



North St. Louis SWCD
505 3rd St N, Ste A
Virginia, MN 55792
(218) 749-2000
www.nslswcd.org

Date: July 6, 2022

To: Rainy River Headwaters/Vermilion River Watershed Stakeholders

From: Rainy River Headwaters/Vermilion River Watershed Planning Partnership

Subjects:

1. Notification of upcoming development of a comprehensive watershed management plan for the Rainy River Headwaters/Vermilion River Watersheds (RRHW/VR) Watershed planning area, and
2. Invitation to submit priority issues and plan expectations/attend kick off meeting(s)

As a stakeholder with potential water management interests in the Rainy River Headwaters and/or Vermilion River Watersheds (see enclosed map), your input is requested as we begin developing a “comprehensive watershed management plan” for these watersheds.

What is a “comprehensive watershed management plan”?

A comprehensive watershed management plan is a document that lays out a locally and collaboratively developed strategy to manage, protect, and restore water resources on a watershed-wide scale. The plan will cover a wide range of water management topics including drinking water sources, flooding, recreation, groundwater quality, groundwater recharge, wetland management, surface water quality, water storage, riparian buffers, habitat, cultural resources and others that are locally important. The RRHW/VR Watershed Planning Partnership (Cook County & SWCD, Lake County and SWCD, St. Louis County, and North St. Louis SWCD) are utilizing the Minnesota Board of Water and Soil Resources (BWSR) One Watershed, One Plan process to create the plan with local, state, and tribal input. The process will prioritize water management issues, target resource concerns, and develop measurable goals to create and then implement this plan. This process emphasizes local governments working together on a watershed scale and making choices that show results.

What will this plan do?

This plan will identify what voluntary projects and activities that local partners will direct time and resources on to protect, and in some cases restore, important resources in this planning area for the next 10 years. Funding will be provided to carry out these activities through the Clean Water Land & Legacy Amendment.

What will this plan NOT do?

This plan does not take away or override any existing local authority. Local governments are not required to participate. This plan will work to align local plans and citizen input with state strategies; however, it is not a plan that requires change of any local, state, or federal regulations. This plan is not regulatory, including when it comes to mining and other state and federally regulated activities.

What does protection mean?

Considerable acres of this planning area already have notable protections in place including a federally designated wilderness area, a national park, a national forest, lands within the 1854 Ceded Territory, and other public lands. Private lands also protect the quality of our lakes and streams, provide habitat for fish and wildlife, and other public benefits. This plan will likely include voluntary actions that can be taken locally such as landowner education, conservation easements, support for private forest management, shoreline restoration, stream/road crossing improvements, stormwater management, and/or cost-share programs rather than new rules and regulations as a means to reduce risk of long-term impacts to our water resources. State and federal regulation changes are not local activities and therefore cannot be altered as a result of this plan.

What else?

This plan will be developed for the Rainy River Headwaters/Vermilion River Watershed planning area. Recipients of this notice are invited to submit water management issues they think should be addressed during the planning process as well as any expectations for the plan.

Please submit comments or, if none, notify us of receipt of this letter by Friday, August 5, 2022.
Written comments can be submitted by email or letter to:

Becca Reiss, Community Conservationist
North St. Louis SWCD
505 3rd St S, Ste A
Virginia, MN 55792
becca@nslswcd.org

All citizens and stakeholders that live, work, or recreate in the watershed are invited to one of three public information meetings with more information coming soon:

Thursday, August 11th 5-7:30 at the Orr Community Center
Tuesday, August 16th 5-7:30 at the Seagull Lake Community Center
Thursday, August 18th 5-7:30 in the Ely Area

At this meeting, we will review and compile watershed data, discuss priority issues identified by stakeholders, and provide additional opportunity for the Rainy River Headwaters/Vermilion River Watershed Planning Partnership to gain feedback.

Information about the partnership and this planning process (including meeting details) is available at: www.nslswcd.org/RRHWVR



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If you have questions related to the Rainy River Headwaters/Vermilion River watershed planning project, please contact any of the following partners:

Local Staff Contacts

Cook County SWCD
Ilena Hansel
District Manager & Water Planner
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Koochiching County
Matthew Gouin
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Lake County SWCD
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Rainy River Headwaters/Vermilion River 1W1P Planning Area

