



400 Court Ave P.O. Box 1051

Gaylord, MN 55334

Winter 2017

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RIVER WATCHER NEWSLETTER

High Island Creek & Rush River
Watershed 319 TMDL Project

A Look Back at 2016

2016 was a big year for the High Island Creek and Rush River Watersheds, in January the High Island Creek Watershed was awarded a grant to continue monitoring water quality (High Island Creek Watershed Pollutant Load Monitoring Project), in February both watersheds were awarded a grant to improve dissolved oxygen levels and reduce phosphorus (High Island Creek and Rush River TMDL Project for Low Dissolved Oxygen), and in September the watersheds were included in a grant to assist in citizen education regarding water quality improvements (Lower Minnesota Watershed Restoration and Protection Strategy (WRAPS) North Project). With all of these projects starting in 2016, it made for a busy year for watershed staff, but also showed great results. Below you can see a break down of Best Management Practices Implemented under the High Island Creek and Rush River TMDL Project, on Page 3 you will find a 2016 water monitoring summary for the High Island Creek and on Page 5 you will find more information on the Lower Minnesota WRAPS Project. Please contact: **Coleton Draeger**– Watershed Coordinator @ 507-237-4050 or **Ron Otto**– Watershed Technician @ 507-237-5435 ext.105 for more details today!

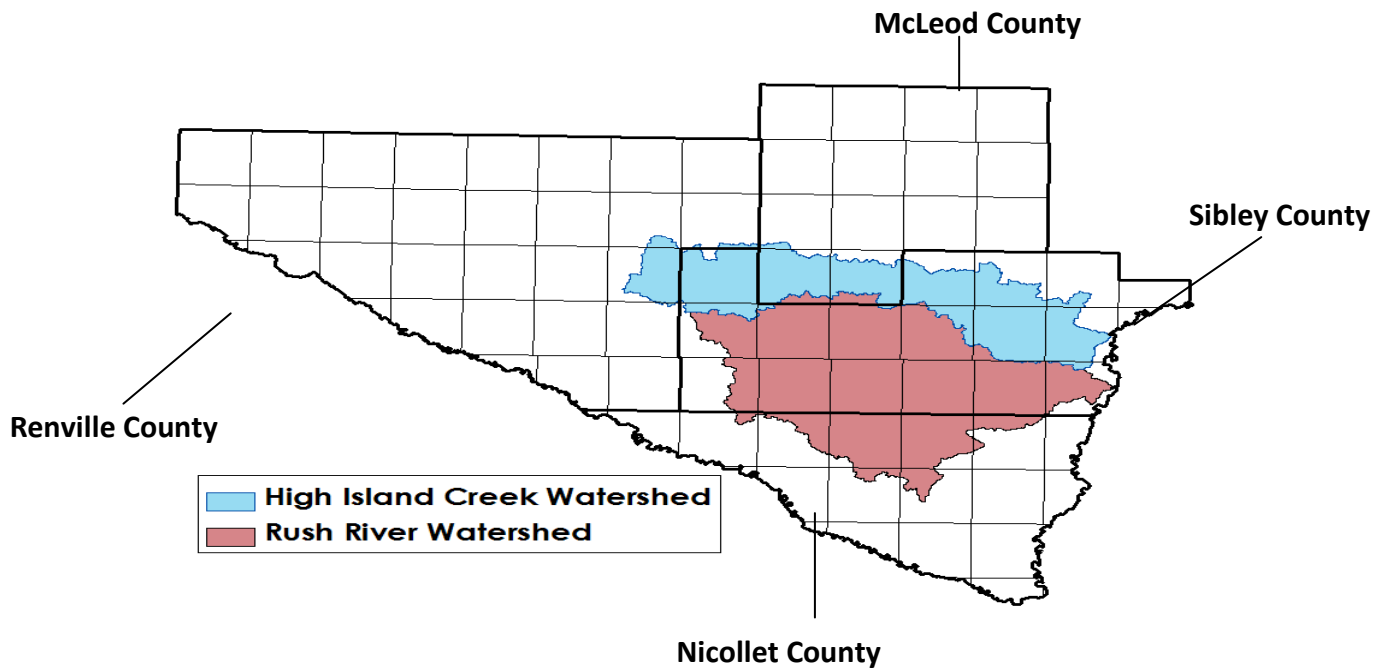
2016 Best Management Practices Implemented as part of the TMDL Project For Dissolved Oxygen

Cover Crop	506.8 Acres Implemented
Open Intake Alternatives	22 Implemented
Buffer Strip	45.22 Acres Implemented



Cover Crop Implemented off of HWY 15 south of Winthrop, Fall 2016.

Watershed Boundaries



BE AWARE OF WILD PARSNIP

Information Provided by Sibley County Ag Inspector: Greg DeVries

Wild parsnip is a poisonous invasive plant that is becoming present on the local landscape. The following information has been put together for the Minnesota Associate of Ag Inspectors.

“ Wild Parsnip causes “Phyto-photo-dermatitis,” which happens when sap of the plant, from broken stems and leaves, touches the skin and is exposed to ultraviolet light (whether cloudy or sunny). Within 24-48 hours, the affected area will first redden and in most cases be followed by blisters that can be painful for a couple of days. In many cases, the blisters will lead to brownish pigmentation that can last for years. Unlike Poison Ivy, the reaction caused by contact with Wild Parsnip sap is not an allergic reaction. Toxin in the sap is absorbed by the skin and energized by ultraviolet light. Moisture from perspiration speeds absorption. Burning is inevitable if skin comes in contact with juice from cut or broken stalks, leaves, or flowers. The Juices are most potent while in flower. No one is exempt. Symptoms usually take 24-48 hours to develop, but could take longer. Mild exposure is similar to sunburn. Severe exposure causes skin to blister. “

It is the desire of Sibley County Environmental Services to eradicate Wild Parsnip from Sibley County in the next 2 – 4 years, to do so will involve the citizens of Sibley County working together to eradicate this plant before it is beyond control, as it has become out of control in South Eastern Minnesota. Eradication is possible through cutting and spraying this weed. Spraying is the most effective, using products such as Milestone herbicide, and 2-4D. The use of these chemicals is very effective during the rosette of the plant In May and June and again in September and October. ***Be aware of this plant as you enter afield this spring, if you encounter this plant, be prepared to properly treat it or seek medical attention!**



Call Sibley County Environmental Services for more info: 507-237-4091.

Above, Wild Parsnip. Photo Courtesy: MNDOT

A Look Back at 2016: High Island Creek Water Monitoring

It was yet another interesting year when it comes to monitoring water quality on the High Island Creek. As many of you know, watershed staff are responsible for the monitoring of two sites on the High Island; the first site is off of Sibley County Road Number 9 north of Arlington, and the second site is off of Scenic Byway Road number 6 outside of Henderson. This past monitoring season started in February which is traditionally earlier than normal due to an abnormal winter and early ice out conditions, the season was fast and furious with multiple samples collected due to the extensive amounts of precipitation the watershed received during 2016. After looking at the data collected there are indeed pollution concerns that exist within the watershed. The transparency can be one way to take a quick glance and realize the need for improvement. Chemistry data also indicated impairments throughout the watershed, the 2 very clear issues were Total Suspended Solids levels and Nitrate Levels. With the implementation of BMP's we can work to improve these impairments and try to make this watershed a healthier environment for our aquatic organisms within the High Island Creek. If you would like to take a look at the data collected over the course of 2016, please feel free to stop by the Sibley County Courthouse, we would be glad to show you what we collected. The photographs displayed below show the two very different landscapes within the watershed and what they impose on water quality. The picture on the left is from our Arlington, MN monitoring site and is not effected by the steep elevation change. The picture on the right was taken at our Henderson Monitoring Site and is effected by nearly a 200 foot elevation change prior to draining into the Minnesota River.



Arlington Monitoring Site: June 23rd, 2016.



Henderson Monitoring Site: June 23rd, 2016.

Incentives offered by the High Island Creek and Rush River TMDL Project for Dissolved Oxygen

- **Buffer Strip Incentive Payment**

This option pays the landowner a one time payment of \$400 per acre of CRP buffer strip implemented, the CRP must be in a 15 year contract. This payment is in addition to the CRP payments received. After "Buffer Law" deadlines are in place, incentive payments will only be made to those who implement a buffer beyond the minimum requirements.

- **Cover Crop Incentive Payment**

This option pays landowners who have canning crops (peas, sweet corn, etc.) or sugar beats \$30 per acre to implement cover crops. (The cover crops must be seeded by September 15th)

- **Open Intake Alternative Cost-Share**

This option offers 75% cost-share up to \$600 per intake to landowners who implement open intake alternatives. Alternatives include: Rock Inlets, Open Intake Removals, Slotted Risers, or an additional practice determined acceptable by project staff.

MANURE APPLICATION SETBACK REMINDER

As we approach manure application season, please don't forget the proper setbacks to ensure water quality is protected. If you have a question about proper application setbacks please contact your county's feedlot officer for verification. Take a look at the chart seen too the right as a reminder of setback requirements. If you find that setbacks are not being met properly don't hesitate to contact the State Duty Officer at the number listed to the right, this individual will be able to assist with enforcement and make sure all rules and regulations are followed.



Minnesota Pollution Control Agency

Manure Application

Minimum setbacks near waters ✓
(Counties can be more restrictive than state Rule 7020)

	Surface application	Incorporation within 24 hrs.
Lake, stream	300 feet*	25 feet**
Wetlands (10+ ac.)	300 feet*	25 feet**
Ditches (no berms)	300 feet*	25 feet**
Open tile intakes	300 feet	0 feet
Well, quarry	50 feet	50 feet
Sinkhole (no berms)		
Downslope	50 feet	50 feet
Upslope	300 feet	50 feet

* 100-foot vegetated buffer can be used instead of 300-foot setback for non-winter applications (50-foot buffer for wetlands, ditches)
** No long-term phosphorus buildup within 300 feet

State Duty Officer: 1-800-422-0798
MPCA-St. Paul: 1-800-657-3864

✓ See "Applying manure in sensitive areas"
At <http://www.pca.state.mn.us/gp0r69c>

MPCA's photo

Low Interest Loans available for upgrading of Noncompliant Septic Systems

Owners of a Subsurface Sewage Treatment System (SSTS) are eligible for low-interest loans to upgrade their non-conforming septic system. Furthermore, those in the High Island Creek Watershed are eligible for an additional \$500 incentive from the High Island Creek Watershed District. Check with your county contact for further details.

To Be Eligible:

- Applicant must be a property owner of a non-conforming septic system:
 - Discharge to the surface
 - Tiled to drainage or road ditch
 - Discharge to cesspool, seep-age pits or dry wells
 - Less than a 2-foot separation to seasonally saturated soil
 - Lack of a system
 - Does not meet setbacks to existing well

Not Eligible:

- Refinancing a previously installed system
- Septic for new homes
- Non-residential property
- Project started before design and loan approval
- Under court order to repair system

Contact Information:

Sibley County: Ron Otto
Sibley SWCD office
111 6th Street, P.O. Box 161
Gaylord, MN 55334
507-237-5435 ext. 105

Nicollet County: Mandy Landkamer
Environmental Services Office
501 South Minnesota Avenue
St. Peter, MN 56082
507-934-0250

McLeod County: Roger Berggren
Environmental Services Office
830 11th Street East, Suite 110
Glencoe, MN 55336
320-864-1214

Renville County: Diane Mitchell
Renville County Government
Services Center
105 S. 5th Street, Suite 318
Olivia, MN 56277
320-523-3760

Lower Minnesota River Watershed Restoration and Protection Strategy (WRAPS) Update

Some of you may have received a newsletter recently that introduced you to the Lower Minnesota River WRAPS Project that has recently begun in the area, others may have not. This project is designed to give you, the landowner or resident, an opportunity to tell local and state staff what you would like to see happen to improve the land and water quality in the Lower Minnesota River Watershed. In the near future you will be able to mark your calendars for upcoming WRAPS coffee shop talks where the tab is on us and you get the chance to speak with local Soil and Water Conservation and County Environmental staff about environmental topics within your local watershed. These will be occurring throughout the watershed over the course of the next 2 years, so if you cannot make the first one, no need to worry, there will be others to attend. The first topic of this series will offer an Introduction to watershed characteristics and the fish community. We are also planning on producing a documentary style video which will begin production this coming growing season focusing on conservation practices within the watershed. If you would like the chance to star in this documentary or showcase a conservation practice on your property, please give us a call, we would be more than happy to talk with you!

Coleton Draeger—Watershed Coordinator
507-237-4050



High Island Creek & Rush River

Watershed Implementation Projects

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Nicollet Counties,
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Extension Service,
High Island Creek Water-
shed District,
Natural Resource Conser-
vation Service

Attention High Island Creek Watershed Residents:

Landowners and renters within the High Island Creek Watershed District must obtain watershed district permits or file notification forms before tiling, ditching, dredging, filling or otherwise altering the natural drainage of an area. Wetlands and stream courses may be protected under the USDA Farm Program, Minnesota Department of Natural Resources, Army Corp of Engineers or Minnesota Wetland Conservation Act programs.

Protect your legal status and farm program benefits. Before beginning drainage work, contact Al Kerber—Watershed Ditch Inspector @ 320-510-1783. Failure to obtain a permit may result in a fine of \$500 or more.

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Both Projects are equal opportunity organizations and employers. Questions and comments can be directed to: Coleton Draeger

Watershed Grants Coordinator / Phone: (507) 237-4050