

**MINUTES OF THE ROSEAU RIVER WATERSHED DISTRICT BOARD OF
MANAGERS MEETING HELD AUGUST 18, 2020**

ORDER: Chairman Jason Braaten called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m. and let the Pledge of Allegiance.

MANAGERS PRESENT: In person, Tony Wensloff, LeRoy Carriere, Cody Schmalz, Carter Diesen, and Jason Braaten.

STAFF PRESENT: In person, Administrator Halstensgard and Specialist McCormack

CONSULTING STAFF PRESENT: In person Attorney Michelle Moren, Nate Dalager, HDR Engineering.

The purpose of the meeting was to hear landowner comments and concerns about the Roseau Lake Rehabilitation Project. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic the meeting was held at the Roseau City Center located at 121 Center Street East, Roseau Mn. 56751 and via WebEx. Chairman Braaten request those on the WebEx or phone mute their lines and that those in attendance raise their hands and be called up to the microphone.

Matt Magnusson requested the update that was to be given at the August board meeting be given now. Administrator Halstensgard stated that the update was that the Environmental Assessment Worksheet was still under internal review with the DNR.

The following people addressed the board: Vangie Byfuglien, Wayne Trangsrud, Deb Stone, Hunter O'Leary, Terry Kveen, Norman Kveen, Mitch Magnusson, Matt Magnusson, Chad Reese, Melanie Benit, Bonny Dohلمان, Pat Beaumont, Laura Dempsey, Brenda Grawberger, Tricia Johnson.

The comments and concerns raised by attendees were as follows:

- Explanation of project timeline
- Overall Plan status
- Land acquisition process, specifically potential use of eminent domain
- Landowner involvement in the process
- Access to private land for the purpose of survey
- Terry and Norman Kveen read prepared statements
- Amount of land to be acquired (fee title and easement) verses use of public land (approximately 6,000 acres of public land used for this project)
- Landowners have hired an engineer to review the Final Engineer's Report
- Cost benefit analysis is not required for flood damage reduction projects
- What are the different requirement for the various project alternatives.
- Randy Prachar, MN DNR Area Wildlife Manager was asked to explain the natural resource benefits of the project.
- If the landowners are not willing to sell and the Board isn't willing to do eminent domain, should the project move forward?
- Landowners rely on the land for income.
- Question if easements would be required for south of the river for Alternative 1A.
- Timeline to meet with landowners for further discussion
- There was clarification that with an easement, the landowner retains the rights and responsibility to the land.
- Question as to why there is so much concern for the ducks and geese and not farmers.
- Concerns with draft Operating Plan components.

- The landowners asked the Board and DNR to completely abandon the project.
- Institute for Justice spoke about the effects of eminent domain.
- Request to stop the flooding that impacts the area.
- Melanie Benit read aloud written comments (see attached)

Engineer Dalager, Administrator Halstensgard, Randy Prachar and Chairman Braaten answered the questions posed and addressed the comments presented.

After a **motion** by Manager Wensloff and second by Manager Diesen, the meeting adjourned at 7:52 p.m. Motion carried unanimously

Respectfully submitted,

Cody Schmalz, Secretary

Tracy Halstensgard, Administrator

Good morning Tracy,

I was just emailing you. The Roseau County Landowners Coalition is a group of over 50 farmers, landowners, and community members in Roseau who oppose this project. Members of the coalition who wanted to go on record and share their information either spoke at the meeting or submitted comment through the coalition's Facebook page. The five responses we received to our request for public comment are listed below:

1. Lesa Schmechel, 3399: County Rd 28, Roseau, "This project will push back water onto our CRP land making it difficult to complete the responsibilities of these contracts."
2. Alyssa Aune, 30067 440th St NE, Gatzke, "I am strongly opposed to the Roseau Lake Rehabilitation project. I stand with our Roseau County farmers. As a person who's been involved with farming her entire life, growing up in Roseau County and continuing to help on the family farm, I am deeply worried of how area watershed districts are treating local farmers. Many of these flood control projects turn into mismanaged areas of stagnant water - creating a breeding ground for mosquitoes, woodticks, blue-green algae, and other bugs. The area wildlife will always prefer running water and dry land. In fact, many of our area wildlife prefer well-managed farmland and hay land. A present-day, local example of this problem would be Thief Lake. Just look at aerial photos of the land from 40 years ago compared to today. Farmers know their land best, and they care for it much better than any "project" or organization could. Whisking away farmland from generation farmers is absolutely absurd and far from rational. These families have dedicated their livelihoods to caring for the land. Please stop using our taxpayer dollars to fund projects like this and figure out a different path, especially one that respects our area farmers and landowners. Our local farmers are crucial to the existence of our small towns and rural areas."
3. Steve Kappes, White Bear Lake, "I oppose this project 100%!!!"
4. Melissa Magnusson, 2178 Gardenette Dr. N. White Bear Lake, "My family has farmed in the Lake Bottom for 3 generations. The Roseau Lake Project threatens to wash away productive farmland and years of dedicated hard work put in by my family and other Roseau County farmers. This project is completely unnecessary, will cost taxpayers \$15 million+ dollars, and has no justifiable benefits!!!"
5. Beth Louise Johnson, 33182 Hwy 310, Roseau, "There seems to be not enough benefit for the cost of this project. Also, not enough projected benefits to warrant taking farmland."

Best,



Melanie Benit
Activism Associate
[Institute for Justice](https://www.instituteofjustice.org/)
+1 (703) 682-9320—Ext. 211

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