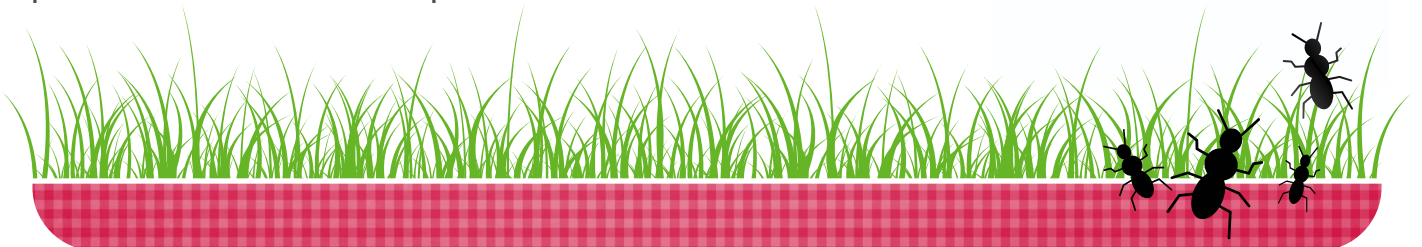
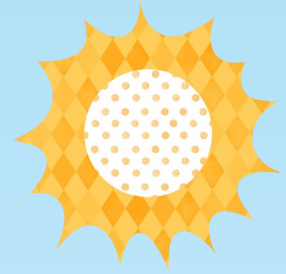


Miss. Headwaters Board Biennial Report

7/11/21-6/30/2023

Director's Report

If I could sum up the past two years I would say that getting the board involved politically was evidenced throughout this biennium. Two major accomplishments by the board were getting federal legislation written by Rep. Pete Stauber (HR 1657) to help facilitate a potential land exchange between the Chippewa National Forest, and influencing DNR Commissioner Strommen to release the Sheep Ranch parcel and Kabekona complex to local partners for land acquisition. These efforts allowed the MHB board and partners to work together and craft a message of importance and urgency. Both accomplishments required board members to meet with the respective agency and political personnel and elevate the conversation to a political one to bring a change in direction from the current course. Without partners providing background information, and the MHB board crafting a message, the effort would have been futile. These are just two examples of how the MHB board is able to clarify and provide a beacon of hope to an issue.



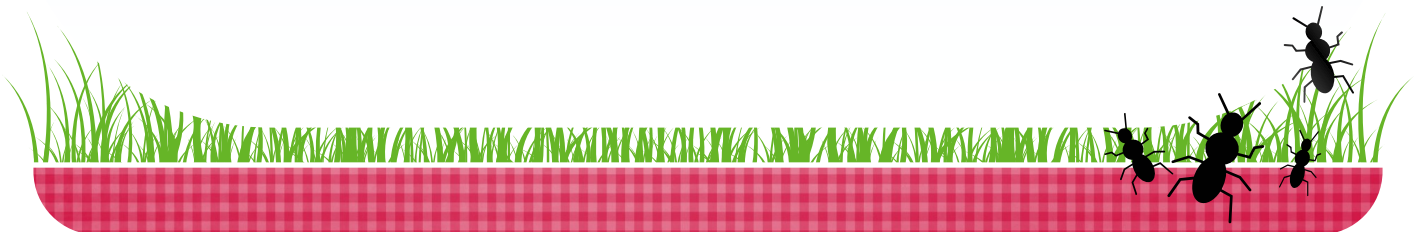
Notable Activities

- Worked with the Leech Lake Band of Ojibwe to provide funding for perennial cover at a solar panel site by Lake Winnie.
- Boy Scout Zach Roberts participated in the MHB signage project by installing a kiosk and signs at various locations on the Mississippi river and received an Eagle Scout award for his efforts.
- Continued to work with counties to raise support for the MN Traditions social media program. Over the biennium, eighteen counties supported MN Traditions with \$167,750 in funding.
- The Miss. Headwaters Habitat Corridor Program has just over \$22M over 6 phases and the newest proposal in 2023 is requesting \$9.270M. 6,446 acres and 47 shoreland miles have been protected, and an additional 5,637 acres and 9 shoreland miles are on schedule to be completed.
- Began working on the Whiskey Creek acquisition project which was funded by the Legislative Citizens Commission on Minnesota Resources (LCCMR) and funded by the Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund (ENRTF). While there were many delays and obstacles to overcome, the partnership with the city of Baxter and Crow Wing SWCD remained strong and we are currently in the process of trying to acquisition the land. Once completed, this project will intercept 400 acres of impervious pavement drainage from Hwy. 371, and reduce Total Suspended Solids to the Miss. river to capture 37% of Baxter's TMDL reduction goal.
- Held the MHB biennial conference in October 2021 where over 60 people attended. Attendees learned about what was being done over the past two years with MHB help. An Itasca Commissioner said that he changed his perspective on easements and acquisitions as a result of attending the conference.
- Connected with a non-profit MN-Fish which helped bring about funding for Public Water Accesses. MHB was given a list of DNR priority accesses and we disbursed them among the counties and provided feedback to the DNR on what local priorities are.

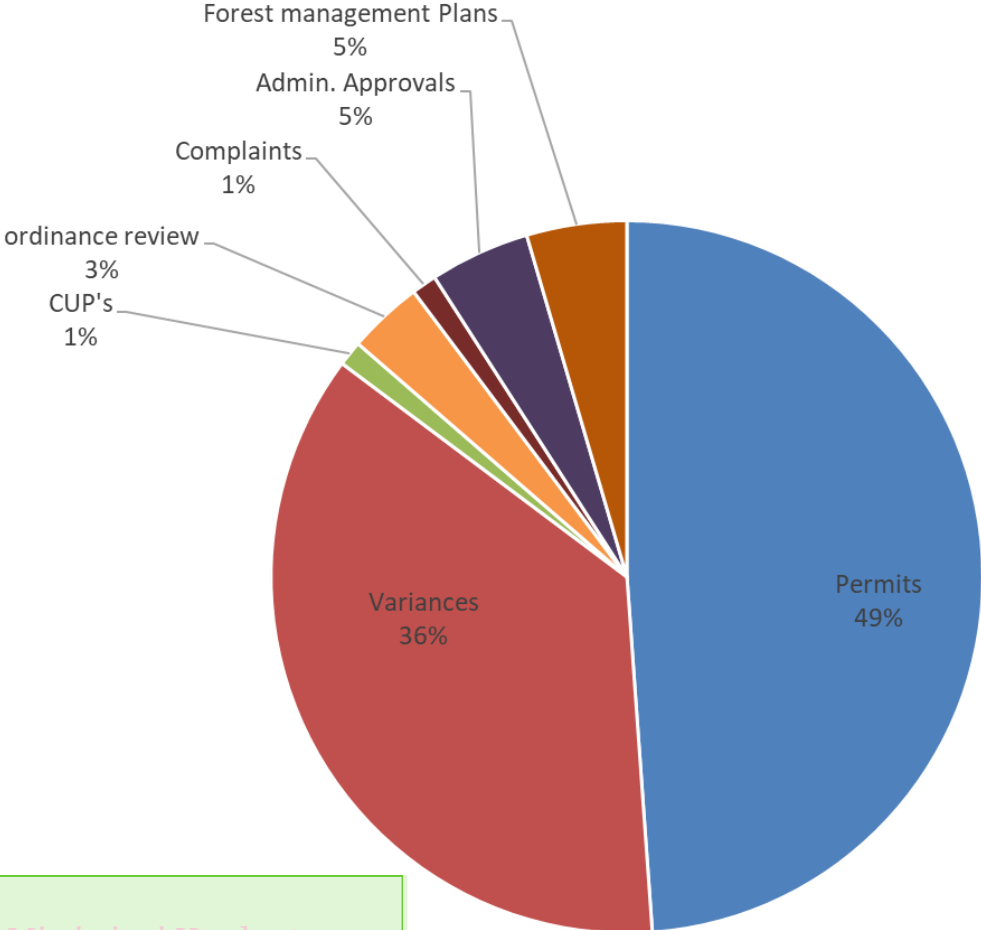


Activities continued.

- The MHB board facilitated a meeting with DNR Commissioner Sarah Strommen. The issue was about allowing the MHB to use the current easement and acquisition program (MHHCP) to acquire the Sheep Ranch Parcels rather than letting the DNR use their process which would take a considerable amount of time. The conversation went well, and the MHB board solicited a letters of support from Hubbard county to help show local support for this project. The decision was made on 8/3/22 to release the parcels pending further study. On 12/7/22, the DNR met with The Conservation Fund and decided to allow the acquisition of Sheep Ranch and the Kabekona River Complex to proceed with The Trust for Public Land and Northern Waters Land Trust agencies. This occurred because MHB was worked with partners to raise the conversation to a political level and resolve differences.
- Attended MN Association of County Professional Economic Developers (MAPCED) and Economic Development Association of MN conference and gave a presentation on signage and resourcetainment. This is a model that can be implemented statewide.
- Attended One Watershed One Plan advisory committee meetings for the Brainerd Mississippi and Mississippi Grand Rapids watershed and provided input on priorities and resource concerns. As a result, there is a special Mississippi river chapter in each of those plans.
- Held five resourcetainment events that encouraged the public to explore and discover the Mississippi river in a meaningful way.
- A documentary titled "A Living History of the Miss. Headwaters Board" was produced by Principia Media which helps the audience visualize the formation and history of the MHB. It was placed on the MHB website and used as a tool for people to understand what the MHB does.
- The MHB website was updated to have a more user friendly events page and recreational page in which people could see events being held on the Miss. river along with stretches of the Mississippi river to paddle. Sen. Carrie Rudd and Rep. Michelle Fischbach assistant commented on how the website was easy to understand and helpful for them when they attended the biennial conference.
- The Executive Director visited with local high schools (7) on the Mississippi river this year and introduced them to the MHB and what we do. He also provided them with knowledge about environmental fields available to them. As a result, the kids learned about the environmental field of study and what options are available to them.
- The MHB paid \$2500 for a conservation kiosk to be set up at the Brainerd Visitors center for people to interact with the software and learn more about the Miss. river. A calendar was set up for scheduling the use and transport of the kiosk to different locations for use at county fairs to gain a larger audience.



REGULATORY ACTIONS



197 Public Meetings

Mississippi Headwaters Board

Land Services Building
322 Laurel St.
Brainerd, MN 56401

Phone: 218-824-1189
Web: www.mississippiheadwaters.org
E-mail: timt@mississippiheadwaters.org



County in-kind Contributions:
\$585,178