

Middle Fork Crow River Watershed District Meeting Minutes
March 10th, 2026 at 6:30 pm at the MFCRWD Office

Board of Managers Present: Ruth Schaefer, Jay Hedtke, Jeff Gertgen, Amanda Toutges.
Virtually attended: Shane Braegelman

Staff & Guests Present: Andy Johnson – District Administrator; Leah Melges – Office & Finance Manager; Erin Vruwink – Water Resources Specialist; Nick Wyers – District Engineer; and John Kolb – District Attorney, Jeff Martinka – United Prairie Bank

1. President Schaefer called the meeting to order at 6:30 p.m.
2. President Schaefer recited the District’s mission statement: “We exist for the protection and preservation of water quality in the Middle Fork Crow River Watershed District.”
3. Additions / Corrections to the Agenda: **A motion to approve the distributed agenda made by Manager Toutges, seconded by Manager Hedtke. Motion passed unanimously.**
4. Consent Agenda
 - a. Financial Report
 - i. Finance Report & Cash Balances
 - ii. Approval of Payables & Expenditures
 - b. Regular Board Meeting Minutes – February 10th, 2026.
Motion by Manager Hedtke, seconded by Manager Toutges to approve the Consent Agenda. The motion passed unanimously.
5. Discussion / Business Items
 - a. New London Hydrogen Sulfide Survey Results Presentation by Erin Vruwink – Discussion

Water Resources Specialist Erin Vruwink presented the results of the New London Hydrogen Sulfide Survey, conducted in partnership with the City of New London to assess community support for a potential project addressing hydrogen sulfide issues. A total of 800 surveys were mailed to residents within the city limits and a smaller surrounding area, with 106 responses received (13% response rate). The survey evaluated impacts on daily life, duration of odor exposure, and perceived health effects. Results indicated that 68.9% of respondents agreed the odor negatively affects community events, businesses, and tourism, particularly in the spring. Additionally, 68% expressed support for a future project. Willingness to pay for improvements was reported at 35.8%. Overall, the findings suggest that there is a clear community concern and desire for action, with acknowledged impacts on daily life. However, willingness to fund solutions varies, indicating high sensitivity to cost. Moving forward, efforts will focus on continued monitoring and data collection (including air monitoring), ongoing

community engagement and education, and exploration of short-term mitigation strategies.

b. 2026 Westby Internship Donation – Discussion

In previous years, the District has provided a monetary donation to support the Gary/Cindy Westby Internship Program, which offers career opportunities for students interested in law enforcement or DNR conservation. The District has again been given the opportunity to contribute to the program this year.

A motion to approve a donation for the Westby Internship Program in the amount of \$750 was made by Manager Toutges, seconded by Manager Braegelman. A roll call vote was conducted, with all members voting in favor. Motion passed unanimously.

c. Diamond Lake Bio Reactor BMP updates and contract update – Discussion

Administrator Johnson reported on the Board’s approval of the lowest-bid contractor, NXT LVL, at last month’s meeting. District Attorney John Kolb noted that the contract requires the contractor to provide proof of insurance and performance bonds within 15 days; however, the contractor submitted coverage below the originally specified levels. After review, District Attorney Kolb, Administrator Johnson, and District Engineer Nick Wyers determined that the initial insurance requirements had been over-specified. It was recommended to waive the original insurance requirements in favor of the coverage provided and documented in the contractor’s certificate of insurance, and to authorize execution of the construction contract.

A motion by Manager Gertgen, seconded by Manager Hedtke, to move forward authorizing execution of the contract agreement between NXT LVL and the District for the Diamond Lake Bio Reactor BMP. A roll call vote was conducted, with all members voting in favor. Motion passed unanimously.

d. Aquatic Plant Point Intercept Program – Discussion

Administrator Johnson has been working on developing an Aquatic Plant Survey Program, funded through the AIS subfund, with the goal of supporting lake health and providing benefits across all district lakes. It was noted that, aside from Nest Lake and Diamond Lake, most district lakes do not currently have aquatic plant management plans and discussion geared toward identifying equitable ways to support all lakes.

Two survey methods were outlined: meandering surveys and point-intercept (PI) surveys. While other agencies also collect similar data, it is not consistently shared. Johnson has been working on program development, including funding structure options, which include: (1) covering a percentage of PI survey costs, (2) providing a set dollar amount for PI

surveys, or (3) covering a percentage of costs up to a specified maximum. Johnson will continue developing this program and funding approach.

- e. MFCRWD website changes and upcoming ADA requirements – Update
The District’s current website provider, Streamline, has been costly, and with increasing expenses – including requirements for ADA compliance related to PDFs – Water Resources Specialist Erin Vruwink has been developing a new website using Wix. The new site is nearly complete, with the exception of uploading remaining PDFs. The District has until April 2027 to achieve full ADA compliance for website documents. District Attorney Kolb recommended first finalizing the website and utilizing available free tools to evaluate ADA compliance. He also noted that linked and archived documents do not need to be updated, provided the website includes clear information on how individuals can request assistance or obtain accessible materials (e.g., contacting the office). Additionally, the District will need to develop a policy to comply with accommodations for accessibility.
- f. Agenda Additions / Other Matters: Current plans include conducting a survey around June in preparation for an anticipated draw-down of HSW, potentially occurring in September 2026.

6. Reports & Updates

- a. Administrator – Andy Johnson:
District Administrator Andy Johnson reported that the CD-47 project has been completed. Vegetation establishment will be evaluated during the spring. All components of the initial CD-47 project are finished, with a deadline of December 2026 to complete the bioreactor portion. Regarding the New London underground storage and storm sceptor project, the City of New London received a significantly lower estimate than anticipated. The project was initially expected to cost approximately \$600,000, but current estimates are around \$160,000, due in part to the removal of a substantial amount of piping. Bidding has not yet been finalized or approved. Johnson also reported attending the Legislative Day at the Capitol, where he participated in an administrators’ meeting and gained valuable information. During the visit, he met with Representative Dave Baker as well as leadership from the MPCA, DNR and BWSR.
- b. Finance Manager – Leah Melges:
Finance Manager Leah Melges reported that the on-site review conducted with Brenda Nowak from Peterson Company Ltd. proceeded smoothly. Nowak indicated that all necessary information was obtained during her two days in the office, and a third on-site day was not required. The audit is expected to be finalized in June, at which time Peterson Company Ltd. will present the findings at a future board meeting.
- c. Water Resources Specialist – Erin Vruwink:

Water Resources Specialist Erin Vruwink reported ongoing work related to upcoming events, including Paddle the Crow, Earth Day and various school and community events in the area. She also noted that WPLMN training has been completed and the first water sample of the year has been collected. Additionally, she is collaborating with Manager Schaefer on mapping for the Safe Wake Area for the District's upcoming Area Lakes Conference at the Dethlefs Center on March 24, 2026.

- d. District Engineer – Nick Wyers: Written report provided.
District Engineer Nick Wyers reported on current project activities. A level control structure has been installed at the bridge site, and work at the diversion site is complete for the Lake Calhoun Dam/Bridge Project. Rock arch rapids construction will continue through the end of the month, and an extension of the fisheries deadline has been requested, allowing work through the end of March. The bridge is scheduled to be closed and removed for replacement in mid-September. Wyers also noted coordination with Administrator Johnson on the Diamond Lake Bioreactor with work expected to begin in the coming months.
 - e. District Attorney – John Kolb:
No report.
 - f. Other Reports from Managers / Staff: No additional comments offered. Manager Toutges' term will conclude in April 2026. She has served a three-year term and has indicated that she will not seek renewal. Manager Braegelman reported that a farmer is cutting trees in a grove near MFC5, which will result in drainage from his field into the river. The affected area is approximately 80-120 acres. The Board recommended that photos of the site are taken followed by consultation with the county ditching authority regarding any permitting requirements.
7. Public Access Forum (*those desiring to speak, please share your name for the meeting record*):
None.
8. Adjournment: Motion made by Manager Toutges, seconded by Manager Braegelman to adjourn the meeting. Motion passed unanimously.

The meeting declared adjourned by President Schaefer at 8:12 p.m.

Submitted by,

Leah Melges
Recording Secretary
Office & Finance Manager