



March 2, 2026

John Jaschke  
Executive Director  
Minnesota Board of Water and Soil Resources  
520 Lafayette Road  
St Paul, MN 55155

Dear Mr. Jaschke,

Carver, Dakota and Scott Counties care about the quality of the Minnesota River and recognize the importance this riverway has on our history, landscape, environment, recreation and economy.

### **County Investments**

Through our respective watershed management organizations and joint watershed districts, we have invested millions of dollars to fund capital projects over the years that hold back water or stabilize bluff ravines in the basin, which reduces riverbank and bluff erosion sediment into the Minnesota River.

Examples of these major capital projects include extensive ravine stabilization projects in the Blakeley Bluffs region in wake of the 2014 flooding, as well as more recent stabilization projects in key tributaries flowing into the Minnesota River (Sand Creek, Picha Creek) in Scott County; creek and ravine restorations and stabilizations in Carver County including West Creek re-meander, East Creek Sediment pool, Seminary Fen ravines, Bevens Creek dam failure restoration, and Carver Creek slope failure restoration.

### **County Support**

In addition to these investments in our respective geographies along the Minnesota River, our three counties supported the original formation of the State Legislative-created Lower Minnesota River Watershed District (LMRWD) in 1959. In our board resolutions supporting the establishment of this new district, we cited its most valuable and primary purpose: to improve the channel of the Minnesota River for water storage, navigation and other public uses. Maintaining and dredging this navigation channel has

been critical to the economic vitality of the Ports of Savage and U.S. Salt barge terminal in Burnsville.

## **County Concerns**

While we continue to support LMRWD's original, primary purpose, today our three counties have growing concerns with the District's seemingly expanded mission and scope. Recent examples that have raised concern include the District's decision to bond for a capital improvement project without unanimous support from all counties, and its decision to pursue the acquisition of land around the Savage Fen without support from the City of Savage.

It also appears that to improve the quality of the Minnesota River we need to engage with partners upstream. The recent presentation of MnDOT's Trunk Highway 41 river gauge shows the flooding impacts. Between 1935 and 1990, there were 4 events hitting flood stage at the TH 41 crossing. From 1991 to 2025, there have been 12 events. Besides the water quality issues, we need to understand the impacts to major state and regional infrastructure as part of the discussion.

## **Next Steps**

We think it's time for a change and time to think beyond the narrow scope and boundary of the LMRWD. On behalf of the Boards of Commissioners for Carver, Dakota, and Scott Counties, we respectfully request the State's support in exploring a fresh, coordinated, basin-wide approach to restoring the Minnesota River. The challenge facing the Minnesota River is not an urban issue, a rural problem, or a single watershed district's responsibility to address. It truly takes a collective response.

As the State's namesake river, the Minnesota River has needed collective attention for decades. Our counties recognize and appreciate the significant past efforts to protect this vital resource on a basin-wide approach, which provides a strong foundation for renewed action. Notably, the landmark 1994 study *"Working Together: A Plan to Restore the Minnesota River"* led to the creation of the Minnesota River Board (MRB) to address the river's challenges. A few of our current Commissioners were involved in the 1994-2014 effort to revitalize and reshape the MRB and its multi-county, multi-agency approach to basin-wide planning and funding. While we understand the challenges that ultimately ended that initiative, we firmly believe its core mission remains essential: *"To provide leadership, build partnerships, and support efforts to improve and protect water quality in the Minnesota River Basin."*

It is time to renew this mission with a modern approach. We are asking the Minnesota Board of Soil and Water Resources to explore an effort that brings together cities, townships, counties, watershed districts, and other key stakeholders across the basin to

develop a new, collaborative strategy for improving water quality and protecting this critical resource.

Thank you for your consideration and commitment to the future of the Minnesota River.

**Sincerely,**

Tom Workman, Chair  
Carver County Board of Commissioners

Laurie Halverson, Chair  
Dakota County Board of Commissioners

Jon Ulrich, Chair  
Scott County Board of Commissioners