

## Stakeholder Engagement Meeting Summary

**Date:** November 19, 2024  
**Time:** 3:00 PM – 5:00 PM  
**Location:** Old Village Hall - 20 E Main Street, Rice, MN 56367

*This summary was prepared by Kimley-Horn as a representation of what was shared at the stakeholder meeting. All written comments are reported verbatim unless otherwise noted. Discussion comments are a summary of the various thoughts as recorded by group facilitators.*

### ATTENDEES:

- Approximately 50 stakeholders were observed in attendance. 38 people signed in.

### KEY TAKEAWAYS:

- Many operators/irrigators have lived and/or farmed in this area for a long time.
- We heard several concerns about the project, including that the model is flawed. Many questioned if there is actually a problem and if Little Rock Creek should continue to be a designated trout stream.
- People are concerned about limiting water and the effects that will have on their livelihood. They don't like the uncertainty of not knowing what will happen and if they have a farm to pass down to their kids. They worry about the long-term feasibility of any solution, as well as the potential high costs.
- There is a strong desire for simple and dependable solution; to get it right the first time and not come back to landowners.
- When it comes to potential solutions, people tend to prefer stream augmentation from within the Zone of Influence. Many also commented on the need for conservation options.

### INPUT OPPORTUNITY #1 – MENTIMETER EXERCISE

- **How long have you lived/farmed in this area?** (24 responders)
  - About 2/3 of responders have lived or farmed in the area for more than 20 years, with several more than 60 years or “my whole life.”
- **What concerns you most about this project?** (Mentimeter/large group discussion, with some reiterated in small group discussions). Items in **bold** were mentioned multiple times.
  - **Availability of water/water restrictions/no water**
  - Impacts to the community
  - DNR, government overreach
  - Efficiency
  - Fairness for landowners
  - **Uncertainty, family legacy**
  - Waste of good soil
  - Keeping my permit
  - Lack of common sense/there is no problem
  - **Long term feasibility/sustainability**
  - Keeping my job

- Doing nothing
- Losing money
- **The model is flawed**
- Reduced yields/not enough food for MN
- Ongoing research
- “Pop water crops”
- Quality
- Trying to satisfy a model
- Wasting capital
- **Cost of solutions**

## **THOUGHTS ON POTENTIAL WATER APPROACHES**

*Smaller discussion groups*

### **General**

- Acknowledge there will still be dry creek periods

### **Conservation**

- Why isn't conservation (alone) an option?

### **Augmentation**

- Augmenting streamflow – how many wells would this be?
- Augmenting streamflow seems the easiest because a supplemental well is easier to drill, can turn on/off when needed, and has lowest infrastructure cost
- Augment from within the Zone of Influence because the zone recharges

### **Groundwater Recharge**

- Perception among stakeholders that DNR has 30 feet of right-of-way on the creek which could be used for a buffer zone
- Wetland creation would recharge groundwater and be a more natural solution that would address other climate-related issues
- Keep online storage/recharge in the evaluation [beavers, dams, wetlands] because the topography is well suited to online storage within the general creek channel area.

### **New Wells & Conveyance Systems**

- What are the long-term impacts of wells outside the Zone of Influence? Will those new wells limit other landowners from getting new wells in the future.
- Conveyance systems:
- Creating such a large system to replace flow for temporal periods isn't logical
- Railroad/highway crossing outside Zone of Influence
- Worry about operations and maintenance on a large conveyance system

**OTHER THOUGHTS (LARGE GROUP DISCUSSION / Q&A)**

- Strong desire for simple and dependable solution, and to get it right the first time and don't come back to landowners — "one and done."
- This is a precedent-setting action.
- Questioning of the need for Little Rock Creek to be designated as a trout stream, and if removing the designation would negate the impairment/need for improvements. Request to compare costs vs. reclassifying the stream.
- Conduct an economic impact study.