



704 Highway 75 South | Wheaton, MN 56296

March 31, 2025

Foung Hawj
Chair – Environment, Climate, and Legacy Committee
Minnesota Senate
3231 Minnesota Senate Bldg.
St. Paul, MN 55155

Dear Chair Hawj,

RE: SF1569 – Red River Basin Mediation Agreement Funding

Our organization supports Senate File 1569, which will provide \$350,000 per year for two years to support implementation of the 1998 Red River Basin Flood Mediation Agreement (the “Mediation Agreement”).

The historic Mediation Agreement has brought watershed districts, counties, state and federal agencies, environmental groups, farmers, landowners, citizens, and related groups together for over 25 years. The Mediation Agreement was a positive product of a lawsuit from the late 1980’s between state/federal agencies, multiple Red River watershed districts, and the Red River Watershed Management Board. Following the tenants of the Mediation Agreement allows stakeholders to reduce and limit controversies about how multipurpose flood mitigation and water storage projects are developed and implemented in the Red River Basin.

Minnesota state legislative funding - combined with local matching funds - has been a tried-and-true formula to help initiate on the ground projects to reduce flood damage and to provide environmental benefits. We use and promote the “Red River Basin Model” to manage water in the vast expanse of Northwest Minnesota. The Bois de Sioux Watershed District covers areas of six counties (Big Stone, Grant, Otter Tail, Stevens, Traverse, and Wilkin) whose landowners pay an additional property tax levy that is used for both local water projects and projects for the benefit of the Red River Basin. It is this latter membership, as part of the Red River Watershed Management Board, that coordinates in-kind administrative services and matching cash for the state’s \$350,000 investment in this program.

We utilize a joint Flood Damage Reduction Work Group to implement the Red River’s Mediation Agreement to support targeted local project teams as they develop multipurpose water storage projects that provide both flood damage reduction and natural resources enhancement benefits in the Red River Basin of Minnesota. The core of the Mediation Agreement is the local project team process, which brings local, state and federal partners and stakeholders together at the project concept phase to study a problem and to develop alternatives.

Please consider funding for SF1569. Thank you.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Linda J. Vavra". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Linda" being more prominent.

Linda Vavra, President