



## Frequently Asked Questions #1

# Vermillion River Watershed Standards

Vermillion Standards govern seven specific topics:

- Floodplain Alteration
- Wetland Alteration
- Buffers
- Erosion & Sediment Control
- Stormwater Management
- Drainage Alteration
- Agriculture

Individual Frequently Asked Questions sheets describe each topic.

### Why was the VRWJPO established?

To protect and improve water quality in a river, it is necessary to look not only at the river but also at the land surface that drains to it. This land area is called a watershed.

Watersheds rarely conform to township, city, county or even state boundaries. The Vermillion River Watershed Joint Powers Organization (VRWJPO) was established to manage water quality in the Vermillion River Watershed.

## What are the Vermillion Watershed Standards?

In June 2016, the Vermillion River Watershed Joint Powers Organization (VRWJPO) adopted the [2016-2025 Vermillion River Watershed Management Plan](#). The plan includes a range of actions to protect and improve surface water and groundwater quality in the watershed.

Based on the plan, the VRWJPO reevaluated its Standards, or the water quality outcomes that should be achieved in the watershed. The Standards guide implementation of goals, policies, objectives, and actions in the Watershed Plan.

Local units of government are legally obligated to develop local controls that meet minimum requirements to implement the Standards or have the VRWJPO regulate under the plan. The VRWJPO adopts Rules based on the Standards to provide enforcement in communities that do not develop local controls.

According to State law, Minn. Stat. Chapter 103B, all metropolitan watersheds must create and implement a watershed management plan to address water quality and quantity concerns. The 2016-2025 Vermillion River Watershed Management Plan was developed through an open public process with input from many stakeholders with varied interests and roles.

### Where can I find the current Standards?

The standards are in Appendix B of the plan on the Vermillion River Watershed website: [www.vermillionriverwatershed.org](http://www.vermillionriverwatershed.org), under "Plans/Reports."



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#### Vermillion River Watershed Joint Powers Organization

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The Vermillion River Watershed encompasses an area of approximately 335 square miles, including portions of two counties and all or portions of 20 cities, towns, and townships. The main stem of the river begins in southeastern Scott County in New Market Township flowing east through central Dakota County, passing over a waterfall in the City of Hastings, and then discharging to the Mississippi River both through a northerly flowing outlet near the City of Hastings as well as through a southerly flowing outlet near the City of Red Wing, Minnesota.

## Who are the Vermillion River Watershed Joint Powers Organization decision-makers?

The current VRWJPO is directed by a three-member Board made up of two elected County Commissioners from Dakota County and one elected County Commissioner from Scott County. A prior joint powers organization was formed in 1984 among the then 21 (now 20) communities within the defined bounds of the watershed. In 2000, that entity dissolved and was replaced in 2002 with the current joint powers organization governing structure.

The Watershed Planning Commission, made up of nine citizen representatives from across the watershed, advises and makes recommendations to the Joint Powers Board. A Technical Advisory Group of surface water and river management experts including scientists, engineers, and consultants provide technical guidance based on water monitoring results, research, and professional expertise in their fields.

The VRWJPO is accountable to the Minnesota Board of Water and Soil Resources (BWSR). BWSR dictates the content of watershed management plans and requires annual reports on plan implementation.

## What law governs the VRWJPO activities?

The VRWJPO was formed to address the purposes of the Metropolitan Surface Water Management Act (Minn. Stat. Chapter 103B.201) and the subsequent rules formed under the authority of that statute (M.R. 8410).

According to this law, watershed management organizations, like the VRWJPO, are to:

- Protect, preserve, and use natural surface and groundwater storage and retention systems;
- Minimize public capital expenditures needed to correct flooding and water quality problems;
- Identify and plan for ways to effectively protect and improve surface and groundwater quality;
- Establish uniform local policies and official controls for surface and groundwater management;
- Prevent erosion of soil into surface water systems;
- Promote groundwater recharge;
- Protect and enhance fish and wildlife habitat and water recreational facilities; and
- Secure the other benefits associated with the proper management of surface and groundwater.