



Yellow Medicine River Watershed District 2014 Annual Report

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Administrator.....Cindy Potz
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The Mission of the Yellow Medicine River Watershed District is to provide an organized means for proper management and protection of the water resources in the Yellow Medicine River Watershed. Our watershed district places emphasis on flood control, water control management through the process of viewing and approving drainage permits, and water quality problems. We view and approve all water-related projects in the district. Our watershed district partners with Federal, State, Counties, Cities, and Townships in water planning and management. The Watershed District employs technical staff who conducts water quality monitoring of lakes, rivers and streams in the watershed, and establishes and maintains records and hydrological data. The District endeavors to provide for wildlife and create opportunities to enhance the recreational opportunities as a supplementary benefit of projects that improve water quality and provide flood protection.

Projects Summary

- * Tiling and Drainage Projects
- * Beaver Damage Control
- *Lac Qui Parle Overflow
- * Fallen Tree Program
- *Terrain Analysis Grant
- * Annual Advisory Meeting
- *WRAPS MPCA Grant
- * 1W1P BWSR Grant

*** Tiling and Drainage Projects ***

The number of tiling permits requested has decreased for the fourth straight year across the Watershed District, from 134 down to 128. Factors to be considered regarding the decrease may include: 1) drought conditions, 2) the increased tile lines installed in previous years.

128 tiling and drainage permits were viewed and approved in 2014. 54 permits were approved in Lincoln County, 51 permits were approved in YM County, and 22 permits were approved in Lyon County. Once again throughout 2014, landowners were instructed at the time of obtaining a blank permit, to contact their neighbors, and were instructed as to where the neighboring landowners needed to sign on the permit. By instructing the farmers to negotiate prior to the tile being installed, the Yellow Medicine River Watershed District Board of Managers believes this will alleviate future disputes. When there were instances regarding permit disputes, the Watershed Board would ask the landowners to come to the Board Meeting to discuss how to reconcile the differences.

The board has made a motion to change the \$250.00 fee for unpermitted drainage, due to the cost of negotiating resolutions with the landowners, and often times the cost of a legal counselor. The Board has chosen to change the fee to a range from \$250 up to \$750.00 depending on the type of unpermitted project that was done, and how adversely it affected neighboring landowners and the watershed. The Board will proceed with making this change as a part of the new rules and regulations, as suggested by the Board of Soil and Water Resources to be completed after the completion of our One Watershed One Plan project.

*** Beaver Damage Control Program ***

The Yellow Medicine River Watershed District annually budgets for funding to operate a beaver damage control program to eliminate nuisance beaver and beaver dams, and lessen the crop damage done to the croplands in the vicinity of the beaver dams. We continue to research and utilize ideas for controlling the building of beaver dams in the streams and ditches. In 2014, we hired a number of local contractors to remove the nuisance beavers and the dams. Expenditures for beaver control in 2014 were \$7499.32.

*** Fallen Tree Removal Program- River Maintenance ***

For the past few years the Yellow Medicine River Watershed District has managed a fallen tree removal program, working with contractors to focus on a portion of the Yellow Medicine River or a tributary, to saw up, drag up, and burn up, fallen trees. A number of fallen trees were reported due the velocity and high levels of water which traveled through the watershed.

The blockage caused by the fallen trees can redirect the flow of water outside of its normal channel, eroding the banks, overflowing onto farmer's fields and creating oxbows. This in turn causes excessive silt to be washed into the stream causing further turbidity problems.

The Yellow Medicine River Watershed District also uses the funding from the Fallen Tree Program to eliminate potential infrastructure damage. Fallen trees can block the flow of water through culverts and under bridges. As this water backs up, and the trees are not removed,

therein lies the opportunity for the water to wash out roads, crossings and bridges which could lead to a person or person(s) to become seriously injured and putting extra expense on the taxpayers.

In 2014, the Watershed District spent \$10,753.80 on fallen tree removal. Residents of the watershed routinely inform the District Office as to the location of the blockage, whereupon, a staff member will visit and assess the site before bringing a contractor in to remove the debris. Just outside of Minneota, MN on Lyon County Highway 10, the Watershed District funded tree removal and stream bank stabilization project with the Lyon County Highway Department. That project cost \$6,590.00 and \$6408.68 was reimbursed to the Watershed District from FEMA funds.

*** Terrain Analysis Grant ***

The Terrain Analysis Grant from BWSR supports the creation of a watershed delineation and the hydrologic and hydraulic model using the recent Minnesota LiDAR data. The Watershed District has contracted with Minnesota State University, Mankato's Water Resources Center to complete the work. We have been working with Rick Moore.

This project utilizes the State of Minnesota LiDAR elevation datasets recently acquired for southern Minnesota. There is considerable interest in making use of the new LiDAR derived digital elevation models (DEM'S) in Minnesota for water resource projects, as they provide a very precise depiction of the land surface. However, LiDAR DEM's do not inherently include important information about subsurface water conveyance connections such as culverts, drain tiles, and storm sewers. As a result, bridges, roads and other structures on the landscape effectively act as virtual dams preventing terrain analysis algorithms from properly routing the flow of water across the DEM landscape. This project will create an inventory of burnlines and culverts for use in creating hydrologically corrected DEM's from Minnesota LiDAR data for long range use in improving water quality and quantity models in the Yellow Medicine River watershed. The various secondary datasets we will create are Critical Source Areas, Specific Catchment Areas, Stream Power Index, Compound Topographic Index, and Environmental Benefit Index. We will also be able to identify bluff and ravine areas using the LiDAR data.

Also, we intend to work with the new technician, Andy Meyer, Water Resource Center for training and use of the LiDAR, which will be offered to all project partners.

The grant is for \$88,612.00, of which, \$35,200.00 has been used to date.

WRAPs MPCA Grant

Why this project is taking place:

The MPCA is committed to working with a range of partners using a watershed approach that addresses all of Minnesota's 81, 8-digit HUC watersheds, within a ten year cycle. The major components of the approach include unified methods to: 1) monitor and gather information, 2) assess the data, 3) develop implementation strategies to meet standards and protect waters, and 4) implement water quality protection and restoration activities.

Intensive watershed monitoring through a Surface Water Assessment Grant began in the Hawk/Yellow Medicine 8-digit HUC in 2010. This monitoring work expands on previously established routine water quality and flow sampling to include extensive fish and aquatic invertebrate surveys. Following completion of the intensive watershed monitoring in 2011, subsequent steps include assessment of the monitoring data to determine impairments,

identification of stressors that are causing impairments, development of TMDLs using identification of pollutant sources using computer modeling and other techniques, and civic engagement as a strategy in moving towards water quality goals.

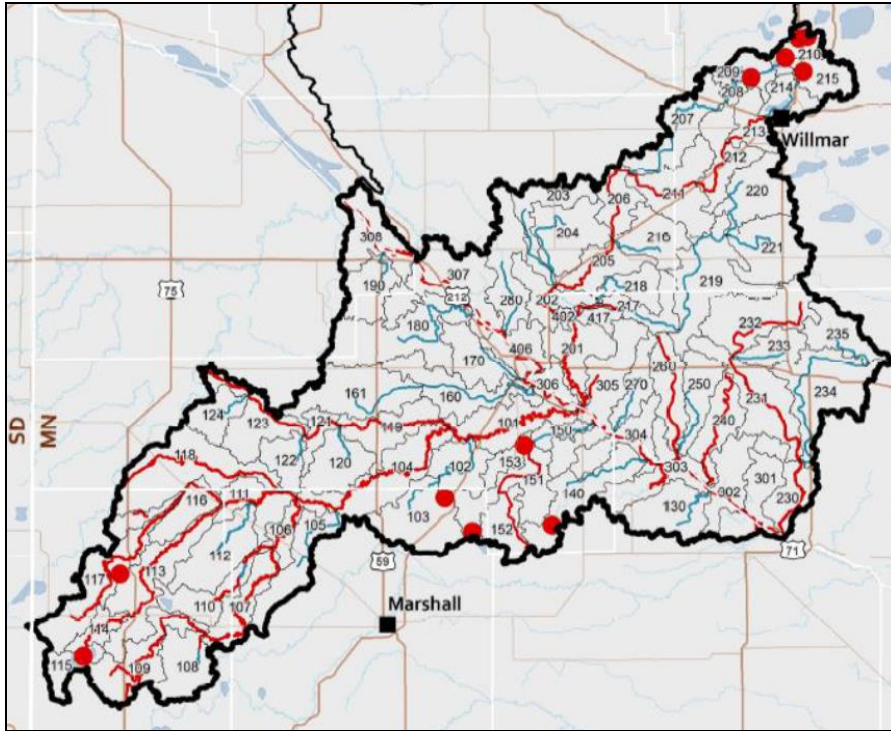
In accordance with the federal Clean Water Act, the MN Clean Water Legacy Act states that “Public agencies and private entities...shall encourage participation by the public and Stakeholders, including local citizens, landowners and managers, and public and private organizations in the identification of impaired waters, in developing TMDLs and in planning, priority setting and implementing restoration of impaired waters.” (2007 MN Statute Section 114D.35). The project will culminate in a set of strategies to restore impaired waters and protect un-impaired waters. These strategies will ultimately be executed by state and local governments, citizen organizations, businesses, and individuals.

Goal:

The goal of this project is to establish a framework and to provide tools for local government and watershed projects to engage the public in a manner that will lead to water quality improvement through implementation. This goal will result in outlining specific strategies to protect or restore all waters within this watershed. These strategies will be used as the basis for making informed local water quality and land use planning decisions as well as for development of grant applications to implement the restoration and protection of waters within this 8-digit HUC.

Progress:

Progress on the watershed approach to date includes the intensive watershed monitoring work that began in 2010, utilizing input from citizens to determine the values across the watershed, zonation mapping, stressor identification using the MPCA Biotic Stressor Identification Report and Monitoring and Assessment Report. This work plan outlines and describes future and ongoing steps including stressor identification, finalization of watershed modeling, civic engagement, and TMDL development.



In its third year, the WRAPs Grant Pilot Program has the Watershed District working with MPCA to write a report to summarize the results of the monitoring and data analysis. The report will include a comparison of water quality conditions to standards to determine if water is achieving designated uses. It will identify impairments and waters that should be protected. This report will then be used to assist the various stakeholders within the watershed to plan the implementation of various best management practices within the watershed to produce the most effective results to better meet our pollution reduction goals.

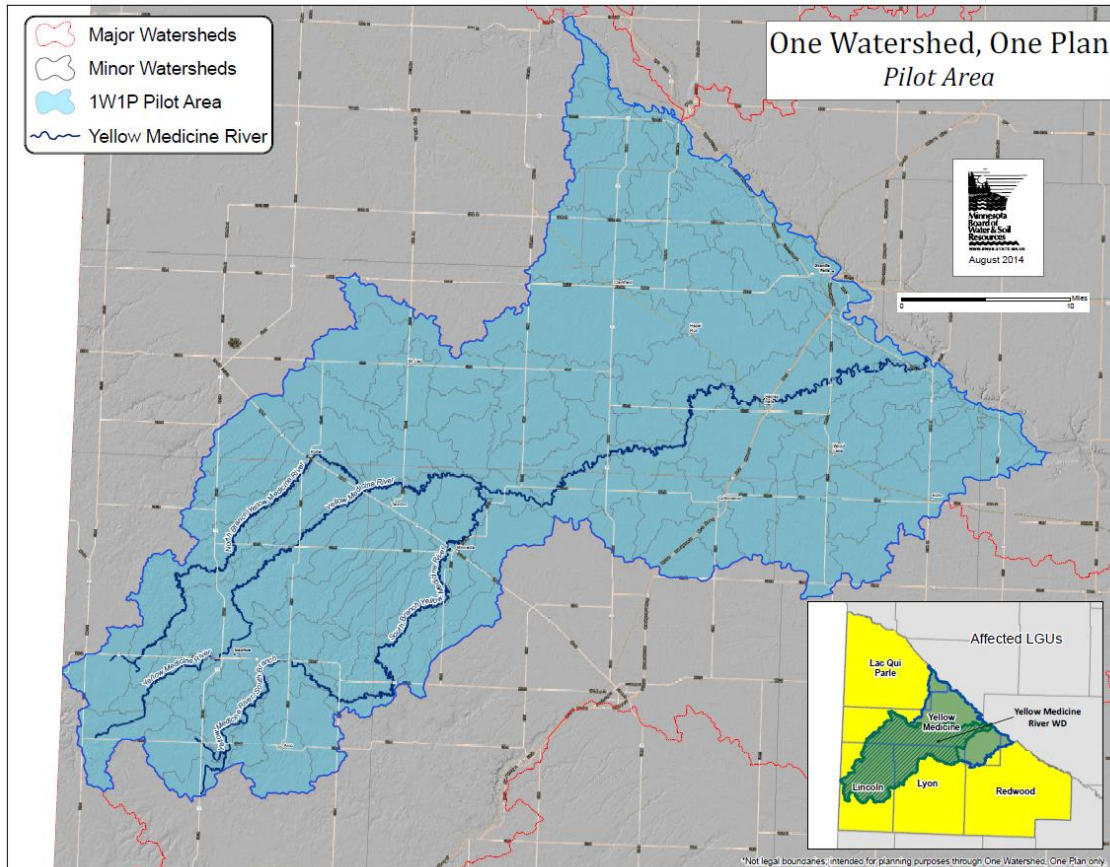
In 2014, the Watershed District spent \$42,638.38 of \$105,121.42 with no match needed.

**** One Watershed, One Plan (1WIP) ****



One Watershed-One Plan grant is a Pilot Project with BWSR. It is a Targeted Watershed Project in which cooperating agencies, including: the county SWCD's (Lincoln, Lyon, Yellow Medicine) and Area II Minnesota River Basin Projects, work together with the Watershed District and State Agencies to combine the various water plans, including the County Water Plan, the SWCD Water Plan, and the Watershed's Plan, into one single comprehensive watershed management plan that is specific to the Yellow Medicine River Watershed.

The planning began in August of 2014. The project is scheduled to be completed June of 2016. Tasks completed in 2014 include the selection of consultants, the creation and mail of notifications, the creation of the various committees, and the Initial Planning Meeting.



***New Projects ***

We have begun some grant research on acquiring funding for additional projects at varying locations in the Yellow Medicine River Watershed District.

- Assist Area II with a Retention Structure Maintenance Program
- Supporting the LQPYB Watershed’s projects for the overflow of the LQP River.
 - Our 25% contribution was:
 - \$4,025.75 for Riverbank Restabilization
 - \$263.46 for Fencing
- WRAPS(Watershed Restoration and Protection Strategies) with SWCD/NRCS/Civic Engagement
Establish Watershed Modeling scenarios with Priority Management Zones

The 2014 Annual Advisory Hearing*

Our advisory hearing is held annually, with a presentation by the watershed district staff, and comments and suggestions by the advisory hearing committee.

*Annual Advisory Committee Meeting
August 19, 2014*

The annual meeting of the YMRW District Annual Advisory Committee was called to order at 5:00 p.m. by Advisory Committee Chairman Curt Blumeyer, Lincoln County Commissioner. Other Advisory Committee members present were Gary Crowley, Lyon SWCD supervisor; Norris

Peterson, YM SWCD supervisor; Glen Sorenson, Lincoln SWCD supervisor, Jolene Johnson, YM county Water Planner, Rodney Stensrud, Lyon County Commissioner, and Ron Antony, YM County Commissioner.

Introductions were made.

Yellow Medicine River Watershed District Board of Managers in attendance were:

John Boulton, Tim Buysse, Tim Dritz, Jeff Hoffman and Corey Hoffman.

Also attending the meeting were; Pauline Van Overbeke, Lincoln SWCD Coordinator; Pete Doyscher, Lincoln County Environmental Office; George Potz, YM County Landowner; Cindy Potz, YMRW District Administrator; and Emma Volz, YMRW Technician.

Cindy Potz read the published notice.

Emma Volz read the 2013 advisory committee meeting minutes.

Tim Buysse made a motion to approve the 2013 advisory committee meeting minutes.

Tim Dritz seconded the motion. All voted aye. Motion carried.

Potz presented a powerpoint presentation about the watershed projects in the past year, and those being proposed. After the presentation, questions were taken. Discussion was held on the WRAPS program, and how that helps recognize the years of monitoring data that we have acquired, and using it in an effort to target the high priority locations in our watershed, those that are high in phosphorus, nitrates, suspended solids, and fecal coliform loading, as well as low Dissolved oxygen. This data is recorded through the MPCA and EPA websites, specific to each monitoring site. This information will be compiled and used in the WRAPS report. The WRAPS report will be used for all agencies to address the concerns of the watershed, in writing future grant applications. The WRAPS program is sponsored by MPCA.

Then, applied for this past year, and awarded this summer by BWSR, we are in the beginning stages of a One Watershed One Plan program, where all agencies will be involved in creating an overall water plan for this watershed, and we will all be able to use that plan for writing of grant applications and submissions to BSWR and MPCA. This is a pilot program but appears to be well designed.

Discussion was held on the tiling permit applications and some of the problems we are experiencing with unpermitted tiling and drainage. Our unpermitted tiling fee of \$250.00 is not covering the expenses involved when addressing the issue of an unpermitted project. Legal expenses and meetings add to the cost of research and communications on an unpermitted project. And it seems that a \$250.00 fee is not a sufficient deterrent to some landowners to prevent them from installing drainage tile without a permit. Discussion was held on contact with other watershed district administrators and staff, to determine how they handle unpermitted tiling. Potz reported that the results of these inquiries vary greatly. There is no state or watershed standard for the amount of a fee. After discussion, the board members of the watershed suggested that they will create a resolution at the next board meeting.

Chairman Blumeyer asked for a motion to adjourn the meeting.

Motioned by Ron Antony, YM County Commissioner, seconded by Jeff Hoffman YMRW District board manager, to adjourn the meeting. All voted aye. Motion carried. Meeting adjourned at 6:15 p.m.

Lunch was served.

Respectfully Submitted,

Corey Hoffman, YMRW District Secretary

This concludes the 2014 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 each 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.

