
2018 Annual Activity Report of the Yellow Medicine River Watershed District



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Mission

The mission of the Yellow Medicine River Watershed District (YMRWD) is to provide an organized means for proper management and protection of the water resources in the Yellow Medicine River Watershed. The YMRWD has three core functions outside of administration: (1) Serve as the drainage authority for systems under its jurisdiction, (2) Provide a regulatory framework that permits a variety of activities that complement the flood reduction and water quality goals of the district, and (3) carry out activities of the watershed management plan.

History of the Yellow Medicine River Watershed District

The Yellow Medicine River Watershed District (YMRWD) is a local unit of government established on August 27, 1971 through a petition of its residents to the MN Board of Water and Soil Resources. The jurisdiction of the organization covers 685 square miles in southwestern Minnesota that drain to the Yellow Medicine River in Lincoln (39%), Lyon (23%), and Yellow Medicine (38%) counties. County Commissioners appoint representatives to a 5-member board of managers that direct and oversee activities of the District. The southeast portion of the Coteau des Prairies, partially located in the southwest of the Yellow Medicine Watershed, comprises one of the distinct regions in Minnesota, known as the Buffalo Ridge. From the Coteau region, the watershed drains to the northeast with 1,125 feet of elevation change to the lower region, called the Flatland region. The Transitional region in between these two regions is where the elevation changes are the greatest, at approximately 45 feet per mile.

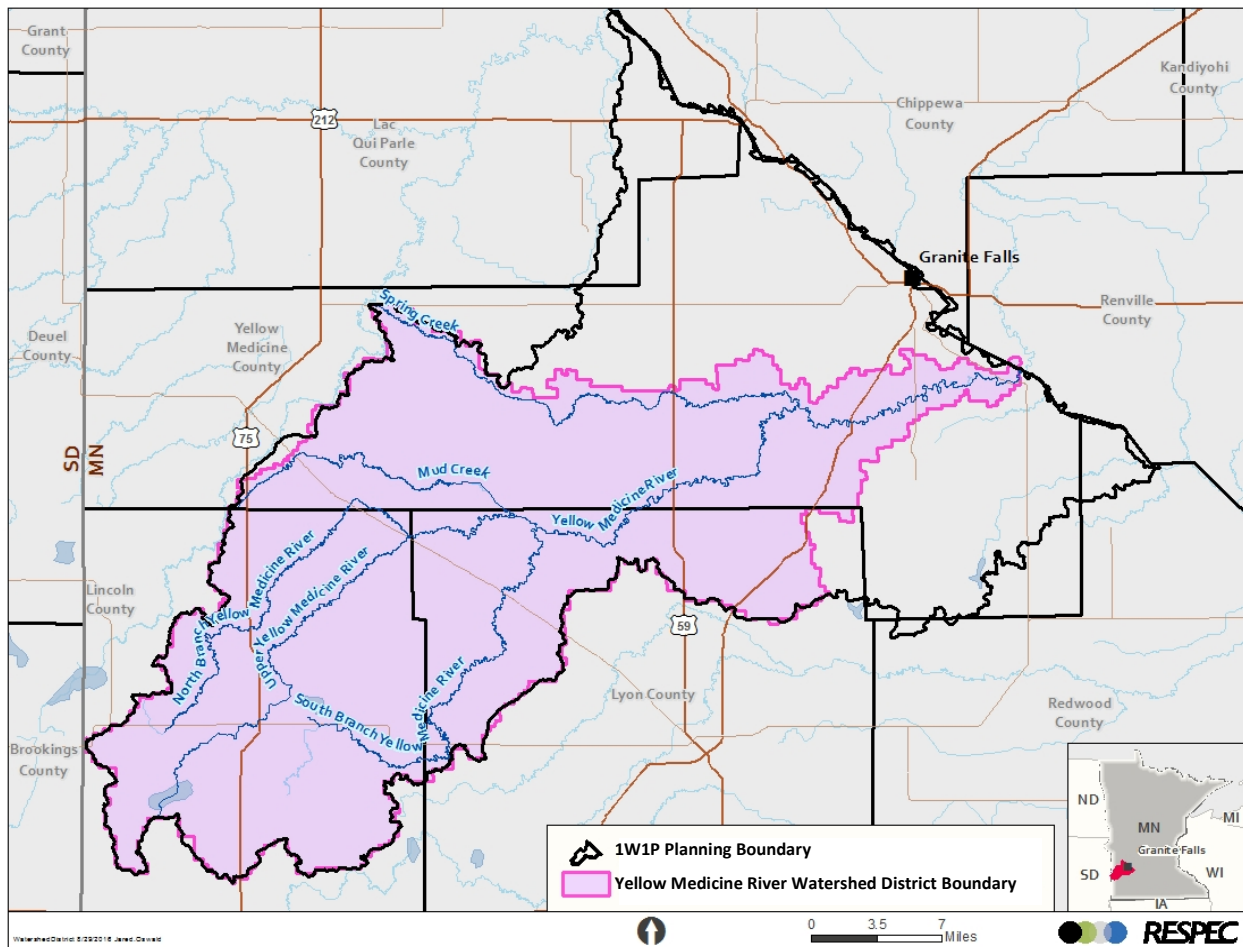
District Staff

The District maintains one full time Administrator. Michelle Overholser was the District Administrator throughout 2018. In October, the District hired Mike Luke as and Part-time Program Assistant. Mike is currently a student at SMSU in Marshall and is working part time for the district.

2018 Budget

A hearing for the 2018 proposed operation budget was held on September 11, 2017 during the regular board meeting. No public attended the hearing. The proposed budget was presented and a levy amount of \$240,000 for the year was proposed. The Board of Mangers approved the budget and the levy amount of \$240,000.

District and Watershed Planning Boundaries



Current and Future Goals

The YMRWD has adopted the Yellow Medicine One Watershed One Plan as the Districts comprehensive water plan. In 2018 the District elected to become the fiscal agent for the implementation grant and the Administrator of the plan. Throughout 2018, in partnership with partner local government units, the district developed a 1W1P implementation plan, including a ranking and tracking system for BMPs integrated and installed throughout the watershed and the 1W1P planning area.

In 2019, the district will continue to lead the 1W1P implementation efforts, working closely with the SWCDs to increase conservation BMPs across the watershed. In the up coming year, the district aims to increase the capacity and capabilities of the office and staff to better serve the community.

One Watershed, One Plan

The Yellow Medicine One Watershed One Plan (1W1P) project began in 2014 as one of five pilot projects across Minnesota that set out to align watershed planning along watershed boundaries and move away from county planning boundaries. It was hoped that the plan could be completed by the end of 2015, but unforeseen delays pushed the planning process into 2016. Project partners signed an extension to the One Watershed One Plan Memorandum of Agreement in order to continue the planning efforts. The plan was completed, went out for public comment in May and was approved by the MN Board of Water and Soil Resources on December 14, 2016.

In 2018, the implementation grant of \$551,712 was received for the 2018/2019 biennium. \$296,883 of the grant, including the \$55,171.00 match required, was budgeted for direct cost-share to landowners and producers. This district anticipates similar funding levels for the 2020/2021 biennium, which begins July 1st 2019.

Drainage Authority Work

During 2018, eleven ditch systems were under the jurisdiction of the watershed district. Nine are permanently managed by the district and two were temporarily under the jurisdiction of the district while undergoing an improvement project. Major activity included the following:

- Lincoln County Ditch 38 – In 2017 construction work was completed and a final acceptance hearing was held early 2018.
- Lincoln County Ditch 39 – Construction was completed the summer of 2018 and the final acceptance hearing was held that fall.

In the permanently managed systems, the work was primarily limited to maintenance and minor repairs.

Regulatory Program: Drainage Permitting

The district continued its permitting program which requires that all non-maintenance drainage projects obtain a permit from the watershed district. In 2018 134 tiling and drainage permits were viewed and approved, up from 120 in 2017.

Nuisance Beaver Program

In 2018 the Watershed District continued its program to pay a bounty on nuisance beavers. The district funds a nuisance beaver program to help deter overland flooding and stream bank erosion caused by beaver dams in streams and ditches located in the watershed boundaries.

Appreciation

This concludes the 2018 annual report of the Yellow Medicine River Watershed District. The Yellow Medicine River Watershed District Board of Managers and staff would like to take this opportunity to express our appreciation for the support given to our organization, by the various county offices and personnel, as well as the Commissioners of Lyon, Lincoln, and Yellow Medicine Counties. We appreciate the opportunity to work with each of you, in meeting the goals of the Watershed District, in our efforts to successfully manage and monitor the waters of the Yellow Medicine River Watershed.

Respectfully submitted,

John Boulton

John Boulton, 2018 YMRWD Secretary