

White Earth Reservation Representative to IRRWB

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 (RRB) Flood Mediation Agreement. Watershed districts in the RRB provide in-kind funds as match to state funds and the Red River Watershed Management Board (RRWMB), acting as the fiscal agent for the Mediation Agreement, provides a mixture of cash and in-kind match.

The Flood Damage Reduction Work Group implements the Mediation Agreement, which supports local project teams as they develop multipurpose water storage projects that provide both flood damage reduction and natural resources enhancement benefits in the RRB of Minnesota. The core of the Mediation Agreement is the local project team process, which brings all local, state and federal partners and stakeholders together at the project concept phase to study a problem and to develop alternatives.

The Mediation Agreement is a direct result of a lawsuit in the late 1980's between state/federal agencies and the RRWMB along with its membership. The Mediation Agreement reduces and limits controversies about how multipurpose flood mitigation and water storage projects are developed and implemented.

The Mediation Agreement has brought watershed districts, counties, state and federal agencies, environmental groups, farmers, landowners, citizens, and related groups together for over 25 years. 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 Northwest Minnesota. Please consider funding for SF1569. Thank you.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Mark A. Bellcourt", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Dr. Mark A. Bellcourt, IRRWB Member