

Pursuant to notice and due call, a regular meeting of the Upper Minnesota River Watershed District Board of Managers was held Tuesday June 11, 2024 at the district office located at 211 2nd Street SE in Ortonville, MN. Board members present were Holker, Gillespie, Radermacher, Meyer and Bork. Executive Director of the UMRWD, Amber Doschadis, facilitated the meeting with President Wanda Holker. Jordan Roggenbuck, Big Stone County Engineer, was in attendance to discuss permit # 33-24. There were no members of the public present during this meeting.

Holker called the meeting to order at 9:00 am.

Minutes and Expenses

A motion to approve minutes and June expenses was made by Radermacher, seconded by Bork. Motion carried: 5-0.

Big Stone Highway Beardsley Dry Lake Inlet	\$47.55
Houston Engineering #70720 1W1P	\$110.50
Houston Engineering #69140 1W1P	\$1,748.25
League of MN Cities PandC Coverage	\$3,020.00
MN Assoc Counties - Drainage Conference	\$195.00
Discover	\$238.81
Ronglien Dam Road Patch	\$128.59
Big Stone County. Mowing	\$440.00
American Legion #58 Hall Rental	\$150.00
Houston Engineering #71107 BV Diversion Benefits	\$5,659.71

Permit # 33-24

Jordan Roggenbuck, Big Stone County Engineer was present to discuss permit #33-24, which as proposed will re-establish an adequate outlet for Otrey Lake after the historic outlet has seen diminished capacity over time. Roggenbuck discussed project features and longstanding concerns with the drainage system downstream of the proposed outlet. Roggenbuck and Doschadis summarized a meeting they had on site with downstream landowners between Otrey and Bentsen Lake. Roggenbuck submitted an engineer’s statement of no negative impact for the board to consider. A motion was made by Radermacher, seconded by Bork to approve the permit referencing the Engineer’s Letter stating there will be no negative impact from this project and that the County will continue to coordinate with downstream landowners. Motion carried: 5-0.

Whetstone River Restoration

Doschadis reports that contractors were able to collect samples last week for the future Waste Removal with Hedge FLP. These results will give more direction on the necessary elements of the mitigation effort.

Fish Passage in the Upper MN River Watershed

Doschadis reviewed the National Fish Passage Program Award, Little MN River and Whetstone Restoration Projects and notified the board that the SWO will reduce their application request to the America the Beautiful Program down to \$1.3 million.

Browns Valley

Sediment Removal Project is scheduled for this summer, pending site conditions following the wet Spring. Doschadis is working with Roberts, Traverse and Big Stone Counties on tax assessment values for the project impact area, which Houston Engineering will use while revising their original engineers report to assist the board in establishing a benefits roll. MN DNR has initiated the Toelle Coulee Phase 2 project for funding after necessary bonding bill word changes were made this legislative session. Doschadis has drafted agreements and sent to the City of Browns Valley for

their review and approval. Houston Engineering has submitted Task Order 2024-04 for a Feasibility Study, a motion was made by Gillespie, seconded by Meyer approving the task order once a grant agreement has been finalized with MN DNR and the City of Browns Valley. Motion carried: 5-0.

One Watershed, One Plan

Signature Cards Ready to be signed, managers will stop at CenBank following the meeting to sign documents. The work plan has been approved and the Policy Committee will meet in July/ August to finalize planning guidance documents.

Upper Big Stone Lake

Doschadis is working with the county and MnDOT on culvert and road surveys that HEI will use as part of the Climate Resiliency Study in the Upper Big Stone Lake Watershed.

Big Stone Lake

Doschadis summarized discussions with USACE and the NWS. Board members discussed their accounts of previous dam operations and how readings can differ significantly at the staff gage on the south end of Big Stone Lake versus the northern portion of the lake, depending on wind/ wave action. Doschadis also highlighted the datum conversions and historic differences noted in converting from one datum to another. Doschadis brought up historic lake levels readings along with the MN River gage which reads outputs from the Big Stone/ Whetstone Dam to show a historic pattern of lake level management. The USACE staff noted to Doschadis that while they assisted in constructing the current structure in the 1980s, they no longer believe they have control in daily operations or maintenance of the structure. Doschadis presented an email from Artie Arndt with questions regarding lake levels and due to inconsistent conversations he seems to have had with past and present UMRWD Board Managers, Doschadis asked for board consensus on all responses before sending back to Mr. Arndt. The board unanimously agreed to respond to his questions with the following italicized text:

1. When was the policy changed from 968.0 summer water level to the 968.5? *The goal is to operate dam gates in an attentive manner to hold the lake near the summer pool, allowing levels to come up several tenths of a foot above 968 while taking forecasted precipitation, wind and wave action on the staff gage and potential for low water levels/ future drought like conditions into account.*
2. Who made the policy change? *There has not been a policy change.*
3. Who decides what the lake level should be? *The UMRWD Board of Managers appointed the position of Dam Superintendent to our Executive Director/ Administrator who facilitates daily dam operation to attain a board directed summer pool range.*
4. Is there an engineer study to support the higher levels without erosion and property damage issues? *This isn't applicable to summer levels if that is what you are asking.*
5. Is there any studies done on how fast the watershed gets to the lake now vs 1987 when policy was made to hold the lake at 968.0? *No*
6. How has the frequent flooding in recent years been considered in what level to hold the water at now? *The UMRWD Dam Superintendent continues to open all 8 slide gates in the fall, providing valuable storage for potential flood waters the following Spring, summer flooding has not been a factor to date.*

Administrator's Report

A motion was made by Radermacher seconded by Meyer to approve the report, as submitted by Doschadis. Motion Carried: 5-0

The meeting was adjourned at 10:45 am.

Amber Doschadis, Administrator

Gene Meyer, Secretary