
2019 Annual Activity Report of the Yellow Medicine River Watershed District



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Jerry Nelson, Yellow Medicine SWCD Supervisor – alternate
Jolene Johnson, Yellow Medicine Water Planner

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 2019. In 2019 the District also employed a Part-time Program Assistant. That position was eliminated in November of 2019, with the plan of adding a full-time technician position in 2020.

2019 Budget

A hearing for the 2019 proposed operation budget was held on September 13, 2018 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.

2019 had a budgeted income of \$280,644 with an actual income of \$259,768.72.

2019 had budgeted expenses of \$280,644 with actual expenses of \$160,044.

A full 2019 Budget Summary is attached to this report as Appendix A along with the proposed 2021 Budget.

2020 Budget

A hearing for the 2020 proposed operation budget was held on September 09, 2019 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.

2020 had a budgeted income of \$285,044 with a projected actual income of \$283,455.24.
2020 had budgeted expenses of \$290,294 with projected actual expenses of \$220,098.

A full 2020 Budget Summary is attached to this report as Appendix B.

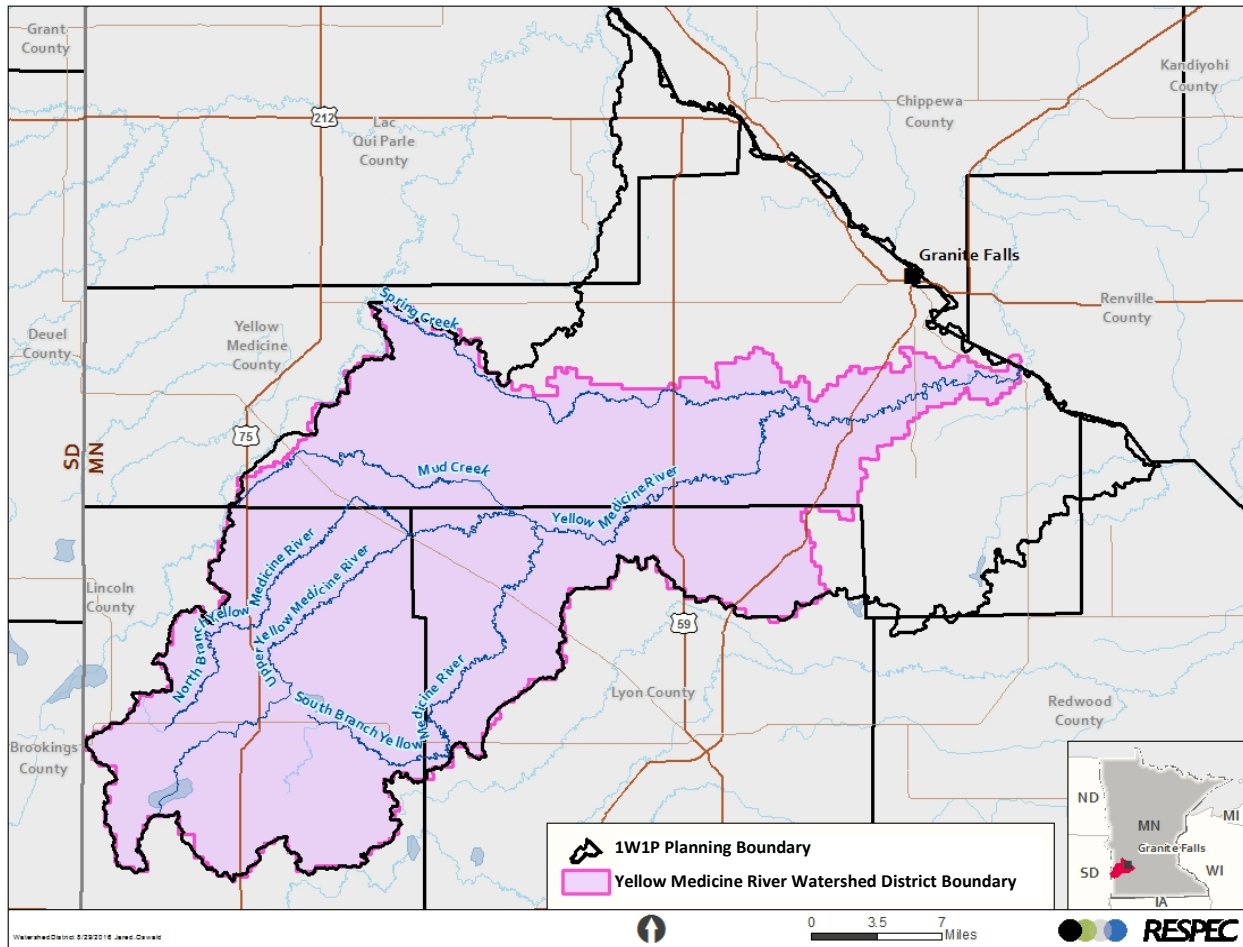
2021 Budget

A hearing for the 2021 proposed operation budget will take place on September 21, 2020 during the regular board meeting. The Administrator is recommending that there is no levy increase for 2021, a \$240,000 levy for the year is proposed.

The 2021 budget has an income of \$365,044 with expenses of the same amount.

A full 2021 Proposed Budget Summary is attached to this report as Appendix C and is undergoing an open comment period until September 18, 2020.

District and Watershed Planning Boundaries



Current and Future Goals

The YMRWD has adopted the Yellow Medicine One Watershed One Plan as the District's comprehensive water plan. In 2018 the District became the fiscal agent and Administrator for the implementation grant, and developed a 1W1P implementation plan in partnership with partner local government units.

In 2019, the district continued to lead the 1W1P implementation efforts, working closely with the SWCDs to increase conservation BMPs across the watershed. In the upcoming 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.

In 2019, \$100,000 of funds were moved from the technical assistance category into direct cost-share to landowners, bringing that number up to \$396,883, which translates to 65% of the grant funds going directly to producers and landowners in order to install conservation practices.

Drainage Authority Work

During 2019, nine ditch systems were under the jurisdiction of the watershed district. In 2019 most of the work completed on the ditch systems were minor repairs and ditch inspections.

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 2019 214 tiling and drainage permits were viewed and approved, up from 134 in 2018.

The District also reviewed and updated the District Rules in 2019.

Nuisance Beaver Program

In 2019 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 2019 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,

Elmo Volstad

Elmo Volstad, 2019 YMRWD Secretary