall include in its notice of the regular meeting location that the board/committee members may participate in the meeting by interactive technology. The timing and method of providing the notice of the regular meeting location must be as described in section 13D.04.

Minnesota Statutes § 13D.04 Notice of Meetings

The schedule of regular meetings of the board/committee kept on file at the VRWJPO's primary office will need to be updated to provide notification that board/committee members have the ability to attend through interactive technology. Website should also be updated to provide notice of this as well. Notice should also be posted on the door of the board's/committee's usual meeting room prior to the first interactive meeting conducted by the board/committee. Notices of special meetings should include language notifying the recipients of said notice that board/committee members have the ability to attend via interactive technology.

Minnesota Statutes § 13D.02 subd. 6

The meeting minutes must reflect the names of any board/committee members appearing by interactive technology and state the reason or reasons for the appearance by interactive technology.

6c. Update on Vermillion River Watershed Community Advisory Committee Member Terms and Status

Meeting Date: 11/19/2025
Item Type: Regular-Action
Contact: Travis Thiel
Telephone: 952-891-7546
Prepared by: Travis Thiel

PURPOSE/ACTION REQUESTED

- Information only. Presentation on the current member terms and their status at the end of the calendar year 2024.

SUMMARY

Members of the Vermillion River Watershed Community Advisory Committee (CAC) are appointed to serve three-year terms by the Vermillion River Watershed Joint Powers Board (JPB). Appointed members of the CAC are eligible to serve two consecutive terms. Members are sometimes appointed to an open incumbent seat on the CAC 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 CAC. Currently, requirements to be eligible to serve on the CAC stipulate members must be residents of either Dakota County or Scott County with appointment preference given to applicants that live within the watershed area for which they are to be appointed. WPC members terms are staggered such that three members' terms expire at the end of any given calendar year. Seats for those whose eligibility is completed become vacant and open for a new appointee. The VRWJPB may appoint an expiring term member of the Community Advisory Committee to continue to serve as an interim appointment upon the expiration of that member's term where the VRWJPB has not received applications for that expiring term member's position. The interim member's appointment shall expire upon the VRWJPB's appointment of a new member of the Community Advisory Committee filling the position held by the interim member.

Based on the CAC terms that staff are tracking, it appears Josh Borton will have a second term that will expire at the end of calendar year 2025. There is an existing CAC vacancy, and with Josh's vacancy, it would result in two vacancies on the CAC. There has historically been challenges with vacancies and establishing a quorum at meetings. Staff have been posting requests to social media and in the newspaper for CAC members with no success in attracting applicants. We would recommend all CAC members use their social networks to assist staff in recruiting new CAC members. An update will be provided at the meeting regarding where members are at in their respective terms.

EXPLANATION OF FISCAL/FTE IMPACT

None

Supporting Documents:
Attachment A: CAC Member Term Tracking

RESOLUTION

6c. Update on Vermillion River Watershed Community Advisory Committee Member Terms and Status

Information only.

CAC MEMBER TERMS

	Previous Incumbent Term End	Appointment Date	Interim Term Expiration Date**	1st Full Term Expiration Date	2nd Full Term Expiration Date*	Eligibility Ends**
John Nicolai	12/31/2024	1/23/2025		12/31/2027	12/31/2030	12/31/2030
Brad Blackett	12/31/2022	3/23/2023	12/31/2025	12/31/2028	12/31/2031	12/31/2031
Andrew Riesgraf	12/31/2020	1/28/2021		12/31/2023	12/31/2026	12/31/2026
James Kotz	12/31/2020	1/28/2021		12/31/2023	12/31/2026	12/31/2026
Sandra Weber	12/31/2021	12/1/2022	12/31/2024	12/31/2027	12/31/2030	12/31/2030
Vacant						
Joshua Borton	12/31/2016	7/27/2017	12/31/2019	12/31/2022	12/31/2025	12/31/2025
Kevin Chamberlain	12/31/2022	6/22/2023	12/31/2025	12/31/2028	12/31/2031	12/31/2031
Steve Hamrick	12/31/2017	6/25/2020	12/31/2020	12/31/2023	12/31/2026	12/31/2026

*If a member chooses to continue serving on the VRWCAC for a second full term, this would be their formal term end date.

** When appointed to finish out the term of an existing position on the CAC, the appointee is eligible to finish that term and serve two full three year terms in addition.

Eligibility reflects the full period that could be served by a current incumbent or an appointee to a currently vacant position.

6d. Summary of Comments Receiving During the 60-Day Review of the Draft 2026-2035 Vermillion River Watershed Management Plan

Meeting Date: 11/19/2025
Item Type: Regular-Information
Contact: Kelly Perrine
Telephone: 952-891-7002
Prepared by: Travis Thiel

PURPOSE/ACTION REQUESTED

- Information only. Staff will provide a summary of the comments received during the 60-day review of the Draft 2026-2035 Vermillion River Watershed Management Plan.

SUMMARY

Minnesota Stat. 103B.231 requires watershed management organizations to prepare and adopt a watershed management plan at least every 10 years. Staff have prepared a draft 2026-2035 Vermillion River Watershed Management Plan (WMP) that will be adopted in early 2026. Based on requirements of Minnesota Stat.103B.231, Subd. 7. the draft WMP must be released for a 60-day review and comment period to all counties, the Metropolitan Council, the state review agencies, the Minnesota Board of Water and Soil Resources, soil and water conservation districts, towns, and statutory and home rule charter cities having territory within the watershed. Staff released the WMP for 60-day review on August 28, 2025, until October 28, 2025.

Comments were received from the following:

- City of Apple Valley
- Dakota County
- Friends of the Mississippi River
- Metropolitan Council
- Minnesota Board of Water and Soil Resources
- Minnesota Department of Health
- Minnesota Department of Natural Resources
- Minnesota Pollution Control Agency
- City of Rosemount
- Scott County

A summary spreadsheet has been prepared that includes all comments received from each respective organization and is being provided for your information. In general, comments will not require significant revisions to the WMP. Formal responses must be prepared and sent to each organization who provided comments.

EXPLANATION OF FISCAL/FTE IMPACT

None

Supporting Documents:
Attachment A: WMP 60-Day Review Comments Received

RESOLUTION

6d. Summary of Comments Receiving During the 60-Day Review of the Draft 2026-2035 Vermillion River Watershed Management Plan

Information only.

Attachment A: 60-Day Review Comments received on the draft 2026-2035 Vermillion River Watershed Management Plan

Commenting Agency	Comment Text (verbatim)
Metropolitan Council	Staff commends the VRWJPO for developing a watershed management plan that includes an inventory of its land and water resources, prioritization of issues, associated goals, and strategies to address its most important resources through a community guided collaborative scientific approach. Staff commend the VRWJPO for developing a watershed management plan that includes a thoughtful overview of the makeup of the watershed, as well as discussion of what makes this watershed unique, along with a comprehensive listing of issues, associated goals, policies, and strategies. Met Council staff also applaud the inclusion of an implementation plan and action audit that demonstrates progress and supports investment prioritization. Creating a section that highlights what's new would support improved understanding of the plan. This may also be included in the executive summary. Page 4, Groundwater Supply. This section could be strengthened by including language that describes the role groundwater plays in supporting baseflows and ecosystem function in the watershed. Table E-1. The actions listed in this table could benefit from the identification and inclusion of success criteria. These criteria would support the goals outlined in Figure 1-1, section 2, and the action audit described in section 3.1. These criteria could be informed by additional engagement with partnering agencies, communities, and stakeholders. Section 2.5 Groundwater Supply, Page 21. Lawn and landscape irrigation are major contributors to inefficient water use and likely growing concerns as communities continue to grow and develop within the watershed. While this section identifies agricultural irrigation and indoor appliance efficiency as topics of importance, it could be strengthened by including outdoor water use efficiency. Section 2.6, Page 22, Climate Resilience. This section could benefit from discussion that describes the multiple benefits of adaptive actions and nature-based approaches to stormwater management, stream and habitat restoration, and the watershed's communities. Appendix B, Land Use and Water Impacts. The role of groundwater quantity and quality protection could be expanded and clarified. A continual supply of clean cool groundwater is essential for the river and watershed function, and land use changes that drive increased water demands or create additional pollution risk can lead to negative impacts. It's vital that communities proactively consider potential impacts and associated effect on communities and local economies, when land use decisions are being made. Section 7.2, Page D-23, Erosion and Sediment Control Standards Regulation. Remove the second acre from the first sentence (change "… more acre…" to … more…). Section 7.3, Page D-23, Erosion and Sediment Control Standards Criteria. Remove the second acre from the first sentence (change "… more acre…" to … more…).
City of Apple Valley	The City is very supportive of the goals, strategies, and intended activities outlined in the plan. Overall, the plan was well-laid out and included useful information on tactics the JPO will utilize to address its goals. WQ-4: Implementing projects identified in the City of Apple Valley East Lake Subwatershed Assessment. Apple Valley will look forward to implementing projects within the subwatershed, especially as redevelopment activities take place. SW-7: Implementing projects identified withing the Long and Farquar TML and the Long and Farquar Pond Feasibility Analysis. Apple Valley continues to pursue projects identified in these studies and looks forward to continued partnership. NE-12: In lake management projects identified within the Long and Farquar TMDL Implementation Plan. Apple Valley is very interested in continuing approaches to tackle internal loading within these lakes. Document Usability: A plan with "Clickable" Table of Contents provides a better user experience. Consider utilizing links for the Appendices and Figures. Alimagnet Lake, B-25: This lake is also regularly aerated with an in-lake aeration system and has a lift station that operates the lake outlet. Long and Farquar Lakes, B-25: Farquar Lake is regularly aerated throughout the winter. You may wish to mention this. In addition, Long Lake has been on a 5-year partial drawdown cycle.
	This Plan was a pleasure to read; it's well-written, well-organized, visually appealing, and utilizes plain language for increased accessibility to a broad audience of constituents and partners. Additionally, we would like to thank the VRWJPO for including many of the priorities submitted in our early input letter including climate change and resiliency as well as providing quantifiable targets for pollution reductions in the implementation section. This was a pleasure to read! The plan is extremely well-written, well-organized, and visually appealing. Very nice work!

Minnesota Board of Water and Soil Resources	The VRWJPO did an excellent job with the public and stakeholder engagement process and issue prioritization; both are well-documented in the plan and appendix. The goals, objectives, and action items clearly support the priorities that surfaced during the engagement and assessment process. Thank you for considering many of the priorities submitted in our early input letter, particularly climate resiliency and cloride pollution. Consider including a map with labels on the major surface water resources to orient the reader to the watershed. While the reader can identify many of the water bodies by utilizing the text, subwatershed inset maps, and public waters map (among others), it would be helpful to have one overview map that clearly identifies the water resources. It appears as though the "Local Government Plan Implementation" section is meant to fulfill the content requirement described in MR 8410.0050 F. However, the intent of this requirement is to briefly describe who does what to ensure that the standards in this plan are fully implemented to protect watershed resources, e.g. "LGUs are responsible for permitting and implementation of local controls to ensure they meet or exceed the VRWJPO's standards". This could be a simple statement of responsibility, based on the information provided on pages 43-44 and in Appendix D. Then, you could remove the LWMP process detail and combine it with the information in Section 1.5, p. 14 to minimize redundancy. This chapter does a great job framing the plan, providing big-picture changes that have taken place since the previous plan was developed, summarizing the engagement process, and describing the plan's structure. The main body of the plan is missing a description of the degree to which a LWMP can adopt the JPO's plan by reference. It's noted that the information appears in Appendix D on p. D-5, and this is sufficient to meet plan content requirements. However, appendices are considered part of the plan and, as such, they are subject to amendment procedures should any changes be made during the lifetime of the plan. Therefore, BWSR suggests considering whether policy documents (e.g., standards) should be included by reference rather than as appendices. Regardless of whether the JPO's standards are referenced or attached, also suggested to include the "adoption by reference" language from Appendix D in Section 1.5 for completeness. Please add the requirement for local water plans to be adopted not more than two years before the local comprehensive plan is due. Despite the excellent prioritization of the objectives and topics of importance (TOI), having two different, yet related, frameworks seems to muddle the implementation priorities. For example, on p. 18, projects that reduce nutrients, including nitrate, is a high priority TOI. But, protecting GW quality is a medium priority objective. How will the JPO decide what priority level to assign to a project where the primary pollutant reduced is nitrate with primary benefit to GW? Another example is on p. 19: Implementing infiltration practices is a high priority objective, but infiltration BMPs are a medium-priority TOI. Yet, infiltration practices in the implementation table (SW1-SW3) are high priorities. Or on p. 23, where improving high-priority water resource environments is a high priority objective, but in-stream habitat and in-lake resotrations are medium and low TOIs, respectively. However, the TOIs are GREAT in Section 3 when utilized to illustrate project targeting. See related comment on Section 3, below. Regarding measurable goals: BWSR acknowledges and greatly appreciates the inclusion of target pollution reductions as part of the implementation section. However, these are not quite the same as having measurable goals for the plan. The outcomes of action items can - and should - contribute to setting measurable goals, but they are only a part of the overall plan outcome. In general, most of the plan goals, as written, are unclear in how they will achieve *measurable progress* in protecting and restoring VRWJPO's resources. How will you know how much progress you are making on "protecting and improving" resources without quanifiable benchmarks? The great news is that you've compiled much of the data needed to create metrics for these goals, noting that Table 3-1 does an excellent job summarizing past measurable accomplishments and Table 3-16 includes potential measurable outcomes (e.g. pollution reductions) and outputs (e.g. number of projects) for action items. These data could be used to reframe the goals into something objectively measurable; specific examples for some of the goals are provided in comments, below. For more information and examples regarding measurable goals, see "Setting Measurable Goals" on this page: https://bwsr.state.mn.us/planning-information Surface water quality goals of "protect and improve" all surfacewater and groundwater resources are vague. While the JPO has an abundance of monitoring data that can demonstrate steady or improving conditions, the goal lacks metrics by which to measure success or failure. Consider using data from Tables 3-1 and 3-16 to inform the goals, e.g. "Protect and improve surface water quality by removing XXXX tons of TSS and YYY pounds of TP per year from surface waters." You've done the hard work of estimating reductions; now just use those estimates to create a target for pollution reductions. Alternatively, you could focus on monitoring data and/or priority resources, e.g. "remove XYZ lake and ABC tributary from the impaired waters list". Goal of "reduce runoff rate and volume" is also vague. Reduce by how much? Where? How will you measure success? Similarly, "protect and improve groundwater aquifer supply" is vague. Groundwater goals can be tricky to quantify, particularly when there are many other partners also doing groundwater work. However, where and how can the JPO specifically support these efforts? Are there areas of the watershed that could be targeted for BMPs, particularly those areas and/or actions outlined in the County Groundwater Plan and other relevant plans?

BWSR greatly appreciates the inclusion of proactive resiliency-related goals that promote adaptation to our rapidly changing climate. These actions will help preserve natural resources, protect property, and foster smart development within the Vermillion River Watershed. However, as Atlas 15 is rolled out, how will the JPO ensure that municipalities are utlizing the most up-to-date data for planning and design to ensure resiliency and resource protection within their jurisdictions?

Please add goals for wetland management to meet plan content requirements. This section contains a TOI for wetland restoration and the implementation table has at least two wetland management goals (NE-6 and NE-7), so perhaps you can adapt identified action items into a measurable goal for wetlands.

Excellent summary and evaluation of accomplishments in the previous plan, particularly Table 3-1; can't wait to see what you accomplish over the next 10 years!
Can you clarify what is meant by "greatest VRWJPO benefit" with respect to the first bullet point?
In this section, the targeting by TOIs is excellent and much less confusing than in Section 2. This section is great for providing direction to the JPO to help meet the overall Plan goals and objectives and provides a roadmap for prioritized implementation.

Please provide a reference to the Watershed Project Partner Maintenance Policy, e.g., is it on the VRWJPO web page?

Thank you for providing a clear, concise description of how the JPO's standards will be implemented and for clearly distinguishing between the responsibilities of the JPO and local governments.

BWSR appreciates the inclusion of target resource/audience, priority level, objective, and outcome columns in the implementation tables. While not required, these are important components for public transparency, prioritization, and tracking progress.
If it's possible to combine the information from Tables 3-14, 3-15 and 3-16 into one big table, it would be easier to see the full scale of implementation over time and associated outcomes without having to flip from one page to another to another.

As previously noted, BWSR greatly appreciates the inclusion of outcomes and outputs associated with implementation activities. However, success is difficult to measure when the metric is "up to X" reductions/projects/reports, etc. Is doing 1 out of 4 things sufficient, or 1 of 12 things? Suggest providing a single number or a range as a benchmark by which to measure progress toward plan goals over the next 10 years.

Recommend rounding the estimated pollutant reductions to whole numbers.
There's a mix of "reductions" and "removals" for the same pollutants. Is there a difference, or should they all be the same? If there's a reason for the difference, please clarify.

What is the Vermillion River Watershed Stewardship Grant? I don't see anything on the website about it.

Appreciate the comprehensive list of references, including assessments, studies, and local, regional, and state plans. However, there are no Met Council planning documents, e.g. the Metropolitan Area Master Water Supply Plan, on the list.

The land and water summary provides a comprehensive yet broadly accessible overview of the watershed's resources, demographics, climate etc. and provides an essential framework for developing plan priorities. The maps, also, are very well done. That being said, some maps could be a little larger, e.g. B-5, where the legend font is small (granted, the reader can zoom in on a screen, but bigger would be nice!).

Figures B-21, B-22, and B-23 appear to be *average* annual (or January) min/max temps, not just min/max temps, correct? It's not clear from the text or the captions, however.
The subwatershed inset maps are great! Also suggest including a larger map that shows all of the subwatersheds in one panel.
Note that the DNR is in the process of updating the Public Waters Inventory over the next several years: https://www.dnr.state.mn.us/waters/watermgmt_section/pwi/update.html

Are there any water bodies that are nearly/barely impaired? If so, could these help inform your implementation priorities, e.g. the objectives that focus on removing water resources from the impaired waters list and preventing new impairments? Which water bodies fall into these categories?

Figure B-92 is great; it's very helpful for understanding stormwater infrastructure within the watershed. Note that MN DOT within the metro is also covered under an MS4 general permit.

Please include data for or references to 100-year flood levels and 100-year discharges of key locations.

Executive Summary (page 1): The first paragraph states that the Vermillion River Watershed is one of the state's 81 major watersheds, as denoted by an 8-diget Hydrologic Unit Code (HUC). However, it does not appear that 8-digit HUC is identified anywhere in the Plan. If the HUC is referenced, recommend providing that number.

Section One (page 10): States there was moderate to severe drought in 2022, 2023, and 2024. Should this be 2021, 2022, and 2023?

Dakota County Environmental Resources Department	General Comment, Section Two and Section Three: The 2020-2030 Dakota County Groundwater Plan, and subsequent Agriculture Chemical Reduction Effort (ACRE) Plan, identified agriculture as a major source of nitrate contamination in groundwater within the Vermillion River Watershed. In addition, the draft Minnesota Nutrient Reduction Strategy (July 2025) identified agriculture as a major source of phosphorus (56%) and nitrogen (78%) to the Mississippi River. Both the ACRE Plan and the Minnesota Nutrient Reduction Strategy identified one of the key practices to reduce nutrient leaching and runoff is increased adoption of continuous living cover across the landscape (e.g., additional perennial corps and cover crops). However, it does not appear that actions to support increasing continuous living cover are incorporated into the Water Quality priorities or implementation plan (page 18, 45- 46). Soil health initiatives appear to be incorporated into other goals, but there is some confusion of the priority level. Specifically, (1) soil health initiatives, such as cover crops, are identified as a high priority topic under Groundwater Supply in Section Two (page 21), but medium priority in the implementation table (page 49); (2) soil health is also identified as a medium priority under Natural Environments (page 23, 51). Consider if soil health initiatives, such as continuous living cover, should be a higher priority under the Water Quality Goal since this strategy has been identified as a key component to improving water quality in both the Dakota County Groundwater and ACRE Plans, and the Minnesota Nutrient Reduction Strategy for nitrate leaching, total phosphorous runoff, and sediment loss. Recommend reviewing the priority level for soil health initiatives and ensure this is consistent across sections two and three; and if it is identified as an action in different goals, consider if it should have the same priority level to reduce any conflicts. Section Three (page 39): The plan identified priority projects in "Areas that have pesticide and/or herbicide concentrations above health risk standards based on 2001-2019" monitoring data. The Minnesota Department of Agriculture (MDA) has continued to conduct annual pesticide monitoring in Dakota County. Recommend updating this sentence to state "Areas that have pesticide and/or herbicide concentrations above health risk standards based on 2001-2024 Dakota County and MDA monitoring data, and future monitoring results". Section Three (page 40): The Metropolitan Council Master Water Supply Plan aquifer drawdown model is referenced here and several other places in the document. The aquifer drawdown model was developed as part of the 2015 Master Water Supply Plan, this 2015 plan was updated as part of the Imagine 2050 Water Supply Plan. The aquifer drawdown map was developed with Metro Model 3, which is in the process of being updated over the next 1-2 years to incorporate updated data and projections in accordance with Imagine 2050. Since updates to the Metro Model could impact priority areas, recommend changing this reference to include future model predictions. For example, could refer to the resources as "Metropolitan Council Master Water Supply Plan and updated Metro Models…" Section Three, Table 3-15, CR1: Consider if the Climate Resiliency Plan could be moved up in the timeline since the MPCA has Grants to prepare Minnesota for climate change, with applications starting in fall 2025. Appendix B, B-10 Groundwater Resources (page B-77 – B-79): Recommend including discussion and a map with vulnerability of Drinking Water Supply Management Areas (DWSMAs) within the watershed. Understanding this connection is especially important due to sensitivity of the groundwater aquifers to surface water pollutants and the river's direct impacts to the City of Hastings drinking water supply. The Minnesota Department of Health (MDH) also has a Source Water Protection Map Viewer. Appendix B, B-10 Groundwater Resources (page B-78): Section states that the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) does not allow appropriation from the Mt. Simon-Hinckley in metropolitan counties unless it is for potable water. Please note this statute was updated in recent years. This now applies to the whole state, not just the metropolitan area.
Dakota County Transportation Department	The Transportation Department has no additional comments regarding the Vermillion River Watershed Management Plan. The Plan's stated objectives and proposed actions align with the strategies and policies identified in Dakota County's 2040 Transportation Plan.
Minnesota Department of Natural Resources	Our Area Hydrologist Taylor Huinker participated in the Technical Advisory Committee as well as provided a DNR priorities letter at the beginning of the process. In addition to the plan being consistent with DNR goals and priorities, the plan provides a strong framework for the Vermillion River Watershed Joint Powers Organization to implement its goals to preserve and improve the overall health of the watershed. Though the plan incorporates most of the DNR goals and priorities, I want to emphasize when projects or education opportunities present themselves, to consider all components of a healthy watershed: hydrology, biology, connectivity, geomorphology, and water quality. For example, when implementing wetland restorations, consider coupling wetland restoration with surrounding native upland vegetation areas to increase water quality, as well as habitat.
	An important note to consider is that the VRWJPO does have a role in groundwater protection. Topics to think about and consider include infiltration, soil health initiatives, and the significant issue of nitrate contamination in local drinking water. Please note that nitrate is not only an issue in the Quaternary aquifers, but in some bedrock aquifers as well, particularly in the Prairie du Chien Group in this watershed.

While there is an action item in the implementation table regarding a Drinking Water Supply Management Area (DWSMA) and these important protection areas are noted a couple of times in Section 3.4 regarding targeting, DWSMAs are not defined or explained anywhere in the Plan. There is no reference to how many DWSMAs are in the watershed, what their vulnerabilities are, or any implications regarding these areas.

In particular, two DWSMAs in the watershed have been listed by the Minnesota Department of Agriculture as Mitigation Level 1 or 2 DWSMAs under the Groundwater Protection Rule. See the detailed comments spreadsheet for suggestions as to how these can be incorporated into the Plan and where there may be opportunities for multiple benefits projects.
As briefly mentioned above, nitrate contamination exists in both the Quaternary aquifers as well as bedrock aquifers, such as the Prairie du Chien Group. Nitrate contamination of drinking water is a significant concern in the watershed that should be acknowledged in the Plan.
Infiltration appears to be the preferred stormwater management strategy for the VRWJPO. However, proper care should be taken to ensure infiltrating waters do not significantly increase the risk to drinking water quality. The VRWJPO should review projects for compliance with state rules and guidance, including water well setback guidance and source water protection guidance. Additional, specific comments are included in the detailed comments spreadsheet.
Overall, the Plan is written in plain language and is well-organized. In particular, the implementation table is easy to follow. We also appreciated the various references to groundwater with regard to chloride and the inclusion of private wells in the Plan.

While there is an action item in the implementation table regarding a Drinking Water Supply Management Area (DWSMA) and they are noted a couple of times in section 3.4 regarding targeting, DWSMAs are not defined or explained anywhere in the plan. There is no reference to how many DWSMAs are in the watershed, what their vulnerabilities are, any implications, etc. Strongly suggest including this information, at minimum, in Appendix B: Land and Water Resources Inventory. This inventory should include DWSMA information as it is to present "the condition of resources within [the watershed' boundaries, helping to inform issues, and actions to address said issues". MDH SWP staff are happy to provide definitions and/or other relevant wording upon request. Additionally, consider including a figure of the DWSMAs in the watershed and their vulnerability in the plan and/or linking to MDH's online map viewer: https://www.health.state.mn.us/communities/environment/water/swp/mapviewer.html. Shapefiles are available for download at the link below, with the exception of Emergency Response Areas (ERAs). Shapefiles of ERAs can be provided upon request, however, they are considered non-public information, so they should not be included in any figures in the plan.

Overall, consider the potential for multiple benefits, especially within the implementation table. Some opportunities are noted in individual comments below, but for assistance with identifying opportunities to add or note groundwater benefits in other projects, please reach out to MDH SWP staff.

The VRWJPO has a part to play in protecting groundwater, as noted on page D-4 within the VRWJPO Standards. Infiltration appears to be the preferred stormwater management strategy. However, proper care should be taken to ensure infiltrating waters do not significantly increase the risk to drinking water. The VRWJPO should review projects for compliance with state rules and guidance including water well setback guidance and source water protection guidance. Additional, specific comments are included throughout the remainder of our comments.

There are instances where reuse may not be appropriate or safe for human health. When discussing reuse, suggest adding "where protective of human health". The following are instances where reuse is discussed:
- Stormwater Management Issues, Goals, Objectives, and Topics of Importance (pages 19-20, 33, 40)
- Climate Resilience Issues, Goals, Objectives, and Topics of Importance (pages 22, 35, 41)
- Table 3-14: Implementation Plan items WQ-3, WQ-4, SW-4, SW-5 (pages 45-48).

A particularly place where this should be emphasized is within the targeting section on pages 40 and 41).

Consider if a clearly labeled subwatershed map with other relevant layers like city boundaries could be added to the plan. It was a bit difficult to figure out where certain projects are planned to take place when reviewing the implementation table.
Ensure that goals are measurable. Having measurable outcomes in table 3-16 is helpful, but without it being very clearly paired with a goal, it is difficult to assess the goals.
Consider expanding on the reference(s) to the Dakota County Groundwater Plan. Currently, it appears the groundwater plan is only referenced in terms of groundwater supply/quantity. Are there items in the groundwater plan related to quality that the VRWJPO can incorporate?

There is very minimal mention of nitrate contamination in groundwater in the plan. Nitrate contamination of groundwater is a significant issue in the watershed and is not limited to surficial/Quaternary groundwater. See other comments below with more specific recommendations.

While what is included for groundwater is true, the VRWJPO can also ensure projects do not negatively impact drinking water quality. Consider noting this as another role for the VRWJPO.

Minnesota Department of Health	While infiltration is an important tool for stormwater management, it can negatively impact groundwater quality in some areas. Ensure that infiltration is promoted in areas that make sense and align with MDH and MPCA guidelines, even when a Construction Stormwater General Permit is not required. This includes restoring or enhancing "natural infiltration" in some cases. More info is available here, or feel free to contact MDH SWP staff: https://stormwater.pca.state.mn.us/stormwater_and_wellhead_protection. This section states that "Communities within the Watershed rely primarily on groundwater aquifers for drinking water, whether supplied via municipal or private wells." It is assumed that this is referring to the City of Burnsville obtaining some of its drinking water from the Kramer Quarry, but this is not explained. Consider explaining this statement. While infiltration is an important tool for stormwater management that can benefit groundwater quantity in some areas, it can negatively impact groundwater quality in some areas as well. Ensure that infiltration is promoted in areas that make sense and align with MDH and MPCA guidelines, even when a Construction Stormwater General Permit is not required. This includes restoring or enhancing "natural infiltration" in some cases. More info is available here, or feel free to contact MDH SWP staff: https://stormwater.pca.state.mn.us/stormwater_and_wellhead_protection. Soil health initiatives can also benefit groundwater quality, particularly within the Hastings DWSMA, which has been listed by MDA as a Mitigation Level 2 DWSMA under the Groundwater Protection Rule. MDA has established a Local Advisory Team for the area and, in consultation with them, has developed and approved a list of BMPs and Alternative Management Tools that are practicable and appropriate for protecting groundwater within this DWSMA. These are voluntary at this time, but have the potential to be required in the future if enough practices are not implemented. Consider the benefits to groundwater quality from soil health in addition to just quantity, which is the subject of the Groundwater Supply Issue Category. Contact MDA for more information or visit this webpage: https://www.mda.state.mn.us/hastings-dwsma. MDH SWP staff can also connect watershed staff with Minnesota Rural Water Association staff that specialize in agriculture and source water protection. This section notes that "Groundwater sensitivities and supplies" were used to establish priority issues, referencing Appendix B, but DWSMAs were not defined or explained in the main body of the plan nor in Appendix B. See comment #1. For nutrients, consider targeting vulnerable groundwater areas, particularly the DWSMAs for Rosemount and Hastings, which have both been listed by MDA as Mitigation Level 1 and 2 DWSMAs, respectively. Multiple benefits projects can allow for additional funding and efficient use of resources. Like to see groundwater chloride included here - great! The filtration BMPs section implies that infiltration BMPs will not be used in the areas listed in the fourth bullet point, which is good, but consider that there are other areas where infiltration is not recommended, not allowed, or not allowed without a higher level of engineering review. See other comments regarding infiltration for the link to MDH and MPCA guidance/requirements. MDH SWP staff are available to assist at a high level and at a project level as needed. However, the special section in the next column about requirements is noted and appreciated. Consider if this could be relocated or laid out differently to note that is applies to various areas of this section, as opposed to being its own type of project and targeting criteria. It is appreciated that soil health initiatives including DWSMAs as a targeting criteria. Consider specifically calling out the Rosemount and/or Hastings DWSMAs, as they have been listed by MDA as Mitigation Level 1 and 2 DWSMAs, respectively. Other vulnerable DWSMAs could also be good places to focus these efforts if options in these two DWSMAs are exhausted. See previous comments regarding considerations for infiltration projects and practices. It is unclear exactly where in the subwatershed these projects will take place, so please note that this subwatershed includes a fair amount of highly vulnerable DWSMA, some of which is within an Emergency Response Area. Even if a Construction Stormwater General Permit is not required, MDH and MPCA guidelines should still be followed. Suggest adding "where protective of drinking water" when discussing infiltration. This could also add the objective "Support and implement projects, programs, and practices to protection or improve groundwater quality." MDH SWP staff would be happy to assist with evaluating specific infiltration projects for their appropriateness regarding groundwater and drinking water protection. Note that geospatial data for Emergency Response Areas is not publicly available, but you may request this from MDH directly. It is unclear exactly where in the subwatershed these projects will take place, so please note that this subwatershed includes a fair amount of highly vulnerable DWSMA, some of which is within an Emergency Response Area. Even if a Construction Stormwater General Permit is not required, MDH and MPCA guidelines should still be followed. Suggest adding "where protective of drinking water" when discussing infiltration. This could also add the objective "Support and implement projects, programs, and practices to protection or improve groundwater quality." MDH SWP staff would be happy to assist with evaluating specific infiltration projects for their appropriateness regarding groundwater and drinking water protection. Note that geospatial data for Emergency Response Areas is not publicly available, but you may request this from MDH directly. This is a great project! Please feel free to reach out to MDH for any assistance or collaboration requests. We would be happy to partner with the watershed on this. The Minnesota Rural Water Association staff that works closely with Hastings is also a potential partner - MDH SWP staff would be happy to introduce them to watershed staff. There may also be opportunities for MDH or other drinking water related funding for this project.

	Note that street sweeping can also meet the objective "Support and implement projects, programs, and practices to protection or improve groundwater quality." when completed in a highly vulnerable DWSMA, especially when there is a surface water contribution like with Hastings. Like to see groundwater chloride included here - great! Note that MDH SWP has a new Drinking Water Ambient Monitoring Program that has the ability to work on special projects. There may be projects related to this implementation action that the program would be interested in partnering on. Please contact MDH SWP staff if interested and we can introduce you to staff from that program. It appears that a significant portion of this subwatershed, and nearly the entire city of Hastings, is within a highly vulnerable DWSMA. Suggest adding "where protective of drinking water" when discussing infiltration. This could also add the objective "Support and implement projects, programs, and practices to protection or improve groundwater quality." Note that soil health initiatives are also often beneficial to groundwater quantity and could address the objective of "Support and implement projects, programs, and practices to protection or improve groundwater quality." as well. Ensure any alterations to the landscape, floodplain, etc. do not place wells within a floodplain. Work with Dakota County to evaluate this. Consider a targeted "adopt a drain" campaign within Hasting's highly vulnerable DWSMA surface water contribution area. The action items and action ID do not match with Table 3-14. It appears WQ-9 was jumped over and listed as WQ-10 instead, shifting the rest of the table to be off. Consider including "Agricultural production and waste disposal practices have introduced contamination into groundwater" as a notable way that water resources have been altered through land-use activities. This section states that all residents get their drinking water from groundwater, however, page 21 says that "Communities within the Watershed rely primarily on groundwater aquifers for drinking water, whether supplied via municipal or private wells." It is assumed that the statement on page 21 was taking into consideration that the City of Burnsville obtains some of its drinking water from the Kramer Quarry. The appendix should match the body of the plan. Consider removing "injection wells" as a source of water to an aquifer. This does not apply in the watershed. Check with DNR regarding the source of groundwater that supports the Vermillion River's trout populations. MDH SWP staff believe it should be the Prairie du Chien Group, which is a bedrock aquifer. The Quaternary Aquifers section states that "Quaternary aquifers are not used for municipal or public drinking water supply". However, there are public water suppliers, including municipal suppliers, that use Quaternary aquifers. This should be reworded to state that "Quaternary aquifers are not often used for municipal or public drinking water supply" in the watershed. This section (B-77) notes that high nitrate is an issue in the quaternary aquifers, but does not note that high nitrate is also an issue in the Prairie du Chien Group bedrock aquifer. This is a significant concern in the watershed that should be acknowledged in the plan. Consider removing "in metropolitan counties" to bring the statement up to date with current legislation: https://www.revisor.mn.gov/statutes/cite/103G.271.
Minnesota Pollution Control Agency	The Action Audit section was interesting and a great summary of some of the completed work. Great job of displaying reductions of pollutants (Table 3-1). The tables summarizing the Implementation, Measurable outcomes, and priority areas are in different spots throughout the document. Would it be helpful to accumulate that information in one place. For example: Table 3-16 has WQ-2, up to 3 assessments. To know what those are, a person would have to go find the WQ-2 goal, and then find if there were priority areas for the assessments. Some of the prioritized areas are based on the modeled results that are in the appendix. Summarizing the yearly outputs and stating where the prioritized areas are would be helpful. Some of the measurable outcomes could have more details that would help link to the CIP table. It's good to see the goals with numeric targets (i.e.. TSS reductions) in addition to the number of projects. Are there other opportunities to add details like those to Table 3-16.
	While reviewing the draft plan, some potential typos, formatting errors, omissions, and errors were found. Please see the comments on the attached draft for minor corrections to consider addressing. (included below in this spreadsheet starting in row 132) The City of Rosemount's top stormwater management priority continues to be providing flood protection for homes within our bounds. Currently, hundreds of Rosemount homes are at greater risk of flooding because intercommunity discharge limits set by the VRWJPO do not allow The City to direct stormwater south to the Vermillion River. As such, the City of Rosemount requests VRWJPO consider modifying the established intercommunity flow rates to allow for a temporary or permanent outlet option to the Vermillion River. While Rosemount is currently installing a trunk storm sewer east to the Mississippi River, it may take a significant amount of time to complete, leaving the previously mentioned homes at greater risk.

City of Rosemount	As the City of Rosemount is not the only community with flooding and stormwater quantity concerns, we urge that the VRWJPO provide greater prioritization for water storage and flood management at a coordinated regional intercommunity scale. Developing a Climate Resilience Plan is a great first step, but investigating the feasibility of a watershed-wide pond smart pumping plan is critical to providing flood relief for upstream communities that doesn't put downstream communities at greater risk. The City of Rosemount urges the VRWJPO to continue its collaborative approach with cities and other LGUs in the Watershed. As the VRWJPO completes the proposed Climate Resilience Plan, updates to modeling that affect intercommunity flow, feasibility studies for projects, and any other projects or studies that affect LGU operations, it is key to continue including those communities affected. Not only does it ensure that plans/projects are workable, but it also ensures that there is buy-in when funding and other forms of support are sought. The City is requesting greater financial assistance for flood control and stormwater volume management projects. Financial assistance offered in the past has typically focused on water quality improvements. Putting in projects that reduce flood risk can be expensive and complex. The nearly exclusive focus on providing funding for water quality projects alone, has meant that providing flood protection for critical infrastructure and homes is unnecessarily delayed. This results in a situation where Rosemount residents and businesses are paying taxes to fund projects in other communities without receiving reciprocal benefits to address real high priority concerns that affect human safety and quality of life in their own community. Rosemount was not afforded the privilege of being able to direct stormwater to the Vermillion River because we developed later, adding a significant financial burden to find a solution to storage and flooding concerns that other communities that were afforded that privilege don't have. Let's not forget that the primary concern that drove the creation of watershed law in Minnesota was flooding; providing assistance to address flooding and water quantity concerns should have at least equal weight. The City would appreciate assistance from the Watershed with regards to reviewing conformance of its Comprehensive Surface Water Management Plan (CSWMP) to that of the 2026-2035 VRWJPO WMP. The City requests flexibility with timing in regards to bringing its CSWMP into conformance with the VRWJPO WMP. The City is beginning the process of updating its 10-year comprehensive plan, of which it CSWMP is a part, as required by state law. The City would like to avoid a situation where it is updating its CSWMP and sending it out for comment for conformance with the VRWJPO WMP, only to have to do it again a short time later with regards to the Met Council Comp Plan process. The City's Comp Plan update is not due until late 2028. Page 4: Indent/tab/margin formatting error Page 13: Punctuation: remove comma Page 21: Will VRWJPO be providing an evaluation to cities on whether local plans conform to the watershed plan? Page 26: inconsistent capitalization Page 45: Punctuation is off Page 45: I think this would be better: Temporary storage sedimentation BMPs that pond water and allow for sediment to settle from the water column: wet ponds, stormwater wetlands, hydrodynamic separators, etc. (in reference to an item in the Prioritized Stormwater Management Topics of Importance) Page 52: What does this mean??? (in reference to "Watershed-Wide LGU CIP collaboration") Page 63: Where is this map showing where these are??? (in reference to item NE-7 in the Implementation Table) Page 69: Did you miss one??? (blank space in table) Page 76: Did you miss one??? (blank space in table) Page 85: Didn't this fall through??? (regarding establishing another wetland bank) Page A-1: It would be nice if links were included to these plans. (Appendix A) Page A-2: Where's this? (Potential Wetland Restoration Inventory) Page B-4: Twin Cities Metro Area might be a better term to use since it's defined in statute Page B-4: It would be nice if there was some indication in here of percentage funding coming from each community. Page B-7: Ravenna Township??? (in regards to bullet point on communities projected to transition out of rural agriculture to large-lot rural residential by 2040) Page B-13: Shouldn't there be a full-sized map showing all the subwatersheds??? Page B-16: These links don't work. Page B-20: Needs edit (regarding a sentence in the climate data section of Appendix B) Page B-23: Where is the map showing subwatersheds? Page B-25: [Alimagnet] Lake was stocked with channel cats and possibly other game fish previously. Bass maybe??? Has a winter aerator to improve game fish survival for top down water quality affects. Page B-26: Farquar [Lake] has been stocked with walleyve and has an aerator. Also has CLP (curlyleaf pondweed) Page B-26: Is this still true with some of the wetter years we've been having? (regarding the pump operation in Cobblestone Lake) Page B-26: I think the DNR stocks this one (Cobblestone Lake). Also has eurasian watermillfoil Page B-65: Shouldn't mainstem be one word? Also, should it be capitalized. Page B-65: Consistency with dashes? Page B-66: One word? (referencing "water body")

	Page B-69: Is this labeled incorrectly? Page B-69: this station doesn't do stage? (referring to image of stream flow data at the Vermillion River near Empire gaging station) Page B-70: Birger Pond in Innisfree Park has been monitored through CAMP since 2022. Due east of Farquar. Page B-75: Incorrect label (on a Figure) Page B-75: Then our system shouldn't be shown on the map. Our system largely does not drain to the Vermillion River. (regarding a map of MS4 systems) Page B-83: Did you forget a subsection? Isn't Oak Savana one of the [Ecological Classification] subsections for a large chunk of the watershed? Page B-87: In Empire. (referring to Dakota Woods Dog Park) Page B-87: This does not appear to be available to the general public. Requires an ArcGIS account and password. (referring to a link to a public water access map) Page C-1: Does this require further indent and a differently formatted bullet? Looks like it's a sublist to the the bullet point. Page C-7: I think the Visitor Center is actually in Eagan. None of Lebanon Hills Park is in Rosemount, although parts of Rosemount drain there. Page C-7: Not in the Rosemount or Apple Valley libraries? Page C-13: missed citation Page C-16: Is this a sublist that should be indented? Page D-5: Ordinances aren't required per se. What are required are regulatory controls, and in some cases the LWP and agreements or permit conditions may be sufficient. Page D-7: Might be a good idea to clarify if construction of structures is included: barns, silos, etc. Page D-22: This map (Figure D-1) could maybe use some updating. I see at least 1 water quality corridor that doesn't exist any longer, the North Creek extension into Apple Valley. Page D-23: The dash is inconsistent with use of this term in other locations in this document. Page D-23: LGUs that aren't MS4s are not required under state regulations to ensure that a CSW NPDES Permit is required by a project. This sentence is confusing. Page D-23: Remove dash
Scott County	Generally, Scott County finds the proposed plan well written, and we appreciate the hard work that has gone into developing the plan. Section 2.3: Water Quality Topics of Importance: Projects that address bacteria - Low Priority. Scott County supports this level of priority for the JPO. It aligns with Scott County's priority level. It is important that the VRWJPO remain consistent with this priority level in communications and activity. Changes to the priority level should be discussed with Scott County prior to adopting. Table 3-15: WQ-15 Projects that address E.coli Upper Mainstem Subwatershed: Scott County will continue to support this VRWJPO project. Scott County will not lead, coordinate, or dedicate funds associated with this low-level project. Scott County will support VRWJPO efforts that align with the level of priority and effort identified in the WMP and provide County staff resources when available. Table 3-14: CMR-5 Partner Programs: Please revise the reference to the Scott SWCD Clean Water Education Program to remove the SWCD. The official name of the program is the Scott Clean Water Education Program (SCWEP).
Friends of the Mississippi River	FMR is largely pleased with the draft plan. The plan is straight forward, easy to follow, and focuses on what the JPO deems as most important for water quality. However, the plan largely ignores the impact of upland habitat on water quality and focuses on the benefits of in-stream restoration and green infrastructure improvements. While other watershed districts are recognizing the importance of watershed-level upland habitat protection and restoration and taking a more active role in this work – districts like South Washington Watershed District and the Mississippi Watershed Management Organization, for example – the VRWJPO is not taking this same approach. The benefits of upland habitat protection and restoration for water quality, in-stream habitat quality, and overall resilience are documented and clear: https://iwaponline.com/wqrj/article/59/2/89/101761/Impacts-of-land-use-land-cover-on- water-quality-A Moreover, we have seen these benefits play out in the Vermillion River watershed, where upland habitat restoration projects at places like the Kasel parcel of the DNR's South Branch Vermillion River AMA have resulted in improved in-stream trout habitat and population numbers, due in part to reduced sedimentation and increased provision of diverse insect food sources. However, there is little to no information in the plan that speaks to intact habitats and landscapes, or to a watershed-level focus on land use or habitat protection. For example, in the 'climate resilience' section, there is no mention about landscape-level resilience and the role that intact and healthy habitat – be it grasslands or forests – can plan in water retention, filtration, and mediation. Further, in the 'natural environments' section, a low priority is placed on both improving disturbed landscapes and on upland restoration. If these are both low priority, but intact and restored landscapes offer the benefits identified above, then the plan should at least contain strategies that encourage or engage partners to pursue restoration of disturbed landscapes and the protection and restoration of upland habitat. This doesn't have to be a burden that the JPO pursues alone, but the plan should identify potential partners and roles that the JPO could plan in this important work.

Lastly, the plan presents the itemized priorities of the watershed's property tax levy. Priority #7 is identified as "Protect and enhance fish and wildlife habitat and water recreational facilities." If protecting and enhancing habitat is included as an express priority or purpose of the JPO's funding, then that should be reflected more clearly in the goals and methods of the JPO's work.
The VRWJPO's mission is to "Collaboratively provide education, science, and support to **restore and protect** the Vermillion River watershed's **natural resources** for all who live work and play within its boundaries." Natural resources don't stop at water resources and related infrastructure – nor does the connection of the land and landscape to the health and resiliency of the water.

In addition to a focus on upland habitat, the plan's focus on agricultural lands is also important. As noted in Table B2, agricultural/undeveloped land accounts for over two-thirds of the acreage within the JPO's purview, and "[a]griculture is projected to remain the predominant land use in the watershed for the foreseeable future." The document also notes that agricultural practices such as crop rotation, cover crops, and reduced tillage can mitigate farming's negative impacts to hydrology and soil health [B-9]. We recommend that the Plan echo the findings of the updated MN Nutrient Reduction Strategy (currently in draft) by emphasizing the need for greater adoption of "continuous living cover" farming systems, which prioritize living roots and/or groundcover year-round; continuous living cover systems deliver significant benefits for water quality and can provide habitat for wildlife and diversify farm income streams. For example, the City of Hastings has leased land around its DWSMA for cultivation of Kernza perennial grain and alfalfa, dramatically reducing nutrient leaching to public water supplies; LGUs should work with area farmers to introduce continuous living cover practices at all scales, and seek ways to support the development of supply chains and markets for perennial and winter annual crops.