



MEMORANDUM

Comfort Lake-Forest Lake Watershed District

Date: August 3, 2026
To: CLFLWD Board of Managers
From: Mike Kinney, District Administrator
Subject: 2026 Minnesota Watersheds Summer Tour



District Wide

Background/Discussion

The purpose of this agenda item is for staff to gain knowledge regarding what managers want to attend the 2026 Minnesota Watersheds Summer Tour.

The 2026 Minnesota Watersheds Summer Tour will be hosted in Detroit Lakes August 24-26 in partnership with the Red River Watershed Management Board, Wild Rice Watershed District, Pelican River Watershed District, Red River Retention Authority, and the Board of Water and Soil Resources. The Summer Tour provides the host watershed district with the opportunity to showcase their watershed management efforts.

Event Information: <https://www.mnwatersheds.com/summer-tour>

Where: Lakefront Holiday Inn, 1155 Hwy 10 East, Detroit Lakes, MN

When: August 25-26, 2026

Recommended Motion

Proposed Motion: Manager _____ moves to authorize managers and staff to attend the Minnesota Watersheds tour and expend the associated funds as necessary to attend.

Seconded by Manager _____.

Attached

2026 Summer Tour pocket guide

August 25 Workshop Agenda

August 25 Welcome Reception Agenda

Pocket Guide

MINNESOTA WATERSHEDS

2026 SUMMER TOUR

**AUG.
24-26**





SCHEDULE

All events are taking place at the Holiday Inn, Lakefront in Detroit Lakes.

MONDAY, AUG 24

5-8 p.m. NETWORKING EVENT & PONTOON RIDES

TUESDAY, AUG 25

9 a.m.-12 p.m. MINNESOTA ASSOCIATION OF WATERSHED ADMINISTRATORS (MAWA) MEETING
*Lunch will be served for attendees

1 p.m. REGISTRATION & WELCOME

LEARN FROM THE EXPERTS

1:15-3:15 p.m. **Don't Click on That! & Planning for Technology Disruption**
Christian Torkelson, League of Minnesota Cities

TUESDAY, AUG 25

3:30-4:30 p.m. **Game Changer: How Minnesota's Clean Water Fund has Transformed Waterwork in the State**
Jen Kader, Clean Water Council

5-7:30 p.m. **DINNER & WELCOME RECEPTION**
Tera Guetter Tribute, RRWMB 50th Anniversary Celebration & Bus Tour Overview

WEDNESDAY, AUG 26

8 a.m.- 4:30 p.m. BUS TOUR

12 p.m. **LUNCH — Sponsored by Bell Bank**
Twin Valley Community Center



EVENT PARTNERS



COLLABORATIVE PROJECT HIGHLIGHTS

BUCKS MILL — As part of the Landmark Reconnect the Red Initiative and the Buck's Mill Dam Modification project, this WBIF-funded effort restored private streambank ecology and eliminated a major barrier, successfully restoring natural fish passage from Pelican Lake to Detroit Lake and bringing the watershed closer to full connectivity with the Red River.

- 27 Native Species Planted 6,500 sq ft
- Total Cost: \$4,345.88, Cost Share: \$3,694.00
- Funding Source: Clean Water Fund - Otter Tail WBIF
- Soil Savings: 1.49 Tons / Year Phosphorus Reduction: 1.43 lbs / Year

TOM BERGREN & JOHN AUSTINSON: RICEVILLE 5 & 6: 9 BASINS — This project utilized the road as an embankment structure, which allowed for the removal of the culvert. A riser was put in its place in order to minimize gully potential for years to come.

- Total Cost: \$153,953.09 | Cost Share: \$138,557.61
- Funding Source: Clean Water Fund
- Soil Savings: 387.80 Tons / Year
- Phosphorus Reduction: 445.97 lbs / Year
- 27.4 Ac-ft of Storage

ERIC ZURN (AR VIII FAMILY FARM TRUST) SPRING CREEK 34 (8 BASINS)

— This project discharges its outflow directly into the Wild Rice River, entering the stream just before it meets Spring Creek, which inspired the name of the local township.

- Total Cost: \$265,460.18 | Cost Share: \$240,414.16
- Funding Source: Clean Water Fund / EQIP/ Wild Rice WD
- Soil Savings: 166.86 Tons / Year
- Phosphorus Reduction: 194.83 lbs / Year 80.0 Ac-ft of Storage

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Streambank restoration along Valley Creek, a world-class trout stream in Afton, MN.

TOUR STOPS



Bus Stops



Drive-by

Locations are listed in the order of the planned tour. Eight locations include guided, on-site visits. The remaining locations are notable features that will be viewed and discussed from the bus as the tour travels between stops.



1. BUCK'S MILL DAM PROJECT

A natural modification to support species

A partnership between the PRWD, MN DNR, and Moore Engineering, modernizes the historic 1936 structure on the Pelican River. By adding a natural spillway and replacing the downstream culvert, the modification restores fish migration routes — supporting species like Lake Sturgeon — and improves river ecology.



2. THE STINKING LAKE PROJECT

Flood storage and a new water management system

Established in 1990 by the Buffalo Red River Watershed District, provides 5,159 acre-feet of vital flood storage for the Hay Creek Watershed. Building on this legacy, the Board officially established the Hay Creek Water Management District in 2023 to further manage and formalize the project's operations.



3. GOOSE PRAIRIE WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT AREA (WMA)

Enhancement Project to support water management and flood control

A partnership between the Wild Rice Watershed District, the Minnesota DNR, and regional partners. The project provides 1,500 acre-feet of floodwater retention, significantly reducing downstream flooding while enhancing habitat, water quality, and recreation.

2026 SUMMER TOUR STOPS





SOUTH BRANCH WILD RICE RIVER RESTORATION (SBWRRR) SITE 1

This Clay County pilot project supports river stabilization degraded river reach. By installing rock arch rapids, the project reconnects the river to its floodplain, reducing flood damage, erosion, and sediment transport.



DALEN COULEE PROJECT

Reducing soil erosion and improving habitat

Located in Clay and Norman Counties, this project mitigates recurring agricultural flooding by restoring the natural drainage and storage capacity. By stabilizing the channel and establishing permanent vegetation, the project reduces erosion, improves water quality, and creates lasting habitat for fish and wildlife.



THE RURAL FARMSTEAD RING DIKE PROGRAM *Helping families in flood zones*

Supported by the Minnesota Legislature, the Red River Watershed Management Board, and local watershed districts — like the Wild Rice Watershed District — safeguards rural homes and agricultural infrastructure, helping families remain on their land while strengthening basin-wide flood resilience.



4. PERLEY FLOOD CONTROL LEVEE & GRADE RAISE PROJECT

Offers 100-year flood protection to 162 acres

This project provides the City of Perley with a permanent, reliable flood protection system following historic vulnerability to Red River flooding. By constructing a continuous earthen levee, internal drainage, and critical road grade raises.

[MORE STOPS >>](#)

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CELEBRATE

50TH ANNIVERSARY RED RIVER WATERSHED MANAGEMENT BOARD



FUN FACTS & HIGHLIGHTS

- Created in 1976 by the MN legislature.
- Comprised currently of seven watershed districts via a joint powers board agreement.
- 21 counties within the Red River Basin of MN along with many cities.
- Taxation authority.
- Funding: The RRWMB has helped fund approximately 70 flood mitigation projects including:
 - Flood impoundments and city flood protection.
 - Flood-prone property acquisitions.
 - 300+ farmstead ring dikes.
 - 40 water quality projects and several hydrologic and hydraulic studies.
 - River Watch Program.



NELSON SLOUGH PROJECT

- A groundbreaking ceremony was held on June 30, 2026 by the Middle-Snake-Tamarac Rivers WD.

HAPPY ANNIVERSARY!



THE DWIGHT HEITMAN RING DIKE

Protecting farmsteads from flooding

Constructed in 1998 under a Minnesota state-led initiative and administered by the Wild Rice Watershed District and the Red River Watershed Management Board, this project protects Norman County farmsteads by sitting two feet above the 1997 flood's high-water mark.



THE LOWER WILD RICE CORRIDOR PROJECT

For ecological health and flood prevention

This long-term, voluntary initiative restoring a 23-mile river reach through landowner-supported conservation easements, using strategies like setting back levees and reconnecting oxbows to simultaneously reduce agricultural flood risks and improve ecological health.



THE LAKE IDA DETENTION UNIT

Native solutions for reduction of sediment

Located in an inter-beach area of the ancient glacial Lake Agassiz. The WMA is mainly wet prairie with a mixture of lowland grasses and sedges along a short ridge with lowland shrubs.



5. THE HEIBERG DAM RESTORATION

Enhanced ecological function and flood resilience

The project realigned the Wild Rice River to its historic course while maintaining the dam's vital role in ice management and infrastructure protection. By incorporating features like rock arch rapids and lowered dam sections, the project enhanced ecological function and public safety while balancing flood resilience.



LUNCH @ Twin Valley Community Center

Heiberg Dam rainfall destruction presentation by Daryl Richardson, meteorologist in the Red River Basin

Sponsored by





FRENCHMAN'S BLUFF

Support & fuel health in the native ecosystem

This majestic tallgrass prairie preserve overlooks the Red River Valley. Today, the site is managed in partnership with the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources and utilizes active conservation methods like prescribed burns to support scientific research and native ecosystem health.



WATER AND SEDIMENT CONTROL BASIN

Improving soil health & water quality w/ drainage flow

This engineered embankment system built across sloping cropland to trap sediment, manage runoff, and reduce gully erosion. Often installed in series as part of a comprehensive conservation plan, these structures improve soil health and water quality by controlling drainage flows.



ZURN WASCB

A familial effort to protect their farmland

By prioritizing soil health through reduced tillage and the installation of over 80 water and sediment control basins, the Zurn family achieved Minnesota Agricultural Water Quality Certification Program (MAWQCP). These efforts, supported by cost-share partnerships with the NRCS and SWCD, also included establishing grassed filter strips to further protect the water and land on their farm.



OGEMA BANK PROJECT

Working with natives to improve wetland & bank health

Selected in 2018 for the Local Government Road Wetland Replacement Program, this project restored 173 acres of agricultural land by disabling artificial drainage and seeding native vegetation. Completed in 2021, the restoration successfully created a diverse prairie and marsh ecosystem that supports over 60 native species and generates 88 wetland banking credits.

MORE STOPS >>

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MINNESOTA WATERSHEDS



2026 ANNUAL CONFERENCE & TRADE SHOW

DECEMBER 2-4
GRAND VIEW LODGE
NISSWA, MN



*Flood Control Levee
Improvement Project,
Perley MN*

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OKESON BEST MANAGEMENT PRACTICE

Funding impactful community improvements

Located in Detroit Lakes, the Becker Soil & Water Conservation District and the NRCS collaborated on complex sediment-reduction projects that significantly improved water quality and land productivity. By offering to cover up to 90% of project costs through diverse funding sources, they successfully encouraged local landowners to adopt impactful conservation practices.



CAMPBELL CREEK RESTORATION

Solutions for erosion control & water quality

In 2022, the District secured a 16-year grant from the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency to systematically reduce phosphorus and sediment pollution within the Campbell Creek subwatershed. This initiative is now collaborating with local landowners to implement targeted erosion control and best management practices to achieve long-term water quality improvements. Phase 1 will restore 4100 linear feet of streambank using a combination of boulder weirs, conifer revetments, and bank grading. The project will also include the replacement of a highway culvert that has been identified as a barrier to fish passage.



6. RICE LAKE WETLAND RESTORATION

Decrease pollution while improving native habitat

Targets a 280-acre area identified as a primary source of phosphorus loading for Big Detroit Lake. Supported by Clean Water Fund grants, the project uses a phased approach — including rock arch rapids — to raise water levels and improve retention. By restoring this ditched wetland, the project aims to significantly decrease downstream phosphorus pollution while enhancing vital habitat for waterfowl and pollinators.



TOUR END *Return back to Holiday Inn*

BUCK'S MILL DAM PROJECT

Check out the
project video:



Through state and local partnerships, like Pelican River Watershed District, the **150-year-old Buck's Mill Dam** was restored into a natural rock arch rapids system that **reconnects the Pelican River, restores fish passage**, improves safety, and preserves seasonal water levels.

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Minnesota Watersheds Summer Tour

Education Workshop

Tuesday, August 25

1:00 pm – 4:30 pm

Location: Holiday Inn, 1155 Highway 10 East, Detroit Lakes, MN

Don't Click on That! and Planning for Technology Disruption

Time: 1:00 p.m. to 3:15 p.m.

Breaks: 2:00 p.m. and 3:15 p.m. (15 minutes each)

Cybersecurity is everyone's responsibility. This workshop provides practical guidance to help watershed board members and staff protect systems from growing cyber threats. Topics include recognizing phishing and email scams, preventing password theft, understanding social engineering tactics, identifying vulnerabilities in local government systems, and implementing best practices for cybersecurity resilience.

Christian Torkelson is a Cybersecurity Loss Control Consultant at the League of Minnesota Cities Insurance Trust, specializing in helping local governments manage cybersecurity challenges. His professional background uniquely combines public service and IT expertise. He served two terms as a city council member in Little Canada and has worked in IT and cybersecurity since 2008, starting from helpdesk support and advancing to a cybersecurity specialization.

"Game changer": How Minnesota's Clean Water Fund has transformed water work in the state

Time: 3:30 p.m. to 4:30 p.m.

Since passage of the Clean Water Land and Legacy Amendment in 2008, just over \$2B has been spent or appropriated through the Clean Water Fund, revolutionizing the way Minnesota is able to protect and restore waters across the state. Throughout that time, watershed districts and organizations have been critical partners in getting to clean water outcomes, from planning to implementation. This session will delve into how Clean Water Funds have been used, how the Clean Water Council develops its budget recommendations for the Governor and legislature, and what's on the horizon.

Jen Kader is the administrator of the Clean Water Council. She has worked for Freshwater, the Metropolitan Council, and served as a previous member and Vice Chair of the Council. She also has experience interacting with the Legislature and in facilitating dialogue among diverse stakeholders, including serving as lead facilitator for several comprehensive watershed management plans as part of the One Watershed One Plan process.

Thank you to our Summer Tour Sponsors!





Minnesota Watersheds Summer Tour

Dinner, Welcome Reception, and RRWMB 50th Anniversary Celebration

Tuesday, August 25

Location: Holiday Inn, 1155 Highway 10 East, Detroit Lakes, MN

Dinner and Welcome Reception

Social Hour 5 p.m.

Dinner served 5:30 p.m.

Tribute for Tera Guetter 6:15 p.m.

Red River Watershed Management Board (RRWMB) 50th Anniversary Celebration

Ceremony Kickoff – 6:30 p.m.

Rob Sip, Executive Director, Red River Watershed Management Board , Ceremony Emcee

RRWMB Milestones and Perspectives at 50 Years – 6:35 p.m.

John Finney, President, Red River Watershed Management Board

Legislative Collaboration and Partnerships: Comments from Minnesota Legislators

Senator Mark Johnson – 6:45 p.m.

Senator Jordan Rasmusson – 6:55 p.m.

Senator Rob Kupec – 6:50 p.m.

Representative John Burkel – 7:00 p.m.

Federal Coordination and Partnership – 7:05 p.m.

The Honorable Collin Peterson, United States Congress – House of Representatives (1991 to 2021); The Peterson Group, Inc.

Importance of Partnerships at the Local Level – 7:10 p.m.

The Honorable Dan Fabian, Minnesota Legislature – House of Representatives (2011 to 2020); Mayor, City of Roseau, Minnesota

RRWMB Restructuring and Strategic Planning for the Future – 7:15 p.m.

The Honorable Morrie Lanning, Minnesota Legislature – House of Representatives (2003 to 2012); Former Mayor, City of Moorhead, Minnesota

An International View: Importance of Regional water Management – 7:20 p.m.

Lance Yohe, Commissioner, International Joint Commission

State Agency Coordination and Partnership with the RRWMB: 50 Years of Regional Water Management – 7:25 p.m.

- Sarah Strommen, Commissioner, Minnesota Department of Natural Resources
- John Jaschke, Executive Director, Board of Water and Soil Resources

Partnership with the RRWMB and Closing Remarks – 7:35 p.m.

Jan Voit, Executive Director, Minnesota Watersheds

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