

MINNESOTA RIVER BOARD

Executive Committee Meeting

Approved Minutes: February 5, 2004
Water Resources Center, MSU Mankato
9:00 a.m. – 11:00 a.m.

Present: MRB Executive Committee: Harlan Madsen, James Ische, and Judy Hanson.
Diane Ovrebo

Call to Order: Chair Harlan Madsen called the meeting to order at 9:30 a.m.

Agenda Items

Legislation: A starting point could be in redefining the duties of the MRB under Minnesota Statutes, Chapter 1037.378 Minnesota River Basin Joint. Modifications can be made to reflect the current status, the merger with MSU Mankato, impaired waters and funding. Language can be included on the MRB name change, appropriation, partnership of the MRB and MSU, implementing the Minnesota River Basin plan done by MPCA, data collection interpretation and reporting, and tracking of conservation practices such as CREP. Further discussion will be held with Ron Harnack regarding taxing authority options and to clarify possible additional authority and responsibilities. There may be the option of a year or two timeframe before a decision would have to be made on changing the funding base. An approach might be to have the state cover the overhead and management of the MRB/Water Resources Center with any local money for local practices, BMPs ad/or projects. One of the points made by Cheryl Heide is that the MRB is comprised of commissioners and there are no direct ties to the state agencies. An anticipated obstacle is equal and fair distribution of money. There are reports that there is money available for projects but the route to access that money is vague. Mr. Harnack indicated that an expectation of the MRB is prioritization of projects.

Judy suggested meeting with Senator Dennis Frederickson or one of his aides, as well as with Ron Harnack for assistance in writing up legislative action via Chapter 1037.378 Minnesota River Basin Joint Powers Board. Subdivision 7 could be deleted and a subdivision can be added on funding. A focus on priorities and vision could also be added. The state may ask the question of what support the counties will provide. The answer is dues and in-kind contributions. The MRB and Water Resources Center can also provide the leadership and vision for the Minnesota River Basin for better continuity; work that the state does not have the time or is not equipped to do. Feedback from Mr. Harnack and Senator Frederickson will be requested. Diane will be contacting them to schedule a meeting to discuss these items. In the meantime, this discussion will be presented to the Full Board on February 23, 2004 for approval and direction.

Hiring Process: The key component for the MRB is involvement in the interview process. The MOU signed by both organizations does not change, nor the components of the position. Any person applying for the position would need to have an understanding and a passion for working with commissioners and local government. This person would also have to be able to work with diverse individuals. This is an ideal time to think about the nature or specifics of this position; a re-clarification of duties. Bob and Diane will revisit the MOU and determine the relevance of the position description. Diane came into the position with an understanding of the MRB and needed to pick up only the skills of operating in the university

setting. A new person hired may have limited background of one or the other. The balance of the two positions that Diane did will have to be defined for this new person. Both organizations may need to take on additional responsibilities of training and provide that person with assistance until he/she is more familiar with the position requirements.

Dues: Letters regarding 2003 dues were sent out in 2002. A few counties have not yet paid. By the end of February Diane will send out invoices along with a letter requesting payment as soon as possible. An invoice for 2004 will be sent out to all member counties.

New Business:

2004 Tillage Transect Survey: An e-mail was received from Larry Gunderson, MPCA and Robin Martinek, NRCS State Agronomist asking if the MRB is interested in seeing this survey completed. If so, is the MRB willing to partner by encouraging participation by county staff in the counties? Guidelines have been established with a set route followed to garner data points in each county. Human error is a possibility so satellite imagery has been proposed. Images can be purchased and then interpretation would need to be done. That interpretation could be done at the Water Resources Center, and a grant might be an option to cover the expense. The Executive Committee requested this be place on the February 23rd agenda.

Partnering: Harlan informed the Executive Committee about a meeting that was held a couple days ago in his county. Les Nelson had called several agencies together to discuss how to better promote CRP practices. An off-shoot of that meeting was formulating ten (10) strategies for water quality improvement that take no additional funding or staff. He will provide information to the Full Board of this meeting and additional actions taken or scheduled by this group.

The next meeting is the Full Board scheduled for February 23, 2004. The meeting adjourned at 11:29 a.m.

Respectfully Submitted:

Diane K. Ovrebo
Director