



MISSISSIPPI
WATERSHED
MANAGEMENT
ORGANIZATION

Request for Board Action

Attachment 6.6

Agenda Item: Owámniyomni Mill Race Environmental Investigation

Presenter: Emily Resseger

Meeting Date: 18 November 2025

Flexibility: Yes No

Estimated Time: Consent Agenda 10 Min. 15 Min. 30 Min. 45 Min. 1 Hour

Action Request: Information/Review Motion to approve Budget Change Other

Board Action: Approved Denied Tabled Accepted Report Other

Date of Action: 18 November 2025

Background

In 2024, the MWMO began partnering with Owámniyomni Okhódayapi, a Dakota-led nonprofit, to support their work to transform five acres of land at Owámniyomni (St. Anthony Falls) into a place of restoration, education, healing and connection. MWMO and Owámniyomni Okhódayapi share priorities at Owámniyomni of promoting clean water and healthy habitat immediately adjacent to the Mississippi River.

A central feature of the Owámniyomni project is the Mill Race, a historic open channel below the falls that once served mill operations. The Mill Race is now disconnected from the river and receives polluted runoff from historic mill tunnels and storm sewers. Conceptual designs for the Owámniyomni project envision reconnecting the Mill Race to the river to restore flow, improve habitat, and enhance public access.

MWMO monitoring in August 2024 identified high levels of *E. coli* entering the Mill Race from several pipe inputs, as well as elevated nutrients and metals within the channel. The sources of pollution are unknown, as the area around the Mill Race was among the first to be developed into the City of Minneapolis, and includes a tangle of storm sewers, sanitary sewers, mill tunnels, and other

conveyances. Information about sediment and historical conditions within the Mill Race is also limited.

MWMO staff propose to solicit professional engineering services to complete an environmental investigation of the Mill Race, including review of historical records, mapping of inputs, and additional field investigations. The findings will inform design decisions to ensure successful water quality improvements and healthy habitat connections at Owámmiyomni.

Staff request board approval of a not-to-exceed amount of \$103,700 to pay for professional engineering services to conduct the Owámmiyomni Mill Race Environmental Investigation.

Mississippi Watershed Management Organization

RESOLUTION 2025-034

A RESOLUTION APPROVING FUNDING FOR THE OWÁMNIYOMNI MILL RACE ENVIRONMENTAL INVESTIGATION

WHEREAS, The MWMO's 10-year Watershed Management Plan has established a goal to protect and improve the Mississippi River; and

WHEREAS, The MWMO strives to partner with other entities to collaboratively find cost-effective ways to manage stormwater and improve habitat; and

WHEREAS, Owámniyomni Okhódayapi plans to reconnect the Owámniyomni Mill Race to the Mississippi River, improving water quality and creating new connected habitat in a corridor adjacent to the River; and

WHEREAS, The MWMO has determined that the Owámniyomni Mill Race currently has poor water quality and receives untreated water from abandoned mill tunnels and storm sewer pipes; and

WHEREAS, The MWMO does not know the sources of inputs to nor the extent of pollution in the Mill Race; and

WHEREAS, The MWMO has sufficient Watershed Assessment funds available; and

WHEREAS, Staff recommends the Board of Commissioners approve up to \$103,700 in Watershed Assessment funds to complete an environmental investigation of the Owámniyomni Mill Race current conditions and inputs.

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, the MWMO Board of Commissioners approve up to \$103,700 in Watershed Assessment funds for professional services to complete an environmental investigation of the Owámniyomni Mill Race and authorizes MWMO staff to take all necessary administrative actions to implement the resolution.

Adopted this the 18th day of November, 2025.

Review for the Board: _____

Connie Buesgens, Chair

Review for Administration: _____

Kevin Reich, Executive Director