



Minnesota River – Mankato 1W1P

Policy Committee Meeting

Monday, September 9, 2024 • 3:00 – 5:00 PM

Meeting Location

Nicollet County Courthouse
EOC Conference Center Room
St. Peter, MN 56082

Agenda Items	Action	Time
1. Welcome and Business Items • Approve agenda and minutes • Approve financials	Approve	10 min
2. Public Kickoff Meeting • Summary of results • Resource station feedback • Other	Discuss	15 min
3. Status Update on Plan Progress • Land and Water Resources Narrative • Plan Issues	Discuss	20 min
4. Advisory Committee • Discuss roster and meeting frequency	Discuss	15 min
5. Action Items and Next Steps • Steering Committee: September 25 • Policy Committee: October 14	--	5 min



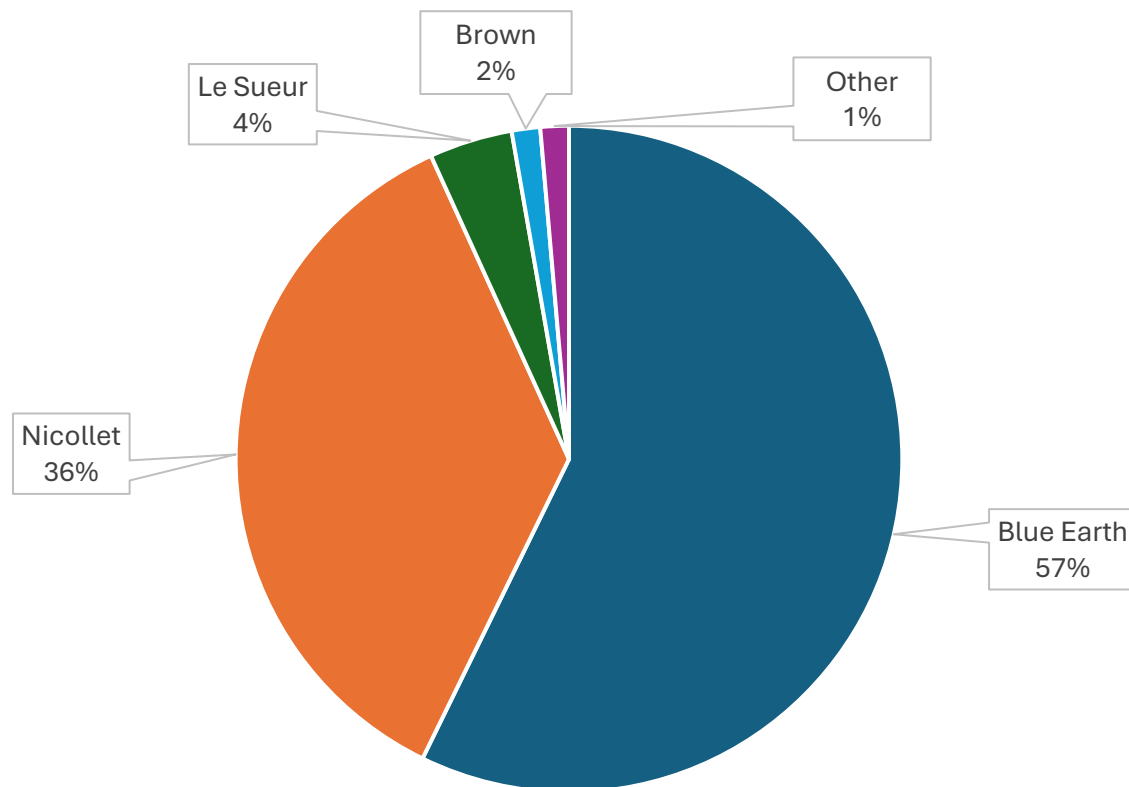
Public Kickoff Summary

Survey

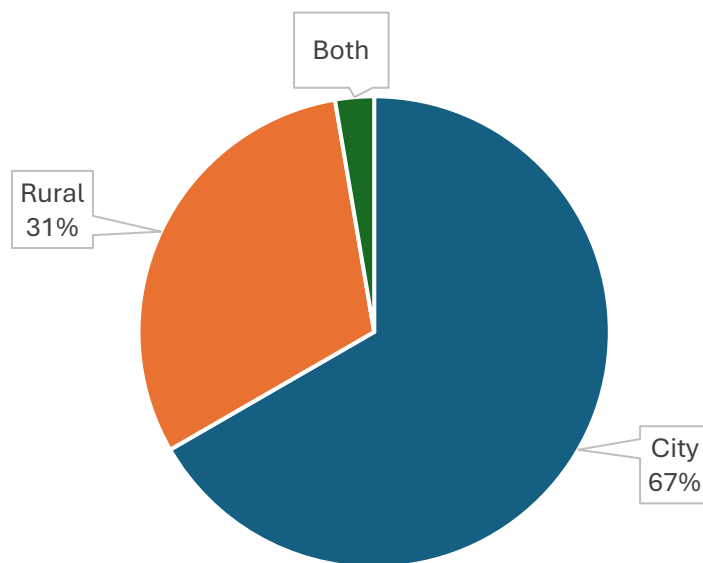
On July 23rd and July 30th, 2024, approximately 40 people attended public kickoff events held in Nicollet and St. Peter respectively. The kickoff events were intended to bring the community into the One Watershed, One Plan (1W1P) planning process, educate community members on the purpose of a watershed plan, and provide opportunities to identify issues and resources most important to them.

At the meetings, community members discussed issues facing their watershed at Resource Stations (see Page 6). There was also a public survey available for people to take in person and online. Between paper surveys available during the kickoff events and online participation, there were 75 responses to the public survey. Results of that survey are summarized here.

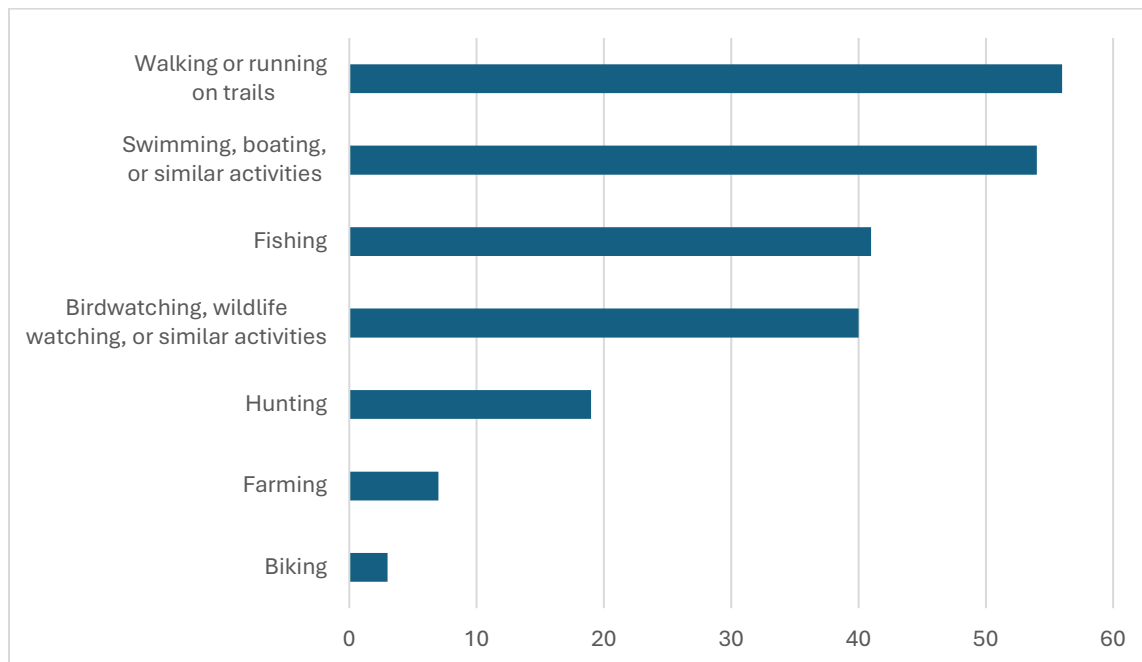
What county do you live in?



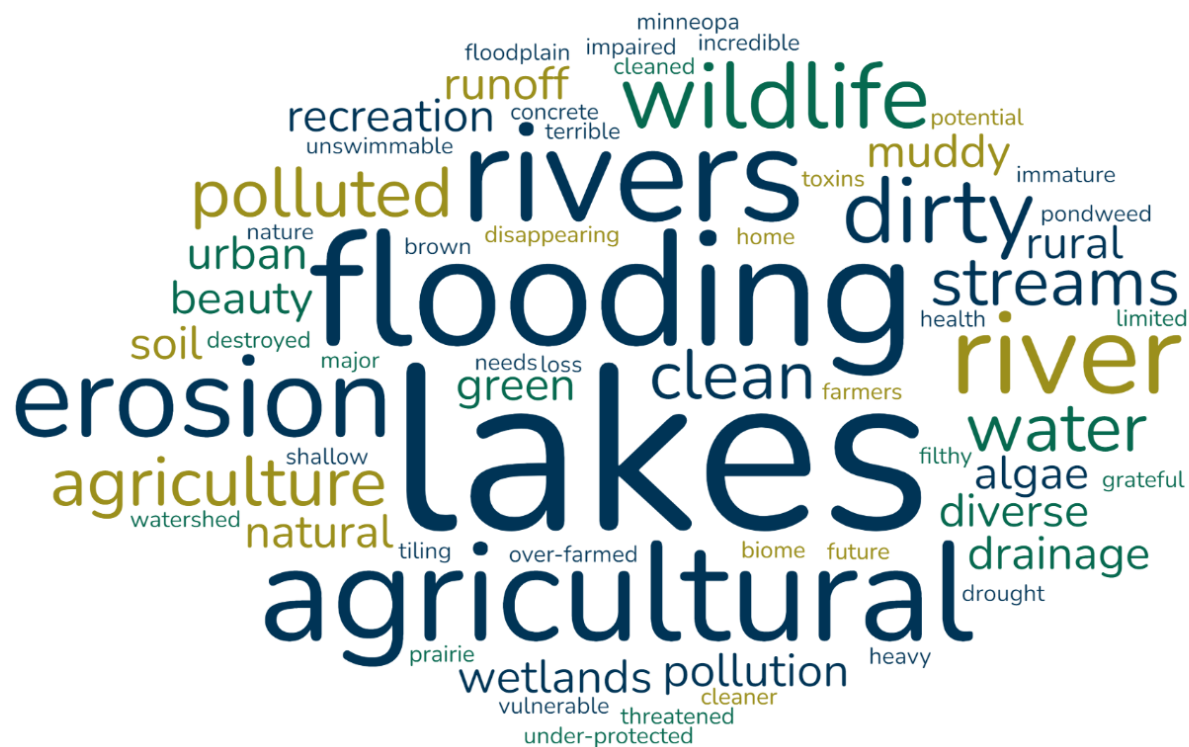
Do you live in a city or rural setting?



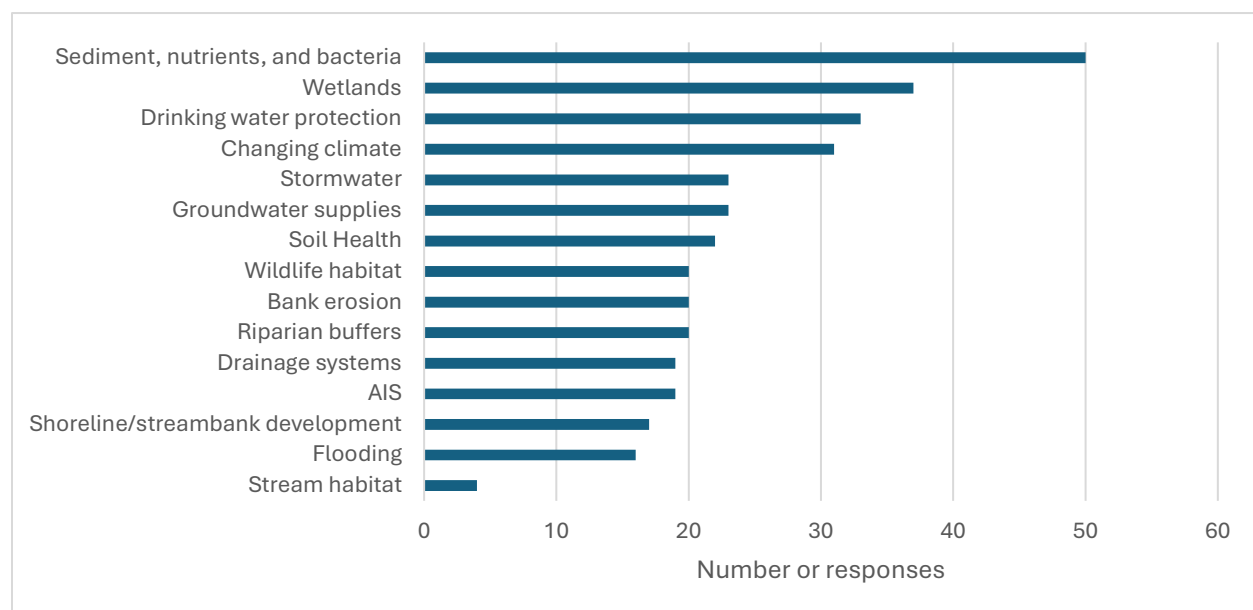
What activities do you enjoy in the watershed?



Using 4-5 words, what comes to mind when thinking of the MRMW?



Choosing up to 5, what are the top issues in the watershed?





Are there any specific waterbodies, stream reaches, or natural areas you are most concerned about?

- Minnesota River, 15 responses
- All, 7 responses
- Duck Lake, 6 responses
- Minneopa Creek, 5 responses
- Lake Washington, 4 responses
- Loon Lake, 4 responses
- 7 Mile Creek, 3 responses
- Crystal Lake, 3 responses
- Le Sueur River, 2 responses
- Swan Lake, 2 responses

One response: Coldwater Streams, Farmland, Hallets Pond, High Quality Habitat, Lake Ballantyne, Lake Crystal, Lake Emily, Lake Hallett, Lake Scotch, Near Unimin, No, Recreation Lakes, Robards Creek, Shanaska Creek, Watonwan River, Wetlands

Are there any topics, resources, problems, or opportunities we didn't cover in this survey you'd like to comment on?

- Citizen shoreline stewardship in particular regarding buffer zones.
- Farm field tiling
- Farm runoff is not very well regulated. Cities are over regulated.
- Flood mitigation planning for municipalities and counties (with Red River project plan as a major resource starting point)
- Have garbage disposals in areas getting off of lakes
- How can people get help fixing bank erosion? Is anyone addressing this?





- I agree that invasive aquatic species are of great concern, but we should also be concerned about invasive trees and plants in our watershed - make sure that our cities and counties are not allowing them to be planted and cause more harm.
- It would be nice to see efforts made to support aquatic natives, not just AIS. The Ag watershed discussion is a mixed bag. When individuals bring up green lakes and surrounding farm runoff, it's like we are not supposed to bring it up because of how important farming is. Farming is important AND it does distress lakes. In turn, individuals discount things they could do because of farming. It's circuitous conversation that's been going on for years and it seems like in the end, nothing gets improved.
- More habitat, easements and public land, wetlands and food prevention
- More natural sloughs to act filters for water entering out lakes
- No enough DNR people to enforce the laws
- No, well done
- Not at this time
- One of your meetings should have been located somewhere South of the river. Get projects on the ground. Don't try to prioritize certain areas so much that you end up not funding good projects in the watershed. People don't like hearing their area is not a priority.
- Polluting farming practices
- Prairie restoration and native plants, grasses, trees, are what we need to support
- Progress? Urban/rural division on issues
- Slalom course to be removed on duck lake.
- Soil erosion on farmland
- The drainage systems and tributaries that feed into the MN River affect the sediment load. Also, selecting only 5 areas of concern does not reflect the magnitude of the impacts to the MN River.
- The impact of climate change and polluting farming practices.
- The lack of protection for Lake Hallett in St. Peter has been and continues to be abysmal. To go from over 20 feet visibility to 2 since the early 2000s is criminal.





- Try to get the green out of the lakes
- Volunteer conservation is great, but if it can't be implementing on a large scale, nothing will improve.
- Water storage
- We drain the wetlands and tile every inch then wonder why our water bodies are unsuitable
- Yes





Resource Stations

At the public kickoff, attendees were directed to resource stations where they discussed issues and geographic areas of concern. A summary of these discussions is included here.

Surface Water Quality Station – St. Peter and Nicollet

- Concerns with ongoing run off into Lake Washington, particularly from nearby agriculture.
- Would there be benefit in making some sort of short appealing “script” or liaison point person to better appeal to landowners to impairment BMPs
- Feels wetlands as they are do not get enough public awareness on their importance. How can public education with the importance of wetlands be done?
- Lake Hallett was supposed to have a fish contamination study done, it fell through the cracks (fish collected but lost data), they would like that process to be carried out.
- Lake Hallett is a high value resource waterbody to those in the St. Peter area, this is a high priority from their mayor’s point of view.
- Cyanobacteria is suspected to also make its way to Lake Hallett, a lot of concerns and questions around the trends of HABs (Harmful Algal Blooms).
- 7-Mile Creek, in addition to other cold-water streams would like to ensure habitat is protected and water quality improves.
- Questions and interest from the public and local officials on learning about stream restoration in ditches. Lots of interest in two stage ditches and hoping to see them in more areas in this region. Could they help with downstream stability? Nutrients upspring? Bring back some biology in impaired areas?
- A lot of concerns around nitrates into groundwater – seepage rates?
- Questions and surprise about how bacteria is entering waterways. One member knew a lot about manure application but thought that as it is injected would stay bound to soil and not be able to come out in tile water. Discussion around E. coli fingerprinting study was briefly had and referenced where to find whole report.





- Lake Crystal: Nutrient impairments
- Lake Washington: Nutrient impairments
- Cold water streams
 - People don't know that and it is important
 - Maintain them and protect them
 - Temperature evaluation
- Nitrates big issue within Watershed and there were a variety of questions on what we can do to limit the sources
- Outlet from Swan Lake
 - "Clean" water source compared to other resources within the area
- Water Storage and Using Floodplain is key to reducing sediment and erosion
- Education and Outreach Efforts are really important in telling the story of the watershed and showing results
 - Visuals to show improvements within the watershed (ex: field trips to different sites)
- Important to highlight things that are great about the watershed as well, not just all of the impairments

Land Use and Habitat Station - Nicollet

- Focus efforts on the waterbodies that have substantial recreational value
- Protection for high use lakes- Washington, Duck, Ballantyne
- Find cost effective practices to get best bang for the buck
- Expand water storage opportunities of the existing shallow lakes in the watershed
- Find opportunities to increase the size of existing natural land areas and waterbodies
- Efforts should focus on the Minnesota River Flood Plain and Tributaries



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- Wildlife and biodiversity have increased with restored natural areas in the watershed
 - Encourage advertising for recreation in people's own local areas (many folks in past traveled long distances far from home to recreate and haven't realized the value of local recreation gems in the area)
 - Establish more cover crops
 - Focus on EAB and invasives in North Mankato/ St Peter Areas
 - Balance the needs of cropland agriculture with conservation practices (need the cropping economy to continue in the area)
 - Provide more resources for education and enforcement of lake shore ordinances (seems like a lot of variances have been approved to get around ordinances)
 - Focus efforts on building protection areas and easements around cold-water streams
 - Focus efforts for better drainage improvements and water storage opportunities that include habitat improvement considerations

Land Use and Habitat Station – St. Peter

- Important lakes to focus work efforts: Lake Washington, Lake Crystal, Swan Lake, Emily, Duck, Ballanytne
 - Consider doing work that will eventually impact Gulf of Mexico and Lake Pepin.
 - Focus habitat work on Hallett Pond and Seven Mile Creek
 - Loon Lake and Lake Crystal need to be emphasized
 - Need to consider how much bigger the natural areas and complexes need to be before we start seeing improvements
 - Seems like there hasn't been good planning in the past. Need focused efforts
 - Need to focus on the Minnesota River Corridor
 - Focus work and improvements to mitigate issues caused by Unimin Mines around the Ottawa area
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- Address Pesticide Issues where it is needed
- Deal with the rural stormwater and drainage on the SW side of St Peter
- Minnesota River is not a reliable recreational river
- Could use more prairie restoration projects
- More emphasis on education and outreach
- Sandy soils in the Lake Crystal area and drainage projects need to be scrutinized
- Look for opportunities for more CREP and farmer incentives
- Make enrollment easier for CREP and focus on upland areas for work.
- Include aquatic habitat in consideration with habitat projects
- Need good “sales people” that are good at communicating with farmers to get projects to take off
- Need to get more word out about wetland credit programs
- Focus on relationship building with farmers
- Focus on Hallett stormwater issues
- Rain gardens and prairie planting projects are wanted in the urban
- Focus on work on SW side of St. Peter rural area
- Wetland Protection
- More habitat
- Concerns of suburban development and impacts
- “Buy in by Producers”
- Expand wetland complexes, for water quality and wildlife
- Expand Prairies
- Concerns over bank erosion on main rivers and ditch systems
- More Conservation Easements (used the term CREP, but I believe they wanted RIM by their statements)



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- Tap into USDA Farm programs for incentives (partnership with future projects with the plan?)
 - Soil Health Benefits
 - Specifically in the Lake Crystal area
 - Rain Gardens in urban areas
 - Concerns over altered hydrology
 - Pattern tiling
 - Increased surface water

Drinking Water and Groundwater Station – Nicollet

- Nitrates were the main concern raised by the public for both public and private wells.
- Residents of St. Peter mentioned the cost associated with nitrate removal and the impacts to their utility bill.
- Regenerative agriculture was mentioned as a focus of the plan to help reduce nitrates.
- Financial assistance for farmers to implement practices to reduce nitrate pollution was important to success.
- In discussing natural occurring contaminants such as arsenic, residents agreed that sampling and education should be in plan.
- Outreach and education for shared wells that don't qualify as a public water supply well.
- Citizens asked what contaminants and how frequently should private wells be sampled.

Drinking Water and Groundwater Station – St. Peter

- St. Peter
 - Blending drinking water from three different aquifers.
 - Vulnerable groundwater supply due to the Jordan Sandstone aquifer and
- 



- rapid groundwater recharge/sandy soils.
- Reverse osmosis treatment for iron/manganese removal and nitrate removal.
- Comments were made about the about how good St. Peter's water is. It was a recent winner of best tasting water in Minnesota. The good taste was attributed to the mixing of water from multiple aquifers and the reverse osmosis treatment system.
- Mankato
 - Two sources of water:
 - Ranney wells – Shallow groundwater wells directly influenced by surface water.
 - Mt. Simon Aquifer
 - Water from Ranney wells is mixed with water from deep wells from the Mt. Simon aquifer. Approximately 70 percent of Mankato's drinking water is from the Ranney Wells.
 - Concerns were raised about groundwater use for the increased development in Mankato.
- Lake Crystal
 - Water is from a deep well with low vulnerability.
- Nitrates
 - Comments/concerns were raised about elevated nitrates and the cost of treatment.
 - With Mankato and St. Peter blending water from deeper aquifers, there was concern expressed about water use from less sustainable deeper aquifers.
 - The value of projects that reduce nitrate runoff on the landscape prior to reaching the vulnerable wells was discussed to help reduce treatment costs and reduce the amount of water that is mixed from deeper wells.
- Recharge
 - Mt. Simon aquifer recharge rate and water appropriations regarding the shallower aquifers.
- Groundwater – Surface Water Interactions
 - Contaminated stormwater runoff affecting surface waterbodies (water quality and quantity) and their interaction with shallow groundwater
- Private Wells
 - The recommendation for regular testing for bacteria and nitrates was discussed.
 - The naturally occurring arsenic in the groundwater in the watershed was discussed and testing was encouraged as wells testing over the safe drinking water standard are not uncommon. It was noted that new wells have only been required to be tested for arsenic since 2008 and there are likely a lot of wells that have never been tested for arsenic.





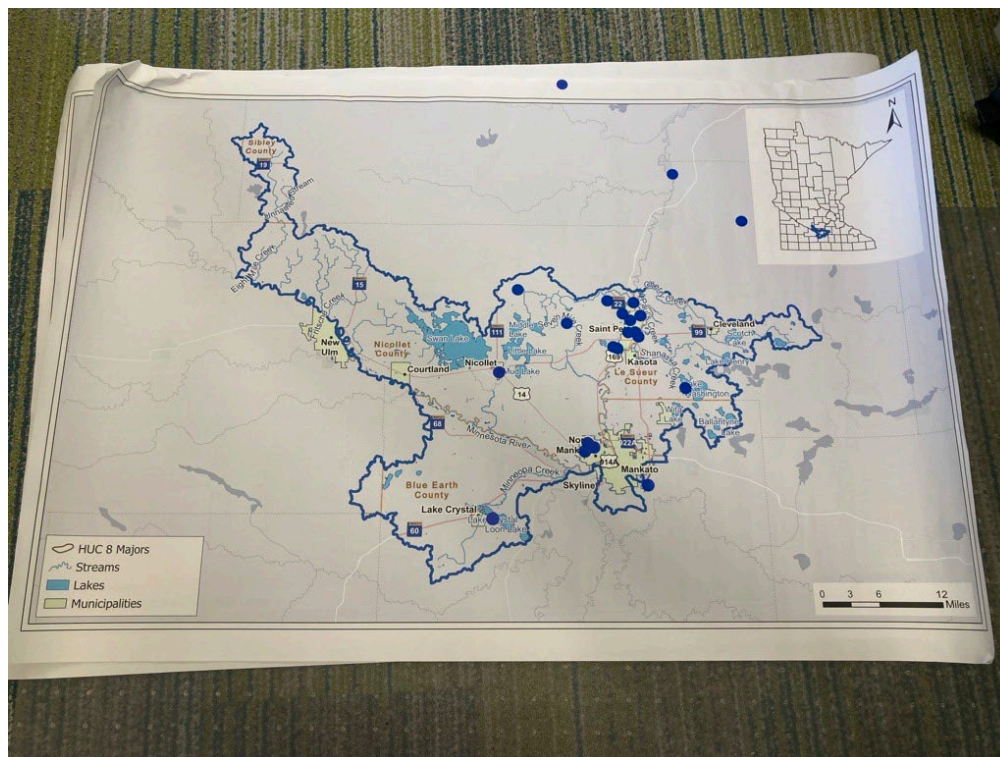
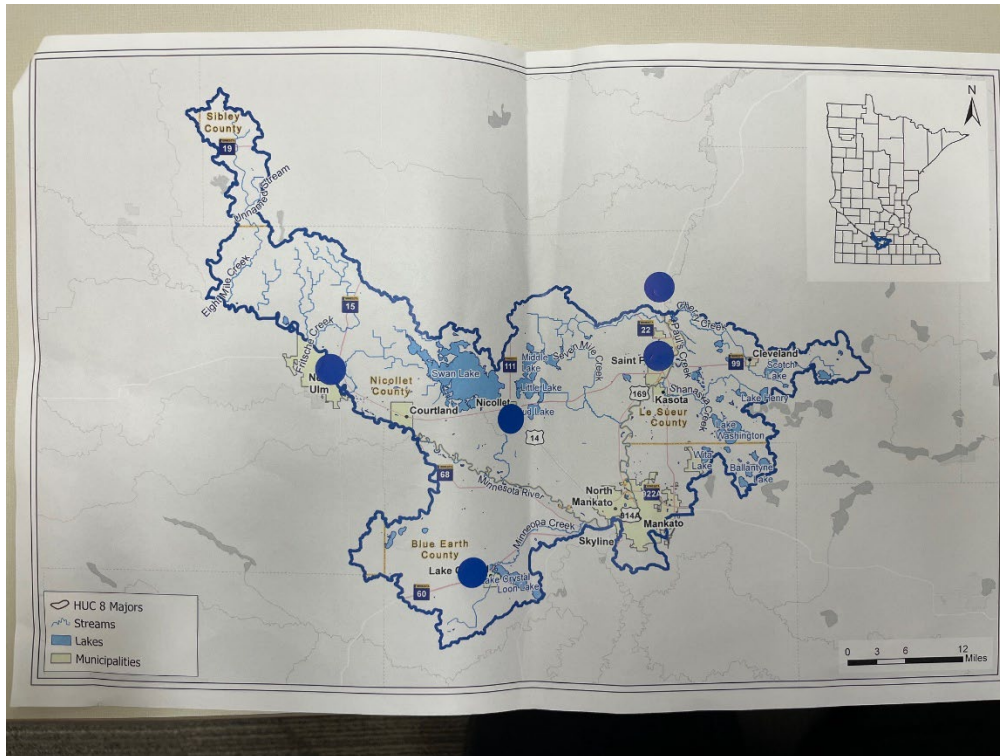
Flood Damage Reduction and Hydrology Station

- There should be more consistency between counties in the evaluation of drainage projects and in the review of the goals for a drainage project.
- There seems to be barriers for obtaining grants for water storage and conservation practices with drainage ditch improvement projects.
- There are a number of cold water/trout streams in the watershed and there should be consistency with how drainage projects are reviewed in those watersheds.
- To help reduce the cost of conservation projects associated with drainage projects, the contractor who is installing the drainage improvement project should also be the contractor doing storage or conservation projects. The set-up costs for the contractor could be leveraged, and the overall cost could be reduced.
- Regarding tile drainage, it should be acknowledged that that water flows faster through plastic pipes than soil.
- Wetland restoration, water storage practices, and soil health are all important practices to help reduce peak flows in streams and the Minnesota River.
- Implementing water storage practices should be the focus of this plan.
- The water storage aspects of soil health should also be a priority and should be promoted as healthy soil can store significant volume of water.
- The public could be better engaged in importance of water storage and with successes in the Minnesota River Basin.
- Conservation practices like CREP and other water storage practices in the upper reaches of the Minnesota River Basin likely played a role in reducing the flood peaks on the Minnesota River in 2024. It would be interesting to model that potential impact to how that flood event may have been worse had those practices not been in place.
- Storage of water through a variety of structural and non-structural means in the upper reaches of the watershed is important to reduce peak flows.
- Agricultural drainage and outlets to public waters should be treated like municipal storm sewers as they are a point source for pollution and increased water flow.



Map Feedback from Public Kickoff

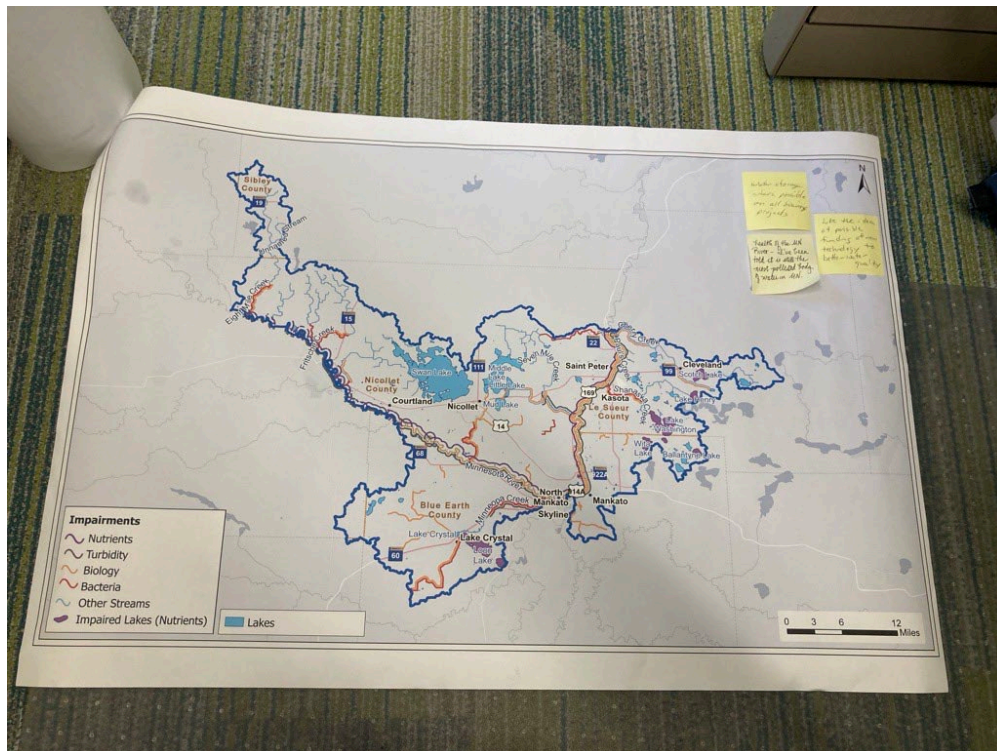
Where do you live? Responses from Nicollet (top) and St. Peter (bottom).





Comments on Surface Water Quality map:

- Water storage where possible on all drainage projects
- Health of the MN River – I've been told it is still the most polluted body of water in MN
- Like the idea of possible funding of new technology to better water quality



Minnesota River-Mankato 1W1P

Recommended Advisory Committee

Organization	Full Name and Title	Email Address	Telephone	Notes	Partner
MN Board of Water and Soil Resources	Jeremy Maul, Board Conservationist	jeremy.maul@state.mn.us	507-344-2824		
MN Department of Agriculture	Reid Christianson, Supervisor, Clean Water Technical Assistance Unit	reid.christianson@state.mn.us	651-201-6026		
MN Department of Health	Scott J. Hanson, Regional Planner	scott.j.hanson@state.mn.us	507-206-2734		
MN Department of Natural Resources	Al Gleisner, Hydrologist	alan.gleisner@state.mn.us	320-753-0344		
MN Environmental Quality Board*	Catherine Neuschler	catherine.neuschler@state.mn.us	651-757-2607		
MN Pollution Control Agency	Bryan Spindler, Watershed Project Manager	bryan.spindler@state.mn.us	507-344-5267		
Conservation Technology Information Center	Dan Coffman, Soil Health Specialist	dan.coffman55@gmail.com	(507) 508-6556	Local farmer	Nicollet County & SWCD
Crystal Waters Project	Mike Roll	mike@rhenryconstruction.com	507-380-1794	Has worked extensively with BES/water, and other conservation projects. Measuring and monitoring, completing grant applications, lakeshore restoration, pollinator, and rain gardens, plans fishing events for kids	City of Lake Crystal
Lake Washington Improvement Association	Chuck Brandel	chuck.brandel@isginc.com	(507) 327-8282		Le Sueur County & SWCD
Minnesota River Congress	Scott Sparlin, Executive Director	sesparlin@gmail.com	(507) 276-2280	Can provide staff contacts for specific issues	City of Mankato
Nicollet Conservation Club	Fred Froehlich	None	(507) 232-3366	Nicollet Conservation Club merged Swan Lake Association	Nicollet County & SWCD
Sibley County Zoning	Geoff Beranek, Planning & Zoning Administrator	GeoffBeranek@sibleycounty.gov	(507) 237-4091		Sibley County
Sibley SWCD	Joel Wurscher, District Manager	joel.wurscher@sibleyswcd.org	(507) 702-7077		Sibley County

Address
41862 271st Ave, Cleveland, MN 56017
39770 Ottawa Rd, Le Sueur, MN 56058

INVOICE

**Remit to:**

1401 21st Ave N, Fargo, ND 58102

Phone: 701.237.5065

Fed Tax ID: 45-0314557

Interest of 1%/month applied to past due invoices

Nicollet County (MN) Soil & Water Conservation District

PO Box 457

Nicollet, MN 56074

Invoice Number: 72322

Date: August 22, 2024

Project Number: R008364-0005

Minnesota River - Mankato Watershed One Watershed, One Plan Copy**For Professional Services Rendered Through: August 17, 2024****Summary of Work Performed:**

Phase 001: Prepare materials for public kickoff, including maps, survey, and initial list of issues; Develop style guide and logo

Phase 002: Draft Land and Water Resources Narrative; Continue developing list of plan issues

Phase 004: Prepare for, travel to, and facilitate 6/26 Steering Committee meeting and 7/23 and 7/30 public kickoff events; Prepare for and facilitate virtual 7/8 Policy Committee meeting and 7/15 Steering Committee meeting

001 - Pre-Planning**Professional Services**

	Hours	Rate	Amount
GIS Analyst 2	9.50	123.00	\$1,168.50
Project Assistant 4	4.00	108.00	\$432.00
Scientist 2	15.50	150.00	\$2,325.00
Scientist 6	12.25	221.00	\$2,707.25
	41.25		\$6,632.75

001 - Pre-Planning Total: \$6,632.75**002 - Draft Plan****Professional Services**

	Hours	Rate	Amount
Scientist 2	24.00	150.00	\$3,600.00
Scientist 6	1.75	221.00	\$386.75
	25.75		\$3,986.75

002 - Draft Plan Total: \$3,986.75**004 - Meetings and Engagement****Professional Services**

	Hours	Rate	Amount
Scientist 2	6.75	150.00	\$1,012.50
Scientist 7	30.25	250.00	\$7,562.50
	37.00		\$8,575.00

Reimbursable Expenses

	Units	Rate	Amount
Meals - Employee	1.0000	15.000	\$15.00
			\$15.00
004 - Meetings and Engagement Total:			\$8,590.00
		Invoice Total	\$19,209.50