

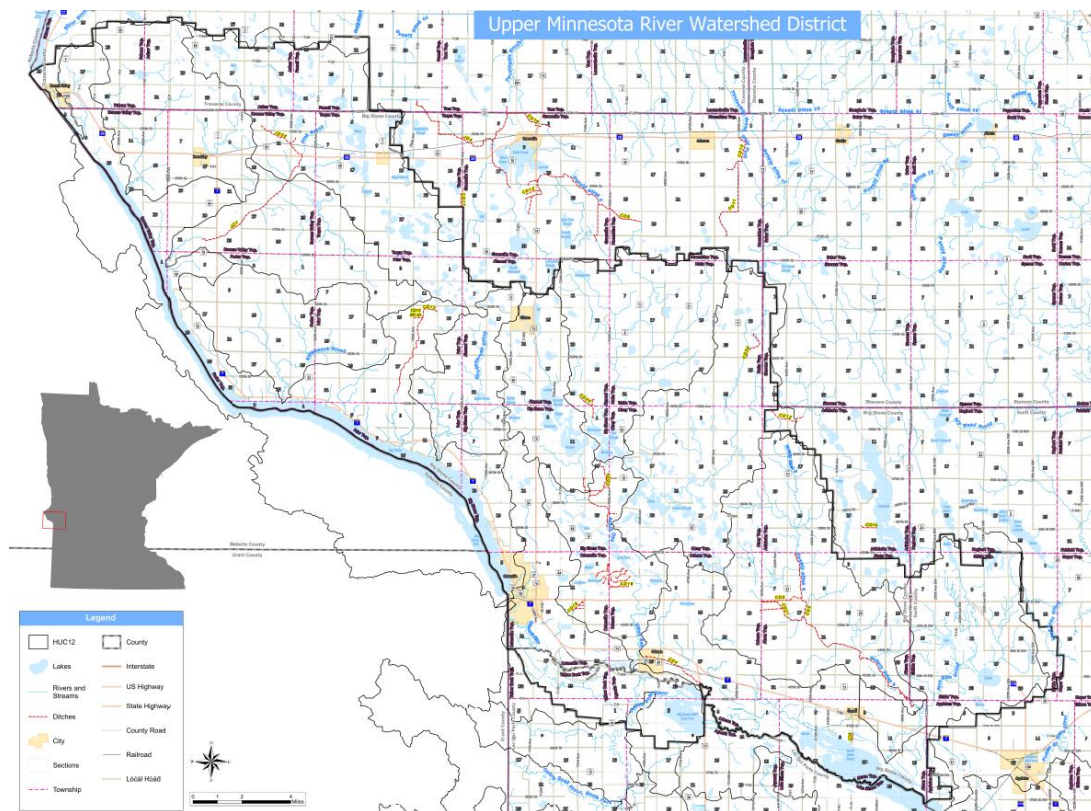


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2025 Annual Report



1. Introduction

The Upper Minnesota River Watershed District was formed by Order of the Minnesota Water Resources Board on September 7, 1967. The Big Stone County Board of Commissioners signed a nominating petition for the District on September 8, 1966. The first overall plan was developed in 1970 and the Watershed District Board of Managers adopted it on December 15, 1970. The Minnesota Water Resources Board, as part of the state review and approval process, conducted a public hearing on the plan on March 11, 1971. On July 14, 1971, the Minnesota Water Resources Board approved the Upper Minnesota River Watershed District's first Overall Plan. The Watershed District encompasses approximately 505 square miles primarily in Big Stone County, with smaller areas in Traverse County, Swift County, Lac Qui Parle County, and Stevens County.

The District continued operation under the policies identified in the first overall plan until approval of a Revised Plan, initiated in 1984 and adopted and approved on November 30, 1988. The District operated under the policies identified in the revised Overall Plan from 1988 through 1999. In November of 1999 the District submitted their third-generation plan, approval of the plan was granted by the Minnesota Board of Water and Soil Resources in August of 2001. In July of 2013 the District submitted their fourth-generation plan, approval of the plan was granted by the Minnesota Board of Water and Soil Resources in September of 2013.

District Structure

The organizational structure of the Board of Managers remains unchanged since inception. The County Board of Commissioners for Big Stone appoints three of the District's Board of Managers, the County Board of Commissioners for Swift County appoints one Board Manager, and the County Board of Commissioners for Traverse County appoints one Board Manager. Each Manager must be a resident of the District. Managers are prohibited from being a public official of the county, state or federal government. Each Manager serves a three-year term, which is renewable by approval of the County Board of Commissioners.

Location

The Watershed District is located in west-central Minnesota. Big Stone Lake and the South Dakota border form the western boundary of the District. The continental divide and Traverse County are located to the north. Areas south of the continental divide contribute runoff southerly to the Minnesota and Mississippi Rivers and north of the divide northerly to the Hudson Bay via the Red River of the North. Generally, the watershed district includes all of the land east of Big Stone Lake draining into Big Stone Lake and into the north side of the Minnesota River above the Marsh Lake Dam.

Approximately 80% of the land area of Big Stone County is in the District. The small area of north central and northeast Big Stone County, not in the District, casts its runoff northward through the west branch of the Mustinka River. In Stevens County the few acres in the District are along the west line of the township situated in the southwest corner of Stevens County. Most of Shible Township in southwestern Swift County is in the District.

On the south, southwest of the Minnesota River, the District includes the northern part of Agassiz and Yellow Bank Townships in Lac Qui Parle County west of State Highway 75. The territory of the District in northwestern Lac Qui Parle County includes the Big Stone National Wildlife Refuge.

All subwatersheds within the District flow to the Minnesota River, some through Big Stone Lake and others directly to the Minnesota River. Subwatersheds flowing into Big Stone Lake include Little Minnesota River, Hoss Creek, Fish Creek, Salmonson Creek, Lindholm Creek and Meadowbrook Creek. Direct drainage areas in or near Ortonville and several small-scattered tributaries outlet directly to Big Stone Lake as well.

Subwatersheds whose tributaries outlet on the northeast of the Minnesota River include: Stony Run, Upper Stony Run, County Ditch No.4, Five-Mile Creek, Shible Lake and a few areas that contribute runoff directly to the Minnesota River. On the southwest side of the District Boundary there are about 18 square miles that contribute runoff directly into the Minnesota River.

District Goals

Originally, the district's goals centered on managing water quantity and ensuring effective water management within the watershed. Early objectives focused on controlling weed and algae growth in district lakes, reducing water pollution, and intelligently regulating lake water levels. The district also aimed to keep detailed records of water levels, chemistry, and other critical data while enhancing recreational facilities and scenic beauty. Additional priorities included preventing excessive runoff and seepage, improving drainage, ensuring soil and water conservation, investigating supplementary watershed areas, and preserving habitats for fish and wildlife. To achieve these objectives, the district implemented various projects, such as surface and groundwater quality studies, flood control measures, surface water level management, wetland restorations, natural resource management, agricultural best management practices (BMPs), and erosion control initiatives.

Today, the district's goals have expanded to address not only water quantity but also water quality, habitat protection, and sustainable land use in response to evolving environmental conditions, technological advancements, and regulatory frameworks. The updated objectives emphasize reducing pollutants like phosphorus, nitrogen, bacteria, and sediment to improve aquatic health and drinking water safety.

Efforts to stabilize streambanks, control erosion, and minimize sediment loading play a key role in protecting water bodies. Wetland protection and restoration have become priorities, enhancing water storage, filtration, and habitat preservation. The district is also focused on increasing water storage capacity to mitigate flooding, managing groundwater withdrawals to safeguard drinking water sources, and promoting conservation practices. Additionally, biodiversity and habitat conservation efforts aim to restore and maintain aquatic and terrestrial ecosystems, ensuring a balanced and thriving environment for fish and wildlife. Recognizing the growing importance of climate resilience, the district's 10-year Comprehensive Watershed Management Plan supports sustainable practices such as conservation tillage and cover cropping to maintain long-term soil health.

To measure progress, the district has established 10-year targets within a Comprehensive Watershed Management Plan with many local partners, including reducing phosphorus levels in impaired lakes, implementing streambank stabilization projects, increasing water storage capacity, and restoring thousands of acres of wetlands and uplands.

This transition from a focus on basic water management to a comprehensive environmental and sustainability approach underscores the district's commitment to protecting and enhancing water resources for future generations.

Board Of Managers Action Summary

Throughout 2025, the Upper Minnesota River Watershed District (UMRWD) Board of Managers conducted regular monthly meetings to oversee district operations, approve financial actions, engage in interagency coordination, and guide the planning and implementation of watershed projects. Key areas of focus included the Browns Valley Flood Mitigation Project, Toelle Coulee Phase 1 and Phase 2 efforts, Beardsley Dry Lake outlet planning, Whetstone River and Waste Remediation projects, and Upper Big Stone Lake climate resiliency initiatives. Continuous administrative oversight, policy adoption, and public engagement supported effective district management.

Governance and Administration

The Board began the year by seating a new manager, updating officer assignments, confirming official designations, and approving 2025 meeting dates. Administrative reports were reviewed and approved monthly, reflecting ongoing operations, grant coordination, and interagency communication.

Personnel matters included:

- Annual employee performance review conducted in January and a wage/benefit update approved.
- Annual closed-session employee review again conducted in December with wage-scale adjustment approval.
- Manager transitions, including oaths of office for reappointed managers in September and routine updates to bank signature cards following membership changes earlier in the year.

The Board remained active in statewide watershed organizations, attending the MN Watersheds Legislative Event, Summer Tour, and Annual Conference.

Financial Actions

The Board consistently reviewed and approved previous minutes and monthly expenses. Invoices throughout the year reflected engineering services for Browns Valley, Toelle Coulee, Beardsley Dry Lake, Whetstone projects, climate resiliency efforts, annual audit services, public notices, insurance, training, and administrative needs.

Quarterly cost-share reimbursements, loan payments related to Whetstone, and seasonal maintenance bills (dam mowing, inlet cleaning) also appeared throughout the financial record.

Unanimous approvals (commonly 4-0 or 5-0) demonstrated procedural consistency and financial stewardship across all meetings.

Major Project Areas

1. Browns Valley Flood Mitigation Project

The Benefitted Property Determination and associated analyses were major focuses throughout 2025.

Key activities included:

- Early-year engineering updates and preparation for public meetings.
- Continued legal and engineering review during spring and summer, including an April presentation of findings and review of impacts and damages.
- A public hearing on June 26 to consider establishment of benefits.
- Adoption of **Resolution 2025-01** in July, formally adopting the Project Benefits Roll for the Little Minnesota River Floodway (Diversion Project).
- Continued refinement of damages assessments and legal consultations through the fall.
- Ongoing maintenance considerations (weed growth, reseeding needs) monitored throughout the year.

2. Toelle Coulee (Phase 1 Maintenance & Phase 2 Planning)

Phase 1 (ditch-through-town maintenance):

- Maintenance challenges persisted due to wet weather, preventing mowing and spraying for most of the year.
- Contractors were solicited, and outreach continued with the aim of securing work when conditions permit.

Phase 2 (Alternative Analysis):

- Engineering analysis advanced throughout the year, with multiple reviews of storage opportunities, landowner impacts, floodplain implications, and dam safety requirements from the MN DNR.
- The Board coordinated with landowners and state agencies to refine alternatives and consider structural components.
- Planning for landowner meetings continued late into the year.

3. Beardsley Dry Lake Outlet Project

A significant portion of early-year work involved evaluation of northern and southern pipeline alignments, groundwater testing, public communication, and preparation for a February informational meeting.

Key developments:

- Groundwater-dependent feasibility issues for the southern alignment were identified.
- Resiliency analysis was performed to support grant funding applications.
- MPCA stormwater implementation grant application submitted in February; outcome announced in May (project was not funded).
- The project remained in development with ongoing engineering analysis and consideration of funding options.

4. Whetstone Waste Remediation and Whetstone River Restoration

This project area accounted for substantial engineering activity in 2025.

Waste Remediation Project:

- Ongoing coordination with USACE and county agencies on downstream impacts, modeling, and historical constraints.
- Public notices issued and the project posted for bids early in the year.
- Contract awarded in June, with construction progressing through summer and fall.
- Pay requests approved throughout the year (July, August, November).
- Final project closeout completed in December, including final payment and additional services approval.

Whetstone River Restoration:

- Continued analysis, modeling, and USACE coordination.
- Public comment period in November.
- Permitting and restoration planning continued into year-end.

5. Upper Big Stone Lake – Climate Resiliency Study

This multi-month grant-funded project advanced steadily through early and mid-year.

- Stakeholder evaluation led to selection of priority projects in early summer.
- Grant term closed June 30.
- Final reporting and reimbursement requests initiated mid-year.
- Late-year efforts prepared for future grant applications related to Stoney Run Watershed resiliency.

One Watershed, One Plan (1W1P)

Implementation of 1W1P remained a significant administrative responsibility.

- January marked finalization of implementation agreements, allowing direct landowner contracting.
- Regular quarterly staff reimbursements processed.
- Policy revisions, including cost-share rate adjustments, were reviewed and approved in September and recognized by the Policy Committee.
- Multiple shoreline and structural BMP projects were evaluated for through the Grant.

Public Engagement and Interagency Coordination

Public meetings included:

- February: Beardsley Dry Lake informational meeting.
- June and July: Browns Valley public hearing and continuation at July Board Meeting.
- Multiple posted notices for budget hearings, project updates, and meetings with agencies.

Interagency coordination occurred regularly with:

- **MN DNR** (dam safety, general permit relationships, public waters classification).
- **USACE** (Whetstone permitting, downstream analysis, historical requirements).
- **MPCA** (grants, loan programs).
- **County partners** (Big Stone, Swift, Traverse).
- **BWSR** (grant administration, workplan revisions).
- **Houston Engineering** as the primary engineering consultant.

District Operations & Policy Actions

Notable actions included:

- Termination of the historic permitting coordination agreement with the MN DNR (April).
- Approval of Diversion hay lease bids and maintenance agreements.
- Completion of 2024 audit in spring and acceptance of audit results in September.
- Adoption of Minnesota Paid Family-Medical Leave policy and selection of a cost-share structure in December.
- Routine updates to administrative procedures, project postings, advertisements, and budget approvals.

Conclusion

The UMRWD Board of Managers demonstrated consistent oversight, deliberate planning, and responsive public service throughout 2025. The Board advanced multiple complex engineering projects, strengthened interagency partnerships, monitored district infrastructure, and maintained stable fiscal and administrative operations.

Substantial groundwork completed during the year positions the District for continued progress on long-term flood mitigation, resiliency planning, water quality protection, and watershed management initiatives into 2026.

2. Mission Statement

The mission of the Upper Minnesota River Watershed District is to serve the residents of the District by wisely and judiciously managing water, in a manner that sustains and enhances the social, economic and natural resources of the District. The District prefers the use of innovative water management methods, which recognize the unique agricultural, community, lake and stream, and natural resources within the District. These innovative approaches as reflected by the policies of the District should be oriented toward ensuring the economic viability of the District's agrarian community.

3. FINANCIAL REPORT

3.1 2025 Audit

3.1.1 A complete copy of the 2025 Audit is included in Appendix B of this report.

3.2 2025 Budget

A hearing for the 2025 proposed operation budget was held on August 13, 2024 during the regular board meeting, no public attended the hearing. The proposed budget was presented and a levy amount of \$375,500.00 for the year was proposed. The Board of Managers approved the budget and the levy amount of \$375,500.00

4. ANNUAL ACTIVITY REPORT

4.1 Board Manager's, Staff and Consultants

Manager	Position	Term Expires	County
Wanda Holker U.S. Highway 75 Ortonville, MN 56278	Chairperson	08/09/2025	Big Stone County
Terry Gillespie 30787 660 th Avenue Clinton, MN 56225	Vice- Chair	08/09/2026	Big Stone County
Sheridan Giese 2535 50th St SW Appleton, MN 56208	Manager	04/08/2025	Swift County
Jon Bork 87288 303 rd Street Beardsley, MN 56211	Treasurer	8/09/2025	Traverse County
Travis Sandberg 73332 340 th Street Ortonville, MN 56278	Secretary	01/01/2025	Big Stone County

Employees	Position	Address	Telephone	E-mail
Amber Doschadis	Administrator/ Executive Director	211 2 nd Street SE Ortonville, MN 56278	320-839-3411	amber@umrwd.org

Consultant	Services	Address	Telephone	E-mail
Houston Engineering	Primary Engineer of Record	6901 East Fish Lake Road, Maple Grove, MN 55369	763-493-4522	www.houstonengineering inc.com
Rinke Noonan	Attorney of Record	1015 W St. Germain Street St. Cloud, MN 56302	320-251-6700	www.rinkenoonan.com

Technical Advisory Committee:

Amber Doschadis, UMRWD Administrator
Tammy Neubauer, Big Stone SWCD
Darren Wilke, BS County Environmental Officer
Chris Domeier, MN DNR Fisheries
Jay Gilbertson, East Dakota Water Development District
Jorden Roggenbuck, BS County Highway Engineer
Corey Stattelmann, BS County Drainage
Jorden Roggenbuck, BS County Engineer
Jace Jackman, MN DNR Area Hydrologist
Dennis McAlpine, Houston Engineering
Lisa Odens, Houston Engineering

Citizens Advisory/1W1P Committee:

Amber Doschadis, UMRWD Administrator
Ryhan Schickler, LqP SWCD
Darren Wilke, BS County Environmental Office
Andy Albertson, Swift County SWCD
Jennifer Breberg, LqP Environmental Office
Tammy Neubauer, Big Stone SWCD
Sara Gronfeld, Traverse SWCD
Kyle Jarcho, MN DNR Area Hydrologist
Jay Gilbertson, East Dakota Water Development District, SD
Dan Morrill, Big Stone SWCD Manager
Jerome Schwagerl, Landowner, stakeholder
Dustin Escher, Centrol Specialties
James Nelson, Landowner, stakeholder
Jeff Nodsle, Citizens for Big Stone Lake, stakeholder
Rick Robinson, Citizens for Big Stone Lake, stakeholder
Cassandra Behnke, Bonanza Education Center, Citizens for Big Stone Lake

4.2 2025 Annual Work Plan

One Watershed, One Plan

The Upper Minnesota River Watershed District (UMRWD), together with Big Stone, Swift, and Traverse Counties and their Soil and Water Conservation Districts (SWCDs), continued coordinated implementation of the Upper Minnesota River One Watershed, One Plan (1W1P) throughout 2025. This partnership—formalized under a Joint Powers Collaboration Agreement—advances the shared mission of restoring, protecting, and enhancing the water resources within the Upper Minnesota River Watershed.

In 2024, the Comprehensive Watershed Management Plan (CWMP) was approved by the Minnesota Board of Water and Soil Resources (BWSR), establishing measurable 10-year goals, priority planning regions, targeted implementation strategies, and an integrated funding structure.

The 2025 work plan reflects the first full year of implementation under this approved plan.

The UMRWD serves as both the Plan Administrator and Fiscal Agent, coordinating implementation, grant management, reporting, contracting, and cost-share administration. Committees & Governance



Implementation activities continued to be guided by the three formal committees established under the JPC:

- Policy Committee – One voting member from each partner entity. Provides final approval on priorities, funding decisions, and work plans.
- Steering Committee – Technical staff from counties, SWCDs, and the UMRWD. Leads project identification, ranking, cost-share review, and recommendation of annual implementation activities.
- Advisory Committee – State agencies, stakeholders, landowners, and local organizations. Provides technical review and stakeholder input for measurable goals, issue prioritization, and project evaluation.

Committee activities in 2025 focused on aligning project implementation with the CWMP's priority issues, which include:

- Soil health
- Erosion and sediment reduction
- Agricultural surface flow and drainage
- Loss of water storage
- Wetland quality and quantity
- Groundwater quantity and quality protection
- Streambank erosion

These issues are prioritized by planning region—with Upper Big Stone Lake and Stony Run Creek designated as high priority regions receiving the earliest and most concentrated implementation effort.

Cost-Share Policy Integration

The Cost Share Policy (Revised September 2025) was fully integrated into 2025 project decision-making. All projects considered for state or local financial assistance were:

- Ranked using Steering Committee scoring criteria
- Evaluated for alignment with CWMP measurable goals
- Screened for cost-effectiveness using PTMAApp outputs
- Reviewed for eligibility under state funding requirements
- Prioritized based on planning region needs and CWMP objectives

Projects meeting the pre-approval threshold were entered into, eLINK, the MS4Front system and advanced for contracting. Consistent with policy, projects providing the greatest watershed benefit, especially those in high-priority regions, were awarded first.

The Browns Valley Flood Mitigation Project:

The annual bridge inspections were completed.

The annual inspection of the weir structure, box culvert and floodway were completed.

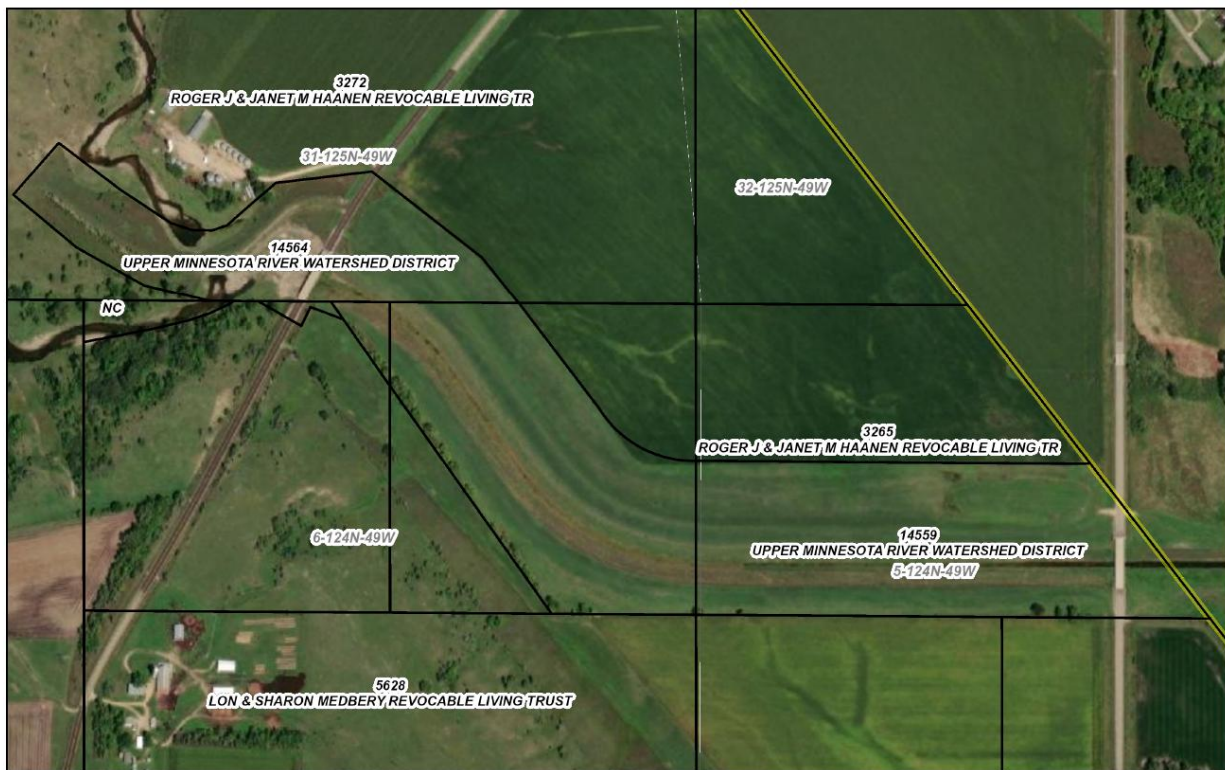
A large rain event brought significant flows through the diversion channel in June of 2025, the Upper Minnesota River Watershed District coordinated with Houston Engineering, Inc. to evaluate potential impacts within the Browns Valley Diversion Channel.

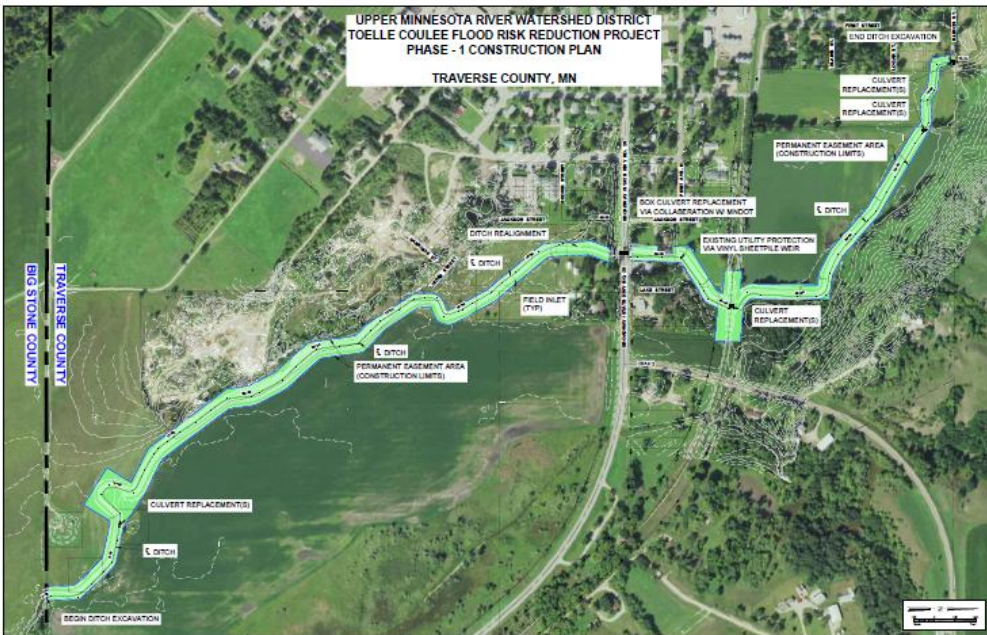
High flows from the storm prompted the District to request a post-event sediment survey to determine whether deposition had occurred similar to previous flood years.

The survey results showed *minimal sedimentation* throughout both the low-flow channel and the wider diversion channel, confirming that the system would continue to function as designed following the 2024 restoration work. Several trees transported into the channel during peak flows were removed by District staff to maintain conveyance capacity and prevent future debris obstructions.

The District submitted for reimbursement to the state as the event was covered under a local disaster recovery effort.

Haying of the diversion channel continued in 2025.





Toelle Coulee - Phase One The goal of the Toelle Coulee Project – Flood Damage Reduction is to provide 100-year flood protection to the rural community of Browns Valley. Toelle Coulee Phase I consisted of the west ditch improvements and was completed in 2020 and inspections were completed in 2025.

Routine maintenance checks to track volunteer tree growth were also completed.

The District was unable to secure a contract from a call for bids to remove volunteer trees from the channel. Staff will reevaluate and post for bids again in 2026.

Toelle Coulee – Phase Two

UMRWD previously contracted with Houston Engineering, Inc. (HEI) to identify alternatives to mitigate flood risks to the City of Browns Valley from flooding from Toelle Coulee.

Funding has been secured for Phase II which preliminarily studies noted the construction of Reinart-Appel Levee, the East Levee, County State Aid Hwy 2 culvert replacement and the Trunk Highway 28 culvert replacement.

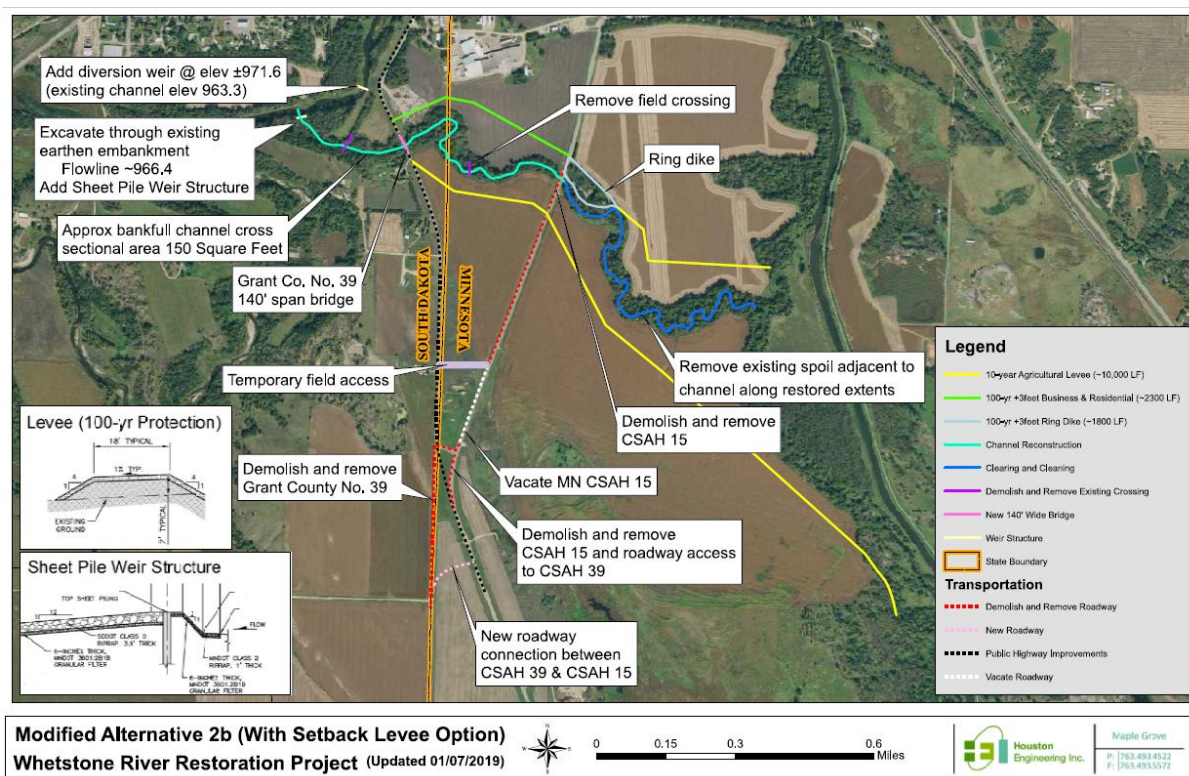
Since then, local stakeholders have expressed concerns regarding potential consequence of implementing the alternatives evaluated in 2008, including maintenance costs of the proposed project components, potential discharge increases to Big Stone Lake, and the design discharges. To address these concerns and update the prior study with information made available over the last 16 years, UMRWD contracted with HEI in 2025 to:

- Update discharge frequency analysis modeling and validation of design discharge frequencies.
- Update hydraulic modeling of the existing condition
- Evaluation of up to 3 alternatives
- Mapping floodplains for the 100-year and 500-year for the existing condition and 3 alternatives

HEI will summarize their findings in early 2026, within an addendum to the 2008 Engineers Report. UMRWD will then return to the stakeholders in 2026, presenting the findings to the public at a public information meeting.

The estimated cost to complete these tasks is **\$45,800**.

Whetstone River Restoration



The Little Minnesota River and the Whetstone River are the two primary tributaries to Big Stone Lake, which was the focus of intensive restoration efforts during the early 1990's under the Environmental Protection Agency's Clean Lake Program, administered by the MPCA. Big Stone Lake is located at the Headwaters of the Minnesota River and is a Minnesota, South Dakota border water. MPCA lists aquatic life, aquatic recreation and industrial consumption as beneficial uses of Big Stone Lake. MPCA has also noted stressors in Big Stone Lake of excess nutrients and mercury in fish tissue which have both directly affected the lakes ability to provide aquatic life and aquatic recreation. Big Stone Lake was listed as impaired for aquatic consumption in 2006 for excess mercury found in fish tissue and was listed in 2018 as impaired for aquatic recreation due to excess nutrients.

The hydrologic modification most affecting the water quality of Big Stone Lake and the headwaters of the Minnesota River was when the Whetstone River was diverted into Big Stone Lake from its historic channel which originally flowed directly into the Minnesota River. The US Army Corp of Engineers (USACE) accomplished this by diverting the Whetstone into Big Stone Lake and constructing a dam at the outlet of the Lake.

By disconnecting the Whetstone River from the floodplain, river water quality became poorer and contributed additional nutrient loads to Big Stone Lake, which were previously filtered by floodplain wetlands along the 9000 foot historic channel.

The Whetstone River Restoration project covers two state jurisdictions and two county jurisdictions and is a priority to the Upper Minnesota River Watershed District (UMRWD) based on three areas of the Watershed District Plan. Those three areas are Big Stone Lake water quality, Big Stone Lake water levels, and river biotic diversity.

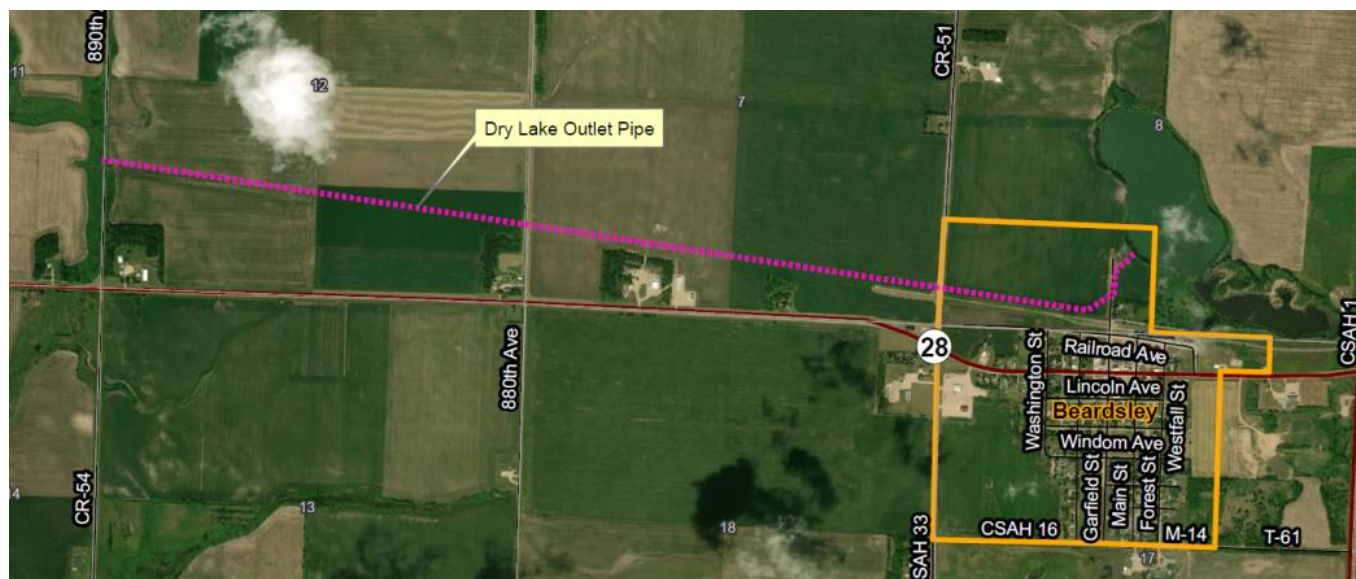
Whetstone (continued)

The most pressuring need is related to water quality. The Plan essentially includes a loading capacity established using the data gathered during and evaluated through the EPA Clean Lakes study. Contained in the Plan are Big Stone Lake Water Quality Goals. The present total phosphorus and total nitrogen loads to Big Stone Lake for a "normal" hydrologic year are 16,346 kg/yr and 80,054 kg/yr, respectively. Monitoring necessary for completing the TMDL has been completed and a draft document should be available soon.

Water from the Whetstone River and Big Stone Lake flow south through the Big Stone Lake Dam which is where the Minnesota River begins. Flows continue south toward the Big Stone Refuge and proceeds to Marsh Lake. The reach of the Minnesota River from Big Stone Lake to the Marsh Lake Dam is listed as impaired for aquatic consumption, aquatic life and *Escherichia coli* (E.coli).

Biotic diversity is also addressed in the Plan. "The District recognizes the value of its biotic resources and will seek to maintain the conditions and habitats critical to the existence of these resources." By restoring the historic Whetstone Channel, the Big Stone Lake Dam will be bypassed as a barrier that inhibits upstream movement of both fish and various invertebrates.

Beardsley Dry Lake Flood Control Project



In 1996-97 over 100 inches of snowfall covered the City of Beardsley. Runoff during the melting period caused flooding in Dry Lake, located just north of town. The lake's water surface rose 19 feet and the surface of the lake grew eleven times larger than the levels recorded in the last survey.

The flooding of Dry Lake inundated the Beardsley wastewater treatment system, overtopped two state highways and a county road and caused wide-spread basement flooding to those within the city limits of Beardsley. After exploring several solutions, the city, FEMA and many other agencies, agreed that building a gravity pipe system would be the best way to combat Beardsley's flooding problems.

In summer of 1997 crews constructed a 2.6 mile, 36" reinforced concrete pipe, drain line with maximum depths of 28 feet to drain the excess water out of Dry Lake and provide a long-term outlet for Dry Lake to protect Beardsley from future flooding.

This project, known as the "Beardsley- Dry Lake Diversion Project," was built to reduce flood damage adjacent to Dry Lake. The location of this outlet is shown in **Figure 1 above**. The plans are dated July 1997 and were developed by Widseth Smith Nolting (WSN). Record drawings were recorded with a February 1998 date.

FEMA paid the cost of original construction under an agreement with the City of Beardsley (City) that the future operations, maintenance, and inspection would be the City's obligation. During project development, the Upper Minnesota Watershed District (UMRWD), Big Stone County, and the MnDNR agreed that the UMRWD was the best entity to undertake responsibility for the project obligations. The City of Beardsley petitioned the UMRWD to establish the project as a Watershed District Project pursuant to statute 103D. In response to this petition the watershed project was established in January of 2000.

Beardsley Dry Lake (continued)

The outlet pipe has since experienced seepage, settling, joint failures, sediment accumulation, and erosion issues, culminating in a sinkhole forming during the summer of 2019. The District had televising completed of the system in September of 2019. A technical memorandum, “Evaluation of Dry Lake Tile - Revised” (Houston Engineering Inc, January 2020) evaluated the condition, probable causes, and replacement costs based on the information available from the completed televising.

On February 20, 2025, the Upper Minnesota River Watershed District (UMRWD) held a public informational meeting in Beardsley to present the results of the updated engineering evaluation for the Beardsley–Dry Lake Diversion Project (Outlet Pipe) and to discuss repair and replacement alternatives with affected landowners. The meeting was publicly noticed and convened in response to ongoing structural failures and landowner concerns regarding the long-term reliability of the 36-inch reinforced concrete pipe installed under emergency conditions in 1997.

Houston Engineering, Inc. (HEI) presented a comprehensive overview of the outlet system’s condition and the alternatives analysis completed in 2024–2025. The presentation summarized the system’s history, including recurring seepage, settlement, sinkholes, cracking, joint separation, infiltration issues, and sediment blockages documented through televised inspections beginning in 2019. These failures have persisted despite several temporary repairs and localized pipe replacements.

HEI reviewed findings from the updated evaluation, which concluded that the original alignment continues to experience poor soil conditions, groundwater movement around the pipe bedding, and widespread grade and structural issues. Multiple alternatives were considered—including reduced pipe sizing, fall drawdown strategies, open channel conversion, pump systems, pipe lining, material changes, bedding alternatives, and a new alignment. Small-diameter pipes and open channels were dismissed due to insufficient capacity and long-term maintenance concerns, while pipe lining was deemed infeasible because existing settlement and grade issues would remain. The analysis ultimately identified two feasible pathways for further refinement:

1. Reconstruction along the existing (north) alignment, and
2. A newly proposed southern alignment incorporating shallower bury depth, alternative materials (such as HDPE/HDPP), and potential dewatering requirements.

Updated concept-level cost estimates presented at the meeting demonstrated overlapping ranges for both routes, with project costs generally between \$2.85 million and \$4.45 million, depending on material selection and dewatering needs.

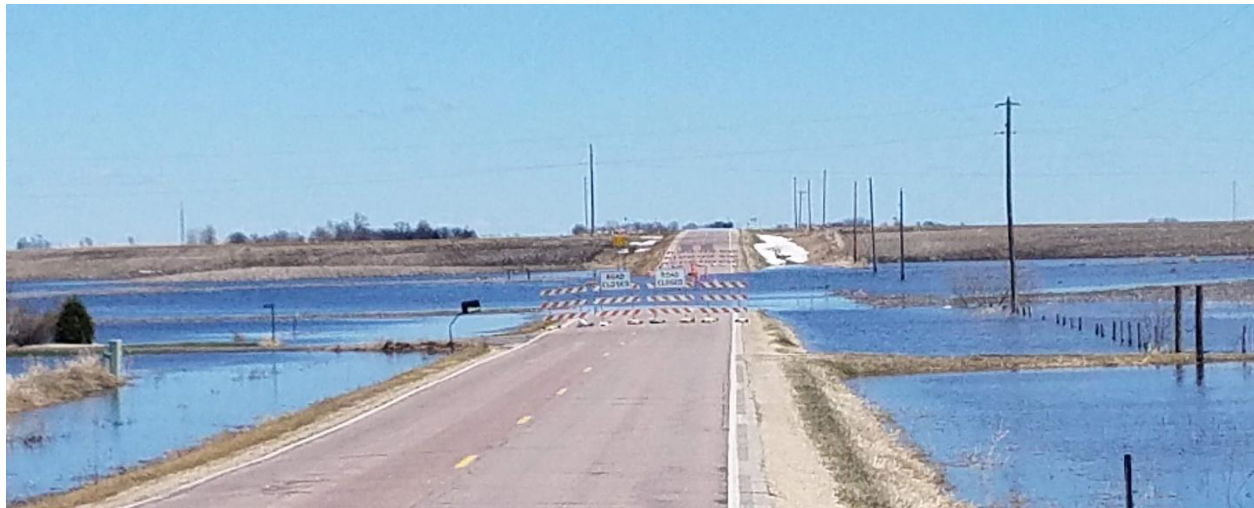
The presentation and discussion with landowners concluded with potential next steps, including refining dewatering costs, advancing alignment analysis, preparing funding applications—including an MPCA resiliency grant submission—and continuing direct communication with landowners regarding impacts, timelines, and cost expectations. Landowners were encouraged to contact the District with questions or concerns prior to future decisions.

The District will continue pursuing additional state and federal funding opportunities to support the eventual repair or replacement of the outlet system. A subsequent public hearing will be scheduled once further engineering details and refined cost estimates are available, allowing the District to report back to landowners on the most feasible and cost-effective alternative.

Highway 12

Highway 12, approximately 1 mile east of Ortonville, has had frequent flooding and inundation over the past several decades. At this location, a wetland is divided by US Highway (Hwy.) 12 with a 30-inch culvert under the highway that functions as an equalizer pipe. This wetland is drained by two drain tiles which flow into a detention area and eventually to the Minnesota River. In 1916, Ortonville Township installed a 15-inch clay tile to control the elevation of the wetland. In 1994, a portion of this tile was replaced with an 8-inch polyethylene tile (the location and length of this repair is unknown). This repair was found to be insufficiently sized to effectively convey flows from the wetland.

In 2011 a multi-phase project was completed to add an additional outlet, which consisted of 2600 LF of new 18-inch dual wall polyethylene tile and 950 feet of new open channel.



In the spring of 2019, Highway 12 was inundated for over 3 weeks, resulting in the adjacent landowners requesting the Upper Minnesota River Watershed District to evaluate potential solutions in conjunction with an upcoming MnDOT highway improvement project. MnDOT made revisions to their original plan and the highway improvement project was completed in 2021, replacing a 30-inch corrugated metal pipe (CMP) with a 42-inch reinforced concrete pipe (RCP) with flared end sections.

The project also raised the overtopping elevation of the road from 1090.2 to 1093.6 (Station 96+00)

The annual Inspection of the Highway 12 Flood Mitigation Project was completed and the District will continue to work the MNDOT and their consultants on additional measures that could be taken to provide additional protection to the area surrounding the Project.

Branch to County Ditch 13

The annual Inspection of the tile into branch 3A to County Ditch 13 was also performed.

4.2.2 Drainage Systems

The district continued with its permitting program, reviewing all permits for drainage work in the UMRWD boundary. The District Board and staff worked with several landowners throughout the year to help resolve drainage issues.

4.2.3 Lake Level Management

District staff performed lake level readings of Big Stone Lake and submitted them to the North Central Rivers Forecast Center, and USGS.

Gate adjustments to the Big Stone Lake/Whetstone River Flood Control Structure were performed as necessary by staff. Routine Maintenance and tree removal were also performed.

4.2.4 Water Quality

Water quality monitoring of Big Stone Lake continued during the year. The District has partnered with Big Stone County and Citizens for Big Stone Lake to complete this effort.

4.2.5 Erosion and Sedimentation

The District Administrator worked with multiple individual landowners on the installation of shoreline stabilization and ice ridge projects on Big Stone Lake.

4.2.6 Intergovernmental Relations

The District Staff worked with DNR, Big Stone National Wildlife Refuge, Citizens for Big Stone Lake, the Cities of Ortonville and Big Stone City, Big Stone and Roberts Counties and the East Dakota Water Development District, on the Whetstone River Restoration Project.

The District staff continues to work with the MN DNR and US Army COE on the operations of the Marsh Lake Ecosystem Restoration Project which was completed in 2020.

District staff has re-initiated conversations with MN DNR, US Fish and Wildlife Service and the USA COE on the historic MN River Channelization Project and goals for the structures and operations going forward.

4.2.7 Public Information and Education

The District Administrator gave presentations to several organizations during the year.

The District Administrator presented water quality information at the Bonanza Environmental Learning Center.

The District posted several articles on their website concerning the Browns Valley Diversion, Toelle Coulee; Whetstone River Restoration and other projects completed or under construction.

4.3.8 Implementation of Goals and Objectives

The long-term Maintenance Fund for the Browns Valley Flood Mitigation Project had an ending balance of \$80,000. Additional funds will be contributed to the accounts from a future annual levy against the City of Browns Valley and payments from the District's haying contract. It is possible that this maintenance fund may need to contribute to the Toelle Coulee Phase Two Project.

APPENDIX B

2025 Annual Audit