

Minnesota State Senate 3-8-22
Environment and Natural Resources Finance Committee
Testimony on behalf of **S.F. 3044**

Chair Senator Ingebrigtsen and Committee Members,

My name is Scott Sparlin, I am the Coordinator/Facilitator for the Minnesota River Congress and the Executive Director of the Coalition for a Clean Minnesota River. This is my 33rd year working on Minnesota River Watershed issues.

We have reached a water management crisis in Minnesota, certainly not limited to anywhere in the state, but especially evident in the Minnesota River Watershed. Due to land use practices both urban and rural we have now reached the point that if we do not begin to both temporarily and permanently store more water, we will continue to experience increased collective, infrastructural, societal, and business losses at an unacceptable rate putting many Minnesotans at risk. Exacerbating this condition is the climatic trend and future prediction of increased rainfalls in short periods of time. The combination of all these factors leads first to small and medium sized tributary streambank erosion. Then the dislodged sediments combined with the increased rate flows enable even more sediments and nutrients to be delivered to our lakes, major tributaries, and main stems where they then flow downstream to the Mississippi River, Lake Pepin and ultimately the Gulf of Mexico.

We are a water blessed state and the time to invest in a major water storage initiative is upon us. The compelling data concerning the need, especially in the Minnesota River Basin, has been thoroughly studied and is well documented. The fact is, most of society has observed and intuitively known this for a long time. We have engineered ourselves into this condition and we also have the technical knowhow to mitigate it. We now need the commitment, and the significant financial resources, to accomplish the goal. In many cases our government (all of us) paid to create the challenges we are faced with. The time is now for all of us to come together for the greater good of future generations of Minnesotans and those downstream. This is not an investment we can ignore, or we will pay much higher prices in short years to come.

It is our belief that we need specifically targeted temporary and permanent water storage funds to be directed to the implementors such as Soil and Water Conservation Districts, Watershed Districts and participating willing landowners.

Scientific Background

Extensive scientific data collected over decades shows clearly that we need to put more water storage on the landscape. Additional water storage will protect infrastructure and improve water quality. Diverse water storage practices, such as replacing historically drained lakes and

wetlands and increasing soil health, will all help to achieve this goal. The climatic trend and future prediction of increased rainfalls in short periods of time will only exacerbate the issue.

The Minnesota River Congress is using the Collaborative for Sediment Source Reduction (CSSR) and Management Options Simulation Model (MOSM) study recommendations in conjunction with the rich datasets available through state agency monitoring, assessment and conservation targeting (WRAPS, TMDLS, 1W1P) to support the case for the need for more water storage. We have enlisted researchers at state agencies and elsewhere who have completed studies to help provide data and documentation (e.g. Patrick Belmont, Karen Gran, Chris Lenhart, Peter Wilcock and numerous others).

After over 3 years and 25 basin-wide meetings attended by a diverse cross section of the population, it has become very apparent that any way water storage in any form can be accomplished is of the utmost priority. Over and over from every part of the basin we heard water storage has to be addressed if we are going to be serious about protecting our infrastructure and improving our surface water. The good news is it can be achieved without adversely affecting agri-business or community development. We simply need it to be realistically funded to the degree it needs to be effective. It already has been prioritized by the implementers. We have written support from numerous entities supporting our efforts to see this come to fruition. Here is a daily growing list of support.

City of Henderson (signed endorsement and resolution)
City of Granite Falls (signed endorsement and resolution)
City of Eden Prairie (signed resolution)
City of Arlington (signed endorsement)
City of Amboy (signed endorsement)
City of New Ulm (signed resolution)
City of Mankato (signed resolution)
City of Olivia (signed endorsement)
City of Nicollet (signed endorsement and resolution)
City of Redwood Falls (signed resolution)
City of Springfield (signed resolution and indorsement)
City of St. Peter (signed endorsement)
City of Winthrop (signed resolution and endorsement)
City of LeSueur (signed resolution and endorsement)
Minnesota Association of Watershed Districts (resolution passed and signed)
Lower Minnesota River Watershed District (resolution passed and signed)
Izaak Walton League MN State Chapter (resolution passed)
Lake Pepin Legacy Alliance (signed endorsement and resolution)
Brown County SWCD (signed endorsement)
Blue Earth County SWCD (signed endorsement)
Martin County SWCD (signed endorsement)
Faribault County SWCD (signed resolution)
Cottonwood County SWCD (signed endorsement)
McCloud County SWCD (verbal endorsement)

Nicollet Conservation Club (signed endorsement)
MASWCD (relative resolution)
Area 6 SWCD (11 Counties) (in principle)
Area 5 SWCD (10 Counties) (in principle)
Friends of Pool 2 (signed endorsement)
Crystal Waters Project (signed endorsement)
Minnesota River Congress (signed endorsement)
New Ulm Area Sport Fishermen (signed endorsement)
Rural Advantage (signed endorsement)
Clean Up the River Environment-CURE (signed endorsement)
The Coalition for a Clean Minnesota River (signed endorsement and resolution)
Redwood Country Farmers Union (resolution passed and signed) (State Pending)
Friends of the Minnesota Valley (signed endorsement)
Izaak Walton League MN Valley Chapter (signed resolution)
Minnesota Center for Environmental Advocacy (signed endorsement)
Anglers for Habitat (signed endorsement)
Minnesota Conservation Federation (signed endorsement)
Fish and Wildlife Legislative Alliance (signed endorsement)
Blue Earth Project (signed endorsement)
Save the Kasota Prairie (signed endorsement)

Thank you for this opportunity and I will gladly answer any questions you may have.

For More Information

Contact Scott Sparlin, Coordinator/Facilitator, Minnesota River Congress
sesparlin@gmail.com (507 276 2280)
<https://www.mnrivercongress.org/>