



In our previous article, Part 2, we provided a narrative of the history and characteristics of the Long Prairie Watershed. This article discusses new planning efforts across the state to protect natural resources within watersheds.

The acronym 1W1P stands for “One Watershed, One Plan”. This is a program put in place by the Board of Water and Soil Resources (BWSR) for the state of Minnesota. Its intent is to support local governments in developing plans to identify, prioritize, and target actions specific to the resource concerns within a major watershed boundary. Outcomes of these plans are required to be measurable and reportable to the state and general public.

In the past, each county had developed a watershed plan for protecting natural resources across their entire county. The way in which one county chose to prioritize and manage resource concerns could often be very different than the neighboring county’s plan. The individual county plans did not always align to most effectively address water resource concerns for any particular watershed. Realizing that most watersheds span across several county boundaries, there was a push to find a way to combine county plans. One Watershed, One Plans are collaborative efforts of counties to join their ideas into a common shared resource protection plan for each individual watershed.

Under the 1W1P, all counties, sharing a watershed, focus on preselected priority resource concerns within a specific time frame. Funding is allotted by the state for the installation of best management practices and land management solutions. The majority of this funding is to be put towards cost-share dollars for voluntary landowners in targeted areas who see the benefits of installing these practices on their property. The plans are currently designed to be ten year plans broken into incremental two year periods. At the end of each two year increment, plan objectives are reviewed and reported as a way to measure the effectiveness of implementation. Minor modifications to the plan can be made at this time if needed. New funding is also awarded at two year increments.



Questions:

Who is involved in the 1W1P process?

- * Local SWCDs (Supervisors and staff...)
- * Counties (County Commissioners; Planning & Zoning...)
- * Other forms of local government (City & townships; existing watershed districts if present in the watershed boundary...)
- * Members of the local organizations (ag groups; lake associations,...)
- * Landowners (You!)
- * State and Federal partners (DNR, BWSR, MPCA, MDH ...)



Where do the funds for the 1W1Ps come from? Currently, the agencies are allocated funds from the state legislature and federal programs to protect Minnesota waters and natural resources. The majority of these funds are passed onto the local governing units in the form of grants. Many of these grants must be competitively applied for by your local government units. Of the competitive funds available, some counties get them while others lose out depending on the type of resource concern and quality of application. Grants that are awarded to local government units like SWCD's typically go out to property owners, farmers, and organizations wanting to implement practices for the betterment of the environment and quality of ownership. The One Watershed, One Plan Program is designed to more evenly disperse funds, with less competition, across those watersheds with plans in place.

Water quality concerns in the Sauk River Watershed often involve the Sauk River Watershed District. Is there a similar watershed district for the Long Prairie Watershed? No watershed district exists for the Long Prairie River Watershed District. Water quality concerns for the Long Prairie Watershed usually involve the Soil and Water Conservation Districts from any of the six counties within the watershed boundaries.

What are the current identified areas of concern listed for the Long Prairie Watershed in particular? In studies completed in 2005, the MPCA has identified" six sections of the Long Prairie River having low dissolved oxygen levels. Seven additional creeks have been listed as "impaired" (failing to meet quality standards) within the watershed. The streams impaired for E. coli bacteria include Moran and Eagle Creek in Todd County and an unnamed tributary to Lake Miliona in Douglas County. Four creeks are listed for Biological impairments for aquatic life, fish, and macroinvertebrates: Harris Creek, Venewitz Creek, Spruce Creek and a second unnamed tributary to Lake Miliona. Ten impaired lakes in the Long Prairie Watershed include the lakes: *Echo, Fish, Jessie, Agnes, Henry, Winona, Crooked, Latimer, and Twin.*

To make gains on the current state of the watershed, it is suggested by the MPCA studies that local government units look at stream bank, riparian, wetland and shoreland restoration practices, correcting stormwater runoff concerns for developed and urban areas, and better management of agricultural acreage, particularly those acres in annual cultivation. This only touches on a few areas of need. The intention of the IWIP is to look at areas more purposefully, identify the cause to any given pollution stressor, and derive logical and practical solutions to address issues. It is important to note that even if you do not own land adjacent to a stream, lake or other body of water, that is impaired, how you manage your property today and in the future does impact the quality of water and natural resources around you. Your involvement and actions, good or bad, have a domino effect on the properties and environment surrounding you– eventually reaching, or becoming, an area of concern. It's simply the nature of watersheds.



Has a One Watershed, One Plan been developed for the Long Prairie Watershed?

No new plan is created at this time, but there has been lots of communication amongst all six counties to initiate this process. Please join us for **Part 4** of this series to learn about the progress of the One Watershed, One Plan for the Long Prairie Watershed.