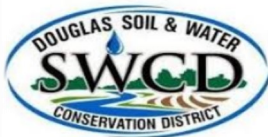




Todd County
MINNESOTA



Todd SWCD Board of Supervisors



Planning for a Plan — the Long Prairie

One Watershed, One Plan- Part 4

A series of watershed articles disseminated by the Long Prairie Watershed Collaboration of Todd, Douglas, Morrison, Wadena, East and West Otter Tail Counties

In our last article, we discussed what the term 1W1P (One Watershed, One Plan) means and how these plans aim to improve water quality conservation and protection efforts in each watershed across the state, particularly for this focus, the Long Prairie Watershed. We have defined the term watershed and provided a narrative on the history and characteristics of the Long Prairie Watershed in previous articles. If you have missed out on previous articles, please contact your local SWCD office for direction on how to access or get a copy of these articles.

This article is designed to bring the public up to speed on where we are in future planning efforts for the Long Prairie River Watershed. As the first and second rounds of 1W1P grant applications began to unfold across the state in 2017-2019, Water Planners within the counties of Douglas, Morrison, and Todd started discussing priority watersheds. The Sauk River and Red Eye Watershed 1W1Ps were already under way, and we needed to select the next watershed to focus on within our shared counties. Todd and Morrison County were receiving requests from landowners and farmers to address issues within the Long Prairie Watershed. Todd County continues to receive weekly calls primarily from the townships of Iona, Morrison, Long Prairie, Moran, and Villard Townships including Lake Charlotte and the Venewitz Creek area as these articles are getting developed. Douglas County has continuous engagements with the lake associations and Lake Improvements Districts located within the western portion of the watershed. The Long Prairie River watershed covers a substantial portion of all three counties. Efforts beginning as early as May 2019 to engage community leaders in planning discussions for the future of the Long Prairie River and to gauge levels of support for developing a 1W1P for the watershed. Commissioners from all three counties and the Supervisors of all three associated SWCDs signed Resolutions of Commitment in the development of a 1W1P for the watershed. In January of 2020, the counties of Wadena, and East and West Otter Tail, holding smaller land areas within the watershed, were invited to join the discussions. With support garnered from all six counties, a grant application to the Board of Water and Soil Resources has begun. The application is due by June 2, 2020. The six county collaboration will be notified by BWSR if the Long Prairie Watershed was selected by late summer of 2020.

The current grant application contains the map that was previously published in Part 3 of this series which identifies the boundary of the watershed; it shows the partnership (see logos in the border of this article), commitments from local government units, and employee capacities to do the planning work. How citizens, like you, can provide input and work with the different partners is a required part of the application, too. The application describes all the previous studies done ahead to provide meaningful, measurable data for the condition of the river and its watershed such as the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency (MPCA) TMDL (Total Maximum Daily Loads) study completed in 2005,





the Watershed Restoration and Protection Strategies (WRAPS) Report beginning in 2011, and water monitoring and assessment that has occurred across portions of the watershed in 2014, 2017, and currently. The application concludes with a proposed budget for creating a plan that will encompass clear priorities and targeted methods to address all issues found in the TMDL, the WRAPS, and local government unit findings across the watershed. The budget created will cover the hiring of consultants to lead this effort as County and SWCD technical staff, while contributing to the planning efforts, must carry on their regular duties and obligations to the public and ongoing projects, as well, during this time period. The plan is estimated to take a year and a half to two years to develop starting in the fall of 2020 if awarded. There will be local and state technical staff assigned to a Technical Team, leadership from the counties involved will make up a decision making Policy Committee; agency and community leaders will make up Local Advisory Teams, and public input meetings are also proposed. After the initial plan is drafted and reviewed by the members of the Policy Committee, it goes out for public comment before being sent to the Board of Water and Soil Resources for approval and adoption.

Why should members of the public care?

The people of the Long Prairie Watershed often visit SWCDs and Planning and Zoning offices asking for technical assistance, approval for land use and variances, and sometimes cost-share. You own the land. You till the soil. You maintain the forests and crops. You drink the water. Your jobs, job locations, and homes are often dependent on the river. Hunting, fishing,



swimming, boating, lawn care, irrigation and water permits, timber resource for home and building construction, gravel and fill, ditching, roadways, and wells are effected by the available resources in your area as are the economics. Without voluntary participation from landowners, this cause would be pointless. You, the landowners within the Long Prairie Watershed, are the critical foundation on which all plans are built. As locals living within your community, we are aware of the concerns, issues, and hardships that surround natural resource management but not to the level in which it may impact you as an individual, particular association, group, or industry. How can the plan best meet your needs and goals? Where should funding be prioritized? Are the solutions the teams derive practical and affordable for rural landowners, townships, urbanites, lake shore owners, and farmers? What long term implications exist that we may not be aware of?

Funding opportunities are enhanced for the Long Prairie Watershed when 1W1Ps are adopted. The NRCS EQIP program will be prioritizing funds for projects within a 1W1P development area. Other state grant opportunities and contributors, such as the MPCA, award more points to applications within a 1W1P boundary, as will your local SWCDs. If the project or best management practice you want to implement is listed as a priority within the plan, your request is more likely to be approved than one that is not.



The intent of the 1W1P for the Long Prairie Watershed is not to implore the general public of the affected area to travel to and attend long meetings composed of technical terms and acronyms. Let the technical team do this work. But we do ask that you are aware, make comment when you invite technicians out on site, or when you stop into the offices, let us know if there is a new concern out there. Feel free to ask questions. We are committed to updating you at each critical phase of plan development. And if we do host an occasional night out, present at a lake association, or meet at a local farm, do try to attend if you can. The plan will only be as good as the team who put it together. We consider you an integral and necessary part of the watershed team, no attendance required.



Make the Long Prairie Watershed Great Again.
We look forward to creating one Great Plan!