

**Vadnais Lake Area Water Management Organization  
Technical Commission (TEC) Minutes  
August 13, 2025  
Vadnais Heights City Hall, Council Chambers  
800 County Road E East, Vadnais Heights, MN 55127**

**Commission Members Present:**

Nick Ousky	Vadnais Heights (VH)
Susan Miller	North Oaks (NO)
Jami Philip	White Bear Township (WBT)
Terry Huntrods	City of White Bear Lake (WBL)

**Absent:** Tom Hoffman, City of Lino Lakes (LL); Gloria Tessier, Gem Lake (GL).

**Others in attendance:** Phil Belfiori, Brian Corcoran, Dawn Tanner, Lauren Sampedro, Angela Hugunin (VLAWMO staff); Jeremy Erickson (SPRWS).

**I. Call to Order**

Chair Ousky called the meeting to order at 8:14 am.

**II. Approval of Agenda**

Administrator Belfiori noted that the agenda for TEC consideration was revised. It was moved by Commissioner Huntrods and seconded by Commissioner Philip to approve the August 13, 2025 TEC agenda as revised. Vote: all aye. Motion passed.

**III. Approval of Minutes (July 9, 2025)**

It was moved by Commissioner Philip and seconded by Commissioner Miller to approve the July 9, 2025 meeting minutes as presented. Vote: all aye. Motion passed.

**IV. Administration & Operations**

**A. August Financial Report and Consider Authorization for Payment**

Administrator Belfiori summarized the August financial statement as included in the meeting materials. He noted income from interest and one of the installments of the Storm Sewer Utility fee payments. Administrator Belfiori highlighted key expenditures including lab and creek monitoring, development of the Watershed Management Plan and JPA, as well as payments to the North Oaks Company and Carp Solutions and grant reimbursements. Staff recommended approval of the August financial report for payment.

It was moved by Commissioner Huntrods and seconded by Commissioner Philip to approve the August financial report and authorize for payment. Vote: all aye. Motion passed.

## B. TEC Report to the Board for August

Administrator Belfiori gave an overview of the August TEC Report to the Board, highlighting key areas including sending of the 2026 JPA, which is out for signatures and approval by member communities. The 60-day review phase for the updated Watershed Management Plan is nearly at a close.

Staff recommended approval of the TEC Report to the Board for August.

It was moved by Commissioner Philip and seconded by Commissioner Miller to approve the August TEC Report to the Board. Vote: all aye. Motion passed.

## V. Programs

### A. LL1 2025-01 NOHOA-Steenson Shoreline Restoration Application

Sampedro presented a grant application from the revised agenda for a shoreline restoration project on Pleasant Lake in North Oaks. Sampedro shared the proposed location of the project, noting that NOHOA owns the shoreline around Pleasant Lake and is the grant applicant. The adjacent landowner with deeded access to the shoreline will work with NOHOA on the project. Sampedro explained that this project marks a continued partnership effort between VLAWMO and NOHOA, with support from NOHOA's Shoreline Restoration Facilitator and North Oaks resident, Joe Coyne.

Sampedro highlighted current site conditions of erosion and that the proposed project would restore 65 feet of shoreline with native plants and erosion control blanket, totaling about 975 square feet.

Staff recommended a conditional approval of LL1 2025-01 in the amount of 50% of eligible project expenses, not to exceed \$2,750 in accordance with program guidelines, with the conditions that the planting plan will be updated to reflect existing shoreline conditions including fluctuating water levels and full shade areas, the contractor will consider using a native plant nursery to source the proposed plants, and biodegradable or coir logs will be added for wave breaks if native plant seeds are selected over plugs.

Commissioner Miller said that this is the first shoreline restoration project she has seen with the low bidder. She asked about the conditional nature of this approval, clarifying whether this would mean that Sampedro would continue to work with this applicant and that if things did not go as requested, grant reimbursement would be denied. Sampedro confirmed this.

Commissioner Miller asked how successful shoreline restorations have been where they have used reseeding as opposed to replanting. Sampedro explained that these tend to require more

front-end maintenance, so it's typically recommended to begin with a few more established plants to accelerate the process and ensure project efficiency and effectiveness.

It was moved by Commissioner Miller and seconded by Commissioner Huntrods to approve the LL1 2025-01 grant application in the amount of 50% of eligible project expenses, not to exceed \$2,750 in accordance with program guidelines, and with the conditions that the planting plan will be updated to reflect existing shoreline conditions including fluctuating water levels and full shade areas, the contractor will consider using a native plant nursery to source the proposed plants, and biodegradable or coir logs will be added for wave breaks if native plant seeds are selected over plugs. Vote: all aye. Motion passed.

#### B. LL1 2025-02 NOHOA-Lunstad Shoreline Restoration Application

Sampedro presented a grant application for a second shoreline restoration project on Pleasant Lake in North Oaks.

Sampedro explained that for this proposed project, NOHOA is the applicant and will partner with the adjacent landowners to move forward with the restoration project. This project site is highly visible due to its close proximity to a golf course. Sampedro gave an overview of current project site conditions, highlighting a lack of groundcover and evidence of erosion.

The proposed project would restore 225 linear feet of eroding shoreline along the southeast side of Pleasant Lake, adding soil and over 600 native plants to restore approximately 3,360 square feet of shoreline.

Staff recommended conditional approval of LL1 2025-02 in the amount of 50% of eligible project expenses, not to exceed \$5000 in accordance with program guidelines, with the conditions that the planting plan will be updated to reflect existing shoreline conditions including fluctuating water levels and full shade areas, the contractor will consider using a native plant nursery to source the proposed plants, and biodegradable or coir logs will be added for wave breaks if native plant seeds are selected over plugs.

Commissioner Miller recommended a close review of the project during the first few years after construction.

Commissioner Huntrods inquired about the bidding process. He also noted that one project has three times the area but a bid that is only about twice as expensive. He asked what might contribute to this discrepancy. Sampedro responded that ease of access is a contributing factor to price differences. Chair Ousky noted that efficiency of scale may also contribute to price discrepancies between bids.

It was moved by Commissioner Miller and seconded by Commissioner Philip to approve the LL1 2025-02 grant application in the amount of 50% of eligible project expenses, not to exceed

\$5,000 in accordance with program guidelines, and with the conditions that the planting plan will be updated to reflect existing shoreline conditions including fluctuating water levels and full shade areas, the contractor will consider using a native plant nursery to source the proposed plants, and biodegradable or coir logs will be added for wave breaks if native plant seeds are selected over plugs. Vote: all aye. Motion passed.

### C. Update on Recent Outreach Activities

Hugunin provided an overview of outreach activities that occurred in July, including the North Oaks Garden Club Garden Tour event and the Environmental Resources Expo, part of White Bear Lake's Marketfest.

Hugunin noted that this was VLAWMO's first time invited to the North Oaks Garden Club Garden Tour. Grant recipient Damien Lepoutre extended the invitation as native plants were a highlight of his tour spot. VLAWMO staff educated the community members on the benefits of native plants and VLAWMO's grant programs. Hugunin noted great conversations with tour attendees and shared that the event helped build a relationship with the Garden Club. Staff have been invited by the Garden Club to participate in a panel discussion on native plants and pollinators in September.

Hugunin also described VLAWMO's attendance at White Bear Lake's annual Marketfest event. Hugunin and volunteer Gina Schmidt were present at the VLAWMO table, which had an Adopt-a-Drain display that was of particular interest for youth.

Hugunin gave an overview of upcoming outreach events, including the August 19<sup>th</sup> date for neighborhood garden tours and the September 11<sup>th</sup> Blue Thumb Rain Garden Maintenance Workshop. She noted that these outreach opportunities offer staff an opportunity to get the community engaged in local water stewardship efforts and to raise public awareness of VLAWMO.

## VI. Projects

### A. Update on Vadnais Heights LCCMR Application Proposal

Sampedro provided an update on VLAWMO's partnership with the City of Vadnais Heights to submit a Legislative-Citizen Commission on Minnesota Resources (LCCMR) grant application proposal for the construction of a water quality improvement project, trail network, and educational features behind City Hall. The City received notice on July 22<sup>nd</sup> that the proposal was selected to recommend to the 2026 Legislature for funding from the Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund (ENRTF). Out of 400 proposals received, this proposal was one of 109 proposals selected for recommended funding.

The LCCMR staff is recommending \$2,842,000 for the project. VLAWMO is now working with the City on a draft work plan. They will continue working with LCCMR staff until materials are submitted to the Legislature in spring of 2026.

Chair Ousky thanked Sampedro for VLAWMO's help with the application.

#### B. 319 Update: Phase 1 Final Reporting and North Oaks Company Savanna Restoration

Tanner explained that staff are busy working on the final tasks as part of the 319 phase 1 grant. Staff is currently completing final invoicing and reporting to close out phase 1 of the deep-water wetland project. She explained that the shoreline and submerged vegetation enhancements are continuing to grow in well, and the design and ordering of the educational sign are completed. Planning is underway for the phase 2 project.

Tanner described the NOC's work with Stantec to complete a 25-acre area with comprehensive savanna, wetland, and prairie restoration adjacent to the deep-water wetland. This area wraps right around the berm and will include plant species added in the project area that will support reduced maintenance needs and an improved mosaic of habitat.

Tanner shared photos from various parts of the project area, explaining that RCSWCD did multiple transplanting efforts this year. Bladderwort and other species that were transplanted are present in the deep-water wetland, as well as wildlife such as native frogs and muskrats. Native plants are returning to areas, including the islands, where invasive plants were removed. A variety of native plant species are establishing and thriving in and around the project area, drawing pollinators and other wildlife dependent on this native vegetation. She also showed the educational sign.

#### C. Update on Birch Lake 2025 Memo and Report from Dive Guys

Tanner shared that Dive Guys provided a final report following the completion of this year's hand-pulling effort on Birch Lake. VLAWMO provided a package of documentation including a memo, the Dive Guys report, and pre- and post-survey maps from RCSWCD. Tanner explained that this package was included in the TEC packet and will be provided to the Board at its August meeting.

#### D. Update on Rotary Nature Preserve

Tanner gave an update on restoration work at the Rotary Nature Preserve, noting that earlier phases of restoration areas are showing impressive results. Tanner shared photos from recent visits to the wetland area. The contractor Natural Shore Technologies is beginning work on wetland areas by treating invasive species late this summer/early fall.

#### E. Update on Tamarack Alum Monitoring & Vegetation Survey

Tanner explained that RCSWCD and VLAWMO staff completed an aquatic vegetation survey as part of the monitoring of the Tamarack Lake Alum project. The third phase of the project will begin in October. Aquatic vegetation studies are showing reestablishing areas of native plants especially in littoral areas. The lake will be surveyed again in 2026 to continue to document and describe the vegetation response to the alum treatment.

#### **F. Carp Solutions Revised Biomass Estimate**

Tanner provided an update on recent survey days when Carp Solutions completed boat-based electroshocking to reassess the biomass of invasive common carp on Pleasant Lake. No carp were detected on any of the three days.

Staff is awaiting guidance to determine potential next steps for 2026.

### **VII. Commissioner Reports**

Commissioner Miller shared the North Oaks City Council will be considering VLAWMO's JPA at their meeting tomorrow.

Commissioner Huntrods shared Birch Lake Improvement District is having their annual meeting 8/20 at the White Bear Lake City Hall at 7 pm.

### **VIII. NOHOA**

None.

### **IX. Ramsey Soil & Water Conservation Division**

None.

### **X. St. Paul Regional Water Services**

Erickson shared about the recent cyber attack affecting SPRWS, which has hampered their ability to do their work.

### **XI. Public Comment**

None.

## **XII. Next Meetings**

Board Meeting: August 27, 2025 at 7:00 p.m.; TEC Meeting: September 10, 2025 at 8:15 a.m.

## **XIII. Adjourn**

It was moved by Commissioner Philip and seconded by Commissioner Huntrods to adjourn the meeting at 8:58 am. Vote: all aye. Motion passed.