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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

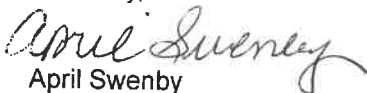
The Sand Hill River Watershed District is in support of Senate File 1569, which allocates \$350,000 annually for two years to help implement the 1998 Red River Basin (RRB) Flood Mediation Agreement. Watershed districts within the RRB contribute in-kind funds to match the state's financial support, and the Red River Watershed Management Board (RRWMB), serving as the fiscal agent for the Mediation Agreement, provides both cash and in-kind contributions.

The Flood Damage Reduction Work Group is responsible for carrying out the Mediation Agreement, which aids local project teams in creating multipurpose water storage projects that not only reduce flood damage but also enhance natural resources within the RRB of Minnesota. A key component of the Mediation Agreement is the local project team process, which fosters collaboration among local, state, and federal partners and stakeholders right from the project's conceptual phase, allowing them to assess issues and explore solutions.

This Mediation Agreement stems from a legal dispute in the late 1980s between state/federal agencies and the RRWMB and its members. It serves to minimize conflicts and streamline the development and implementation of flood mitigation and water storage projects with multiple benefits.

For over 25 years, the Mediation Agreement has united a wide array of groups, including watershed districts, counties, state and federal agencies, environmental organizations, farmers, landowners, and community members. The combination of legislative funding and local matching funds has proven effective in initiating real-world projects that not only reduce flood damage but also deliver environmental benefits. We endorse and utilize the "Red River Basin Model" for water management in Northwest Minnesota. Our watershed district constituents greatly benefit from this funding and depend on this funding and the process laid out in the Mediation Agreement for the institution of projects. We respectfully request your support for SF1569.

Sincerely,


April Swenby
Administrator