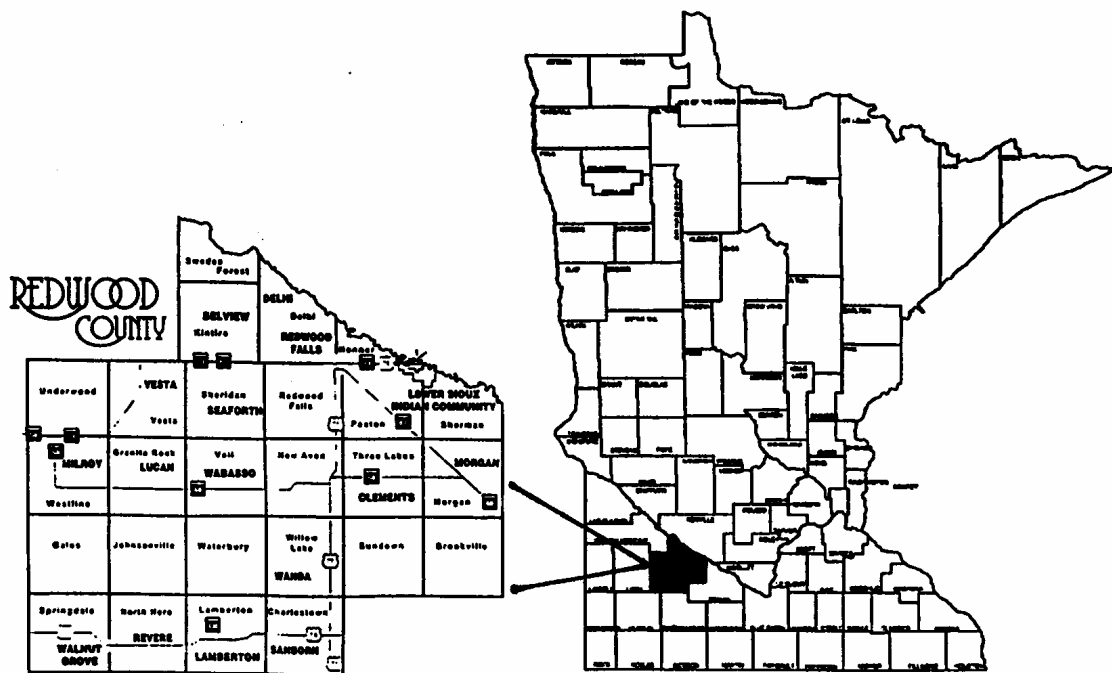


# PRIORITY CONCERNS SCOPING DOCUMENT



## INTRODUCTION:

Redwood County is located in Southwestern Minnesota. The City of Redwood Falls is the county seat. The county population reached an all-time high of 22,229 people in 1940. However, in the 1980s the population began a serious decline, to only 16,519 in 2002. Based on the last 25-year trend, it is anticipated that the county will continue to see a slight decrease in population over the next 10 years.

The soils in Redwood County are dark and the terrain varies from nearly level to steep. These soils formed in glacial till or in material sorted out of the till by water. The original vegetation was tall and medium prairie grasses. The total land area is 874 square miles or 559,360 acres. The dominant land use is agricultural. There are approximately 508,129 acres, or 90% of the land, in agriculture, however 485,900 acres or 87% of the land is in crop production. Corn, soybeans and livestock are the primary sources of agricultural income. Agriculture will remain the main industry in Redwood County with a projected increase in the size of farms.

In December 1990, the Redwood County Board of Commissioners appointed Redwood Soil and Water Conservation District as the coordinating agency for implementation of the Redwood County Comprehensive Local Water Plan. The commissioners also appointed a Water Plan Advisory Board.

Responsibilities of the Water Plan Advisory Board include:

- To provide guidance for plan implementation
- To receive and have input for plan recommendations
- To review and approve plan changes and updates

A budget and plan of work are developed each year. Redwood SWCD, as the coordinating agency, is responsible for reporting the annual progress of the plan.

The first Redwood County Water Plan was adopted by the Redwood County Board of Commissioners on September 11, 1990. It expired in 1995. Due to changes on the state level, a one-year extension was granted for the revision and update of the original water plan. The revised plan was completed in 1996 and approved by the Redwood County Board of Commissioners on January 14, 1997. The current 10-year plan will expire in December of 2005.

On June 22, 2004, the Redwood County Board of Commissioners adopted a resolution to update the current Redwood County Local Water Management Plan.

The following Priority Concerns Scoping Document for the Redwood County Local Water Management Plan was developed in accordance with changes to the Comprehensive Local Water Management Act; Statutes: 103B.304-103B.355. This document lists the priority concerns selected by the Redwood County Local Water Management Advisory Board along with a detailed account of how these concerns were identified and selected.

## **LIST OF PRIORITY CONCERNS SELECTED:**

The Redwood County Local Water Management Plan will address the following priority concerns:

- 1) Groundwater protection that will focus on wellhead protection for public water supply.
- 2) Drainage management focusing on wetland restorations and road retention opportunities.
- 3) Surface water quality addressing impaired waters by major watershed for these priority pollutants: phosphorus, nitrogen and fecal coliform bacteria.
- 4) Erosion and sediment control focusing on residue management county-wide, and gully and concentrated flow areas in the southwest portion of Redwood County.

## **PRIORITY CONCERN IDENTIFICATION:**

*Public and internal forums held to gather input for priority concerns:*

**August 16, 2004:** A notice of Decision to Revise and Update the Redwood County Local Water Management Plan and request priority concerns, plans and official controls was sent to the following: Redwood County Commissioners, cities, township officers, adjoining counties, commodity groups, sportsmen's groups, Redwood County Environmental Office, Redwood Cottonwood Rivers Control Area, Lower Sioux Agency and Area II River Basin Projects.

**August 16, 2004:** A notice of Decision to Revise and Update Redwood County Local Water Management Plan and request priority concerns was sent to the following state agencies: MN Department of Agriculture, MN Environmental Quality Board, MN Department of Health, MN Department of Natural Resources, MN Pollution Control Agency and MN Board of Water and Soil Resources.

**October 12, 2004:** Notification of the public input meeting to be held on October 26, 2004, as sent to the state agencies and other officials.

**October 15, 2004:** Official notice of the public hearing was placed as a legal advertisement in the Redwood Gazette.

**October 18, 2004:** The Redwood County Local Water Management Advisory Board met to review and discuss the list of priority concerns that had been received. After review and discussion advisory board members selected the top four concerns to address in the Local Water Management update.

**October 21, 2004:** Redwood Gazette published a news release about the upcoming public input meeting and the updating of the Redwood County Local Water Management Plan. The news release was also sent to KLGR radio.

**October 26, 2004:** A public input meeting was held in the commissioners meeting room at the Redwood County Courthouse in Redwood Falls.

The public input meeting was attended by 11 individuals:

Tabor Hoek, BWSR	Troy Krause, Redwood Gazette
Paul Rasmussen, MDOT	Eugene Short, Co. Commissioner
Robert Starr, Citizen	Bruce Tolzmann, Co. Commissioner
Jim Doering, RCRCA	Joe Schouvieller, Co. Commissioner
Brian Green, Environmental Office	Kari Clouse, Redwood SWCD
Marilyn Bernhardson, Redwood SWCD	

**November 1, 2004:** An article seeking input for the Local Water Management update was published in the Local Water Management newsletter distributed county-wide.

## **SUMMARY OF PROCEEDINGS:**

A public meeting to hear input for priority concerns to update the Redwood County Local Water Management Plan was held October 26, 2004 at 1:00 at the County Commissioners Board Meeting Room in the Courthouse, Redwood Falls, MN. Those in attendance are listed above.

The meeting was called to order by Commissioner Gene Short at 1:00 p.m.

Short inquired about the official notice of the meeting, published in the local newspaper, and inquired whether the public would have another opportunity for input. A public hearing will be held to review the final plan.

Bernhardson explained the update process to this point.

The priority concerns, as selected by the Local Water Management Advisory Board, were presented and discussed. The consensus of the group was that these concerns are some of the top priorities in the county. Once these concerns are expanded and action items developed they will cover most of the written comments that were submitted.

Bernhardson shared with the group that a citizen, unable to attend the meeting telephoned her. The citizen expressed concern regarding rural individuals and funding for the upgrade of septic systems. It was suggested that the landowner work with the township association to draft legislation for individuals to receive grants as well as low interest loans for the upgrade of septic systems. Discussion was held regarding septic upgrades and funding.

The next step is to develop objectives and actions to be implemented. The new plan will be effective January 1, 2006.

Hoek explained that the old process, through the Water Plan, included every resource in Redwood County. The new water management plan will deal with only the priority concerns, which is more realistic. This is a way in which to streamline the planning process and proceed with implementation.

Discussion was held regarding funding projects identified in the plan and the reporting method.

Rasmussen from MnDOT shared his concerns on a specific problem with Crow Creek and a stream restoration. It was decided this issue needed to be addressed at another time with additional participants.

Bernhardson asked for any additional input. Being none, the selected four priority concerns will be included in a scoping document. After the document is developed it will be forwarded to state agencies for review. Hoek indicated the document would then go before the BWSR Board for approval sometime after 1/1/05.

Once the Scoping Document is approved, Bernhardson will draft the plan. She will seek input from others before the plan is developed.

A public hearing to review the final plan will be held at the end of 2005.

Motion by Shouvieller, second by Tolzmann, to adjourn the meeting at 1:57 p.m. Motion carried by all voting yes.

## **SUMMARY OF COMMENTS:**

The following written responses were received from state agencies:

### Board of Water and Soil Resources:

- Nutrient Management
  - Landowners need to follow the University of Minnesota recommendations
- Conservation Tillage
  - 30% residue needs to be established on all tillage acres after planting.
- Conservation Buffers
  - Voluntary retirement of lands along riparian areas next to rivers, streams and ditches is needed. Buffers on public drainage ways need to be enforced.

### Minnesota Pollution Control Agency:

- Impaired Waters/Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL)
  - Identify what priority the county places on addressing impaired waters, and how the county plans to participate in the development and implementation of the TMDL projects.
  - Include a map of impaired waters within the county.
  - Identify the pollutants causing the impairments.
  - Submit to MPCA any data collected for use in identifying impaired waters.
  - Describe actions and timing the county intends to take to reduce the pollutants causing the impairments.
- Feedlot Compliance – findings and fixing the problems
  - Identify feedlots that are not in compliance with Minn.R.ch.7020 and develop management plans with landowners to resolve the problems.
- Individual Septic Treatment Systems (ISTS)
  - Identify and repair failing systems.
- Stormwater
  - Educate contractors on stormwater permit requirements.
  - Implement best management practices and procedures for contractors on construction sites.

### Minnesota Department of Health:

- Recognize and support the needs of public water suppliers in wellhead protection planning programs.
- Recognize non-community public water supply systems and the inner well management zone protection needs.
- Support the development of water quality databases for private wells that are compatible with the County Well Index and can be used in a Geographic Information System(GIS) format.

Drinking water is important to everyone and is a vital necessity for community health and economic well-being. Language to reflect the above statements needs to be placed in the Local Water Management Plan.

Minnesota Department of Natural Resources: Lee Sundmark

- Protect, enhance and sustain natural resources in the Minnesota River Basin.
  - Hydrograph stabilization, water quality improvement and increased recreational opportunities.
- Protect, enhance and sustain natural resources in Ramsey Creek Watershed.
  - Hydrograph stabilization, streambank stabilization, water quality improvement and increased recreational opportunities. Trout habitat is marginal.
- Protect, enhance and sustain natural resources in the Cottonwood River Watershed.
  - Hydrograph stabilization, water quality improvement, and increased recreational opportunities. Include removal of stream gradient control structures in Cottonwood River. Alternative: Add structure to create fish passage and eliminate dam safety hazard.

Minnesota Department of Natural Resources: Cathi Fouchi

Focusing on Minnesota River Watershed

- Holding Water on the Landscape – Hydrograph Restoration
  - Promoting retention structures and conservation of water precipitated from the atmosphere in the area where it falls, as much as practicable, provides additional stability to the hydrograph.
  - Create of buffers on ditches, streams and rivers.

- Fish Passage
  - Stabilizing flows through the use of dams may result in conditions favorable to exotic species and elimination of native fish species.
- River and Stream Channel Restoration
  - Opportunities for recreational use of water resource may be lost through development decisions that change the path of rivers and streams.
- Agricultural Best Management Practices (BMPs)
  - Best Management Practices can help reduce pollution problems and preserve water quality.

Minnesota Department of Natural Resources: Jeff Zajac – Area Wildlife Manager

- Preservation and Restoration of Wetlands.
  - Vigorous enforcement of WCA and Federal Farm Bill wetland protection mandates is vital to preservation of existing wetlands. Promotion of incentive programs for the wetland restorations.
- Extension of field drainage systems both in terms of miles of tile and increased diameter of tile.
  - Need a moratorium on field drainage improvements.
- Over-application of nutrients via fertilizers used in row crop production.
  - Fertilizer applications need to be made based on current soil test and crop needs.

Other Stakeholders Written Comments:

County Commissioners collective priorities:

- Expand the filter strip programs
- Transition of filter strips into CRP, if possible
- Well Sealing
- Dredging Lake Redwood
- Additional Habitat Land

Redwood-Cottonwood Rivers Control Area:

- Redwood and Cottonwood rivers main stem water quality in terms of TMDL impairments, current and planned in 2006.

- A TMDL limit needs to be set, an implementation plan written and seek funding for implementation.

Vail Township Board:

- City of Wabasso is using county tile line for storm sewer purposes.

Pheasants Forever:

- Increase amount of habitat and maintain current habitat for wildlife.
- Mandate filter strips at least 66 feet wide on all drainage ditches.

Area II River Basin Project, Inc.:

- Slow floodwaters to reduce flood damages to agricultural land and roadways and to reduce the introduction of sediment from unstabilized stream banks.
- Blind Intakes
- Best Management Practices

Brookville Township Board:

- Groundwater Contamination

County Commissioner Joseph Schouvieller:

- Need for buffer and filter strips
  - Need to educate the public on the importance of permanent grass cover to protect from erosion and streambank erosion.
- Groundwater quality
- Road retention/Blind intakes
  - Need to slow and re-direct water to smaller culverts to slow the runoff and pollutants to the Minnesota River.

Waukon RIM:

- Addition of filter strips
- Restoration of wetlands
- Buffer tile intakes.

City of Lambertton:

- Locating and developing high volume water sources for municipal and industrial use.

Natural Resources Conservation Service:

- Increased number of filter strips

- Nutrient management
- Best Management Practices – Emphasis on structural practices

Soil and Water Conservation District:

- Subsurface drainage
- Filter strips
- Discourage bringing non-cropped land into production

Vesta Township Board:

- Sent response indicating no water quality concerns at this time.

Phone in Comment: A call was received from a landowner expressing concern that when municipalities upgrade a sewage disposal system grants or other assistance are available to pay for at least half of the bill. The remainder is allowed to be prorated to residents on city taxes. When a rural landowner has to upgrade a system only a low interest loan is available to them. The landowner felt there should be grant dollars available to rural landowners for septic upgrade costs.

No plans or official controls were received from any state agencies. However, the district does have access to a diagnostic study and implementation plan on the Redwood and Cottonwood rivers.

## **PRIORITY CONCERNS SELECTION:**

The Priority Concerns were selected by Local Water Management Advisory Board members after brainstorming a list of concerns in the county and reviewing the concerns submitted by state agencies and other stakeholders. The top concerns were presented at the public input meeting where it was agreed that the top four priority concerns selected should receive highest priority in the county. It is not possible to address all priority concerns, however, the concerns selected are broad enough to cover most of the concerns submitted, yet focused enough to achieve goals and action items that staffing and funding will allow.

Some of the concerns listed and not included in the scope of the Local Water Management Plan Priority Concerns will potentially be addressed by other entities which work closely with the Soil and Water Conservation District.

