

Testimony
HB 1217—Department of Water Resources
House Appropriations
Representative Don Vigesaa, Chairman
February 1, 2023

Chairman Vigesaa, and members of the House Appropriations Committee – I am Patrick Fridgen, Director of the Planning and Education Division for the Department of Water Resources (DWR). I am here today to provide neutral testimony regarding House Bill (HB) 1217, and more specifically, background information related to the DWR Cost-Share Program since the potential for DWR cost-share assistance is referenced in the bill.

My comments today are in line with what might be expected to address flood risk reduction efforts in rural areas in the northern Red River Valley – with reference to a pertinent example. Most recently, in 2021, DWR was approached by the Walsh County Water Resource District for cost-share to modify a hydraulic study performed by an engineering firm in 2018. The purpose of that study was to analyze the impact of flow restrictions within the floodplain of the Red River in the Oslo, Minnesota area for a range of flood events.

The total cost to complete the update of the hydraulic study was about \$14,000. The Minnesota Department of Natural Resources provided approximately \$7,000. Because the study was related to rural flood protection efforts, DWR provided 45% cost-share on the remaining \$7,000, which amounted to \$3,139. The update of the hydraulic study was very recently completed, and we are awaiting a copy of the analysis.

To be in line with the State Water Commission’s current policy, and the modified policy that takes effect in the 2023-2025 biennium related to rural flood protection, future studies would be recommended for cost-share at up to 45%. This would also be the recommended percentage for any future construction projects to complete rural flood protection. Having said that, depending on the scope of a future project, if the cause and solution are entirely related to road or bridge repairs or replacements, that would need to be looked at by the Commission for eligibility.

Mr. Chairman, and members of the committee, this concludes my testimony related to HB 1217, and I will stand for any questions that you might have.