

One Watershed, One Plan: Minnesota River – Mankato

STEERING TEAM MEETING MINUTES

April 24, 2024

The One Watershed, One Plan: Minnesota River – Mankato Steering Team met at 9:36 a.m. on Wednesday, April 24, 2024 at the St. Peter Community Center: St. Peter Room #217. Present at the meeting for Nicollet County: Kenny Famakinwa and Crystal Madden; Nicollet SWCD: Mackenzie Bratsch; City of North Mankato: Luke Arnold; Blue Earth County: Scott Salisbury; Le Sueur SWCD: Mike Schultz; City of St. Peter: Curtis Thompson; BWSR: Jeremy Maul and Adam Beilke.

Meeting Agenda

The meeting agenda reviewed.

Website Update

The Nicollet County website was updated to include the watershed information, including: Meeting agendas, packets and minutes, as well as the watershed map. The watershed website: www.co.nicollet.mn.us/mnrivermankato

Public Kick-off Meeting: MNSU Water Resources Center (WRC) Introduction

Kim Musser, Associate Director at Minnesota State University's Water Resource Center, presented program services for public engagement. Musser asked the Team to discuss and decide upon a level of public engagement for the public kick-off meetings. Will the meetings be strictly informational, or will they prioritize public input and interaction, and to what level? After discussion, the Team decided it is prudent to host one additional follow-up public meeting after the plan is created due to the size of the population within this watershed. This allows the public an opportunity to review the plan and provide feedback before implementation. July 2024: Two (2) Public Kick-Off Meetings → Plan Creation → Spring/Early Summer 2025: Follow-up Public Meeting

The Minnesota River – Mankato watershed's population is one of the largest in the state. This watershed is unique because the majority of its land mass is rural, while the majority of the watershed's *population* resides within city limits. There will most likely be competing priorities with both county and city involvement. Staff anticipates feedback for a wide variety of issues, which will need to be prioritized into a workable plan. This plan will be *comprehensive* and include priorities relating to clean drinking water, drainage, and critical habitats. Swan Lake was one habitat example that was mentioned, which is considered to be one of the largest prairie pothole lakes to exist within North America.

The Team explained to Musser that a virtual meeting option is necessary to reach those unable to participate in the in-person public kick-off meetings. Staff anticipates one-hundred (100) participants at each public meeting, but recognize there may be more with the size of the watershed's population.

The Team decided on the following public meeting details:

1. MEETING #1 held on Tuesday, July 23rd from 4:00 – 7:00 p.m. at the Nicollet Conservation Club located at 46045 471st Lane, Nicollet, MN 56074.
2. MEETING #2 held on Tuesday, July 30th from 4:00 – 7:00 p.m. at the Floyd Roberts, Jr. Pavilion located at 100 Amos Owen Lane, Mankato, MN 56001.

These dates and times are scheduled around county and city summer events. Luke Arnold with the City of North Mankato suggested the Team utilize these public events to provide watershed plan information and possibly solicit public feedback.

Methods of gathering measurable data was discussed, as well as how to then prioritize the issues for funding. One activity that received positive feedback from the group is to provide each individual at the public kick-off meeting \$100 in fake money. Individuals will then “spend” their money on issues they deem the most significant. This engagement activity provides clear and measurable data. Unmanned booths at county and city summer events that have a QR code to a public survey was another idea proposed. Musser provided example handouts for review.

Grant Update

Famakinwa confirmed with Maul that the grant agreement has been executed.

Request for Qualifications (RFQ)

The deadline for RFQ’s is this Friday with consultant interviews scheduled soon after. The St. Peter Community Center - St. Peter Room #217 was reserved from 9:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m. on Thursday, May 2nd.

The Consultant Interview Team will present the interview results to the Policy Committee on Monday, May 13th. The Policy Committee will vote to recommend one consultant for hire to the Nicollet County Board of Commissioners for final approval.

April 8th Policy Committee Meeting Update

Famakinwa updated the Team on what took place during the last Policy Committee meeting.

Advisory Committee

The Advisory Committee Member List was reviewed. Team members will send Famakinwa contact details to compile. This list will be used to create subcommittees at a later date. Subcommittee members will choose meeting dates and times.

Intent to Plan Update

Famakinwa received the official response from the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency. *5/1/2024: BWSR response was received.*

Partner Issue & Priority Discussion

Priority discussion was tabled for later in the planning process.

Steering Team Meeting Schedule

The next scheduled Steering Team meeting will take place on Wednesday, May 22nd.

Next Steps

- Nicollet County will reserve the public meeting spaces, and site visits will be conducted to ensure that the facilities will meet our requirements.
- The Team must decide the level of public engagement they are looking for from the public kick-off meetings. Additionally, what the budget allows for refreshments served at the public meetings.

- The Team will work with the consultant to reserve booths at summer county and city public events, and create a survey with QR code to gain feedback at unmanned informational booths.

April 24, 2024 Steering Team Meeting Minute Attachments:

ATTACHMENT A - Public Meeting Locations

ATTACHMENT B - WRC Example Documents

ATTACHMENT C - Intent to Plan Responses

One Watershed, One Plan: MN River - Mankato

Kick-Off Meeting Facility Details

MAP #	FACILITY	INDOOR FACILITY & CAPACITY	OUTDOOR FACILITY & CAPACITY	AMPLE PARKING	WATERSHED FEATURE	AVAILABILITY	ESTIMATED COST	DETAILS, LINKS & RESOURCES
1	Lake Washington Park Community Building 47102 Washington Park Road Kasota, MN 56050	☒ <50	☒ patio	☐	☒	☒	FREE ***	WATERSHED FEATURE: Lake Washington FACILITIES: Indoor electric; <u>heated and cooled</u>; indoor restrooms; <u>kitchenette</u>; 8 tables and 45 chairs available WEBSITE: co.le-sueur.mn.us/Facilities/ RESERVATIONS: Tyler at 507-357-8201; <i>held Saturday, July 27th – contact ASAP to cancel.</i> ***COST: FREE if thorough clean up after event including cleaning the restrooms and vacuuming – cleaning supplies are provided.
2	Land of Memories Park Floyd Robert, Jr. Pavilion 300 Amos Owen Lane Mankato	☒ <99	☒ patio	☒	☒	☒	FREE	WATERSHED FEATURE: Blue Earth River, near MN River FACILITIES: Indoor electric <u>heated and cooled</u>; indoor restrooms; <u>kitchenette</u> WEBSITE: mankatomn.gov/about-mankato/parks-trails-and-recreation/ RESERVATIONS: 507-387-8697 Claudiahicks@mankatomn.gov (Claudia confirmed free 4.15.24)
3	Minnesota Square Park Pavilion 1000 S. Minnesota Avenue St. Peter, MN 56082	☐	☒ <99	☒	☐	☒	FREE	WATERSHED FEATURE: None FACILITIES: Outdoor electric. LARGE pavilion; restrooms short walk away. WEBSITE: saintpetermn.gov/434/Community-Center RESERVATIONS: 507-934-0667 jenh@saintpetermn.gov
4	Nicollet Conservation Club 46045 471st Lane Nicollet, MN 56074	☒ <100	☐	☒	☒	☒	FREE ***	WATERSHED FEATURE: Swan Lake FACILITIES: Indoor dining room; heated and cooled; indoor restrooms; rate for 6 hour rental; bartender included; *** Jake confirmed we are allowed the space for FREE. WEBSITE: saintpetermn.gov/434/Community-Center RESERVATIONS: Jake Zins - 507-232-3930
5	Saint Peter Community Center Community Room #219 600 S. 5 th Street St. Peter, MN 56082	☒ <99	☐	☒	☐	☒	FREE	WATERSHED FEATURE: None FACILITIES: Indoor electric; <u>heated and cooled</u>; indoor restrooms; <u>kitchenette</u> WEBSITE: saintpetermn.gov/434/Community-Center RESERVATIONS: 507-934-0667 jenh@saintpetermn.gov (Jennifer confirmed free 4.12.24)
6	Seven Mile Creek County Park Pavilions #1-3 47454 US-169 St. Peter, MN 56082	☐	☒ <40	☐	☒	☒	FREE	WATERSHED FEATURE: Seven Mile Creek (#1 & 2) & MN River (#3) FACILITIES: Outdoor facility non-electric; outdoor toilet WEBSITE: co.nicollet.mn.us/349/Parks-Trails RESERVATIONS: First come, first served. Mike 507-934-7725
7	Sibley Park Pavilion 900 Mound Avenue Mankato, MN 56001	☒ <150	☒ patio	☐	☒	☒	FREE	WATERSHED FEATURE: Minnesota River FACILITIES: Indoor electric; <u>heated and cooled</u>; indoor restrooms; <u>kitchenette</u> WEBSITE: mankatomn.gov/about-mankato/parks-trails-and-recreation/ RESERVATIONS: 507-387-8697 Claudiahicks@mankatomn.gov (Claudia confirmed free 4.15.24)
8	Sibley Park The Giving Barn 900 Mound Avenue Mankato, MN 56001	☒ <99	☒ patio	☒	☐	☒	FREE	WATERSHED FEATURE: None FACILITIES: Indoor electric; garage doors; <u>heated & cooled</u>; on-site restrooms; 8 picnic tables WEBSITE: mankatomn.gov/about-mankato/parks-trails-and-recreation/ RESERVATIONS: 507-387-8697 Claudiahicks@mankatomn.gov (Claudia confirmed free 4.15.24)

LAND OF MEMORIES PARK: FLOYD ROBERT, JR. PAVILION



Land of Memories Park
Floyd Robert, Jr. Pavilion
300 Amos Owen Lane
Mankato, MN 56001

Located at the entrance of Land of Memories Park, the pavilion provides an elevated view of park scenery. See the [pre-event information](#) for more details. Amenities include:

- Ample parking.
- Approximately 1,100 square feet of open indoor space with a small kitchenette area with.
- Close proximity to generous green space, Land of Memories campground and disc golf course.
- Electricity throughout.
- Heating and air conditioning for year-round gatherings.
- Kitchenette equipped with sink microwave, refrigerator and deep freezer.
- Large outdoor patio overlooking Land of Memories Park.
- Seven 8-foot long tables, ten 5-foot round tables and 100 chairs.
- On-site restrooms.

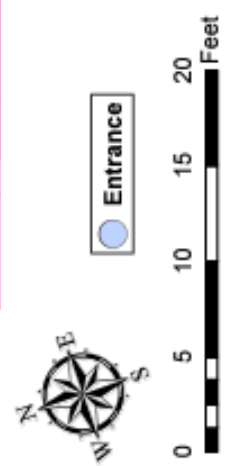
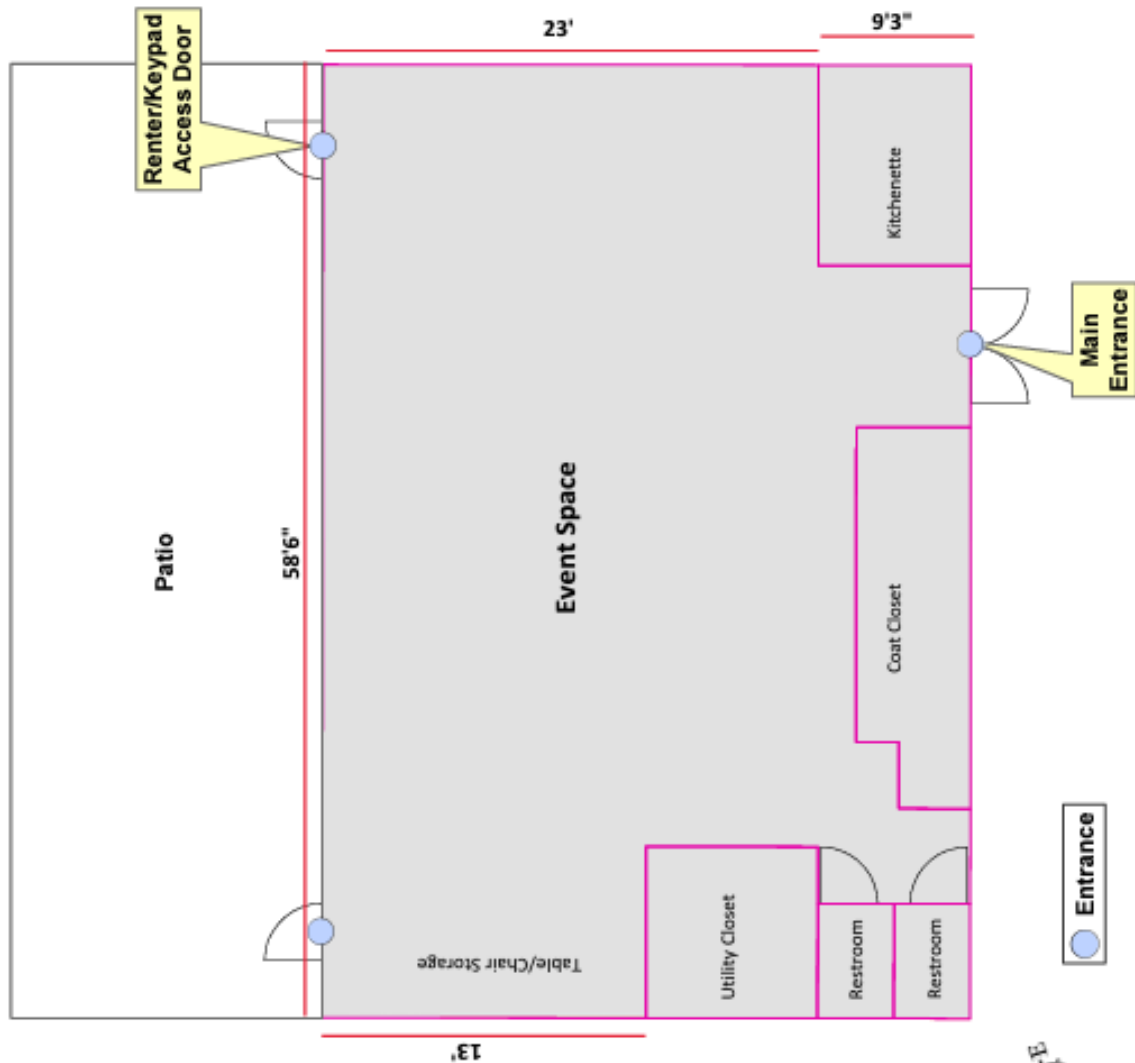
Cost: **FREE**

Space must be returned to the condition found.

Reservation made 5/1/2024, and site visit conducted on 5/6/2024.

Floyd Roberts Jr. Pavilion 100 Amos Owen Ln

Refuse Collection



City of MAYKATO
Leading the way—
Micah Solimine
February 2023

This information is to be used for reference purposes only. The City of Maykato does not guarantee accuracy of the material contained herein and a full legal title search is not guaranteed.



NICOLLET CONSERVATION CLUB, INC.: CLUBHOUSE



Nicollet Conservation Club

46045 471st Lane

Nicollet, MN 56074

(507) 232-3366

Cost: **FREE**

Space must be returned to the condition found.

The Nicollet Conservation Club currently has 450 members, is a \$100,000 Ducks Unlimited sponsor, and contributes to many other outdoor organizations. It is known statewide for its strong stance on conservation issues. The modern, spacious building is used by wildlife groups, as well as other civic organizations. It's also used for weddings, showers, anniversaries, and, occasionally, a funeral. The last main building project at the club was in 1994 when a two story addition increased the size of the building vertically. The upstairs portion was educational exhibits and a meeting/classroom. It's used for firearms training, board meetings, adult hunter education training, and various groups rent the room for their meetings. The Nicollet Conservation Club is a perfect setting for Corporate Meetings, Christmas Parties and Special Occasions. Members may rent the building (bartenders included). The Nicollet Conservation Club also has a grill available for a fee.

The front bar area will have one staff member present if drinks are purchased. The best space for the meeting is in the back dining space photograph #2. The club prefers drinks and food to be kept in that area. Soda can be purchased for \$1.50 can.

Site visit conducted, and reservation placed on April 25, 2025.







September 16, 2021 - 6:00-8:00 p.m. Complimentary Refreshments
St. Olaf Lake Park 17500 240th Avenue, New Richland, MN (4.5 miles NE of town)

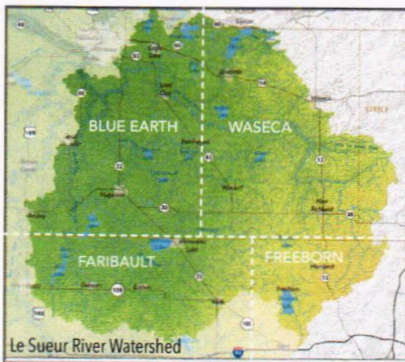


JOIN THE CONVERSATION ABOUT THE FUTURE OF THE WATERSHED

Learn about the watershed planning process that is just starting in the Le Sueur—the One Watershed One Plan (1W1P). You'll have the opportunity to learn about the watershed and informally discuss issues with watershed neighbors and local and state conservation partners. This planning effort is part of a statewide initiative to create a watershed-wide, science-based approach to water resource management. The plan will guide watershed planning and implementation over the next ten years.



Le Sueur River Watershed



YOUR INPUT IS NEEDED

Watershed partners want to learn from residents about your priorities and concerns.
What do you value about local water resources?
What river, lake and groundwater issues are important to you?
What do you think are the major issues or concerns with area rivers and lakes?
What watershed improvement strategies can address these challenges?

WATERSHED PARTNERSHIP

The Le Sueur River Watershed planning partnership includes Blue Earth County, Blue Earth Soil and Water Conservation District, Waseca County, Waseca Soil and Water Conservation District, Faribault County, Faribault Soil and Water Conservation District, Freeborn County, and Freeborn Soil and Water Conservation District.

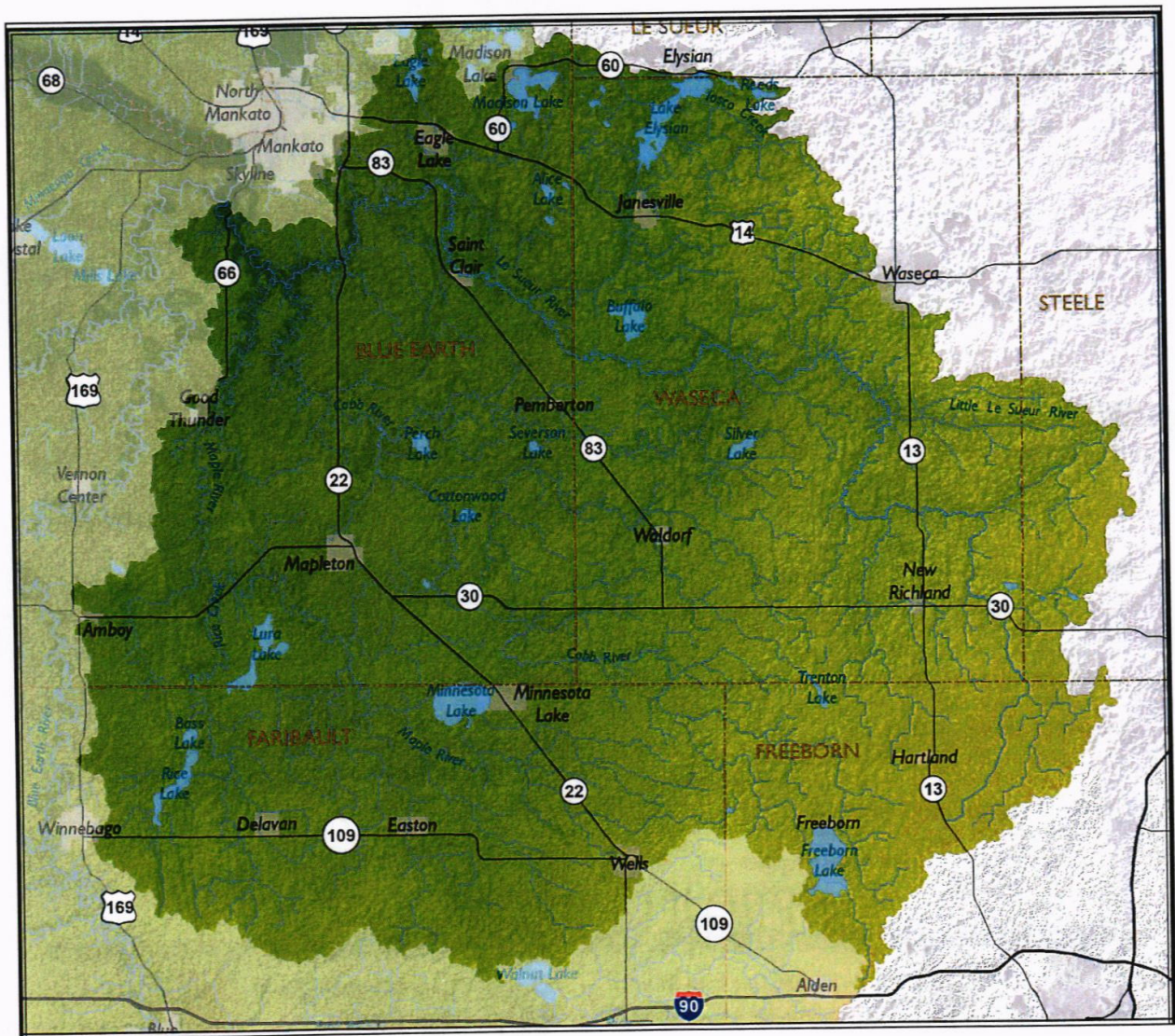
FOR MORE INFORMATION & SURVEY

Rather weigh in online? Visit the Le Sueur 1W1P website to fill out a survey or learn more about the Le Sueur River Watershed and 1W1P planning process: <https://www.co.waseca.mn.us/438/LeSueur-River-One-Watershed-One-Plan>
1W1P Questions? Contact Freeborn County Environmental Services at 507-377-5186 or Rachel.Wehrner@co.freeborn.mn.us
Kickoff Meeting Questions? Contact the Water Resources Center, Minnesota State University, Mankato at 507-389-5492 or Kimberly.Musser@mnsu.edu



Before the meeting, please visit the Le Sueur 1W1P website for meeting updates or cancellations.

LE SUEUR RIVER WATERSHED



CONTACTS

LE SUEUR RIVER WATERSHED

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WATERSHED & PROJECT PARTNERS

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Julie Blackburn - Julie.Blackburn@ISGInc.com

Freshwater

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Lila Franklin - lfranklin@freshwater.org

Le Sueur River Watershed Network

<https://lesueurriverwaters.wixsite.com/network>

Water Resources Center, Minnesota State University, Mankato

Kimberly Musser - kimberly.musser@mnsu.edu

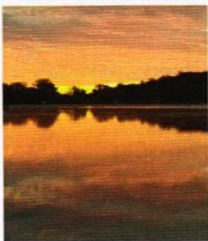
PROJECT UPDATES

Le Sueur River Watershed, One Watershed One Plan Website
<https://www.co.waseca.mn.us/438/LeSueur-River-One-Watershed-One-Plan>



LE SUEUR RIVER WATERSHED
ONE WATERSHED ONE PLAN KICKOFF

PUBLIC INPUT SUMMARY





INITIAL REVIEW DRAFT - NOT FOR DISTRIBUTION
11-2-21



One Watershed One Plan

This document summarizes public engagement that is part of the planning process for Le Sueur River Watershed One Watershed One Plan development. Learn more about One Watershed One Plan (1W1p) by visiting BWSR's website: <https://bwsr.state.mn.us/one-watershed-one-plan>

Le Sueur River Watershed One Watershed One Plan Website

Learn more and follow plan updates posted on the 1W1P website: <https://www.co.waseca.mn.us/438/LeSueur-River-One-Watershed-One-Plan>

Le Sueur River Watershed One Watershed One Plan - Planning Partnership

The Le Sueur River Watershed 1W1P planning partnership includes Blue Earth County, Blue Earth Soil, and Water Conservation District, Waseca County, Waseca Soil and Water Conservation District, Faribault County, Faribault Soil and Water Conservation District, Freeborn County, and Freeborn Soil and Water Conservation District.

The kickoff public engagement was planned, facilitated summarized by the Water Resources Center at Minnesota State University, Mankato for the 1W1P planning partnership.



For More Information

1W1P Questions?

Contact Waseca County Planning & Zoning at 507- 835-0615 or Haley.Byron@co.waseca.mn.us

Kickoff Meeting Questions?

Contact the Water Resources Center, Minnesota State University, Mankato at 507-389-5492

or Kimberly.Musser@mnsu.edu

More detailed public summary information is available upon request.



GATHERING PUBLIC INPUT

Background

This report is a summary of a public engagement component of the Le Sueur River Watershed, One Watershed One Plan (1W1P) planning effort. An initial step in the process for developing the Le Sueur River Watershed 1W1P is to host a public kickoff meeting to listen and learn from watershed residents and stakeholders. The main objective of the public engagement effort is to give residents and stakeholders the opportunity to provide input and identify important issues and concerns related to watershed health. As part of the Le Sueur 1W1P process, project partners will invite watershed residents to provide input on the plan at two public meetings—the kickoff and a mid-point meeting. This document summarizes public feedback from both a kickoff meeting and online survey.

Kickoff Meeting

A public kickoff meeting was held September 16, 2021 at St. Olaf Lake Park near New Richland, MN. The meeting was designed to provide information about the planning process and the watershed and to collect information from watershed residents that will help frame issues and shape planning efforts. The kickoff meeting began with a welcome by planning partners and an overview of the 1W1P process. Participants learned about watershed health and water quality by Minnesota Pollution Control Agency staff. Minnesota Department of Natural Resources staff provided an overview of river flows, climatic trends, and groundwater trends. Approximately 60 people attended representing diverse communities and viewpoints from across the watershed.

The bulk of the meeting centered on facilitated small group conversations where participants discussed the following questions:

- *What do you value and care about when it comes to your community and the natural environment?*
- *What would you like to preserve for future generations?*
- *What concerns do you have about area natural resources and the community?*
- *Are there specific watershed areas or water bodies (lakes, rivers, wetlands) that you are concerned about?*
- *What strategies would you suggest to improve watershed health and community vitality?*

Online Survey

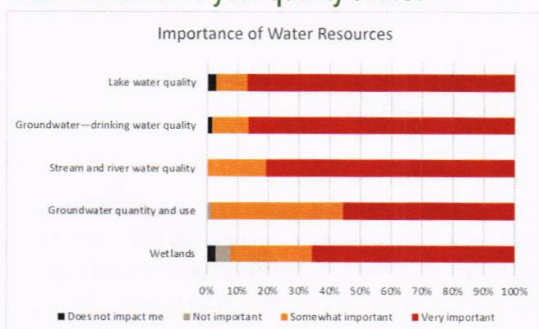
Due to the covid pandemic, an online survey was also developed to reach those who preferred to weigh in online. An online survey was developed in collaboration with planning partners to gain citizen input about watershed issues and priority resources. The survey design conveys the same questions asked to frame input at the kickoff meeting. The 17-question survey included both open and closed-ended questions to gain general input about citizen perspectives. There were 68 survey respondents, primarily rural residents and farmers from Blue Earth and Waseca Counties.



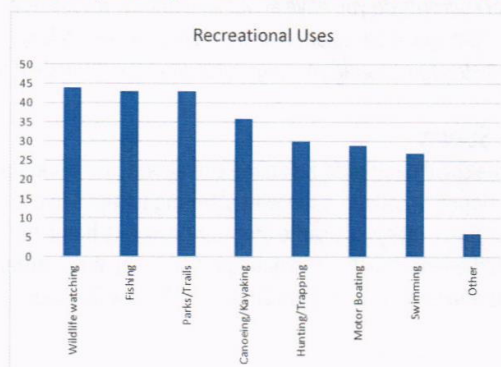
VALUE



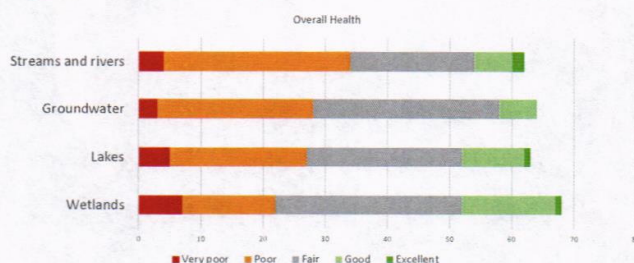
How important are each of the following water resources to your quality of life?



Do you participate in any of the following activities or use the natural areas (lakes, ponds, wetlands, streams, rivers) in the Le Sueur River Watershed?



How would you rate the overall health of water resources in your area/community?



VALUE

What do you value and care about when it comes to water resources and the natural environment in the Le Sueur River Watershed? What would you like to be preserved for future generations?

Natural environment

Participants highly value the natural environment, vibrant communities, and rural character across the watershed. A central topic raised was the importance of preserving the natural ecosystem and environment. There was a strong interest in maintaining good recreational opportunities to fish, hunt, and paddle while stressing the importance of access and healthy wildlife populations. Preserving natural areas and the feeling of being "in the wild," and maintaining a healthy landscape were highly valued.

- *I would love to preserve the lakes and streams so that future generations can enjoy good fishing, swimming and other recreational activities.*
- *Provide habitat for wildlife and native plants so that natural ecosystems can thrive. I want future generations to be able to fish, see monarchs, and enjoy natural lands.*

Surface water quality

Water quality was another central focus, particularly an interest in cleaner water, decreasing sediment and nutrient pollution and not sending excessive sediment levels downstream.

- *I value water quality. I think that it's possible to improve water quality in the Le Sueur River Watershed through wetland restoration and increased adoption of perennial crops in sensitive areas.*
- *Wetland preservation is important to water quality and maintaining buffer strips along public waterways provides habitat and improves water quality.*
- *I would like to see our lakes preserved; more specifically, limiting the impact of invasive species, maintaining good water quality, and limiting additional shoreline development.*
- *Restoring wetlands, seeding prairies, and storing water on the landscape like it had been in the past will help with water quality, habitat, and flooding of communities.*

Healthy agricultural lands and vibrant communities

Many participants discussed the importance of preserving agricultural lands and finding a balance between agricultural production and natural areas.

- *I want our topsoil and nutrients to stay where they are so that they can be an asset to us, instead of washing downstream and being a liability for someone else.*
- *We need to make sure that there is land and land use that provides for my family to live and grow at home in this watershed.*
- *I want our farmland preserved for future generations so we can all eat food. Traditional BMPs should be fully supported and properly located.*
- *Small towns are not what they used to be with fewer families in the area. Resources are taken out of the land, sent elsewhere and we are left with the loss. I would like to see some of that come back and an interest in sustainability.*

Groundwater and drinking water

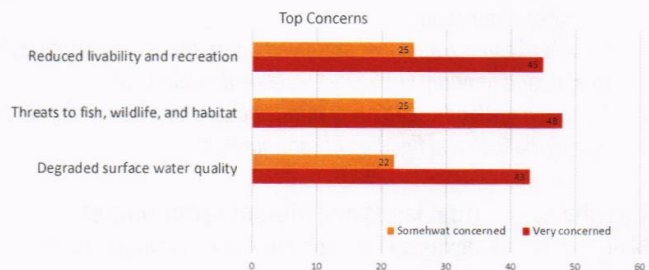
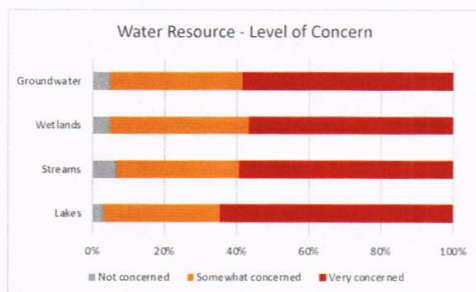
Many valued maintaining groundwater supplies and access to high quality drinking water.

- *Drinking water is the most important resource.*
- *Fortunately, we have good drinking water quality in the watershed for the most part. This needs to be protected and preserved.*

CONCERNS



How concerned are you about the health of area water resources?



CONCERNS

What concerns do you have about area water and natural resources in the Le Sueur River Watershed today?
What issues related to rivers, lakes, or groundwater do you think should be addressed?

Surface water quantity - Increasing flows and flooding

Flooding and increasing peak flows were one of the central concerns discussed. Many participants focused on how to manage flooding and erosion, discussing how to slow flows and store water.

- *I'm concerned about communities flooding and worried about flashy flows and flooding downstream.*
- *My top concern is increased flows due to farm drainage and urban influences.*
- *The watershed is a fragile one that is deteriorating rapidly. Largely uncontrolled drainage practices and lack of water storage have created a highly dysfunctional hydrology.*
- *Higher peak flows are causing more streambank, ravine, and bluff erosion. We need to store water to reduce peak flows.*

Degraded surface water quality

Water quality was another major topic of discussion, particularly concerns about elevated sediment, nutrient (phosphorus, nitrate) and bacteria levels. Participants were also interested in better understanding human health impacts – Can you swim and fish safely? Which waters are impaired?

- *The water quality in our rivers, streams and lakes is deteriorating rapidly. We need to address these issues to help reverse the decline in the quality of the water in the watershed.*
- *I would like my children and grandchildren to be able to fish in lakes and rivers that aren't green.*

Degraded natural environment

Many expressed concern about reduced livability and recreational opportunities as well as threats to fish and wildlife habitat.

- *I have seen wildlife and natural scenery on the landscape decline steadily since I was a kid.*

Land Management - Balancing agriculture and natural areas

Participants noted that the farm economy is essential to the Le Sueur River Watershed and expressed concern about land use and development that impacts natural resources and habitat, noting riparian areas in particular. Many groups discussed concerns related to management—such as BMP funding, government coordination, communication, and paperwork. Groups also discussed fear of future regulation and conflicting values.

WATERSHED AREAS

Are there specific watershed areas or water bodies (lakes, rivers, wetlands) that you are concerned about?
Please specify below.

Watershed areas discussion centered on lakes. Madison, Bass, Elysian, Freeborn, Rice, Loon, St. Olaf, Alice, Clear, Reeds and Lura were focused on. Participants noted that the entire Le Sueur River watershed needs attention. Others discussed focusing work in specific subwatersheds: Bull Run, Josco Creek, Rice Creek, Cobb River, and Indian Creek were mentioned in particular. Targeting discussions included areas that are experiencing flooding or where there is potential bluff failure. Participants also talked about opportunity areas for water storage, such as drained or altered wetlands, lower production or marginal crop lands, and increased usage of cover crops and soil health practices. Some participants suggested focusing on DNR stream stability sites and on lakes and streams that are “nearly/barely” impaired.

STRATEGIES



WATERSHED STRATEGIES

What strategies do you think will help to improve watershed conditions? (Examples include: water management on agricultural or urban lands, riparian areas, lakeshore management, conservation cover, wetlands, groundwater protection, soil health etc.)

Best management practices (BMPs)

Wetlands, soil health and cover crops, and maintaining buffer strips along rivers and lakes were the most commonly discussed best management practices (BMPs). Alternative side inlets, grade stabilization, waterways and terraces were also specifically mentioned BMPs. Participants also discussed the need for improved shoreland management, addressing dead trees along rivers, and sealing wells to protect groundwater. The need for more technical assistance was raised as a concern.

Water storage

Many group conversations centered on water storage strategies that included wetland restoration, finding historic lake basins to restore, as well as connecting water storage to drainage systems and tiling. Citizens also talked about the need for increasing perennialization and providing incentives for permanent cover.

- Funding to increase water storage and wetlands should be the number one priority.
- Practices that lower peak flows and water volume in rivers; wetland restorations have multiple benefits.
- We need water storage in drainage districts. Look at the systems and incorporate water storage in all drainage projects.

Soil health

The need for soil health practices, reducing tillage, increasing cover crop adoption, was widely discussed as well as the benefits of integrating grazing.

- *We need water storage through soil health.*
- *Put a bunch of time and effort and money getting a market for small grains in the area followed by funding for cover crops and watch the soil and water quality improve exponentially.*

Lakeshore management

Improved lakeshore management and effective filtering of incoming tile lines were discussed as well as maintaining buffers and installing terraces. Concern about groundwater and septic updates and maintenance was also raised.

COORDINATION STRATEGIES

What research, coordination, funding and policy strategies do you think will help to improve watershed conditions? (Examples include: data collection, monitoring, coordination and collaboration, technical assistance, local, state or federal policies, conservation programs, funding etc.)

Improved coordination and collaboration

Citizens talked about the need for improved coordination, collaboration, and cooperation among all partners as well as needing continuity for a sustained effort.

Funding and cost share

Participants discussed the need for more funding and cost share to "help get landowners to do the right thing." Supporting existing cost share and conservation programs was noted as a priority, particularly voluntary cost share programs with flexibility. Respondents wrestled with the voluntary approach versus regulation and enforcement and some suggested a mixture of voluntary and required practices.

- *Anything that will financially help the landowner to change or implement a conservation practice.*
- *Continue to have short term ag land retirement (CRP) and permanent (RIM) options available. Working lands strategies that are economically viable (break even) or provide competitive edge (profitable).*
- *Unfortunately, unless there is monetary compensation most people will do little. Regulation is the only real way to improve.*
- *Regulation and compensation, in that order, will be the only way to make a measurable impact in the watershed.*

Programs

Discussions centered around the need for policies and programs to support watershed health, particularly focusing on water storage and soil health programs. For new programs, they suggested working at both the state and federal level, noting the need for political pressure. There was a particular interest in focusing on addressing flooding and riverbank erosion and protecting lakes. In terms of prioritizing and targeting, participants suggested focus on specific water bodies that are priorities for the most people and projects that will have the greatest impact for reducing pollution.

- *More funds should be funneled into water storage practices.*
- *Funding to increase water storage and wetlands should be the number one priority.*
- *Fund projects that are cost effective and have multiple benefits. like water storage, habitat/pollinators, and water quality.*
- *I'd like to see an increased effort for water retention on drainage projects. Funding has been an issue, along with willing participants.*

Education and outreach

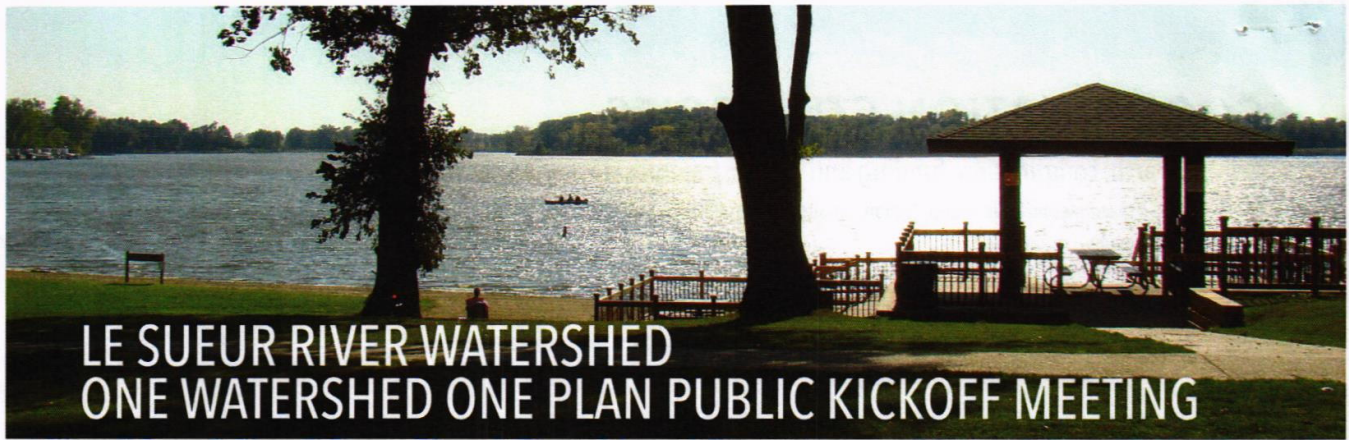
Participants discussed the need for more education and outreach to increase communication about watershed issues and "to have the public care about resources." "We need to figure out how to reach a larger group of people." Respondents discussed targeting absentee landowners, agricultural groups and K-12 students. Demonstrations, self-guided tours, and online data were effective engagement routes to consider.

- *Education is critical. Educating landowners on the requirements, best practices and potential funding will improve participation.*
- *Education followed by cost-share policies to help get landowners to do the right thing.*
- *Active outreach and advertising should be targeted to priority areas or priority practices that have the best return on public investment.*

Research

Research needs were also discussed. Numerous participants noted that we should first look at and use existing research, particularly the Collaborative for Sediment Source Reduction (CSSR). Some expressed an interest in additional funding for research, monitoring and data collection, as well as following up to explain research findings to the public.

- *Pay close attention to the findings of CSSR project and [University of Minnesota] professor Dave Mulla's work. The CSSR project developed a spreadsheet quantifying flow reductions to water storage and land use practices in the Le Sueur.*



September 16, 2021 - 6:00-8:00 p.m. Complimentary Refreshments
St. Olaf Lake Park 17500 240th Avenue, New Richland, MN (4.5 miles NE of town)

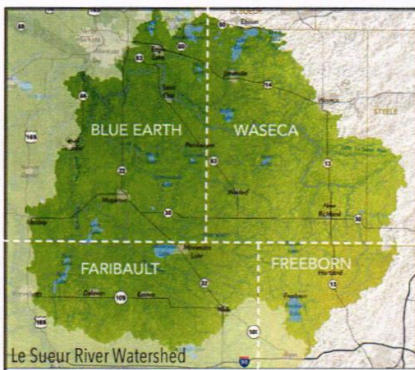


JOIN THE CONVERSATION ABOUT THE FUTURE OF THE WATERSHED

Learn about the watershed planning process that is just starting in the Le Sueur—the One Watershed One Plan (1W1P). You'll have the opportunity to learn about the watershed and informally discuss issues with watershed neighbors and local and state conservation partners. This planning effort is part of a statewide initiative to create a watershed-wide, science-based approach to water resource management. The plan will guide watershed planning and implementation over the next ten years.



Le Sueur River Watershed



YOUR INPUT IS NEEDED

Watershed partners want to learn from residents about your priorities and concerns.
What do you value about local water resources?
What river, lake and groundwater issues are important to you?
What do you think are the major issues or concerns with area rivers and lakes?
What watershed improvement strategies can address these challenges?

WATERSHED PARTNERSHIP

The Le Sueur River Watershed planning partnership includes Blue Earth County, Blue Earth Soil and Water Conservation District, Waseca County, Waseca Soil and Water Conservation District, Faribault County, Faribault Soil and Water Conservation District, Freeborn County, and Freeborn Soil and Water Conservation

FOR MORE INFORMATION & SURVEY

Rather weigh in online? Visit the Le Sueur 1W1P website to fill out a [survey](https://www.co.waseca.mn.us/438/LeSueur-River-One-Watershed-One-Plan) or learn more about the Le Sueur River Watershed and 1W1P planning process: <https://www.co.waseca.mn.us/438/LeSueur-River-One-Watershed-One-Plan>
1W1P Questions? Contact Freeborn County Environmental Services at 507-377-5186 or Rachel.Weigner@co.freeborn.mn.us
Kickoff Meeting Questions? Contact the Water Resources Center, Minnesota State University, Mankato at 507-389-5492 or Kimberly.Musser@mnsu.edu



Before the meeting, please visit the Le Sueur 1W1P website for meeting updates or cancellations.

PUBLIC MIDPOINT MEETING LE SUEUR RIVER WATERSHED ONE WATERSHED, ONE PLAN

Monday, April 4, 2022 - 5:30-8:00 p.m. Complimentary Food
Pemberton Main Street Plaza 141 4th Street, Pemberton, MN

JOIN THE CONVERSATION

HELP SHAPE THE FUTURE OF THE WATERSHED

Get updated and weigh in on the planning progress for the Le Sueur River Watershed One Watershed, One Plan (1W1P). You'll have the opportunity to learn about progress on the plan and discuss resource concerns with watershed neighbors and local and state conservation partners. Citizens input at the beginning of the planning process (kickoff meeting) helped to shape plan content. You have the opportunity to review how citizen perspectives have been incorporated into the plan. The meeting will focus on strategies to address priority resource concerns. This planning effort is part of a statewide initiative to create a watershed-wide, science-based approach to water resource management. The plan will guide watershed planning and implementation over the next ten years.

YOUR INPUT IS NEEDED

Watershed partners want to learn from residents—your priorities and concerns. What river, lake and groundwater issues do you think the plan should focus on? What priority areas do you think should be focused on? What watershed improvement strategies can best address watershed challenges?

FOR MORE INFORMATION & SURVEY

There are two ways to provide input—at the meeting and online. Rather weigh in online? Visit the Le Sueur 1W1P website to fill out a survey or Learn more about the Le Sueur River Watershed 1W1P planning process: <https://www.co.waseca.mn.us/438/LeSueur-River-One-Watershed-One-Plan> What is a 1W1P? <http://bwsr.state.mn.us/one-watershed-one-plan> Le Sueur 1W1P Questions? Contact Waseca County Water Resource Specialist at 507-835-0615 or Haley.Byron@co.waseca.mn.us Midpoint Meeting Questions? Contact the Water Resources Center, Minnesota State University, Mankato at 507-389-5492 or Kimberly.Musser@mnsu.edu



AGENDA

5:30 pm Enjoy complimentary food and meet informally with watershed neighbors
6:00 1W1P—Planning Progress Update
6:45 Small group—Resource Concern 1
7:15 Small group—Resource Concern 2
7:45 Wrap-up
8:00 Adjourn

WATERSHED PARTNERSHIP

The Le Sueur River Watershed planning partnership includes Blue Earth County, Blue Earth Soil and Water Conservation District, Waseca County, Waseca Soil and Water Conservation District, Faribault County, Faribault Soil and Water Conservation District, Freeborn County, and Freeborn Soil and Water Conservation District.



Before the meeting, please visit the Le Sueur 1W1P website for meeting updates or cancellations.

SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION WORKSHEET

VALUE

What do you value and care about when it comes to water resources and the natural environment in the Le Sueur River Watershed? What would you like to be preserved for future generations?

CONCERNS

What concerns do you have about area water and natural resources in the Le Sueur River Watershed today? What issues related to rivers, lakes, or groundwater do you think should be addressed? Prioritized? What are your top 2-3 concerns?

Are there specific watershed areas or water bodies (lakes, rivers, wetlands) that you are concerned about? Please specify below.

STRATEGIES

What strategies do you think will help to improve watershed conditions? (Examples include: water management on agricultural or urban lands, riparian areas, lakeshore management, conservation cover, wetlands, groundwater protection, soil health etc.)

What research, coordination, funding and policy strategies do you think will help to improve watershed conditions? (Examples include: data collection, monitoring, coordination and collaboration, technical assistance, local, state or federal policies, conservation programs, funding etc.)

QUESTIONS?

Do you have questions that you would like answered? What topics should be discussed at future Le Sueur River Watershed, One Watershed One Plan meetings?

April 22, 2024

Kenny Famakinwa
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Jeremy Maul
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RE: Response to Request for Priority Issues and Concerns to be addressed in the Minnesota River-
Mankato River One Watershed, One Plan

Dear Kenny and Jeremy:

The Minnesota Pollution Control Agency (MPCA) appreciates the opportunity to provide priority resource concerns and issues for consideration in the Minnesota River- Mankato One Watershed, One Plan (1W1P). Our priority resource concerns and issues focus primarily on information available through the [Watershed Approach](#) process for the Minnesota River- Mankato Watershed (MRMW) that began in 2013. A list of the available reports, studies, technical information, data, and other relevant supporting documents from this process and prior watershed work is included below.

The MPCA and other state agencies coordinated with local partners to gather, analyze, and summarize information to develop the watershed restoration and protection strategies (WRAPS) report for the entire MRMW Hydrologic Unit Code (HUC)-8. The following pages provide a summary of available information from the watershed process, and where possible only discuss the tributary streams and lakes in the 1W1P planning area (Nicollet, Blue Earth, and Le Sueur counties). The data for the mainstem Minnesota River is excluded. The MPCA requests you consider this information during development of the 1W1P.

Background Information

The State of Minnesota employs a watershed approach to restore and protect Minnesota's rivers, lakes, and wetlands. The watershed approach includes the following processes that can be used to inform water planning:

1. Watershed monitoring and assessment
2. Stressor identification (SID) of biological impairments
3. Total maximum daily loads (TMDLs)
4. WRAPS

The following pages provide a brief description of these processes and internet links for the reports associated with these efforts in the MRMW.

Monitoring and Assessment

In 2013, a comprehensive approach was taken to monitor and assess surface water bodies in the MRMW for aquatic life, recreation, and fish consumption use support. For details on the data collected, refer to the [Minnesota River-Mankato Watershed Monitoring and Assessment Report](#). For more

information about the MRMW and links to reports visit: [Minnesota River- Mankato Watershed Information Page](#).

Monitoring data are used to determine if water quality is supporting a water body's designated use. During the assessment process, data on the waterbody are compared to relevant standards. When pollutants/parameters in a waterbody do not meet the water quality standard, the waterbody is considered impaired. When pollutants/parameters in a waterbody meet the standard (e.g., when the monitored water quality is cleaner than the water quality standard), the waterbody is considered supporting. Data from three water quality monitoring programs inform water quality assessment and create a long-term data set to track progress toward water quality goals. These programs will continue to collect and analyze data in the MRMW as part of Minnesota's Water Quality Monitoring Strategy. Intensive Watershed Monitoring (IWM), the WPLMN, and Volunteer Stream and Lake Monitoring Program (VSMP and CLMP) data provide a periodic but intensive "snapshot" of water quality conditions throughout the watershed.

Within the MRMW 1W1P planning area there are 81 impairment listings. The table below summarizes the listings by impairment type and TMDL status. See the [2024 Minnesota Impaired Waters List](#) for details.

Summary of water quality impairments for the MRMW planning area.

Impairment Type	Number of Listings	Beneficial Use	Completed TMDL
Benthic Macroinvertebrates			
Bioassessments	21	Aquatic Life	0
<i>Escherichia coli</i> (<i>E. coli</i>)	12	Aquatic Recreation	12
Fecal Coliform	8	Aquatic Recreation	8
Fish Bioassessments	20	Aquatic Life	0
Mercury in Fish Tissue	5	Aquatic Consumption	4
Nitrate	2	Drinking Water	2
Nutrients	9	Aquatic Recreation	9
Turbidity	4	Aquatic Life	4

Stressor Identification

SID is performed on biological impairments to determine what pollutant and nonpollutant stressors are causing impairments to the aquatic biological community. The process is described in more detail and documented in the [Minnesota River Mankato SID Report](#) for the reaches listed for aquatic life impairments (fish, aquatic macro-invertebrate impairments). SID was completed on 25 water bodies for biota (fish and/or macroinvertebrates) impairments in the MRMW planning area. In the study, primary stressors are identified as summarized below. Details of each stream reach are in the SID report.

Stressor identification summary for the aquatic life impaired streams in the MRMW planning area.

Stressor	Number of Reaches
Dissolved Oxygen	10
Eutrophication	6
Nitrate	14
Total Suspended Solids	4
Habitat	14
Connectivity	13
Temperature	1
Altered Hydrology	25

Total Maximum Daily Loads

The Clean Water Act requires that TMDLs be developed for waters that do not support their designated uses. A TMDL essentially provides the allowable pollutant loading, as well as needed reductions, to attain and maintain water quality standards in waters that are not currently meeting standards. TMDL studies have been completed for 39 of the 81 impairments on waterbodies for the MRMW planning area.

TMDL reports containing impaired water bodies in the MRMW, and pollutant reductions are found here:

[Minnesota River - Mankato Watershed TMDL Report](#)

[Crystal Lake TMDL Study Excess Nutrients](#)

WRAPS

In each cycle of the watershed approach, rivers and lakes across the watershed are monitored and assessed, WRAPS and local plans are developed, and conservation practices are implemented. Much of the information presented in the WRAPS report was synthesized from the Monitoring and Assessment, SID, and TMDL reports. However, the WRAPS report presents additional data and analyses including watershed-scale models and tools, detailed analyses and output from these work products, and a set of potential strategies for point and nonpoint source pollution that will cumulatively achieve, or otherwise make significant progress toward, water quality targets. The MRMW WRAPS report can be found here: [Minnesota River - Mankato WRAPS Report](#).

To ensure the WRAPS strategies and other analyses appropriately represent the MRMW, local county, SWCD staff, and state natural resource and conservation professionals were convened to inform the report and advise technical analyses. Two key products of this WRAPS report are the strategies table and the priorities section. The strategies table outlines high level strategies necessary to restore and protect water bodies in the watershed, including social strategies that are key to achieving the physical strategies. The priorities section presents criteria to identify priority areas for water quality improvement, including examples of water bodies and areas that meet the prioritizing criteria.

The primary audience for the WRAPS report is local planners, decision makers, and conservation practice implementers; watershed residents, neighboring downstream states, agricultural business, governmental agencies, and other stakeholders are the secondary audience.

Goals and 10-year Targets

Among the required elements of WRAPS are timelines for achieving water quality targets and interim milestones within 10 years of strategy adoption. It is the intent of the implementing organizations in this watershed to make steady progress in terms of pollutant reduction. However, needed pollutant load reductions are generally high and will require significant adoption of conservation practices. This is a general guideline and approximation. Factors that may mean slower progress include limits in funding or landowner acceptance, challenging fixes (e.g., unstable bluffs and ravines, invasive species) and unfavorable climatic factors. Conversely, there may be faster progress for some impaired waters, especially where high-impact fixes are slated to occur or where the watershed is subject to focused efforts.

WRAPS Strategies

A set of restoration and protection strategies were developed to achieve water quality targets for water bodies addressed in the WRAPS. The strategies are provided in the WRAPS report. Where possible, the strategies were derived through quantitative methods; however, in other cases, only more qualitative

characterization of actions was feasible. The chief goal of providing this information is to inform local planning. Specifically, by providing an overall set of actions needed to meet the goals (over some period of years or decades), local planners can focus on a subset of actions to take on for their shorter-term (e.g., 10-year) planning cycle. This provides a means to gauge a plan's ability to make progress over time as well as make adjustments through adaptive management.

Watershed Goals

Among the required elements of WRAPS are timelines for achieving water quality targets and interim milestones within 10 years of strategy adoption. It is the intent of the implementing organizations in this watershed to make steady progress in terms of pollutant reduction. However, needed pollutant load reductions are generally high and will require significant adoption of conservation practices. More information on nutrient reduction goals for the State of Minnesota can be found here: [Reducing nutrient in waters](#)

Prioritizing and Targeting

The WRAPS work group identified initial priorities for restoration for the watershed. The planning MRMW planning group should utilize these priorities and develop/modify as needed to fit the goals of the plan. Listed below are the identified priorities, a brief description of the priority and any water bodies that meet the criteria of that priority if applicable. More details are in the priority table of the WRAPS report.

"Tipping Point: Barely Impaired" Water bodies that are impaired but have a relatively smaller reduction or improvement goal: Nicollet Creek downstream of Swan Lake, headwaters of Seven Mile Creek, and Loon Lake.

"Protection of supporting waters" Water bodies that are currently meeting the water quality standard or not stressed by a specific parameter including "Tipping point - nearly impaired" supporting waters near the threshold and/or with a declining trend: Lake Ballantyne, Lake Emily, Hallett Lake.

"Impaired Waters" Water bodies that have a 303d listed impairment: See WRAPS and impaired waters list.

"Dirtiest Waters or Watersheds" Water bodies or watersheds that have observed data or models indicating that the area is substantially "worse" than others using either 1) estimated reductions, 2) observed data, or 3) model output: Little Cottonwood River, Seven Mile Creek, Henry Lake, Scotch Lake, Crystal.

"Local Priority" Water bodies that are of high social importance to restore or protect: Cherry Creek, Minneopa Creek, Indian Creek, Seven Mile Creek, Lake Washington, Lake Ballantyne, Duck Lake, Lake Emily, Lake Crystal, Swan Lake, Lake Hallett, Scotch Lake, Urban/MS4 areas, cold-water streams, St. Peter Trout Ponds.

"Highly hydrologically altered" Subwatersheds identified as highly hydrologically altered: Minneopa Creek, Seven Mile Creek, and Indian Creek.

"Drinking water and Ground water" Areas contributing water or risks to drinking and ground water resources: Mankato and St. Peter drinking water supply, Kasota Township.

"High impact/ mitigating" Areas that have the ability to mitigate pollutants and stressors when ideally managed or a disproportionately high negative impact when poorly managed.

"Measurable waters" Water bodies with ample monitoring data are selected as priorities because improvements can be measured. Past data can be used to establish baseline conditions prior to work being done and future monitoring data can be used to track the magnitude of change.

Little Cottonwood River, Seven Mile Creek and the lakes with ample data to report trends (see Trends Overview section), and stream reaches with aquatic life (IWM) monitoring locations provide a record to compare after implementing projects. In particular, areas that may show a quick response in aquatic life (IBI) scores are those primarily limited by a connectivity barrier: Eight Mile Creek (intentionally perched culvert), Shanaska Creek (dam/grade control), Spring Creek (perched culvert), and Little Rock Creek (lake outlet).

Groundwater Protection Prioritization

Groundwater protection areas pertinent to the MRMW that were mentioned by the Minnesota River-Mankato WRAPS work group include:

- Protect vulnerable and sensitive groundwater areas throughout the watershed, particularly wellhead protection areas (WHPAs) and drinking water supply management areas (DWSMAs) with high vulnerability.
- Additional concerns in the watershed relate to groundwater and drinking water protection. The main supply of drinking water to the residents and businesses in the MRMW is groundwater – either from private or community wells. Two communities in particular, Mankato and St. Peter, have vulnerable drinking water systems influenced by surface water in the watershed. The MDH has developed Source Water Assessments (SWA) for each of the communities designed to protect the public water source from point and nonpoint pollution including nitrates and other contaminants.

Civic Engagement and Public Participation for WRAPS Work

Civic engagement and public participation were a major focus during the Middle Minnesota River Watershed Approach occurring from 2013 through 2017. The MPCA worked with county and SWCD staff in the watershed, consultants, citizens, and other state agency staff to work on eight projects to promote civic engagement collaboratively in the area. Projects were tailored to local partner interest and capacity. The purpose of this project was to identify community/landowner opportunities, obstacles, and opinions on land management and water quality in the rural portion of the watershed. Ultimately, this work would identify land management options for the purposes of surface water quality restoration and protection within the MRMW. This type of work should be continued and expanded in the 1W1P process. Data and findings are summarized in the [Middle Minnesota River Watershed Approach Civic Engagement Project Summary](#).

Environmental Justice

Environmental justice means the right of communities of color, Indigenous communities, and low-income communities, to the enjoyment of a healthy environment and to fair treatment and meaningful involvement with respect to the development, adoption, implementation, and enforcement of environmental laws, regulations, and policies. As part of the 2024 WRAPS update process, the MPCA is planning on making environmental justice concerns a priority. As part of this 1W1P, please consider integrating environmental justice values and involve community groups when identifying priority areas in the plan.

The MPCA has resources to assist in identifying areas with environmental justice concerns:

[Understanding environmental justice in Minnesota \(arcgis.com\)](https://arcgis.com)

[MPCA and environmental justice | Minnesota Pollution Control Agency \(state.mn.us\)](https://state.mn.us)

Resident and Farmer Interview Opportunities

As part of MPCA's civic engagement efforts during the first iteration of the MRMW watershed approach, consultants were hired to conduct surveys of watershed residents and farmers. The objectives of these interviews were to: 1) connect residents and local staff, 2) learn resident opinions and concerns regarding water quality, and 3) provide maps and resources to spur conversations and identify conservation opportunities. Generalized themes from these interviews included:

- Farming has undergone significant changes over the last several decades. A wide spectrum of understanding and interest exists regarding water quality, conservation practices, and sustainable agriculture. Most farmers feel they are doing a good job with conservation, but economics are the largest factor in making agricultural land management choices.
- While many farmers have made some conservation improvements, many more opportunities still exist. For instance, some who practice no-till consider this a competitive edge, but most farmers have (real or perceived) obstacles to using no-till. Several potential projects and obstacles to adopting conservation practices were identified.

MPCA Water Management Priorities in the MRMW

The MPCA recommends focusing on the following priorities in the planning process. The priorities were identified based on the existence of these issues watershed wide as identified by monitoring and assessment, SID, and the WRAPS.

Biota (Aquatic Life)

Address the stressors to aquatic life in the 1W1P. Aquatic life use impairments within the watershed are complex. Biotic impairments are a result of nonpoint source pollution and localized stress linked to poor habitat condition and altered hydrology. High nitrogen and phosphorus levels are likely impacting fish and macroinvertebrate communities in the southern part of the watershed. Stabilizing hydrology, increasing riparian buffer width, and stabilizing stream banks would greatly help the in-stream habitat.

Altered Hydrology

Seek changes to the landscape that reduce the volume, rates, and timing of runoff and increase the base flows needed to prevent continued and further impairments. A primary stressor of the biotic impairments in the watershed is altered hydrology. Other pollutants (turbidity, nutrients, bacteria, etc.) are delivered because of altered hydrology. Managing the hydrology to provide a consistent base flow is imperative for the survival of the biological communities in the watershed. Increasing rainfall infiltration and water retention, and improving riparian conditions are activities that are needed to stabilize hydrology and reduce impairments.

Turbidity and Total Suspended Solids (Aquatic Life)

Reduce and control sediment entering the water bodies of the watershed. Total suspended solids (TSS), and turbidity (measure of water clarity affected by sediment, algae, and organic matter), are common impairments and stressors to aquatic life in the watershed. Reducing TSS will also likely reduce how other pollutants are conveyed (phosphorus and bacteria).

Nutrients (Aquatic life/Eutrophication)

Reduce nutrient delivery to the watershed. High levels of nutrients (phosphorus) are driving nuisance algae blooms in the watershed's impaired lakes and threatening other lakes that are on the verge of becoming impaired. Algae blooms can deprive lakes of their oxygen as the algae die off and decay, causing fish kills. High levels of algae cause increased levels of turbidity, degrading aquatic recreation and aquatic life. Blue-green algae can also cause serious health issues for humans and pets.

The MPCA anticipates more lakes and stream reaches will be listed as impaired following the intensive monitoring phase of the second watershed cycle (MRMW beginning 2024; Cottonwood River beginning 2027). Past stream monitoring has documented high concentrations of total phosphorus. With the implementation of [River Eutrophication Standards](#), the MPCA suspects that new stream impairments are likely to emerge.

Management plans that appropriately value the nutrient worth of manure and previous crops and focus on the timing and intensity of the fertilizers and manure applications will help reduce the amount of phosphorus and nitrogen reaching the river. These reductions would also aid in the low dissolved oxygen problems present in some parts of the watershed. Resources for nutrient management include:

- [Point Source Phosphorus Mapping Tool](#): Provides summaries of annual phosphorus loads and flow volumes discharged from National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES)/State Disposal System (SDS) permitted facilities since 2005.
- [Minnesota Nutrient Reduction Strategy](#)

Bacteria (Aquatic Recreation)

Practices to control pathways delivering human and livestock feces to the planning area waters should be a priority for the 1W1P. High levels of bacteria are widespread throughout the watershed. The abundance of feedlots, feedlot runoff, improper manure management, and over-grazed pastures in the watershed may correlate with this finding. High bacteria levels could also be attributed to noncompliant septic systems.

Climate Change Resiliency and Adaptation

Planning should incorporate implementation of practices that address changing weather patterns to help our communities be prepared for extreme weather events. As part of the WRAPS update process, the MPCA is planning on making Climate Change Resiliency and Adaptation a priority.

Additional MPCA resources:

- [Minnesota Stormwater Manual](#)
- [MPCA funding options](#)

Drainage Watershed Management

Currently, drainage improvement projects have limited input from local staff to aid in the integration of conservation practices that would help to alleviate hydrology concerns and downstream impacts from increases in water volume. The MPCA recommends early coordination with landowners, SWCD staff, agencies, and engineers to develop improvement projects that account for volume increases.

In most engineering designs of drainage improvement projects, the existing conditions are based on the original design and upgrades. Many drainage improvement projects seek an increase in the drainage coefficient from 0.1 to 0.25 inches/day to a more modern 0.5 inches/day for tile and 1 inch/day for open

ditches. Engineering reports often indicate that drainage pipe is in disrepair and the as built coefficient isn't meeting its original design. This suggests that restoring (maintaining) the system to its original capacity would result in an increase in drainage volume.

The MPCA encourages the planning group to discuss watershed drainage management with an emphasis on finding ways to store and/or reduce the increased volume of water based on the increase in drainage coefficient in improvement projects by working with landowners in areas where drainage improvement will eventually be considered.

Restoring healthy channels and riparian areas of streams and ditches throughout the watershed offers critical habitat, improves water quality, and has the potential to buffer impacts of other stressors. Previously channelized streams in prioritized headwater reaches can be re-meandered to restore stable conditions, increase stream length, create floodplain accessibility, improve habitat, and decrease sediment. Reconnecting incised streams to their floodplains improves ecological and hydrological functions, including increased resiliency in the system and reduced downstream flooding impacts. Collaborative assessment, targeting, and planning is necessary on a subwatershed scale to strategically plan before engaging in stream restoration. Streambank stabilization practices should only be used in appropriate locations (for example threatened infrastructure) due to the natural hydrologic regime being so heavily altered in the MRMW resulting in unstable incised channels.

Stream and Ravine Erosion Control

By-and-large, wide-scale stabilization of eroding streambanks and ravines is cost-prohibitive. Instead, first addressing altered hydrology (e.g., excessive, concentrated flows) within the landscape can help decrease wide-scale stream and ravine erosion problems as discussed in the [Minnesota River Valley Ravine Stabilization Charette](#) and the [Minnesota River Basin Sediment Reduction Strategy](#). Improving activities directly adjacent the stream/ravine (e.g., buffers) can also decrease erosion as summarized in [The River Restoration Toolbox](#). In some cases, high value property may need to be protected, or a ravine/streambank may be experiencing such severe erosion that stabilizing the streambank or ravine is deemed necessary.

Several tools exist to help identify potential erosion areas. The MPCA would offer assistance in trying to locate and prioritize sites for implementation activities if local partners are interested.

Watershed wide practice implementation

While targeting of specific practices is important to prioritize funding that provides the greatest reductions/cost, there is a need in the MRMW to provide opportunities for practices throughout the watershed that would benefit water quality at the HUC-8 scale. The MPCA recommends funding that is flexible and available continuously, watershed wide, to provide options for landowners to try soil health and cover crop practices, work with SWCD staff, and communicate with other landowners who are implementing these practices. The MPCA recommends developing a network of local staff and operators who can provide technical, financial, and practical assistance to landowners implementing soil health principles.

Consider priorities and goals from neighboring completed Comprehensive Water Management Plans

The Minnesota River Mankato HUC-8 Watershed has been divided into four separate planning areas. 1W1P work has been completed in the [Hawk - Middle Minnesota](#) Planning area. The [Cottonwood – Middle Minnesota](#) is nearing completion. The [Redwood - Middle Minnesota](#) is still under development. Priorities and goals from these planning efforts may be beneficial in helping develop the Comprehensive Management plan for the MRMW.

Calibrate modeling efforts to HSPF load estimates

The MRMW Hydrologic Simulation Program-Fortran (HSPF) model has recently been extended and recalibrated. We would recommend that any modeling efforts for implementation utilize the loading information based on the HSPF numbers and Watershed Pollutant Monitoring Network (WPLMN) data to calibrate loads so that reduction calculations would be comparable to monitored loading estimates.

Stream and Lake Protection

There is a growing focus on maintaining the high-quality water that we still have. The same practices that protect water quality will also benefit wildlife, groundwater, air quality, soils, and numerous other aspects of our Minnesota environment.

The MPCA collaborated with the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources and the Board of Water and Soil Resources to develop guidance for incorporating protection strategies into WRAPS, local water plans, and/or 1W1P documents. Link to resource: [Protection and prioritization tools](#)

The MPCA recognizes all the hard work and cooperation from the local partners within the MRMW and offers our continued support in local water planning. Thank you for the opportunity to participate and offer MPCA's priorities. If we may be of further assistance, please contact Bryan Spindler at bryan.spindler@state.mn.us, or 507-344-5267, or at the MPCA's Mankato office.

Sincerely,

Bryan Spindler

This document has been electronically signed.

Bryan Spindler
Environmental Specialist
Watershed Division

BS:jdf

cc: Jeremy Maul, BWSR
Ed Lenz, BWSR
Julie Westerlund, BWSR
Reid Christianson, MDA
Scott Matteson, MDA
Margaret Wagner, MDA
Scot Hanson, MDH
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Alan Gleisner, DNR
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Catherine Neuschler, EQB
Jeff Risberg, MPCA



11 Civic Center Plaza, Suite 300
Mankato, MN 56001

April 25, 2024

Middle Minnesota River-Mankato One Watershed, One Plan Partnership
C/O Kenny Famakinwa, Nicollet County
501 S Minnesota Ave
St. Peter, MN 56082

Re: Response to request for priority issues and plan expectations (One Watershed, One Plan)

Dear Kenny,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide priority issues and plan expectations for the development of the - Middle Minnesota-Mankato Comprehensive Watershed Management Plan (plan) under Minnesota Statutes section 103B.801.

The Board of Water and Soil Resources (BWSR) has the following overarching expectations for the plan:

Process

The planning process must follow the requirements outlined in the [One Watershed, One Plan Operating Procedures \(Version 3.0\)](#) adopted by the BWSR Board on August 24, 2023. More specifically, the plan must have:

- Involve a broad range of stakeholders to ensure an integrated approach to watershed management.
- Reassess the agreement established for planning purposes when finalizing the implementation schedule and programs in the plan, in consultation with the Minnesota Counties Intergovernmental Trust and/or legal counsel of the participating organizations, to ensure implementation can occur efficiently and with minimized risk. This step is critical if the plan proposes to share services and/or submit joint grant applications.

Plan Content

The plan must meet the requirements outlined in [One Watershed, One Plan – Plan Content Requirements \(Version 3.0\)](#), adopted by the BWSR Board on August 24, 2023

- A thorough analysis of issues, using available science and data, in the selection of priority resource concerns.
- Sufficient measurable goals to indicate an intended pace of progress for addressing the priority issues; a specific requirement for water storage goals, expressed in acre-feet, and standards for water storage, retention, and infiltration.
- A targeted and comprehensive implementation schedule, sufficient for meeting the identified goals.
- A thorough description of the programs and activities required to administer, coordinate, and implement the actions in the schedule; including work planning (i.e. shared services, collaborative grant-making, decision making as a watershed group) and evaluation.
- According to Minnesota Statutes, Section 103B.801, subdivision 4, the plan must address:
 - a. Surface water and groundwater quality protection, restoration, and improvement, including prevention of erosion and soil transport into surface water systems;
 - b. Restoration, protection, and preservation of drinking water sources and natural surface water and groundwater storage and retention systems;
 - c. Promotion of groundwater recharge;
 - d. Minimization of public capital expenditures needed to correct flooding and water quality problems;
 - e. Wetland enhancement, restoration, and establishment;
 - f. Identification of priority areas for riparian zone management and buffers; and
 - g. Protection and enhancement of fish and wildlife habitat and water recreational facilities.

Suggested existing plans, studies, models, and tools:

The plan must be based on the best available data, models, and other science to meet plan content requirements. The partnership is encouraged to make use of these existing resources and incorporate them into the final plan document by reference, where possible. Below are a few examples of such resources that are available to the partnership. The other State plan review agencies (Department of Agriculture, Department of Health, Department of Natural Resources, and Pollution Control Agency) as well as yourselves and others have done extensive work in this watershed, and that work may not be listed below, but warrants consideration for inclusion as well.

BWSR has the following specific priority issues:

- **The Nonpoint Priority Funding Plan (NPPF)** – The [NPPF](#) outlines a criteria-based process to prioritize Clean Water Fund investments. Planning partners intending to pursue Clean Water Fund dollars are

strongly encouraged to consider the high-level state priorities, keys to implementation, and criteria for evaluating proposed activities in the NPFP.

- **Drainage** - The drainage authorities within the planning area should be included as stakeholders in the plan development process. This inclusion should ensure that the Chapter 103E processes and proceedings as well as the extent and the limitations of drainage authority responsibility are adequately included in the final plan. Additionally, the planning partners are strongly encouraged to include projects and activities consistent with multipurpose drainage criteria outlined in Minnesota Statutes §103E.011, Subd. 5 and §103E.015. As the 1W1P plan is formulated, BWSR suggests the following:
 - a. Chapter 103E drainage authorities (who are also water planning authorities) be fully engaged from the early stages of the planning process. Use Section 103E.015 CONSIDERATIONS BEFORE DRAINAGE WORK IS DONE and other provisions of drainage law identified below to capture both the extent and limitations of drainage authority responsibility, authority and opportunity for participating in the planning and implementation of conservation practices involving public drainage systems and their associated drainage areas.
 - b. Prioritization within the watershed include identification of Chapter 103E drainage systems and their drainage areas.
 - c. Multipurpose drainage management be included in the approach for targeting best management practices (BMPs) within the drainage area of Chapter 103E drainage systems, considering the five purposes outlined in Section 103E.015, Subdivision 1. Environmental, land use, and multipurpose water management criteria, clause (2).
 - d. Measurable outcomes for erosion and sediment reduction, nutrient reduction, improved instream biology, and detention storage to assist those outcomes, should include correlation to Chapter 103E drainage systems.
 - e. Lay out a coordinated approach for how implementation of multipurpose drainage management practices identified in the plan can be coordinated with, and/or integrated early into Chapter 103E processes and proceedings. When projecting funding needs for BMP implementation along, or within the drainage area of, public drainage systems, incorporate applicable Sections of Chapter 103E.
- **Wetlands** – Protection and restoration of wetlands provides benefits for water quality, flood damage reduction, and wildlife habitat. The plan should support the continued implementation of the Wetland Conservation Act and look for opportunities to improve coordination across jurisdictional boundaries. The plan should also identify high priority areas for wetland restoration and strategically target restoration projects to those areas. The [Restorable Wetland Prioritization Tool](#) is an example resource that can be used to help identify such areas. The state is embarking on a new wetland prioritization plan that will guide wetland mitigation in the future. Wetland restoration and preservation priorities in this plan may be eligible for inclusion in this plan in the future.
- **Conservation Easements** – The State’s Re-Invest in Minnesota (RIM) Reserve easement program and the Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP), in partnership with the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), considers several site specific and landscape scale factors when funding applications. Though it is dependent on specific program terms, the State considers local prioritization of areas for easement enrollment. The plan should take into account areas with a higher risk of

contributing to surface and subsurface water degradation, such as highly erosive lands and wellhead protection areas that would benefit from being placed under permanent vegetative cover.

- **GRAPS** - The [Groundwater Restoration and Protection Strategies \(GRAPS\)](#) for the Middle Minnesota watershed is currently under development and may be available in the near future. This report, if available, will help identify specific groundwater issues in the planning area; therefore, implementation actions to address these issues should be addressed in the plan.
- **WRAPS** - The Watershed Restoration and Protection Strategies (WRAPS) for the Middle Minnesota watershed and pertinent information related to development of the WRAPS available from MPCA staff. The WRAPS outlines reduction goals for excess sediment, phosphorus, nitrogen, and E. coli Bacteria as well as identifies areas for protection within the area and goals address degraded stream habitat. These goals should be reviewed and incorporated into your planning effort.
- **Lakes** – Lakes are very important to the local quality of life and local economies and are sensitive to nutrient enrichment and runoff from both shoreland and watershed sources. Several of the lakes within the watershed are listed as impaired. The watershed plan should consider prioritizing practices that meet the Lake Restoration and Protection Strategies listed in the Watershed Restoration and Protection Strategies (WRAPS) and the 2018 Nonpoint Priority Funding Plan (NPFP).
- **Landscape Resiliency and Climate Adaption** – BWSR strongly encourages your planning partnership to consider the potential for more extreme weather events and their implications for the water and land resources of the watershed in the analysis and prioritization of issues. The weather record for the planning area shows increased frequency and severity of extreme weather events, which has a direct effect on local water management. Adjustments involving conservation and fieldwork planning and implementation should be explored; for instance, the use of an updated precipitation frequency chart such as the [NOAA Atlas 14](#) when designing conservation projects. An additional source of information for use in the planning process is the [BWSR Landscape Resiliency Toolbox](#). Finally, a new white paper from the Minnesota Interagency Climate Adaptation Team titled “[Building Resiliency to Extreme Precipitation in Minnesota](#)” also provides resiliency strategies related to this topic.
- **Local Controls** - BWSR suggests a comparative review of local ordinances and regulations across the watershed, redetermination of ditches, SSTS compliance inspection requirements (property transfer, variance, etc.), level III feedlot inventories, shore land regulations, etc.) with the purpose of identifying commonalities and significant differences, and opportunities for coordination when planning implementation goals.
- **Soil Erosion/Soil Health** – BWSR believes that accelerated soil erosion, leading to turbidity and other water quality issues, is a significant issue in the watershed. This is especially true in the higher slope areas adjacent to the Minnesota River. The majority of the land use in the Middle Minnesota River planning area is agriculture. The concept and the associated practices of soil health have the potential to positively change the interaction of agriculture and the natural system at the soil level. Common soil health practices include the use of reduce or no tillage, the use of cover crops, increased areas of continuous living cover, and extended crop rotations. Improving soil health can help decreased soil erosion, increase water infiltration, provide nutrient scavenging, and increase soil organic matter. In addition, there seems to be increased interest from landowners and operators about soil health. It is recommended that these soil health practices be prioritized for implementation in the plan.

- **Surface and Groundwater Quality** – BWSR believes degraded water quality, both surface and groundwater, are significant issues in the watershed. The plan should examine current efforts to address these issues, and examine listed impairments and their locations, as strategies are developed to improve both surface and groundwater quality. BWSR advocates for efforts that will focus on reducing pollutant sources before they reach water resources as a key component of an overall strategy.
- **Altered Hydrology/Flooding/Water Quantity** – The hydrologic conditions of the watersheds in this planning area have changed over time. In recent decades more precipitation, more runoff, and more runoff per unit of precipitation has been observed as well as more frequent periods of extremely low flow in some watercourses. These hydrologic changes as well as others have contributed to instability of natural and artificial watercourses, degradation of wetland habitats, loss of agricultural productivity, and increased the risk of flood damages. Recognizing altered hydrology as a priority issue in the plan will help ensure that a driving factor behind many related issues is directly addressed.
- **Protecting Pollinator Populations** - Projects should identify opportunities to benefit pollinator populations through creating areas of refuge and providing floral resources that can benefit a wide range of pollinators. Governor Walz recently signed a new Executive Order “Restoring Healthy, Diverse Pollinator Populations that Sustain and Enhance Minnesota’s Environment, Economy, and Way of Life” that directs efforts of the Interagency Pollinator Protection Team. This team recently released a Minnesota State Agency Pollinator Report that outlines state agency priorities. BWSR also has a [BWSR Pollinator Toolbox](#) that provides guidance for project planning, implementation and management.
- **Invasive Species and Landscape Management:** A cooperative approach across the watershed is recommended for invasive species management to address invasive species and weed issues across geographic and ownership boundaries. Invasive species should be prioritized based on their risk to ecosystems, agriculture, recreation, and human health. There should also be a focus on emerging weed threats such as Palmer amaranth that pose a significant risk to agricultural production. Adaptive management strategies should be used to address invasive species and also maintain ecological functions and services within landscapes.
- **Urban Stormwater/MS4s** – Urban stormwater runoff frequently contains pollutants such as pesticides, fertilizers, sediment, salt, and other debris, which can contribute to excess algae growth and poor water clarity/quality in our water resources. Poorly managed urban stormwater can also drastically alter the natural flow and infiltration of water, scour stream banks and harm or eliminate aquatic organisms and ecosystems. Municipal Separate Storm Sewer System (MS4) General Permits is owned/operated by the City of St Peter, City of Mankato and the City of North Mankato within the planning area. These MS4 permit holders are participating in the planning effort, please ensure that their Stormwater Pollution Prevention Programs are incorporated into the plan.
- Data collection and monitoring activities necessary to support the targeted implementation schedule and reasonably assess and evaluate plan progress are required and should be coordinated with other data collection and monitoring efforts.

We commend the partners for their participation in the planning effort. We look forward to working with you through the rest of the plan development process. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact us via email at Jeremy.Maul@state.mn.us, or via telephone at (507-344-2824).

Sincerely,

Jeremy Maul, *Board Conservationist*

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Jeremy Maul", is centered within a light gray rectangular box.

cc: Ed Lenz and Julie Westerlund, BWSR (via email)
Barbara Weisman, Al Gleisner and Korey Woodley, DNR (via email)
Reid Christianson, MDA (via email)
Carrie Raber and Scott J. Hanson, MDH (via email)
Bryan Spindler and Jeff Risberg, MPCA (via email)

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