Meeting Minutes: Vermillion River Watershed Joint Powers Board (JPB)

Date: Thursday, July 23, 2026, 1 p.m., in-person at the Dakota County Extension and Conservation Center, Farmington, MN, and virtual via Microsoft Teams

JPB Members in Attendance

- Dakota County Commissioner Mike Slavik
- Dakota County Commissioner Mary Hamann-Roland
- Scott County Commissioner Tom Wolf

Vermillion River Watershed Community Advisory Committee (CAC) Members in Attendance

- Sandy Weber

Vermillion River Watershed Joint Powers Organization (VRWJPO) Staff in Attendance

- Travis Thiel, VRWJPO Administrator, Dakota County
- Jeff Dunn, VRWJPO Water Resources Engineer, Dakota County
- Brita Moore-Kutz, VRWJPO Communications and Outreach Specialist, Dakota County
- Kelly Perrine, VRWJPO Senior Watershed Specialist, Dakota County

Others in Attendance

- Nikki Stewart, Environmental Resources Department Director, Dakota County (virtual)
- Brian Wisdorf, Assistant County Attorney and VRWJPO Legal Counsel, Dakota County (virtual)
- Vanessa Strong, Water Resources Supervisor, Scott County (virtual)

Agenda

1. **Call to Order**

The meeting was called to order by Chair Slavik at 1 p.m.

2. **Roll Call**

Commissioners Slavik, Hamann-Roland, and Wolf were present in-person.

3. **Audience Comments on Items Not on the Agenda**

None.

4. **Approval of Agenda**

Res. No. VRW 26-28: Motion by Commissioner Hamann-Roland to approve the agenda, seconded by Commissioner Wolf. Motion carried on a 3-0 voice vote.

5. Approval of Minutes from the June 25, 2026, Meeting

Res. No. VRW 26-29: Motion by Commissioner Wolf to approve the minutes, seconded by Commissioner Hamann-Roland. Motion carried on a 3-0 voice vote.

6. Approval of Consent Agenda

a. Acceptance of Treasurer's Reports
b. Authorization to Schedule a Public Hearing to Receive Comments on the Preliminary Vermillion River Watershed Joint Powers Organization 2027 Budget and Watershed Management Tax District Levy

Res. No. VRW 26-30: Motion by Commissioner Hamann-Roland to approve the consent agenda, seconded by Commissioner Wolf. Motion carried on a 3-0 voice vote.

7. Approval of Expenses

Travis Thiel presented the expenses from June 1-30, 2026, totaling $87,809.65.

Res. No. VRW 26-31: Motion by Commissioner Wolf to approve the expenses, seconded by Commissioner Hamann-Roland. Motion carried on a 3-0 roll call vote.

8. Business Items

a. Presentation of Summarized Results from the 2025 Vermillion River Monitoring Network Report

Kelly Perrine shared highlights from the 2025 Vermillion River Monitoring Network (VRMN) report, available on the VRWJPO website in full. Key points included:

- Total phosphorus (TP) concentrations in the Upper Mainstem subwatershed were significantly higher than the 2016-2023 levels. Staff attribute this to greater precipitation after several years of drought "flushing" phosphorus from the soil that had built up over time.
- The Upper Mainstem subwatershed continues to show elevated concentrations of Escherichia coli (*E. coli*) bacteria, specifically the VR24 monitoring station near the Vermillion River headwaters in Scott County. Levels are two to three times higher than anywhere else in the watershed. Commissioner Hamann-Roland asked about the potential source, whether it was human or livestock. Kelly replied that both human and animal DNA had shown up in tracing efforts, but the amount of human DNA indicates that a septic system issue is contributing to the problem. VRWJPO Co-Administrator Melissa Bokman Ermer is working on a report on the actions taken so far regarding *E. coli* in the headwaters area. Vanessa Strong added that Scott County has educational materials regarding septic system maintenance and would report back on what's been done with those.
- The South Creek subwatershed continued its trend of decreasing total suspended solids (TSS) levels, which could be attributed to stormwater improvement projects the VRWJPO has completed in that subwatershed.
- The North Creek and Middle Creek subwatershed results are somewhat blended together due to the station locations, though NC808 is more representative of North Creek and NC801 is more

representative of Middle Creek. TSS levels were consistently higher at NC808, and TP levels at both exceeded the state standard during summer runoff events.

- The South Branch Vermillion River subwatershed continued to have the highest nitrate levels in the VRWJPO, but the lowest *E. coli* levels. The Middle Mainstem subwatershed had the second-highest nitrate levels. Both are still meeting state standards but are high-priority areas for nitrate reduction best management practices (BMPs) in agriculture.
- The Lower Mainstem subwatershed generally met state standards for TSS and TP. Kelly noted that nitrates from the South Branch are affecting the subwatersheds downstream of it, which is a concern for the karst regions and groundwater aquifers in that area.
- Commissioner Slavik asked about development in areas that have previously been farmland and if the land use change is better or worse for the water quality. State standards for stormwater treatment are higher than they used to be in residential developments, but development also comes with impervious surfaces not found in agricultural zones. Kelly answered that the VRWJPO has prioritized stormwater retrofit BMPs in developed areas to help them meet the current standards.

Information only.

b. Presentation and Discussion on the Vermillion River Watershed Joint Powers Organization Preliminary 2027 Budget and Watershed Management Tax District Levy

Travis Thiel handed out copies of the budget and tax impact statements for Dakota and Scott Counties with a proposed 5% increase to the Watershed Management Tax District levy. He reviewed specific line items that were new for 2027 or changed their estimated costs by 15% or greater, as well as revenues needed for a balanced budget. The total of the preliminary 2027 budget was $1,991,363 for both expenses and revenues, with an unassigned fund balance of $873,293 (44 percent of total budget).

Commissioner Slavik asked to confirm that the revenue from wetland bank credits would be restricted only for acquiring another wetland bank in the future. Travis confirmed that was the case.

The tax impact statement for Dakota County listed a 39-cent property tax increase for a median value residential home in 2027, assuming the levy increased by 5%. For Scott County, the increase would be 53 cents.

Commissioner Slavik asked if staff could run scenarios for a lower levy increase, since the Dakota County Board is considering a much higher levy and looking for ways to lessen potential impacts from elsewhere. Travis agreed to run the budget again with a 3.5% levy increase for the public hearing in August. Commissioner Hamann-Roland cautioned against lowering the cash reserves and said she thought the budget was already well-constrained.

Information only.

9. Staff Reports

Jeff Dunn

- The VRWJPO has been working to ensure that small cities and townships in the watershed are able to meet the updated VRWJPO Standards in their local ordinances. Coincidentally, these LGUs are also updating their comprehensive plans, some with assistance from a consultant and some with the Metropolitan Council. This provides the VRWJPO an opportunity to get the necessary local controls from the Standards embedded in the comprehensive plans. Staff have created a model ordinance

for the townships and small cities to include in the comprehensive plans and drafted a letter to begin the conversations with local leaders, looking to partner with them and not overstep their authority. Jeff confirmed with the JPB to send the letter to township and city clerks, mayors, and township board chairs, and follow up with the Met Council and consultant to keep up-to-date on their progress. Sandy Weber said the townships appreciated the VRWJPO's approach and guidance.

Brita Moore-Kutz

- The VRWJPO will be in the Natural Resources Building of the Dakota County Fair from August 10-16. The Dakota County Water Resources Unit will have an exhibit about septic system care.

Travis Thiel

10. Adjourn

Motion by Commissioner Hamann-Roland to adjourn, seconded by Commissioner Slavik. Motion carried on a 3-0 voice vote.

Next meeting date: Thursday, August 27, 2026, 1 p.m., at the Dakota County Extension and Conservation Center, Conference Room A, and via teleconference on Microsoft Teams.

Certification

Respectfully submitted by

Brita Moore-Kutz

Communications and Outreach Specialist, Vermillion River Watershed Joint Powers Organization

Attest

Scott County Commissioner Tom Wolf, VRWJPB Secretary/Treasurer — Date 8/27/2026