

LRC Water Use Conflict – Public Stakeholder Meeting Minutes

Date: March 12, 2026 2:00 PM

Location: Rice Village Hall (Rice, MN)

1. Meeting Overview (Uma Vempati – Kimley-Horn)

- Uma Vempati started the meeting with an overview of meeting agenda items and a brief progress update.
- It was noted that there were audience members present who had not previously attended an LRC stakeholder meeting.

2. Discussion Items from Previous Meetings (Jason Moeckel – DNR)

- Jason Moeckel shared an overview of topics for which stakeholders had previously requested additional information. The discussion focused around the following topic summaries published to via GovD email on January 13, 2026:
 - LRC Focus Area, 2009 Benton County SWCD Stressor Report, and 2015 TMDL Report
 - LRC Water Quality and State Regulatory Standards
 - LRC Trout Stream Designation History
 - Rice-Skunk Lake Wildlife Management Area and Dam Operations
- Jason reviewed each summary and answered questions regarding each topic, which focused primarily around the operation of the Rice-Skunk Lake WMA and Dam Operations.
- Jason also discussed the project's goals and the proposed timeline through November 2027, which is available in the meeting presentation.

3. Review of Model Updates (Glen Champion – DNR)

- Glen Champion provided a progress update on the status of the groundwater model. He noted that it is approaching the point of stakeholder review, but at the time of the meeting was not yet completed.
- Glen reviewed changes that have been made to the model since fall of 2025 and provided draft examples of what model output will look like when the model is completed.

4. Review of Management Approaches

- Impoundment Areas (Mat Cox – Kimley-Horn)
 - Mat Cox presented impoundment areas as a management approach, which have been discussed at previous meetings. He clarified that this approach would involve placing small concrete berms in LRC to create groundwater recharge areas, but would not involve augmenting the recharge area with water imported from farther away.
 - Mat noted that since the November 13, 2025 public stakeholder meeting, Kimley-Horn has progressed the impoundment areas approach by conducting outreach with stakeholders who may be willing to host an impoundment area and incorporating additional criteria into site-selection criteria.
- Beaver Dam Analogs (Emily Schabert – Kimley-Horn)
 - Emily Schabert presented beaver dam analogs (BDAs) as a management approach. Some stakeholders have advocated for BDAs in previous meetings.

- Using BDAs as a management approach would involve humans building small dams that mimic real beaver dams by using mud, logs, and brush. BDA sites are selected to minimize impact to any farm operations or other human activity.
- Emily noted that these are a less expensive solution than others proposed but may attract live beavers back to the area, requiring wildlife management for coexistence.
- Emily discussed the proposed BDA Pilot Project intended to take place at Baker Lake Nursery, and the field work that the Kimley-Horn team completed to identify appropriate BDA locations for the Pilot Project.
- Crop Rotations (Brent Beste – DNR)
 - Brent Beste discussed data analysis completed on crop reports and associated water usage.
 - Brent showed box and whisker plots with statistical data from crop reports, showing the variation in irrigation rates of potatoes, corn, alfalfa, and other crop types.
 - Brent presented evidence that due to the variability of crop types and irrigation rates, crop rotations are not likely to be a standalone management solution to the LRC project, but that they could work in tandem with other approaches.

5. Questions and Discussion

- A question was raised around potential partnership between the project team and stakeholders and the Morrison County SWCD's wetland restoration program. Potential connections will be evaluated in the coming months.