

LRC Water Use Conflict – Public Stakeholder Meeting Summary

Date: November 13, 2025, 2:00 PM - 5:00 PM

Location: Old Village Hall
20 E Main Street, Rice, MN

1. Meeting Overview

- Opening remarks acknowledged the need for continued dialogue and for solutions that work for local residents and agricultural producers.
- Meeting goal: share information on approaches under discussion, hear stakeholder questions, and outline next steps.

2. Presentation Summaries

- 2.1 Beaver Dams
 - Overview of beaver dam analogs as structures that mimic natural beaver dams to promote localized storage, habitat, and moderated flows.
 - Randy Klaphake noted potential benefits such as improved habitat complexity and attenuation of peaks; questions remain about design, permitting, maintenance, and monitoring requirements.
- 2.2 Rice–Skunk Lake
 - Dean Zimmerman presented the hydrology and past practices in the Rice–Skunk Lake area.
 - Stakeholders requested consideration of seasonal/operational timing and off-channel solutions to balance ecological and user needs.

3. Key Discussion Themes & Questions

- Interest in lower-cost, lower-footprint alternatives (e.g., conservation, crop rotation, BDAs, off-channel storage/recharge) versus large mileage conveyance solutions.
- Request to understand how the hydrologic models (GSSHA/MODFLOW) account for local conditions; interest in incorporating 2024 data, refined land cover, and verification of irrigation volumes.
- Questions about governance and long-term O&M responsibilities, including potential funding mechanisms for sustained operations.
- Desire for clear criteria to move concepts from conceptual screening to further analysis, and for a process to retire concepts that do not show value.

4. Clarifications Noted During Meeting

- DNR indicated this is a first-of-its-kind conflict process for Minnesota; permit reductions remain a statutory backstop if no solution is identified.
- Model update efforts will continue; recent updates have begun to integrate newer datasets and correct reporting/land cover inputs as available.
- Any evaluation of conveyance would be for delivery to recharge or off-channel storage, not direct stream augmentation, unless otherwise specified by DNR.

5. Action Items & Next Steps

- Advance model updates and provide a plain-language brief on what has changed and how verification is performed.
- Develop criteria/decision points for moving concepts from conceptual review to further analysis (e.g., hydrologic benefit, feasibility, cost, landowner interest, regulatory fit).
- Coordinate with interested landowners where concepts show potential; document feasibility constraints (site access, floodplain, utilities, regulatory).

- Schedule the next public engagement meeting (December 18) and distribute the agenda with time for model update and alternatives status.