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Minnesota Approves First-Ever Comprehensive Watershed Management Plans for Yellow Medicine and Root Rivers

Plans are part of One Watershed, One Plan initiative to address water quality and planning at local level

St. Paul, Minn.— Marking a new era in Minnesota water planning, on December 14 the Minnesota Board of Water and Soil Resources (BWSR) approved the Root River Comprehensive Watershed Management Plan and the Yellow Medicine River Comprehensive Watershed Management Plan. These are the first two plans completed through BWSR's *One Watershed, One Plan* program. The initiative brings together a partnership of Counties, Soil and Water Conservation Districts, and Watershed Districts to create a shared action plan for water management. The roots of the program were conceived by a consortium of local governments seeking to streamline water planning requirements in Minnesota.

"This is a major milestone for the One Watershed, One Plan program," said LeAnn Buck, Executive Director of the Minnesota Association of Soil and Water Conservation Districts. "The idea of local governments working together on watershed management is something we've been advocating for a long time, and is an outgrowth of our collective members' requests for enhanced methods of planning and implementing water resource restoration and protection activities."

Comprehensive Watershed Management Plans address water quality and flooding as well as drinking water, groundwater, and habitat issues. The plans build on existing efforts, current local water plans, local knowledge, and the best available science. Planning advisory committees involve staff from state agencies and watershed organizations, farmer groups, fishing and hunting interests, cities, businesses, and citizens.

"This style of partnership represents a new phase in Minnesota's water planning," said John Jaschke, BWSR Executive Director. "These plans raise the bar on local water management, driving implementation that is prioritized, targeted, and measurable. That means smarter investments and better accountability for state dollars that fund water projects and programs."

Five pilot watersheds were named in 2014. The Root River and Yellow Medicine plans are the first plans to be finalized. The plans each identify priority projects and programs for the designated watershed over the next ten years. For the Root River plan, those priorities include drinking water, stream and river health, and more. The Yellow Medicine plan has priorities that include minimizing flooding, improving water quality through sediment and nutrient reductions, and protecting groundwater. As part of the planning process, local partners commit to working together and will check-in on a regular basis to track progress and periodically update the plan.

More information about the One Watershed One Plan program, including its guiding principles and plan outcomes, as well as a map of the participating watersheds, can be found at BWSR's website: www.bwsr.state.mn.us.

Governor Mark Dayton has declared a Year of Water Action in Minnesota to raise awareness of the many issues affecting water quality and highlight ways that Minnesotans can take action to preserve and protect our state's most precious resource: clean water. To learn more about Governor Dayton's Year of Water Action visit: <http://mn.gov/governor/issues/wateraction/>

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