



**Background:** The purpose of this document is to illustrate how Minnesota Watersheds (MW) and the Red River Watershed Management Board (RRWMB) can (1) further coordinate prior to, during, and after the conclusion of Minnesota legislative sessions, (2) communicate effectively with our collective membership during legislative sessions, and (3) maximize our collective legislative resources to achieve our legislative goals and priorities.

**1. Communication Prior to Legislative Session:**

**a. Legislative Priorities and Platform Development:** Executive Directors (EDs) from MW and the RRWMB will keep each other informed during the development of legislative priorities and platform development on a continual basis prior to the start of a legislative session. The EDs may also attend MW and RRWMB board or committee meetings and other partner meetings as requested or directed to share legislative information. Other partners may potentially include but not be limited to the Association of Minnesota Counties (AMC), Board of Water and Soil Resources (BWSR), Minnesota Rural Counties (MRC), Minnesota Association of Townships (MAT), Minnesota Association of Soil and Water Conservation Districts (MASWCD), Red River Basin Flood Damage Reduction Work Group (FDRWG), Red River Basin Commission (RRBC), Red River Retention Authority (RRRA), Minnesota Subcommittee on Water Policy, the League of Minnesota Cities (LMC), agricultural groups, and other lobbyists working for MW or RRWMB member watershed districts or watershed management organizations.

**2. Communication During Legislative Session:**

**a. Weekly Communication:** During the legislative session, the MW/RRWMB lobbyists and EDs meet weekly (electronically) with the BWSR, AMC, and MASWCD staff to discuss the week's legislative activities and to plan for the upcoming week. The EDs and the MW/RRWMB lobbyists will meet weekly (electronically) to discuss activities, coordination, and results of legislative activity and to coordinate for the upcoming week. Meetings may also be in person as needed. As a result of this weekly coordination, MW and the RRWMB will be better organized to respond to bills, hearings, and the need to testify in support of or against specific bills or legislative actions. The lobbyists will act or commence their work duties and responsibilities as directed by the EDs of MW and RRWMB. Lobbyists working for a MW or RRWMB member WD or watershed management organization will also be invited to attend the weekly meeting, if they have authority from the organization they represent. Having these lobbyists attend would keep them informed about what MW and RRWMB are doing as a whole and would garner support and assistance, depending on the direction the lobbyists are given.

**b. Action Alerts and Calls to Action:** Will be created by the EDs and distributed to membership electronically indicating:

- i. This issue or concern and how it will affect membership.
- ii. Schedule for hearings or other legislative meetings.
- iii. Steps for membership to take such as making telephone calls, sending letters, emails, text messages, and scheduling in person meetings with individual legislators. Talking points will be jointly developed by MW and

RRWMB when appropriate. MW and RRWMB acknowledge that separate sets of talking points may need to be developed from time to time.

- iv. The need for testimony in support for or against proposed bills and how to coordinate testimony. Talking points will be jointly developed by MW and RRWMB.
  - c. **Bill Tracking:** The EDs will direct lobbyists to track bills affecting membership during the legislative session. An update of bills and legislative activity will be electronically distributed by MW to MW and RRWMB membership monthly and as needed. The RRWMB may distribute electronic supplemental updates to RRWMB membership as needed for those issues specific to the Red River Basin.
  - d. **Joint Letters:** Letters in support or against specific legislation will be developed by the EDs with input from lobbyists for electronic signature by MW and RRWMB leadership or the EDs. Separate letters from MW and RRWMB may also occur depending on the topic or issue.
  - e. **Regulatory Updates:** MW and the RRWMB will coordinate on informing collective membership of regulatory as needed regarding state and federal rules related to but not limited to wetlands, drainage, water quality, and general environmental permitting.
  - f. **Legislative Conference(s):** MW and RRWMB may coordinate on the annual legislative conference and may also schedule other “days on the hill” as needed.
  - g. **Meetings With Legislators:** Large group meetings with legislators may not always be effective or conducive and small groups of MW and RRWMB membership may be organized and called upon to meet with individual legislators during the legislative session for specific issues or proposed bills.
  - h. **Communication Process:** Generally, lobbyists from each organization will report directly to the ED, who will then communicate to their board and or legislative committee. MW and the RRWMB have the same legal counsel, which may advise from time to time on specific legislative matters from a legal perspective.
3. **Communication After Conclusion of Legislative Session:** MW and the RRWMB will coordinate on a post legislative session informative meeting located centrally in the state or will use regional meetings to (A) discuss results of the legislative session, (B) start coordination for the next upcoming legislative session, and (3) prepare for the Drainage Work Group and other work groups or statewide committees that meet outside of the legislative session.
4. **Coordination With Other Partners:** As noted, MW and the RRWMB may need to coordinate with other groups such as AMC, MRC, MAT, LMC, MASWCD, FDRWG, RRBC, RRRRA, Minnesota Subcommittee on Water Policy, other quasi-governmental groups, and agricultural groups prior to, before, and after legislative sessions. The MW and the RRWMB EDs will conduct outreach with EDs of the partner organizations as soon as possible and as needed to discuss areas of potential coordination.

5. **Legislator Watershed Institute:** MW and RRWMB will discuss and scope the development of an institute to educate legislators on the role, duties, and responsibilities of watershed districts, watershed management organizations, FDRWG, RRBC, RRRRA, AMC, MW, and RRWMB. Frequency of the event is to be determined.

Note: MW and the RRWMB agree that this Plan may be adjusted as needed and both parties concur that there may be times when agreement may not occur on specific legislative issues. However, in the spirit of coordination and cooperation, MW and the RRWMB agree to work closely together to meet the purpose of this Plan.