



CLFLWD
WATERSHED DISTRICT



Annual Report

Comfort Lake-Forest Lake Watershed District
Draft

2025

Our mission is to protect and enhance local ecosystems and natural water resources.

Introduction

The Comfort Lake–Forest Lake Watershed District (CLFLWD) is a special unit of local government established in 1999 to address water-related issues. Our Watershed District encompasses 49 square miles in northern Washington County and southern Chisago County, including portions of the cities of Chisago City, Forest Lake, Scandia, Wyoming, Chisago Lake Township, and Franconia Township.

This report is intended to inform readers of the District's 2025 activities, goals, and objectives, and describe its projected work plan and budget for 2026. Pursuant to Minnesota Statutes Section 103D.351 and Minnesota Rules Section 8410.0150, the CLFLWD Board of Managers submits its 2025 Annual Report to the Board of Water and Soil Resources, the Commissioner of the Department of Natural Resources, and the Director of the Ecological and Water Resources Division.



For more information, including the District's interactive history timeline and the 2024 Progress Report, visit www.clflwd.org.

Image (above): Aerial of Forest Lake Alum Treatment

Image (cover): Aerial of Moody Lake Wetland Restoration & Round Barn

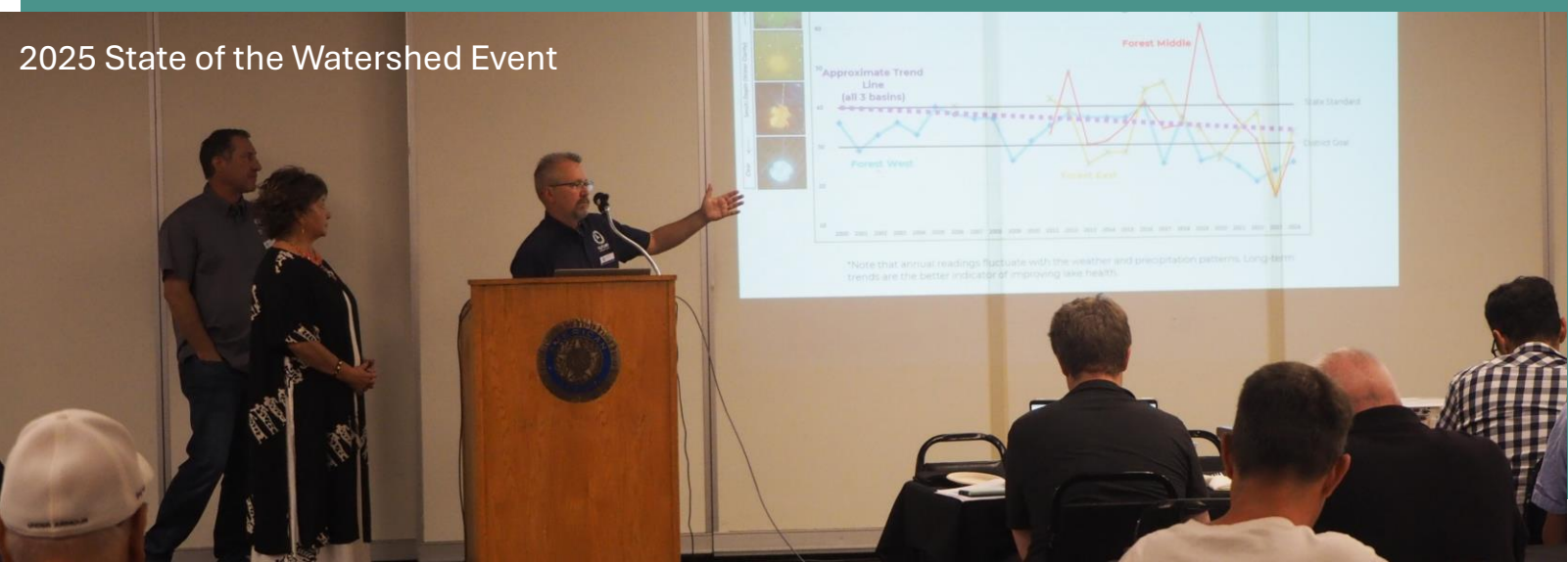
Annual Report Contents

2025 Highlights	4
Board of Managers	5
District Staff	6
Consultants	7
Community Advisory Committee	8
Technical Advisory Committee	9
History of Significant Events	10
Program Activities	12
Project Activities	19
2025 Financials	24
2026 Work Plan & Budget	26
Appendix A: Permits & Variances	
Appendix B: 2025 Newsletter	

2025 Highlights

- Completed the Forest Lake Alum Treatment Project with the second and final alum dose in October 2025
- Purchased two properties with a combined total of 241 acres for water quality and habitat restoration projects
- Completed a Strategic Plan and 5-Year Program & Project Plan
- Held the annual State of the Watershed event attended by 99 people
- Held multiple community education workshops and District events, sent direct communications to target audiences, and expanded social media use
- Throughout the year 2025, submitted grant applications totaling \$7.9 million, of which \$3.3 million in grants was awarded; managed 18 active grants for various projects and programs; most grant-funded projects span multiple years
- Enforced District rules through permitting program management, site inspections, and oversight of buffers and permit maintenance declarations
- Implemented a multi-faceted stream and lake monitoring program with the help of multiple volunteers
- Offered cost-share programs including 61 site visits, 46 program participants, 670 linear feet of shoreline restored, and 1.6 acres of native plantings
- Completed shoreline inventories on Forest Lake, Little Comfort Lake, and Lake Keewahtin
- Began working on a Shoreline Resiliency Action Plan, to be completed in 2026
- Implemented a multi-faceted Aquatic Invasive Species (AIS) Prevention & Management Program including 6,000 watercraft inspection surveys, public outreach, AIS surveys, and AIS management; no new AIS introductions observed in 2025
- Drafted a Floodplain Resilience Action Plan, to be completed in 2026

2025 State of the Watershed Event



2025 Board of Managers

Watershed districts are governed by a board of managers appointed by their respective counties. Roughly 60% of the CLFLWD is in Washington County and 40% is in Chisago County. As such, three managers are appointed by Washington County and two managers are appointed by Chisago County, per MN governing statute 103D.



Stephen Schmaltz, President
Appointed County: Washington
Term Expires: September 2026



Christopher Loth, Vice President
Appointed County: Washington
Term Expired: September 2025



Dave Bakke, Secretary
Appointed County: Washington
Term Expires: September 2027



Jackie Anderson, Treasurer
Appointed County: Chisago
Term Expires: September 2026



Douglas Toavs, Assistant Treasurer
Appointed County: Chisago
Term Expires: September 2027



Jim Schottmuller
Appointed County: Washington
Term Began: September 2025
Term Expires: September 2028

District Staff

CLFLWD staffing has consistently adapted each year to meet the needs of the District based on the goals and objectives of the Watershed Management Plan and the directives of the Board of Managers. The District achieved the objectives set forth in the 2025 work plan, as described in subsequent sections of this report. Questions can be directed to District staff at the contact information below.

CLFLWD Office: 44 Lake Street South, Suite A, Forest Lake, MN 55025		
Name	Position & Contact Info	
Mike Kinney	Administrator	
	p: (651) 395-5855	e: michael.kinney@clflwd.org
Jackie Bussjaeger	Technician	
	p: (651) 395-5853	e: jackie.bussjaeger@clflwd.org
Victoria D'Amico	Water Resources Engineering Technician	
	p: (651) 313-8821	e: victoria.damico@clflwd.org
Blayne Eineichner	Project Coordinator	
	p: (651) 395-5857	e: blayne.eineichner@clflwd.org
Emily Heinz	Planning Coordinator	
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Matthew Hendrickson	Technician	
	p: (651) 395-5852	e: matthew.hendrickson@clflwd.org
Adam Hjelm	Education & Outreach Coordinator	
	p: (651) 395-5858	e: adam.hjelm@clflwd.org
Brad Jernberg	Business & Operations Manager	
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Tori Philippi	Office Manager	
	p: (651) 395-5850	e: tori.philippi@clflwd.org
Aidan Read	Land Management Specialist	
	p: (651) 583-6590	e: aidan.read@clflwd.org
Mike Sandager	Permitting & AIS Coordinator	
	p: (651) 395-5859	e: mike.sandager@clflwd.org

Consultants

Multiple consultants provided accounting, legal, engineering and other services to fulfil the District's obligations, goals, and objectives within the plan and budget. The District's last biennial professional services RFP, per MN Statutes 103B.227, subd. 5, occurred in 2024.

Name(s)	Service & Contact Info	
Bonnie Burns	Accountant, Redpath & Company 4810 White Bear Pkwy, White Bear Lake, MN 55110	
	p: (651) 255-9308	e: bburns@redpathcpas.com
Kalia Xiong	Payroll, Redpath & Company 4810 White Bear Pkwy, White Bear Lake, MN 55110	
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Justin Nilson	Auditor, Abdo 5201 Eden Ave, Suite 150, Edina, MN 55436	
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Anne Wilkinson Greg Grasse	Engineers, Emmons & Olivier Resources 1919 University Ave W, Suite 300, St. Paul, MN 55104	
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Ken Carlson	Insurance, North Risk Partners 10405 6th Ave N, Suite 300, Plymouth, MN 55441	
	p: (651) 379-7909	e: ken.carlson@northriskpartners.com
Chuck Holtman	Legal Counsel, Smith Partners PLLP 400 Second Ave S, #1200, Minneapolis, MN 55401	
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Jay Riggs Angela Defenbaugh	Technical Assistance, Washington Conservation District 455 Hayward Ave N, Oakdale, MN 55128	
	p: (651) 330-8220	e: jriggs@mnwcd.org e: adefenbaugh@mnwcd.org
Craig Mell Casey Thiel	Technical Assistance, Chisago Soil & Water Conservation District 38814 3 rd Ave, North Branch, MN 55056	
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Community Advisory Committee

The Community Advisory Committee (CAC) is an advisory group that is made up of volunteers who advise and assist the Board of Managers on all matters affecting the interests of the watershed district and make recommendations to the managers on all contemplated projects and improvements in the watershed district. Members may reside within or outside of the watershed district boundaries. The Board of Managers may appoint other interested and technical persons who may or may not reside within the watershed district to serve at the pleasure of the managers.

In 2025 the CAC continued to meet monthly. Specific focuses included shoreline restoration, wake boat impacts, aquatic invasive species prevention and treatment, and involvement in the annual budget process.

2025 Community Advisory Committee Members

Tom Furey	Mike Miron
Jerry Grundtner	Randy Schumacher
Ted Hansen	Curt Sparks
Gary Kramlich	

Bone Lake Pontoon Tour



Technical Advisory Committee

Representatives from each of the District's cities and counties, state agencies, neighboring watershed districts, and the Metropolitan Council comprise the District's Technical Advisory Committee (TAC). The TAC provides technical expertise and assistance with the development of the District's watershed management and capital improvement plans, rules and specific projects.

2025 members of the TAC are listed below. Some contacts will be updated in 2026.

Name(s)	Organization
Michelle Jordan	Board of Water and Soil Resources
Mike Isensee	Carnelian-Marine-St. Croix WD
John Pechman, Jason Lind	Chisago City
Susanna Wilson-Witkowski	Chisago County
Jessica Jagoe	Chisago County Dept. of Env. Services/Zoning
Craig Mell	Chisago Soil & Water Conservation District
Sherry Stirling, Jeanette Peterson	Chisago Lake Township
Abbi Wittman	City of Forest Lake
Kyle Morell	City of Scandia
Robb Linwood, Fred Weck	City of Wyoming
Melissa Glenna	Franconia Township
Nicholas Phelps	MN Aquatic Invasive Species Research Center
Jeffrey Berg	MN Department of Agriculture
John Freitag	MN Department of Health
Daniel Scollan	MN Department of Natural Resources
Nick Tiedeken	MN Department of Transportation
Mark Hanson	MN Pollution Control Agency
Nick Tomczik	Rice Creek WD
Jay Riggs	Washington Conservation District
Adriana Atcheson	Washington County

History

Timeline not to scale

**THOUSANDS OF YEARS
NATIVE AMERICANS**

Dakota, Ojibwe, and other Native American tribes inhabit the region. Water quality in lakes and streams was generally good at this time.

**1900s
URBAN/SUBURBAN DEVELOPMENT**

Agricultural activity decreases while urban and suburban development increases.

**1983
FLWMO ESTABLISHED**

Forest Lake Watershed Management Organization (FLWMO) is established.

**2003-2005
WENCK STUDY**

Comprehensive study of entire District's water flow establishing four major subwatersheds, which became the basis for planning, from our headwaters at Bone Lake Subwatershed to our exit point in the Comfort Lake Subwatershed and Sunrise River.

**2008
CLFLWD RULES & REGULATIONS**

CLFLWD adopts rules regulating land alterations and requiring stormwater controls. Rules are implemented through permitting program.

**2010
SIX LAKES TOTAL MAXIMUM DAILY LOAD**

Six Lakes Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) Study & Implementation Plan completed.

**2021
10-YEAR PLAN UPDATE**

CLFLWD adopts updated 10-year Watershed Management Plan covering years 2022-2031.

Good water quality

~200 years of declining water quality

~10 years of improving water quality

**1800s
EUROPEAN SETTLEMENT & AGRICULTURE**

Europeans begin settling in the region. Agricultural activity and wetland ditching expands, altering the natural landscape. Sedimentation increase, and water quality in lakes and streams begins to decline.

**1972
CLEAN WATER ACT PASSED**

United States Clean Water Act is passed

**1999
CLFLWD ESTABLISHED**

Comfort Lake-Forest Lake Watershed District (CLFLWD) is established.

**2005-2008
INTER-COMMUNITY COOPERATION**

Inter-community cooperation is strong with LGUs sharing development plans for review of water quality enhancements as rules are under development. Early projects included correction of flooding at Lakeside Park and Broadway Ave.

**2009-2012
SUNRISE RIVER PETITION**

Chisago Co. petitionsthe CLFLWD, andthe CLFLWD subsequently completes Sunrise River Water Quality & Flowage Engineer's Report.

**2016-2022
HISTORIC SEDIMENT CORES**

Deep history, paleolimnological sediment cores collected on District lakes to determine pre-settlement lake conditions and sedimentation rates over time: Moody, Shields, Comfort, Bone, School, Forest, Little Comfort.

CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE



Visit www.clflwd.org for full interactive history timeline.

History Continued

2013–PRESENT

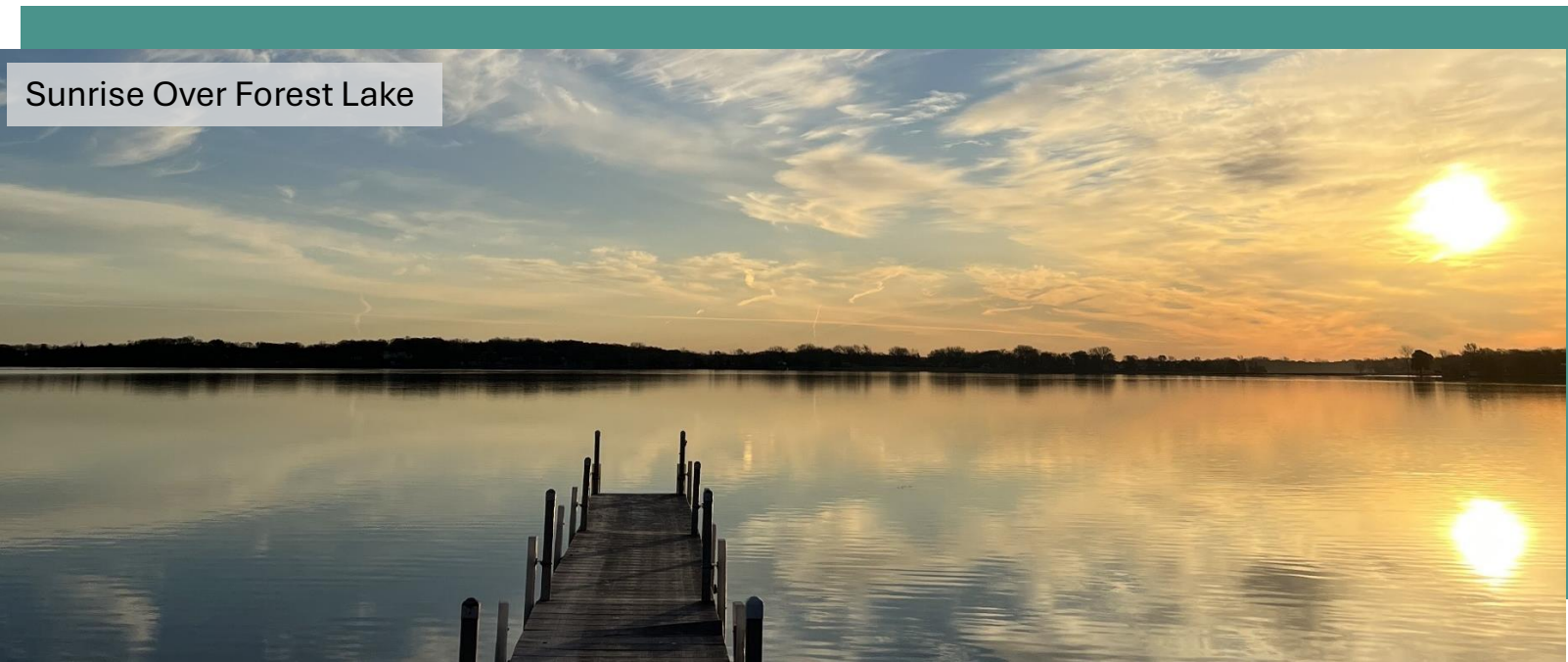
PROJECTS & PROGRAMMING: WATER QUALITY IMPROVES

The Comfort Lake–Forest Lake Watershed District works with partners to implement several water quality improvement projects and provide water quality programming.

Projects include:

- Broadway Iron Enhanced Sand Filter (2013)
- Bone Lake Fish Barriers & Moody Lake Aerator (2015)
- Target Store Stormwater Retrofits (2015)
- Bixby Park Water Quality Improvement Project (2016)
- Hilo Lane Iron Enhanced Sand Filter (2017)
- 3rd Lake Pond Wetland Treatment Basin (2017)
- Moody Lake Wetland Rehabilitation & Alum Treatment (2018)
- Shields Lake Stormwater Reuse, Alum Treatment, and Fish Barrier Upgrade (2019)
- Bone Lake Southeast Wetland Restorations (2020)
- Bone Lake Northeast Wetland Restoration (2022)
- Sunrise River/Highway 61 Wetland Enhancement (2023)
- County Road 50 Iron Enhanced Sand Filter (2023)
- WJD-6 Wetland Enhancement (2024)
- Moody Lake Capstone Projects and Agricultural Practices (2024–2025)
- Forest Lake Alum Treatment (2023–2025)
- Heath Iron Enhanced Sand Filter (In Progress)
- School Lake Agricultural Best Management Practices (In Progress)
- Enhanced Street Sweeping in Forest Lake, Wyoming, Scandia (Ongoing)

Sunrise Over Forest Lake



Program Activities

Ongoing work that occurs annually

Permitting / Regulation

Protecting water resources when development occurs

The CLFLWD adopted Rules on December 18, 2008. The District rules and information on its permit program and materials can be found on its website at <https://clflwd.org/permitting/>.

- In 2025, the District received 29 permit applications. All applications were reviewed by staff and the District Engineer, Emmons & Olivier Resources, Inc.
- Over the course of the year,
 - 28 permits were active at various times,
 - 26 permits were closed out,
 - and staff performed 1,538 site inspections.
- In 2025 active permit sites were 96% compliant with District Rules, which is measured as “Excellent” by the District’s progress evaluation metric.
- Additionally, the District continued performing inspections for stormwater best management practices (BMPs) and buffers required under past permits. In 2025,
 - 146 individual BMPs on 83 properties were inspected by staff
 - Sites were 86% compliant with maintenance requirements, which is measured as “Excellent” by the District’s progress evaluation metric.
 - 19% of self inspections were completed.
- Appendix A contains a summary of the permits and variances issued in 2025 and explanation of best management practice maintenance inspections.

Construction Site With Silt Fence



Visit www.clflwd.org
for District Rules and
permitting info.

Water Monitoring

Measuring the health of our lakes

The District has a robust annual monitoring program to evaluate the water quality conditions in lakes and streams. The District uses these data to establish baseline water quality trends, to identify waterbodies that are impaired and in need of restoration, and to evaluate the success of completed projects. The monitoring program occurs year-round under the direction of our District Engineer, EOR, with assistance from volunteers and District staff. In 2025, 4 volunteers participated in the Community Assisted [Lake] Monitoring Program (CAMP) and 2 volunteers participated in the Community Assisted Tributary (CAT) Monitoring Program.

2025 Monitoring Highlights

- Overall, the 2025 average growing season showed an improvement in lake water quality compared to 2024. The 2024 monitoring season showed particularly poor water quality because of higher-than-average precipitation resulting in increased stormwater runoff and pollutant loads.
- For District lakes, the 5-year average water quality continues to show an improvement compared to the 10-year average.
- Likewise, the water quality trends continue to show improvement, except in the Secchi Depth in Forest-East and Middle and chlorophyll-a concentrations in Forest Middle. Fortunately, the final alum treatment was completed on Forest Lake Middle in October 2025. Thus, the decreased load should improve water clarity and chlorophyll-a concentrations in both basins.
- Most of the lakes monitored in 2025 received “B” water quality letter grades. Lake Keewahtin had the best water quality with A grades across all the categories.

District Staff Collecting Monitoring Data



Visit www.clflwd.org
for detailed 2025
monitoring reports.

Cost-Share Programs


Providing resources to homeowners for stewardship

In 2025 the District continued offering cost-share programs, to provide financial assistance for homeowners to restore their shorelines and implement other water-friendly practices. The District partners with Washington Conservation District (WCD) and Chisago Soil and Water Conservation District (CSWCD) to implement these programs.

- Technical Assistance and Soil Testing
- Mini-Grant (\$500 reimbursement grant suitable for small projects)
- Community Water Cost-Share (competitive program, up to 75% cost-share up to \$7,500)
- Watershed Property Legacy Payment Program (annual payments to landowners for land protection)

2025 Cost-Share Activities

- 61 initial site visits in order to engage with interested homeowners.
- 13 mini grants and 3 Community Water Cost-Share grants
- 15 residents participated in the Legacy Payment Program
- 15 residential soil tests were conducted
- 670 linear feet of shoreline restored
- 1.6 acres of native plantings
- Continued to hold meetings in coordination with the Farmer-Led Council
- Partnered with the City of Forest Lake to complete the North Shore Circle Park Shoreline Restoration Project



Shoreline Restoration Project in Progress
with Sediment Control Silt Curtain



Visit www.clflwd.org
for cost-share
application form.

Education & Outreach

Communicating about our work and promoting stewardship

In 2025, the District continued to grow and strengthen its education and outreach program by expanding established initiatives and developing new programs.

Watershed Connections Lecture Series

The District launched a new lecture series designed to bridge the gap between scientific research and practical application. The series provides a platform for experts to share knowledge on ecosystems, water resources, and management strategies. Four events were held in 2025, with a total attendance of 60 participants.

Community Education Partnership Program

The District identified a growing need for increased engagement with local landowners to educate and empower them to make informed stewardship decisions on their properties that positively impact local water resources. The CLFLWD partnered with established educational institutions, including Hardwood Creek Library, Forest Lake Area Schools Community Education, and Chisago Lakes Community Education. This collaboration leveraged each organization's strengths, resources, and expertise to deliver efficient and effective programming throughout the community. In 2025, the partnership hosted 28 community education events attended by 492 participants. Workshop and class topics included turf alternatives, rain barrels, natural shorelines, and a wide variety of native plant classes.

Bone Lake Pontoon Tour

The primary goal of the Bone Lake Pontoon Tour was to educate participants about the importance of natural shorelines for water quality, habitat, and overall aesthetics. Several shoreline restoration projects were visited and discussed, and a brief history of CLFLWD's water quality improvement efforts was shared during the tour and at a shoreland gathering following the event. 35 people attended the pontoon tour.



Visit www.clflwd.org
for info on upcoming
events/workshops.

Interagency Communication

Working together with our partners to achieve better outcomes

The District coordinates with other agencies on a regular basis to implement the majority of its programs and projects. The CLFLWD continued to partner in the Lower St. Croix Watershed Partnership at multiple levels including the Policy Committee, Advisory Committee, Steering Committee, and Planning Team. More information can be found at www.lsc1wlp.org.

Watershed Planning & Resiliency

Adapting to a changing climate

The District completed a Strategic Plan and 5-Year Program & Project Plan in 2025 organizing its top priorities and the associated initiatives, actions and outcomes.

In 2025, the District completed a draft Floodplain Resilience Action Plan, identifying flood risks and prioritizing flood mitigation strategies. The Action Plan will be finalized in 2026.

Vision Statement

We see a future of continued collaboration with our citizens and communities that improves and sustains the quality of water resources.

Mission Statement

Our mission is to protect and enhance local ecosystems and natural water resources.



Find plans and reports by visiting www.clflwd.org.



Aquatic Invasive Species Prevention & Management

Preventing the spread and mitigating impacts of invasive species.

In 2025, the District continued a high level of involvement in the prevention and management of aquatic invasive species (AIS) on all major lakes.

Aquatic Invasive Species (AIS) Management Highlights

- **Moody Lake:** winter aeration system to promote gamefish survival, curly-leaf pondweed surveys, native aquatic plant transplant project
- **Bone Lake:** curly-leaf pondweed surveys, Eurasian watermilfoil surveys, zebra mussel detection surveys
- **Little Comfort Lake:** curly-leaf pondweed surveys, AIS tracking and early detection survey including Eurasian watermilfoil
- **Shields Lake:** winter aeration system to promote gamefish survival, curly-leaf pondweed surveys and treatment
- **Lake Keewahtin:** aquatic plant point intercept survey, purple loosestrife assessment
- **Forest Lake:** curly-leaf pondweed surveys and treatment, Eurasian watermilfoil surveys, flowering rush surveys and treatments, purple loosestrife assessment, zebra mussel monitoring, creation of plant harvester map to avoid AIS patches
- **Comfort Lake:** curly-leaf pondweed surveys and treatment, Eurasian watermilfoil surveys, zebra mussel monitoring, carp survey
- **District-Wide:** nonnative phragmites tracking and reporting

Watercraft Inspection Program Highlights

- 6,053 inspection surveys and 3,563 inspection hours at public launches



Comfort Lake Carp
Survey (Left)
Aquatic Plant
Survey (Right)



Visit www.clflwd.org
for detailed 2025 AIS
reports.

Land Acquisition & Management

Protecting and managing land to improve our water resources.

Heath Avenue Iron Enhanced Sand Filter Property Acquisition

The District acquired this 2.75-acre property upstream of Little Comfort Lake in April 2025. In 2026 the District will begin Phase 2 including implementation of an iron enhanced sand filter project to treat stormwater runoff from this tributary. See more information in the Projects section of this report.

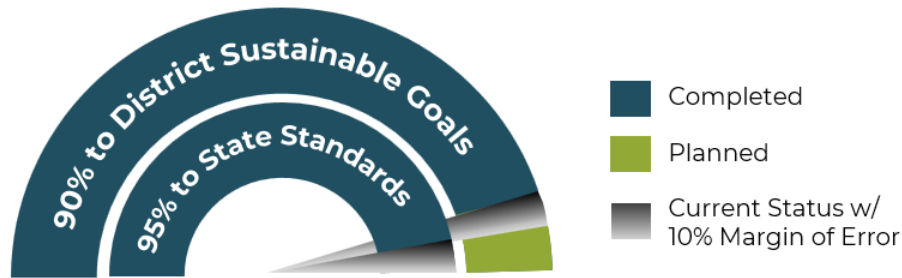
Bone Lake South Acquisition

The District closed on this property acquisition in December 2025, acquiring 238 acres of land just south of Bone Lake. In 2026 the District will begin Phase 2, which entails restoration and enhancement of wetlands, prairie, oak savanna, and forest. While the property will ultimately be open for public recreation, the District will keep the property closed to the public during the restoration and enhancement phase, which will be a multi-year process. The District will maintain communications with the surrounding community to provide updates on the project.



Project Activities

On-the-ground projects that improve our water resources



State Standard Reduction Goal: 3,245 lbs
District Sustainable Reduction Goal: 5,802 lbs

As of the end of 2025, the District has implemented projects and programs to achieve cumulative phosphorus load reductions so that priority lakes were 95% of the way toward meeting state standards (3,052 lb/yr out of 3,245 lb/yr) and 90% of the way toward meeting District long-term goals (5,203 lb/yr out of 5,802 lb/yr).

In 2025, water quality overall was improved compared to 2024. The 2024 monitoring season showed particularly poor water quality because of higher-than-average precipitation resulting in increased stormwater runoff and pollutant loads. For lakes, the 5-year average water quality continues to show an improvement compared to the 10-year average.

Calculating Cost-Benefit

The District evaluates the cost-benefit of every project it undertakes. Phosphorus is a major nutrient affecting water quality in Minnesota lakes and streams and is, therefore, a high priority factor for which the District evaluates cost-benefit. For every project, a phosphorus reduction cost-benefit (i.e., cost per pound of phosphorus removed over the lifecycle of the project) is listed.

The estimated cost takes into consideration the cost of:

- project development/design (e.g., staff time)
- construction (e.g., labor and materials)
- post-construction operations & maintenance (e.g., cleanouts and equipment replacements).

A cost-benefit below \$1,000/lb is generally considered acceptable. Most of the District's capital improvement projects have a phosphorus reduction cost-benefit below \$500/lb, and many are even below \$100/lb.

The same process can be used for sediment pollution reductions.

Moody Lake Capstone Projects

Lifetime Project Cost: \$275,000 | Phosphorus Reduction: 60 lb/yr | Lifetime Cost-Benefit: \$200/lb

The District completed this project in 2025. This project involved multiple best management practices in order to reduce phosphorus loading to Moody Lake by a total of 60 pounds per year and reduce sediment loading by 1 ton per year. The District performed diagnostic monitoring and site-specific wetland coring to target this project and address remaining nutrient loading hotspots in Moody Lake's direct drainage area. The District received a \$239,500 Clean Water Fund grant for this project.

Best management practices include:

- ✓ South Moody Lake Wetland: removal of phosphorus-laden soils and native vegetation restoration, 47 lb/yr phosphorus reduction
- ✓ Moody Lake Round Barn Wetland: removal of phosphorus-laden soils and native vegetation restoration, 10 lb/yr phosphorus reduction
- ✓ Moody Lake Park Improvements: soil decompaction and construction of swales to improve drainage and prevent erosion, 0.5 lb/yr phosphorus reduction
- ✓ Agricultural Field Gully Repair: conservation cover to mitigate gully erosion and prevent soil loss, 2 lb/yr phosphorus reduction, 2 tons/yr soil erosion prevention, 1 ton/yr total suspended solids reduction

2025 Seeding on Agricultural Field Near Moody Lake



Forest Lake Alum Treatment

Lifetime Project Cost: \$667,000 | Phosphorus Reduction: 527 lb/yr | Lifetime Cost-Benefit: \$100/lb

This project marks a major milestone for the District and its partners, as it represents the culmination of numerous projects and program initiatives to address excess phosphorus loading throughout the watershed of this regionally significant lake. This project treats the lake with alum which binds to phosphorus and makes it unavailable for algae growth. This project resulted in a 527 lb/yr phosphorus reduction for Forest Lake. The District received a \$533,600 Clean Water Fund grant for this project.

The first of two phases of the alum treatment took place in September 2023. The District monitored the lake in 2024 to measure success and determine dosing for a second application in 2025. The District completed the second and final alum dose in October 2025.

District Staff Monitoring Near Alum Barge



Alum Injection into Water Column

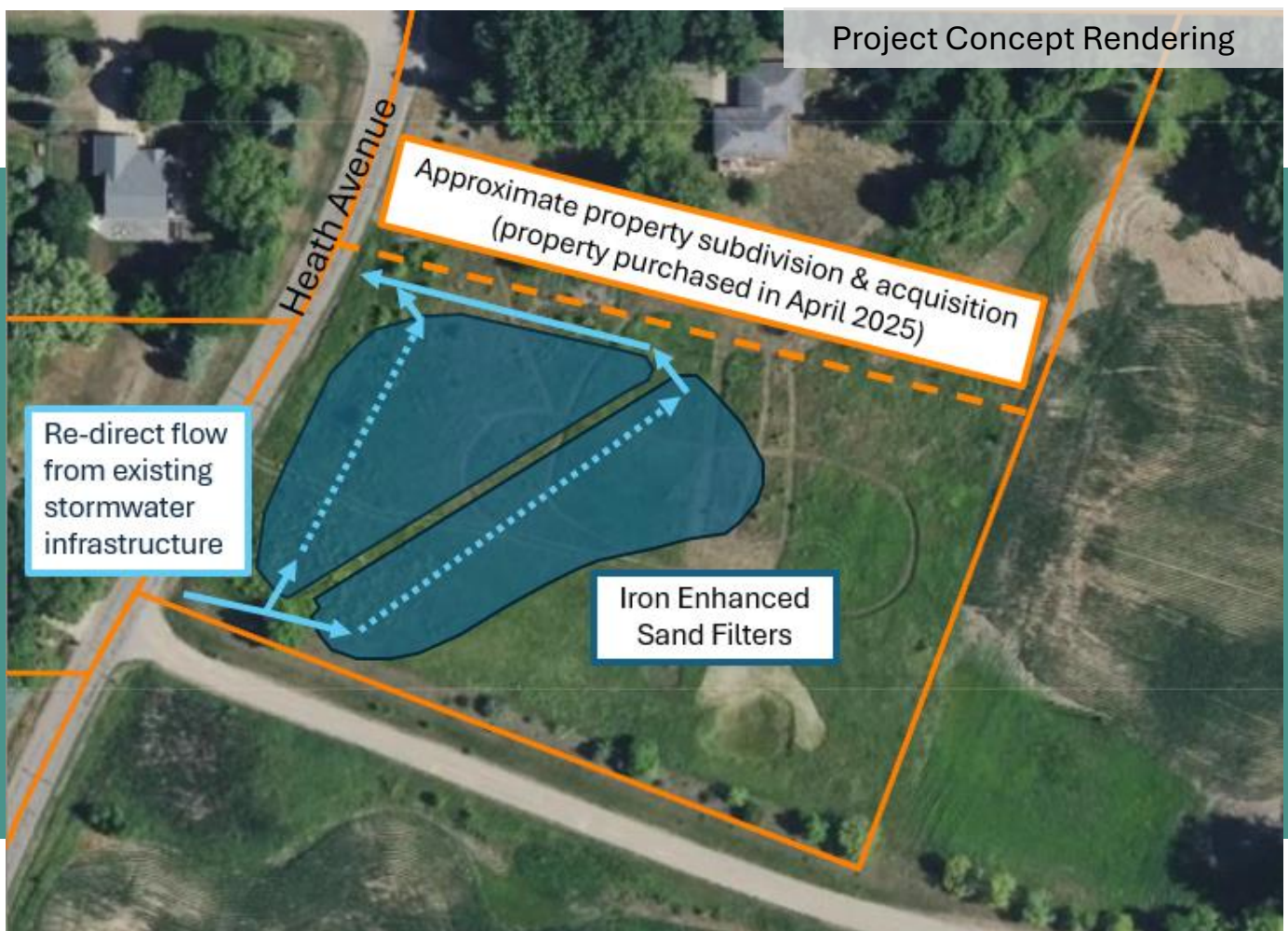
Heath Iron Enhanced Sand Filter

Lifetime Cost: \$1.8 million | Phosphorus Reduction: 80 lb/yr | Lifetime Cost-Benefit: \$900/lb

In 2025 the District purchased the 2.75-acre property necessary to construct this project. The District will proceed with project design and construction in 2026–2027.

The proposed iron enhanced sand filter project will be located along a tributary to Little Comfort Lake with elevated nutrient loading. Given the high amount of dissolved phosphorus in this tributary, iron enhanced sand filters are the most cost-effective practice to improve water quality. The project is estimated to reduce phosphorus loading to Little Comfort Lake by 80 pounds per year. Improvements to Little Comfort Lake will directly improve water quality in Comfort Lake. This project is key to achieving the Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) reductions for both Little Comfort Lake and Comfort Lake.

The District received a Lower St. Croix Watershed Based Implementation Funding grant for project feasibility study in 2024, which was a critical step to order the project and close on the property. The District received a FY25 Clean Water Fund competitive grant for project implementation in the amount of \$1,499,000.



School Lake Agricultural Best Management Practices

Lifetime Project Cost: \$100,000 | Phosphorus Reduction: 61 lb/yr | Lifetime Cost-Benefit: \$160/lb

The District has been working closely with a farmer in southern Chisago County to implement practices to address excess phosphorus/sediment loading from their property and upslope fields. These projects will improve water quality in School Lake, which discharges through a stream to Little Comfort Lake. The District received a FY24 Clean Water Fund Projects & Practices grant for the agricultural BMPs in the amount of \$90,000. After the agricultural practices are completed, the District will look to restoring downstream degraded wetlands. This is a multi-stage project that will span multiple years.

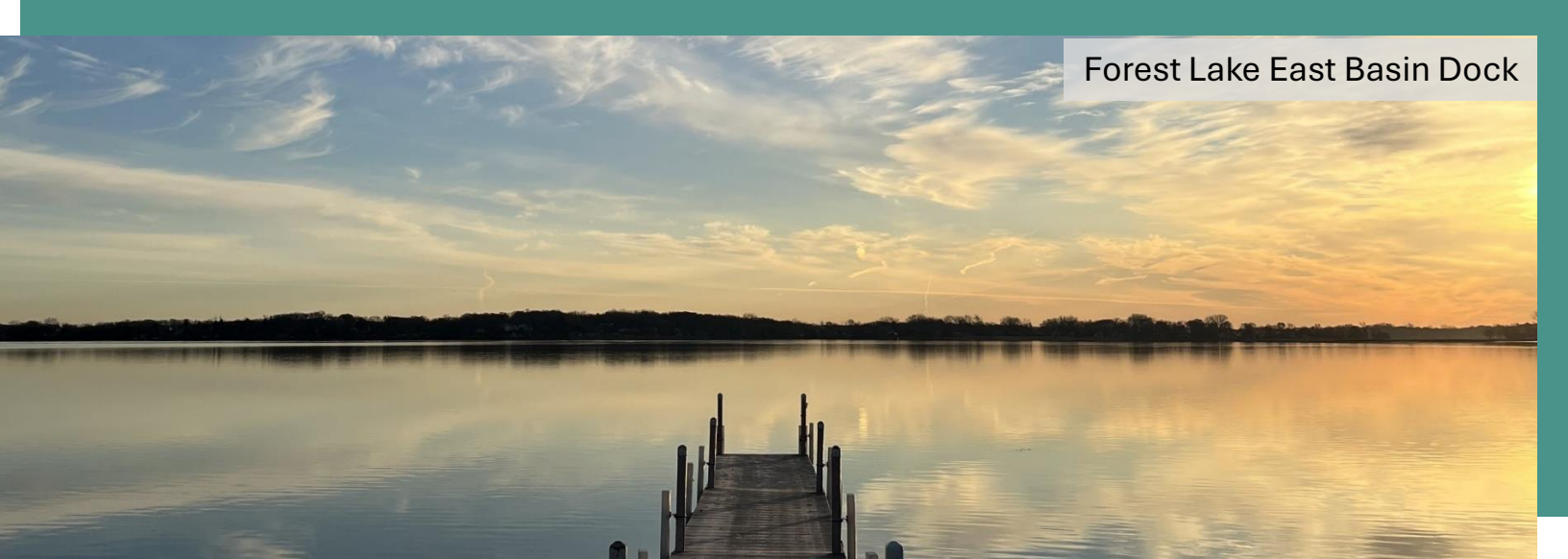
Comfort Lake Green Infrastructure Project

Lifetime Project Cost: TBD

The District received a Clean Water Legacy Partners grant from the Board of Water and Soil Resources to construct a green infrastructure project to improve water quality in Comfort Lake. The District will work with a private landowner on the east side of Comfort Lake to implement a stormwater wetland restoration project. This project is in the early stages of development, and the pollutant removals and lifetime cost-benefit are to be determined.

Sunrise River Headwaters Project Development

The District received a FY25 Clean Water Fund competitive grant in the amount of \$118,000 for project development in the Sunrise River watershed. This project identification and development effort will dovetail with the District's other planning and project implementation efforts. This initiative is underway and will be completed by the end of 2027. This initiative will create a foundation for future water quality improvement and protection efforts in the Sunrise River headwaters area.



Forest Lake East Basin Dock

2025 Financials

The District is primarily funded by a combination of tax levy, grants, and Clean Water Partnership loans. Grants have been essential to the District's ambitious improvement in water quality.



Levy

The District's tax revenue comes from an ad valorem levy on properties within the District boundaries. The Board of Managers carefully weighs tax impacts when considering its annual levy. Over time, property values within the District have steadily increased, and the levy has increased in parallel. The levy represents a steady source of revenue that ensures the District can maintain operations and provide watershed services. To accomplish more clean water outcomes without dramatically increasing the levy, the District has always used grants and loans in order to supplement stable levy funding.



Loan

The Clean Water Partnership Loan is a low interest, 7 to 10-year amortized, loan from the Federal Clean Water Act Fund, administered through the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency (MPCA). This loan operates on a reimbursement basis. The use of the grants and loan programs through the state and federal clean water programs allows the District to accelerate projects and to reach water quality goals much sooner than is common practice. The District has taken a multi-phase approach to its use of loan funds. In 2025 the District received \$500,000 in loan disbursements, and the District worked with MPCA to adjust its loan repayment schedules so that all four loans in the repayment phase are on a 10-year repayment schedule.



Grants

During calendar year 2025 the District:

- Submitted 18 grant applications, 10 of which were awarded, and 2 are still pending
- Applied for \$7.9 million in grant funds and was awarded \$3.3 million, most of which was for projects that will span multiple fiscal years

Statewide, the District is the recipient of the most cumulative competitive Clean Water Fund Projects & Practices grants over the past 11 years with a cumulative award of \$6.6 million between fiscal years 2014-2025. The District's use of diagnostic monitoring to identify and target highly cost-effective water quality improvement projects is key to its success in winning competitive grants.

2025 Financials Continued

The 2025 financial audit was completed by Abdo on March 5th and 6th. The draft audit was presented to the CLFLWD Board in April. The final audit documents include the District’s Annual Financial Report and the Independent Auditor’s Report on Compliance with Minnesota Legal Compliance Guide of Local Governments for the year ended December 31, 2025. A copy of the 2025 financial audit report is available by contacting the District office or visiting our website at www.clflwd.org.

Budget Table 2024-2026

	2024 Actual (audited)	2025 Budget (w/ amendments)	2025 Actual (unaudited)	2026 Budget (w/ amendments)
REVENUES				
Levy	\$1,710,076	\$1,805,843	\$1,766,336	\$2,233,828
Loan Proceeds	\$752,250	\$500,000	\$500,000	\$234,000
Grants & Other	\$643,715	\$3,078,038	\$2,988,901	\$1,934,120
TOTAL REVENUES	\$3,106,041	\$5,383,881	\$5,255,236	\$4,401,948
EXPENDITURES				
1000 Series - Administration	\$568,491	\$519,266	\$579,873	\$610,236
2000 Series - Debt Services	\$294,303	\$438,608	\$416,899	\$449,760
3000 Series - Programs	\$1,102,027	\$1,506,083	\$1,331,919	\$1,234,175
5000 Series - Projects	\$779,953	\$739,804	\$709,288	\$1,994,933
6000 Series – Land Acquisition & Mgmt.	\$26,626	\$2,523,135	\$2,527,387	\$66,000
TOTAL EXPENDITURES	\$2,771,400	\$5,726,896	\$5,565,366	\$4,355,104
Revenues over expenditures	<u>\$334,641</u>	<u>(\$343,015)</u>	<u>(\$310,130)</u>	<u>\$46,844</u>
Fund balance - January 1	<u>\$1,096,684</u>	<u>\$1,431,325</u>	<u>\$1,431,325</u>	<u>\$1,121,195</u>
Fund balance - December 31	<u>\$1,431,325</u>	<u>\$1,088,310</u>	<u>\$1,121,195</u>	<u>\$1,168,039</u>

Active Grants in 2025

Grant Program, Project Name, Total Grant Award*	
Total Grant Awards: \$3,977,792	
CWF, WJD-6 Wetland Enhancement, \$386,000	Lessard-Sams, Bone Lk South Wetland Acquisition, \$1.9M
CWF, Moody Lake Capstone Projects, \$239,500	CPL, Bone Lk South Wetland Acquisition, \$500,000
CWF, School Lake Agricultural BMPs, \$90,000	ECP, North Shore Circle Shoreline, \$26,000
CWF, Forest Lake Alum Treatment, \$533,600	BWSR PRAP, Strategic Planning, \$10,000
Washington Co AIS Prevention & Management, \$24,692	MGLP, Shoreline Restorations & Outreach (\$60,000)
Local Climate Action, Shoreline Resiliency, \$35,000	MN Pollution Control Agency, Greencorps Host Site, 1 FTE
Lower St. Croix WBIF, Heath IESF Feasibility, \$49,000	

*Grant revenues vary by year depending on project timeline. Some project timelines span multiple years.

2026 Budget

Account Code	Budget Item	2026 WMP	2026 Grant & Other Revenue Spend	2026 Local Spend	2026 Total Expense Budget
1-000	ADMINISTRATION	\$490,373	\$0	\$610,236	\$610,236
1-001	BOARD ADMINISTRATION	77,671	0	35,000	35,000
1-002	GENERAL OFFICE EXPENSES	117,087	0	143,236	143,236
1-003	GENERAL ADMINISTRATIVE	195,917	0	306,000	306,000
1-004	PROFESSIONAL SERVICES	99,698	0	126,000	126,000
2-000	DEBT SERVICES FUND	\$150,000	\$49,760	\$400,000	\$449,760
2-000	CWP LOAN PRINCIPAL & INTEREST REPAYMENT	150,000	49,760	400,000	449,760
3-000	PROGRAMS	\$1,452,803	\$147,000	\$1,087,175	\$1,234,175
3-000	GENERAL PROGRAM DEVELOPMENT	16,809	0	500	500
3-001	DISTRICT RULES AND RULEMAKING	11,593	0	52,000	52,000
3-002	PERMITTING	231,855	102,000	166,000	268,000
3-003	MONITORING & DATA ASSESSMENT	315,323	0	102,000	102,000
3-004	NON-POINT SOURCE POLLUTION ABATEMENT	142,592	5,500	186,500	192,000
3-005	EDUCATION AND OUTREACH	137,374	10,000	152,000	162,000
3-006	INTERAGENCY COMMUNICATION	64,919	0	17,000	17,000
3-007	RESEARCH	19,128	0	11,000	11,000
3-008	MEASUREMENT OF PROGRESS	13,331	0	11,000	11,000
3-009	GRANT RESEARCH & PREPARATION	24,924	0	63,000	63,000
3-010	OPERATIONS & MAINTENANCE	122,884	0	94,475	94,475
3-011	AIS PREVENTION & MANAGEMENT	321,351	29,500	219,700	249,200
3-012	[SEE 6-000 LAND ACQUISITION & MGMT]				
3-013	WATERSHED PLANNING & RESILIENCY	30,720	0	12,000	12,000
5-000	PROJECTS	\$1,257,234	\$1,754,120	\$240,813	\$1,994,933
5-000	GENERAL PROJECT DEVELOPMENT	107,232	0	58,358	58,358
5-100	FLOODPLAIN & CLIMATE RESILIENCY	109,552	0	66,000	66,000
5-200	LAKES	67,818	1,633,120	105,455	1,738,575
5-300	STREAMS	80,570	0	0	0
5-400	WETLANDS	884,527	121,000	11,000	132,000
5-500	UPLAND RESOURCES	0	0	0	0
5-600	GROUNDWATER	7,535	0	0	0
6-000	LAND ACQUISITION & MANAGEMENT	\$320,539	\$0	\$66,000	\$66,000
6-000	LAND ACQUISITION & MANAGEMENT	320,539	0	66,000	66,000
TOTAL BUDGET		\$3,670,949	\$1,950,880	\$2,404,224	\$4,355,104

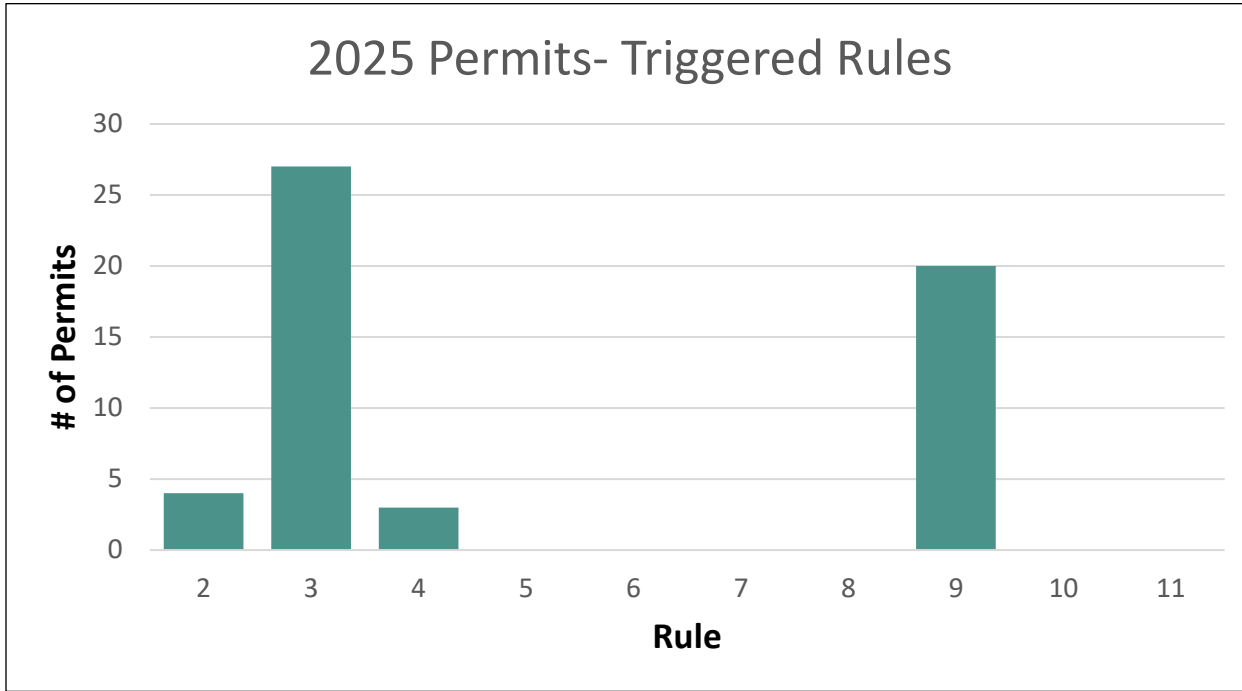
2026 Work Plan

WMP Code	Work Plan Category	Total Staff Hours	Full Time Equivalent (FTE)	Percentage of Total Work Plan	2026 Cost
1000	ADMINISTRATION	4,267	2.4	20.61%	\$249,424
1001	BOARD ADMINISTRATION	1,210	0.7	5.85%	\$70,729
1002	GENERAL OFFICE EXPENSES	856	0.5	4.14%	\$50,037
1003	GENERAL ADMINISTRATIVE	2,151	1.2	10.39%	\$125,735
1004	PROFESSIONAL SERVICES	50	0.0	0.24%	\$2,923
3000	PROGRAMS	12,952	7.2	62.57%	\$757,098
3001	DISTRICT RULES AND RULEMAKING	384	0.2	1.86%	\$22,446
3002	PERMITTING*	2,965	1.6	14.32%	\$173,316
3003	MONITORING & DATA ASSESSMENT	1,274	0.7	6.15%	\$74,471
3004	NON-POINT SOURCE POLLUTION ABATEMENT*	1,573	0.9	7.60%	\$91,948
3005	EDUCATION AND OUTREACH*	1,860	1.0	8.99%	\$108,725
3006	INTERAGENCY COMMUNICATION*	438	0.2	2.12%	\$25,603
3007	RESEARCH	96	0.1	0.46%	\$5,612
3008	MEASUREMENT OF PROGRESS	280	0.2	1.35%	\$16,367
3009	GRANT RESEARCH & PREPARATION	1,155	0.6	5.58%	\$67,514
3010	OPERATION & MAINTENANCE	1,041	0.6	5.03%	\$60,851
3011	AIS PREVENTION & MANAGEMENT*	1,696	0.9	8.19%	\$99,138
3012	[see 6000 LAND ACQUISITION]	0	0.0	0.00%	\$0
3013	WATERSHED PLANNING & RESILIENCY	190	0.1	0.92%	\$11,106
5000	PROJECTS	2,462	1.4	11.89%	\$143,914
5000	GENERAL PROJECT DEVELOPMENT	506	0.3	2.44%	\$29,578
5100	FLOODPLAIN	1,032	0.6	4.99%	\$60,325
5200	LAKES*	428	0.2	2.07%	\$25,018
5400	WETLANDS*	496	0.3	2.40%	\$28,993
6000	LAND ACQUISITION & MANAGEMENT	1,019	0.6	4.92%	\$59,565
6000	LAND ACQUISITION & MANAGEMENT*	1,019	0.6	4.92%	\$59,565
Totals		20,700	11.5	100%	\$1,210,000

*Items for which staff costs are partially funded by fees, partner organizations and/or grants

Appendix A – Summary of Permits and Variances Issued in 2025

Rule	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
# of Permits	4	27	3	0	0	0	0	20	0	0



District Rules

Rule 1.0 – Procedural Requirements

Rule 2.0 - Stormwater Management

Rule 3.0 – Erosion Control

Rule 4.0 – Lake, Stream, Wetland Buffers

Rule 5.0 – Shoreline & Streambank Alterations Rule 6.0 – Watercourse & Basin Crossing

Rule 7.0 – Floodplain & Drainage Alterations

Rule 8.0 – Wetland Management

Rule 9.0 – Fees

Rule 10.0 – Financial Assurances

Rule 11.0 – Variances

Rule 12.0 – Enforcement

Visit <https://clflwd.org/permitting/> for more info.

Maintenance Agreement Inspections

The amended CLFLWD Rules for Stormwater Management (Rule 2), Buffer (Rule 4), and Watercourse Crossing (Rule 6) permits require permittees to install and maintain permanent practices onsite. Stormwater management permittees have a maintenance agreement associated with the required practices and buffer permittees have a recorded buffer with the applicable county. Property owner inspection reports are a requirement of maintenance agreements and are due annually in January. The District provides reporting templates and online forms to assist in annual self-reporting. In addition to permittee self-reporting, the District routinely inspects stormwater management practices and buffers to ensure compliance with maintenance requirements.

Comfort Lake - Forest Lake Watershed District

Spring 2025



CLFLWD Office

44 Lake Street South, Suite A
Forest Lake, MN 55025

Office Hours: Monday - Friday
8:00 a.m. - 4:30 p.m.

(651) 395 - 5850

info@clflwd.org www.clflwd.org



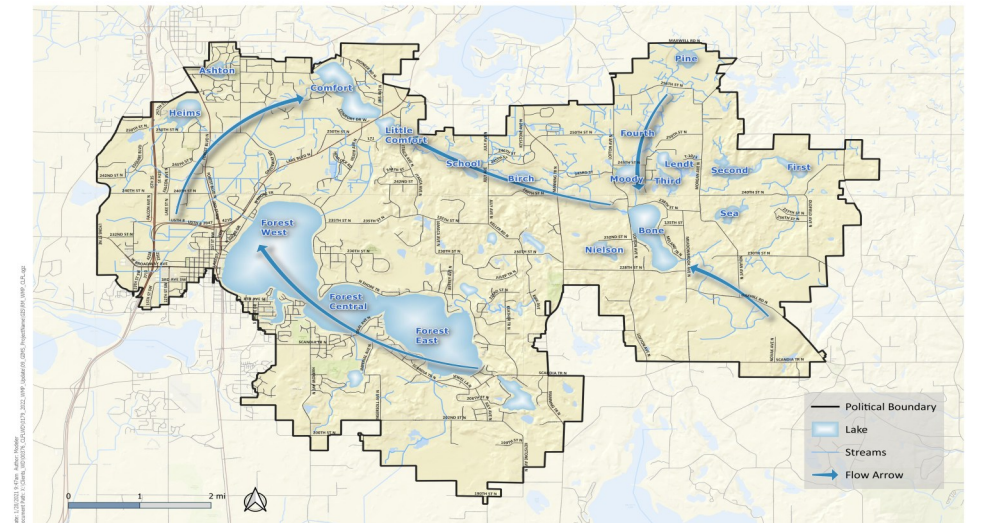
WATERSHED UPDATE

What is a Watershed?

In 1955, Minnesota Legislature passed the Watershed Act in order to better address water-related issues and concerns occurring within the state at a watershed level. Watershed districts are special purpose units of government that have been created to help prevent and solve water resource problems on a watershed level. The boundaries of a watershed generally follow the hydrological or topographical limits of an area or region.

Your Watershed District

The Comfort Lake–Forest Lake Watershed District (CLFLWD) is a special unit of local government established in 1999 to address water-related issues. Our Watershed District encompasses 49 square miles in northern Washington County and southern Chisago County, including portions of the cities of Chisago City, Forest Lake, Scandia, Wyoming, Chisago Lake Township, and Franconia Township.



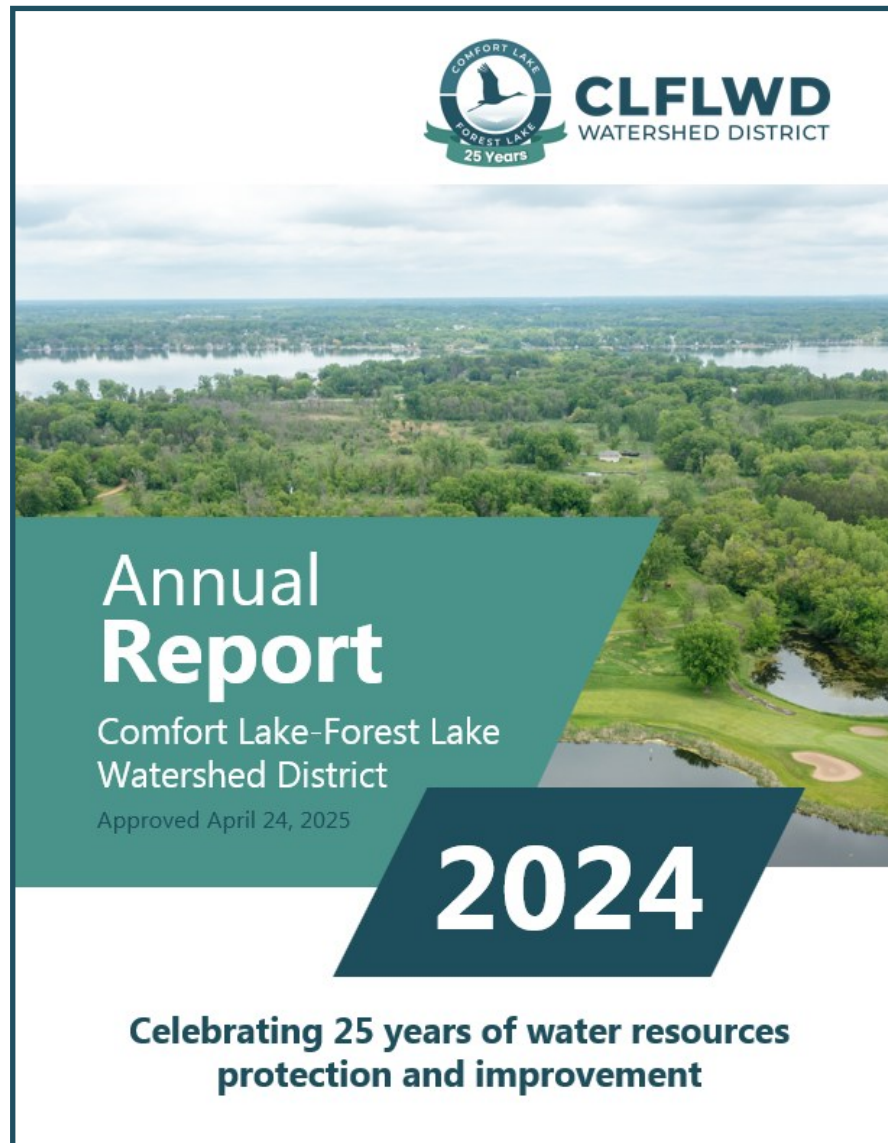
Board of Managers

President - Jackie Anderson
Vice President - Christopher Loth
Treasurer - Stephen Schmaltz
Assistant Treasurer - Douglas Toavs
Secretary - Dave Bakke

Contact information for the CLFLWD Board of Managers and staff can be found by visiting, <https://clflwd.org/about/>

2024 Annual Report

The 2024 Annual Report is intended to inform readers of the District's 2024 activities, goals, and objectives, and describe its projected work plan and budget for 2025. Pursuant to Minnesota Statutes Section 103D.351 and Minnesota Rules Section 8410.0150, the CLFLWD Board of Managers submits its 2024 Annual Report to the Board of Water and Soil Resources, the Commissioner of the Department of Natural Resources, and the Director of the Ecological and Water Resources Division. To view the 2024 Annual Report, as well as the 2024 Progress Report and interactive history timeline, visit www.clflwd.org



2024 Progress and Highlights

- ◆ Celebrated the District's 25th anniversary since establishment in 1999.
- ◆ Delisted Bone Lake from the impaired waters list for excess nutrients and prepared to delist five more lakes by 2026.
- ◆ Held multiple community education workshops and District events, sent direct communications to target audiences, and expanded social media use.
- ◆ Applied for \$1.2 million in grants and was awarded \$830,000 in fiscal year 2024; managed 15 active grants for various projects and programs.
- ◆ Enforced District rules through permitting program management, site inspections, and oversight of buffers and permit maintenance declarations.
- ◆ Implemented a multi-faceted stream and lake monitoring program with the help of multiple volunteers.
- ◆ Offered cost-share programs, updated lake shoreline inventories, and expanded outreach regarding natural lakeshore buffers.
- ◆ Continued increasing the number of projects under the Operations & Maintenance Program and refined O&M inspections and tracking.
- ◆ Implemented Aquatic Invasive Species Prevention & Management Program including watercraft inspections, public outreach, AIS surveys, and AIS management; no new AIS introductions observed in 2024.
- ◆ Made progress on a Strategic Plan and a Floodplain Resiliency Assessment, both of which will be completed in 2025.
- ◆ Completed two large water quality projects: Moody Lake Capstone Projects and Washington Judicial Ditch 6 Wetland Enhancement.
- ◆ Performed project development for the Forest Lake Alum Treatment, Heath Iron Enhanced Sand Filter, School Lake Ag BMPs, North Shore Circle Park Shoreline Restoration, and additional livestock management/agricultural BMPs.

Project Highlight

Sunrise River Highway - 61 Wetland Enhancement

The wetland enhancement project diverts flow from an existing ditch system in the Highway 35 drainage area, through a pre-treatment cell, and then diffuses the flow into the wetland complex located on property owned by the District. The project will result in annual phosphorus reductions of 89 lb/yr to the Sunrise River and 65 lb/yr to Comfort Lake, which ultimately drains to the St. Croix River through the Sunrise River. The project will also provide increased wildlife habitat and add 18.3 acre-ft of flood storage to the area.



Project Outcomes

- ◆ 89 pounds per year phosphorus removal to the Sunrise River
- ◆ 65 pounds per year phosphorous removal to Comfort Lake
 - ◆ 18. acre feet of flood storage capacity
 - ◆ 22.1 acres of restored wetland habitat

Funding Sources

- ◆ Clean Water Fund Grant - \$492,000
 - ◆ Section 319 Grant - \$100,000
 - ◆ Lower St. Croix \$300,499
- ◆ District Grant Match - \$640,855

Total Project Budget - \$1,533,384