

Minnesota River Board

Minnesota River Board



A new era of leadership, partnership, and support

From the Chair and Director:

In July of 2006, the Minnesota River Board took a step into the future with new vigor and purpose. The MRB delegates made it clear that the days of simply “getting by” are in the past. By moving forward in a unified manner, we facilitate our progress – progress that has allowed new opportunities to emerge, new partnerships to form, and new support mechanisms to be created. Now is the time to surge ahead. Our new leadership has created a new environment within the MRB – giving us a more active and influential program in resource management of the Minnesota River basin. The MRB, in conjunction with other partners, is forging the way for Clean Water Legacy funding, nutrient trading, ongoing conservation program support, educational opportunities, stakeholder outreach, reduced rate workshops and research projects, and communications in the basin. These are exciting times for the MRB – times that we wanted to share with all of you. Please find the following documents enclosed in this mailing:

- 1) Summary of “What’s New” for the MRB,
- 2) Highlights about why membership in the MRB is important to your county,
- 3) 2007 budget highlights, approved budget, and county dues calculations,
- 4) Strategic plan highlights, and
- 5) A copy of the approved Procedures Guide and Strategic Plan (2006-2010).

The MRB is working hard to elevate Minnesota River issues at the local, regional, state, and federal levels. The past couple of years have been very successful and it is our sincere hope that all of the current counties will stay the course. The attached strategic plan speaks volumes about our level of organization, direction, and vision. To all of the counties that have stood by the MRB through the rough years – thank you. For those that have stepped back, we invite you to rejoin us. The MRB continues to move ahead to serve our members and our supporting partners. Is a fishable and swimmable Minnesota River within reach? If we stop now, we may never know.

Please feel free to contact the Executive Director if you have any questions or desire to have a MRB representative join you for a board meeting or other planning session.

Bill Stangler, MRB Chair

Le Sueur County Commissioner and MRB Chair

Shannon J. Fisher, Executive Director

Minnesota River Board
184 Trafton Science Center South
Minnesota State University, Mankato
Mankato, MN 56001
Phone 507-389-5491

Minnesota River Board Website: www.minnesotariver.org

Minnesota River Board

Minnesota River Board



What's New?

- **Procedures Guide and Strategic Plan (2006-2010)**
 - The MRB has a new document guiding our future
 - The plan is aggressive, comprehensive, and elevates the MRB to a new level
 - For more information, see the attached plan summary and full report
- **Clean Water Legacy Funding Coordination**
 - The MRB will be coordinating applications for implementation funds for the lower Minnesota River low dissolved oxygen TMDL reduction implementation plan
 - At the request of some funding sources, the MRB will be taking an active role in the coordination of Clean Water Legacy and other funding applications that impact broad regions of the basin
- **Nutrient Trading Coordination**
 - The MRB has partnered with AgFlex, MPCA, and other partners to begin building a nutrient trading program in the Minnesota River Basin
 - The MRB will be receiving funding from the NRCS and AgFlex to coordinate basin promotions, training, and funding recipients for its members
- **CREP Funding**
 - The MRB is working with the Minnesota River Watershed Alliance to identify and secure additional funding of CREP acres (residual acres from the original CREP program) in its member counties
- **Integrated Watershed Model Support**
 - The MRB is joining forces with the US Corp of Engineers to develop an integrated watershed model using data from member counties.
 - The model will be made available to help member counties better evaluate the impacts of various BMPs – giving better predictive outcome capacity
- **State Drainage Working Group**
 - The MRB continues to work with the state drainage task force to discuss a series of recommendations that will be sent to the legislature in 2007
 - Director Fisher is representing the 37-county basin at these meetings
- **Communications Coordination**
 - The McKnight Foundation has provided funding for a 3-year Minnesota River Communications Coordinator. This individual will work with the Minnesota River Watershed Alliance, the MRB, the Water Resources Center, and the other participants in the Alliance to promote objective agendas, information exchange, and the identification of common ground among groups with perceived disparate priorities
- **The MRB Newsletter and Website (www.minnesotariver.org)**
 - As part of the new MRB strategic plan, communications will improve. A web site has been developed and a quarterly newsletter will be produced to elevate awareness, educate, and promoting policy and legislation that is favorable to the basin and MRB members

Minnesota River Board

Minnesota River Board



MRB Membership - How Does My County Benefit?

- **We're all in this together – what benefits one among us, benefits us all!**
 - Upstream rural counties benefit from the support of the entire basin to help raise awareness, provide political support, and advance funding opportunities to increase BMP implementation, promote Minnesota River values, support local economies, and elevate Minnesota River concerns across the entire region
 - Downstream urbanizing counties benefit in all of the same ways listed above – benefits improve the quality of waters received in the Metro area and help offset local urban impacts
 - *Impaired waters issues impact everyone.* Although degradation is occurring across a wide geographic area, cumulative impacts in downstream areas often cause the most socioeconomic distress. Upstream land use and stormwater management may cause downstream river segments to be classified as impaired. Impaired waters could catalyze significant restrictions to wastewater treatment expansions, reduce allowable development, and prohibit many land and water use activities – therefore, it is imperative that the downstream counties help support the implementation of water quality BMPs in the upstream counties and that upstream counties accept their roles in the watershed picture
- **Staying in the Loop**
 - Member counties have the inside track on Clean Water Legacy funding, nutrient trading network establishment, and federal funding opportunities
 - As the MRB takes on a greater role in coordinating basin-wide implementation projects in the basin, member counties will have ready access to application processes and proposal development
 - As the nutrient trading network becomes established, member counties needing credits (typically downstream) and those with credits to sell (typically upstream) will need to have an ongoing relationship, such as the MRB
 - Continuous updates on water quality policy and legislation – the director works closely with other interest groups and legislators to stay in tune with what is happening
 - The basin-wide water plan advisory committee will be comprised of MRB members
 - Possibility of MRB members serving on the Clean Water Council
- **Information Sharing**
 - Input on Newsletter coverage, access to the communications coordinator, and exchange of information at regular meetings and through various promotions
- **Technical Support from the Water Resources Center**
 - Member counties can receive free and reduced rate technical services from the Water Resources Center in exchange for your continued support of the MRB
 - The Water Resources Center provides services such as GIS, water quality research, policy development, public outreach, water plan preparation, grant writing, and mapping
 - Member counties have ready access to significant GIS data, technical support, reduced rate mapping services, breaks on research projects expenses
- **Reduced Rates for Conferences and Workshops**
 - Future conferences and workshops will be offering substantial registration fee discounts to participants from member counties
 - Grants are being developed to provide free workshops in member counties
- **Stay on board with the MRB – we represent more than 42% of the counties in the State!**
 - *Through a unified approach we can realize the potential muscle we have!*

Minnesota River Board

Minnesota River Board



2007 Budget Highlights

- **In 2005 – an official survey indicated that 48% of Minnesota River Basin residents were willing to pay for a cleaner Minnesota River (we are happy to share the results with you)**
- The MRB delegates recognize the resident's desires and that we are moving into a new era.
- The 2007 budget was approved by a vote of 17-1 – understanding that without a slightly more aggressive budget, the MRB cannot support the strategic plan initiatives.

- First additional dues request in 5 years.
- State funds made available before 2001 have been supplementing the accounts, but is all gone.

- New funds are starting to roll in from an active grant writing campaign.
 - Grants accounted for approximately \$28,000 in 2005 and 2006
 - Grants for 2007-2009 already total more than \$60,000
 - More grants pending, success is expected on several
 - Grants are project based and we need the dues for administrative costs
 - Grants income extended the life of the current contract with the Water Resources Center, and therefore the life of the MRB, by 6 months.

- 2007 budget represents the needs for an aggressive program – elevating the MRB mission
- Budget increases from 2006 come as a result of the following
 - Staff salary increases (based on state of MN and union requirements)
 - Staff benefits increases (based on state of MN and union requirements)
 - Addition of 2 Executive Committee Conference Calls to save on travel
 - Small increase in anticipated MCIT insurance premium
 - Small increase in Executive Committee per diem allowance (more meetings)
 - Increase in supplies budgets for additional workshops and events
 - Small new budget for awards recognizing water quality projects
 - Additional funds for postage, printing, and supplies for the newsletter and promotions to legislators
 - Increased travel budget for executive director to carry out strategic plan

- Numerous MRB delegates voiced strong support for this budget – indicating that they felt we are heading in the right direction
- Commissioners commented that the MRB is alive – and the future is very promising
- The budget allows the MRB to continue working on
 - Educational and public outreach opportunities, staff training, reduced fees
 - Leveraging state and federal financial support, working with Foundations and agencies to improve cash flow
 - Influence – the MRB speaks for the MN River Basin – when unified, we are a strong force to contend with
 - Reduced rate services from the Water Resources Center
 - Intangibles – networking, gaining program benefits for members, technical guidance, shaping public policy

Minnesota River Board

Minnesota River Board



Strategic Plan Highlights

➤ Procedures Guide and Strategic Plan (2006-2010)

- The first substantial comprehensive guide for the MRB
- Developed by Executive Director Fisher and Commissioners Schueller (Redwood), Dahlvang (Chippewa), Solem (Lac Qui Parle), and Stangler (Le Sueur)
- The plan reviews where we have been and highlights where we are going
- **Statutory Obligations Review** (*new initiatives for each component listed*)
 - Coordination of Comprehensive Clean Up Goals
 - *Compile and summarize water plans – find common goals*
 - *Develop a comprehensive basin-wide water plan, submit triennial MN River Plan*
 - *Open communication lines with South Dakota and Iowa*
 - Development and Use of Monitoring and Data Management Systems
 - *Support services and research of the Water Resources Center*
 - *Increase non-financial support of NGO, watershed, and agency projects and programs*
 - *Support additional data tools development*
 - Conducting Public Meetings
 - *Continue bi-monthly full board and executive committee meetings*
 - *Move 2 meetings/year to different venues to involve local staff and allow project visits*
 - *Work with delegates to improve meeting content*
 - Provision of Informational and Educational Programs
 - *Continue sponsorship of an annual conference*
 - *Provide annual awards to individuals and organizations improving water quality*
 - *Work with watershed districts/projects to sponsor at least 2 workshops each year*
 - *Support the efforts of the Minnesota River Watershed Alliance*
 - *Develop a quarterly newsletter that highlights MRB and local projects and programs*
 - Provision of Progress Reports and Budget Proposals
 - *Reinstitute the completion of annual reports and work plans*
 - *Develop an annual budget for submission to the governor and legislature*
 - *Submit annual reports, work plans, and project proposals to the state for funding*
 - Advising Project Development
 - *Provide copies of the integrated watershed plan to basin stakeholders*
 - *Provide additional support via lobbying, letter writing, and resolutions to water projects*
 - *Provide technical assistance from the Water Resources Center to member counties*
 - *Reconnect with watershed partners to determine how MRB can be of assistance*
 - Administration of Implementation Funds
 - *Work to identify funding sources that will stabilize water quality positions and projects*
 - *Provide greater support to and assist in the advancement of local projects*
 - *Coordinate non-point Clean Water Legacy funding for basin-wide projects*
 - Maintenance of Membership Requirements and Duties
 - *Work with counties to maintain membership and utilize MRB benefits*
 - *Re-establish the technical and citizen advisory committee*
- Resolutions – new plan in place to give the MRB resolutions REAL value
- Visibility and Outreach – new emphasis on professionalism, visibility, and local support
- Work Plan – an action-filled agenda moving the MRB to prominence within 2 years