



Root River Watershed: Planning for a new era in water management

October 2015 Snapshots



Since submitting a nomination to be a part of *One Watershed, One Plan* in April 2014, Fillmore, Houston, Mower, Winona, Olmsted, and Dodge Counties and their Soil and Water Conservation Districts (SWCDs), along with the Crooked Creek Watershed District, have been deeply engaged in making progress on the Root River Watershed Plan.

“In the Root, fortunately, we have a couple of different venues where we come together quite often, so we know one another and most of the group had worked on projects together,” said Natalie Siderius, Winona County Economic Development and Sustainability Director. “That really was a plus.”

One Watershed, One Plan has foundations in the Local Government Water Roundtable, in which the Association of Minnesota Counties (AMC), the Minnesota Association of Soil and Water Conservation Districts (MASCWD), and the Minnesota Association of Watershed Districts (MAWD) committed to collaboration. The *One Watershed, One Plan* program, developed in 2013 and funded by the Clean Water, Land and Legacy Amendment, offers grants and assistance to local governments charged with water management responsibility to help them make the transition to water planning on a watershed scale.

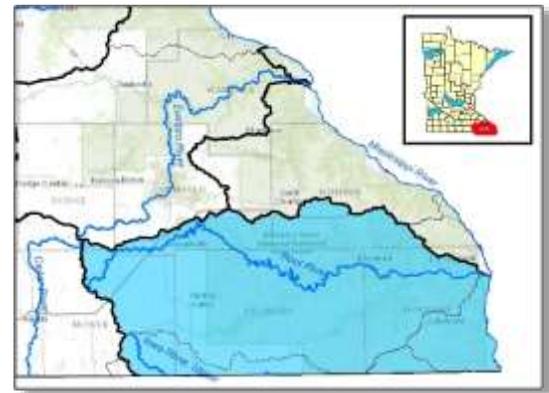
Since June 2014 when the BWSR Board approved the Root River Watershed *One Watershed, One Plan* nomination, the hardworking folks in the Root River Planning Boundary have been meeting regularly to outline the plan, and reviewing draft sections as the consultant completes them. In the last thirteen months, the group has worked collaboratively to identify priority concerns and keep momentum strong throughout the plan writing process.

“In southeast Minnesota, local County and SWCD staff have already been networking with each other on regional and state projects; this has helped during *One Watershed, One Plan* planning,” said Sheila Harmes, Winona County Water Planner. “It is very important to have as much transparency as possible in the process. Updates on the *One Watershed, One Plan* process are provided on the Fillmore SWCD website. We let the public and the advisory committee know that they could access the SWCD website to review the minutes of our meetings about the plan, and to access BWSR fact sheets about the program.”

After hosting a successful public kickoff and open house *One Watershed, One Plan* event on April 8, 2015, the Root Watershed *One Watershed, One Plan* pilot project team has continued to meet, moving towards a complete draft of the plan.

“In terms of the *One Watershed, One Plan* planning process, be as involved as you can be,” said Jennifer Ronnenberg of Fillmore County Conservation Office. “It is easy to want to tell yourself that someone else will take care of all the details. Be as engaged as you can be.”

Next steps for the Root River Watershed include reviewing the rest of the plan sections, finalizing the plan format, and planning for the implementation phase of the pilot project. “A lot is already written,” said Adam King, Dodge SWCD District Manager. “Once we figure out the governance structure and figure out the funding of the implementation, we’ll be in better shape. Our next steps are reviewing and editing.”



“Slow down and take your time,” advised Donna Rasmussen, Fillmore SWCD Administrator. “Make sure that whatever you have in your plan is doable and meets your needs and priorities.”

More and more Minnesotans are starting to recognize the need to talk about water quality, quantity, and management. The Root River *One Watershed, One Plan* pilot project is pioneering Minnesota’s water future, setting the groundwork to permanently improve water quality across Minnesota.