

Top themes which emerged from the First Minnesota River Congress and the 6 River Congress Regional Listening sessions (not in any order)

These are top priority actions and initiatives which 1<sup>st</sup> congress and 6 listening sessions participants have identified as something a basin-wide citizen-led organization could most effectively provide for, which are not being done at all or in the most effective manner at the present time.

**We asked the 2<sup>nd</sup> Congress participants to vote on their top 3 choices for what they envisioned as to what a new or reconstructed body should be engaged in. These are the results of that voting along with summary observations at the end.**

- **Basin Wide Political Action/Clout/Lobbying**  
Develop a basin-wide public affairs agenda, build public support within the basin for that agenda and promote that agenda at the local, State, and national government levels.  
**#1**
- **Basin Wide Conservation Initiatives/Actions**  
Identify and assist basin-wide conservation initiatives  
**#2**
- **Basin Wide Communications at all levels**  
Serve as a vehicle to insure a high level of communication across the entire basin geographically, demographically, and between and among interest groups in the Minnesota River Basin.  
**#3**
- **Basin Wide Education and Awareness Initiatives**  
Provide or support public education and promote public awareness on the importance of preserving and protecting the natural resources of the Minnesota River Basin.  
**#4**
- **Basin Wide Platform for Sharing Knowledge**  
Create and maintain a platform for sharing of knowledge across the entire Minnesota River Basin.  
**#5**
- **Basin Wide Recreational Opportunities and Marketing**  
Market and Promote recreational activities in the Minnesota River Basin  
**#6**
- **Basin Wide Continuing Forum for public input**  
Host forums similar to the Minnesota River Congress meetings to obtain on-going public input and as a means of informing the public of what is happening in the Minnesota River Basin.  
**#7**
- **Basin Wide Development of recommendations for various policies**  
**#8**
- **Basin Wide Most inclusive outreach for participation**  
**#9**
- **Basin Wide On-Going Organizational Management and Development**  
**#10**

The following is analysis and observations based on all responses and additional written and verbal comments from all sessions to date.

Individual responses reflect what a majority of participants feel is a need for a basin wide citizen led body of some sort to be able to effectively engage in political action. One of the comments made resonated with the participants in this regard. That was to make sure that what was being lobbied for from a Watershed District or SWCD was not in conflict and coordinated with those entities and others who may have political agenda's which affect the basin as well. All lobbying should be done in an effort to realize the cultural power which is perceived to be significant and not currently being exercised and executed. This was also a clear first hand observation from the facilitators and organizing team at the event as well.

Responses also made it clear that basin-wide conservation initiatives and actions were a high priority as well and were not being done on a basin-wide scale to any great extent. Comments about helping to create, assisting or supporting initiatives like the Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program or other basin scale applicable initiatives were something a citizen led; basin-wide organization could and should be engaged in.

Basin-wide communications at all levels were observed as a high priority of congress attendee's. Additional comments reflected that this was noted as being a kind of glue which could serve the other priorities well making people aware and spreading news of successes and failures across all communities of interest. It was also noted that communications often spread education and have the ability to spark actions basin-wide. Some communications are going on but it was noted that they should be done to a greater degree and through local media as well as through all modern electronic methods available.

Basin-wide education and awareness is also near the top of the list and identified as something appropriate and needed on a larger more comprehensive scale in the watershed. Additional comments included that all age groups need a greater awareness of the economic, natural and cultural climate we have today and that would be something a basin-wide organization should be engaged in on-going.

All of the themes which emerged from the prior events received votes. They can, and will be considered in the on-going development of a diverse base of representatives and can be acted upon as opportunities arise and are presented by the pro-activity of a new well designed or reconstructed effective citizen led basin-wide entity.

Table responses reflect some consensus among congress participants and further define and clarify to some degree what a majority of individuals were saying as well. The

following is the results of that voting as well after we asked the tables to pick the top 2 themes from the list.

The following were chosen highest as the last 3 picks

- Basin Wide Development of recommendations for various policies

**#1**

- Basin Wide On-Going Organizational Management and Development

**#2**

- Basin Wide Most inclusive outreach for participation

**#3**

- \* Basin Wide Political Action/Clout/Lobbying

Develop a basin-wide public affairs agenda, build public support within the basin for that agenda and promote that agenda at the local, State, and national government levels.

**#4**

- Basin Wide Continuing Forum for public input

Host forums similar to the Minnesota River Congress meetings to obtain on-going public input and as a means of informing the public of what is happening in the Minnesota River Basin.

**#5**

- Basin Wide Recreational Opportunities and Marketing

Market and Promote recreational activities in the Minnesota River Basin

**#6**

- Basin Wide Conservation Initiatives/Actions

Identify and assist basin-wide conservation initiatives

**#7**

- Basin Wide Communications at all levels

Serve as a vehicle to insure a high level of communication across the entire basin geographically, demographically, and between and among interest groups in the Minnesota River Basin.

**#8**

- Basin Wide Platform for Sharing Knowledge

Create and maintain a platform for sharing of knowledge across the entire Minnesota River Basin.

**#9**

- Basin Wide Education and Awareness Initiatives

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**#10**

There was a significant number of people who didn't want a political agenda associated with the new entity. There was some degree of misunderstanding on the last three themes and it was felt by respondents that it is tough for many to grasp the need for

organizational development and management needs in order to succeed over all. We also found it puzzling that development of recommendations for policies received so many last place votes when lobbying and political involvement was picked so high as a priority. The same held true for communications as people had a lot of last place votes for basin wide continuing forum, but at the same time wanted communications at all levels.

In closing this summary we believe that we have the information we need to craft something quite significant for a spring congress.

We have a number of new people who have come forward to want to be on the organizing team going forward as well as the current group. It is our opinion to ultimately split up the group into task related teams of 6 or so. We think at this point 3 teams would work well. We will meet as a large group first to become better acquainted and to do some vision, mission and objective work together as the entire group and then at subsequent meetings break down into task related teams to define, refine and focus on interest and expertise areas.