



2026-2035 Watershed Plan Development Issues and Priorities

Date: October 12, 2023

The Vermillion River Watershed is developing its next generation Watershed Management Plan (Plan). The new Plan is scheduled to take effect in 2026 and run for ten years, the maximum allowed by Minnesota Statute 103B.231 (part of the Metropolitan Surface Water Management Act).

To initiate the planning process as required by Minnesota Rule 8410, watershed staff sent a letter to review agencies and local governments on March 31, 2023, requesting their comments on:

- Priority issues or opportunities and management expectations for them;
- Water management goals for the next 10 years; and
- Water-resource-related data, reports, or other relevant materials.

Comments came in via phone, email, writing, online form, and personal conversation from March 31-June 5, 2023. The following parties submitted comments:

- City of Apple Valley
- City of Empire
- City of Rosemount
- Dakota County Environmental Resources Department
 - Water Resources Unit
 - Groundwater Protection Unit
- Dakota County Soil & Water Conservation District (SWCD)
- Metropolitan Council
- Minnesota Board of Water and Soil Resources (BWSR)
- Minnesota Department of Natural Resources (DNR)
- Minnesota Pollution Control Agency (MPCA)

Below is a brief overview of the main issues covered in the initial comment period. Staff will update this document with comments received at upcoming meetings, open houses, community events, and through digital channels.

Surface water concerns

The watershed is encouraged to address impairments through various restoration efforts that target their root causes, as well as protecting those waters not on the EPA's impaired waters list through proactive implementation of best management practices (BMPs).

- Expand efforts to address chloride pollution, utilize Twin Cities Metropolitan Chloride Management TMDL, and consideration of Twin Cities Chloride Management Plan (MPCA) and the Regional Assessment of Chloride in Select Twin Cities Metro Stream (Met Council)
- Consider metrics in the Plan to encourage communities to look at a sample ordinance on chloride use
- Incorporate and implement strategies to address Total Maximum Daily Loads (TMDLs)
- Implement best management practices and innovative management techniques to reduce stormwater/nutrient and sediment runoff from surrounding commercial, residential and agricultural land
- Address impaired lakes and streams within the watershed
- Address impairments due to high levels of E. coli and/or fecal coliform due to feedlots, land application of manure, cattle in riparian areas, and leaking septic systems
- Identify water bodies that are "nearly or barely" impacted, and prioritize keeping them from being impaired or work toward delisting
- Seek implementation activities that provide multiple benefits to water (quality, quantity, habitat, recreation)
- Target projects in areas with highest contributors of pollutants
- Consider testing Vermillion River for per- and polyfluorinated substances (PFAS)

Groundwater sustainability

- Participate in water supply/conservation initiatives
- Consider strategies that promote water conservation practices and projects
- Consider strategies that promote water reuse, such as reuse of stormwater and wastewater to offset groundwater demand for irrigation
- Maintain and enhance aquifer recharge
- Support Dakota County Agricultural Chemical Reduction Effort (ACRE)
- Refer to Dakota County drinking water studies in planning process

Stormwater/Flooding

- Keep water where it falls by protecting and restoring wetlands, ensuring water courses are connected to their floodplains, and managing stormwater runoff with rate control and volume reduction standards.
- Reduce the flow of water volume and nutrients through drainage systems.
- Design culverts and bridges to retain floodplain functions and bank stability on natural channels and other drainage systems.
- Consider re-evaluating 100-year floodplain risks for riparian areas based on most recent local model data and extreme rain events

- Reduce peak flow and volume of surface water runoff in areas that experience flooding or excessive soil loss
- Consider stormwater discharge needs of communities within the watershed
- Address the need for infiltration on sandy soils
- Address storm sewer infrastructure capacity and corresponding flooding problems

Climate resiliency

- Address climate change and prioritization and expanded efforts related to climate resiliency
- Address changing weather patterns and extreme weather events
- Tools include Climate Resiliency Toolbox and climate vulnerability assessment (CVA)

Land use/Development

- Support land use planning and practices that protect, restore, and enhance priority ecological resources
- Minimize impacts of shoreline development
- Do not change requirements for setbacks for new home construction
- Promote green infrastructure
- Support Minimum Impact Design Standards (MIDS) and the low impact development (LID) approach
- Consider goals and objectives that will increase voluntary adoption of agricultural best management practices and alternate management tools
- Do not recommend changes to agriculture/farming practices
- Address soil erosion problems, and consider programs to protect or restore soil health
- Refer to Dakota County Model Mining Ordinance to minimize impacts of aggregate mining on groundwater quality
- Keep wetland protection and management plans up-to-date
- Request that developers building significant amounts of impervious surfaces develop a chloride management plan

Habitat/Recreation

- Support use of BWSR-approved, weed-free, native seed mixes to provide pollinator habitat
- Address aquatic invasive species (AIS) and best management practices in watershed project plans and designs
 - AIS such as Eurasian watermilfoil and curly-leaf pondweed may require herbicide or mechanical treatment to stop them from being a recreational nuisance
- Require Natural Heritage Information System (NHIS) review as early in planning stage of projects as possible
- Plan for impacts of Emerald Ash Borer (EAB)
- Address impacts to recreation opportunities
- Maintain and enhance native perennial vegetation as well as native buffers

- Understand causes of streambank erosion before attempting to stabilize streambanks

Collaboration

- Increase coordination and communication activities between organizations
- Consider other agency priorities under the Prioritized, Targeted and Measurable criteria for development of goals and objectives to align efforts and allow for pooling of resources

Administration

- Refer to MN Rule 8410, MN Stat 103B, and the One Watershed One Plan Guidebook for developing plan
- Plan must include measurable goals for water quantity, water quality, public drainage systems, groundwater, wetlands, and other identified priority issues
- Plan should consider recent plans and processes to include the Dakota County Groundwater Plan, Dakota County Agricultural Chemical Reduction Effort, Minnesota Groundwater Protection Rule, Dakota County Model Mining Ordinance
- Address issues, problems, capital projects, or land use changes related to regional parks
- Address concerns identified in subwatershed assessments
- Public input process should consider diversity, equity, and inclusion elements and incorporate environmental justice principles
- Conduct integrated water resource management by utilizing the Watershed Health Assessment Framework interactive online map
- Utilize the Met Council Priority Water lists to help inform policies and activities
- Ensure opportunities for Draft Plan review are provided

Education/Outreach

- Consider promoting homeowner education for proper use and maintenance of septic systems
- Consider partnering on education and outreach opportunities with private well owners
- Increase communication about risks of overuse and degradation of groundwater resources
- Promote education of the public on the control of and spread of aquatic and terrestrial invasive species
 - Target lakeshore owners and lake associations to help increase compliance with AIS laws
- Partner on Smart Salting Training and certification efforts
- Partner on turf management and low-input turf workshops to reduce irrigation and chemical use on lawns

Monitoring/Research

- Identify policies and strategies related to monitoring of area water resources
- Identify and provide information regarding emerging contaminant concerns
- Monitor water levels as it relates to water quantity/sustainability

- Identify issues concerning surface water and groundwater interaction
- Increase coordination of monitoring activities between organizations - groundwater monitoring data is available through Dakota County; Met Council water body monitoring is available on the EIMS website