

# SAND HILL RIVER FLOOD STORAGE PROJECT TEAM MEETING MINUTES

Location: 101 Washington Avenue NE  
Sand Hill River Watershed District, Fertile, MN

Date: May 28, 2026



## 1. Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 11:00 am.

## 2. Roll Call (Attendees)

Attendees: April Swenby (Sand Hill River Watershed District Administrator); Zach Herrmann (Houston Engineering); Paul Engelstad (Landowner); Mark Stola (Landowner); Nathan Olson (MnDNR); Bethany Bethke (RRB Coordinator); Scott Schroeder (MPCA); Moria Rueffr (BWSR); Henry Van Offelen (BWSR); Stephanie Klamm (MnDNR); Nicole Berndt (WPSWCD); and Nick Kludt (MnDNR).

## 3. Review of Prior Findings

Herrmann reviewed the previous Sand Hill River Ecosystem Restoration Project Team's recommendations, which focused on flood storage along Sand Hill Ditch in Section 20 of Liberty Township. Conceptual analysis estimated up to 6,170 acre-feet of storage at a cost of \$11–\$15 million, though it did not fully assess soil suitability, land acquisition, spillway details, or construction costs. Hydrology and hydraulics studies suggested a potential reduction of flood levels by about 1.8 feet during a simulated 10-year event at County Road 213 and Texas Crossing, prompting the SHRWD Board to form a new team.

## 4. Purpose and Need

The purpose and need was updated from the prior meeting, and distributed to the Project Team via email. MPCA provided written comments that were incorporated into the draft purpose and need document, and was reviewed with the Project Team. The purpose and need focuses on flood control, water supply resiliency, and environmental enhancements.

The Project Team had extended discussion about the resiliency in the context of water supply. The USGS study that discusses resiliency was discussed and will be incorporated into the purpose and need, along with historical data of records for gage at Climax. The Project

Team suggested that opportunity for stored water as an emergency fire source be evaluated. Other beneficial uses could be to assist with agricultural spraying, as current demand during peak seasons can have adverse impacts on communities that currently rely on the same water sources, such as Beltrami.

The group discussed timelines, approving the purpose and need, and the need for engineering prior to the next meeting.

## 7. Action Items

- **Funding-readiness deliverables:** As a reminder the group was reminded the importance of project readiness and the previous timeline set for a concept plan, cost estimate, and measurable results to improve competitiveness for state grants. The Project Team set a target completion date of **November 2027** to support potential application to Lessard-Sams Outdoor Heritage funding (typically due each February).
- **Revised draft purpose and need:** Herrmann will continue to revise the draft purpose and need statement incorporating the discussion from the participants in the meeting. Mn DNR was asked to draw their attention to historic descriptions of the channel. The team plans to move towards a final draft to present to the district board.
- **Engineering:** Herrmann will develop a plan of work document and alternatives for the board to review and approve. This will incorporate the permitting needs for the project. The group desired identifying early coordination partners with permitting agencies, with focus on project “killers”.

## 8. Next Meeting

Swenby informed the team that the Flood Damage Reduction Work Group will be touring this site on June 23 and will host a meeting in Fertile on the same date. The meeting will begin at 9 AM and will end with a tour after lunch.

The Project Team is scheduled to reconvene at the end of July/early August, pending the district board direction.

## 9. Adjournment

The Project Team adjourned at 11:45 am.