

By Corey Hanson, Red Lake Watershed District Water Quality Coordinator. 4/3/2020

February 2020 was a month that was spent getting caught up on reports and data submittals while assembling work plans for 2020 and 2021.

River Watch

The Red Lake County Central River Watch Team set up an informational Aquatic Invasive Species (mainly Zebra mussels) booth up at a basketball game on Feb 4th. The booth featured information and games for visitors. District staff also completed two River of Dreams classroom visits.

Bartlett Lake Management Plan

District staff completed a revision of a Draft Bartlett Lake Management Plan in preparation for the February 20, 2020 planning meeting. District staff also prepared an agenda for the meeting. The meeting was well attended, had lots of discussion, and concluded with a dot voting exercise in which attendees voted for the goals/action that they felt were most important. MPCA staff gathered and shared information from an alum treatment workshop that will be reviewed by District staff and summarized at the next meeting. BWSR staff shared information about the type of feasibility study that is required for alum treatment grant applications.

Thief River One Watershed One Plan (1W1P)

District staff updated the Thief River 1W1P website so that it contains all the documents that are required to submit the plan to the Minnesota Board of Water and Soil resources and to announce that the Final Draft Thief River Comprehensive Watershed Management Plan has been completed and prepared for submittal to the Minnesota Board of Water and Soil Resources, along with supporting information (<https://www.rlwdwatersheds.org/thiefriver1w1p>).

The Thief River 1W1P Comprehensive Watershed Management Plan was approved by all the Local Governmental Units and submitted for final review by the agencies. The plan will be reviewed by the BWSR Northern Regional Committee meeting on March 4, 2020.

Red Lake River Watershed One Watershed One Plan

BWSR approved the funding request for the 2020 Watershed Based Funding submitted on January 22nd. The Red Lake River watershed is receiving \$1,071,149 in watershed-based funding from the Minnesota Board of Water and Soil Resources (BWSR). With the required matching funds, its work plan has a total budget of \$1,178,264. Priority projects and actions in the plan include.

1. Three grade stabilization projects in the Black River subwatershed
2. Stabilization of the RLWD Ditch 10 outlet
3. Grade stabilization in the Burnham Creek subwatershed
4. Grade stabilization structure or WASCORB in the Browns Creek drainage area
5. Grade stabilization near the Red Lake River, north of Red Lake Falls
6. Exclusion fencing and grazing management in multiple subwatersheds
7. Stabilization of the CD 96 outlet

RED LAKE WATERSHED DISTRICT MONTHLY WATER QUALITY REPORT

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8. Grade stabilization of a large erosion problem near the Red Lake River west of Red Lake Falls
9. Cover crops in priority management areas
10. Agricultural practices in areas that were prioritized by PTMApp

The West Polk SWCD submitted a project funding request for stabilization of a severe, recurring erosion near the RLWD Project 43B portion of Burnham Creek. This erosion problem had been noted during Red Lake River WRAPS reconnaissance of the Burnham Creek watershed.



Other Notes

- District staff reviewed 2019 field data entries, compiled the data into an EQUIS submittal spreadsheet and sent the data to the MPCA.
- A July 2019 Water Quality Report was completed and posted on the District's website: <http://redlakewatershed.org/waterquality/MonthlyWQReport/2019%2007%20July%20Water%20Quality%20Report.pdf>
- A September 2019 Water Quality Report was completed and posted on the District's website: <http://redlakewatershed.org/waterquality/MonthlyWQReport/2019%2009%20September%20Water%20Quality%20Report.pdf>

RED LAKE WATERSHED DISTRICT MONTHLY WATER QUALITY REPORT

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- A October 2019 Water Quality Report was completed and posted on the District's website: <http://redlakewatershed.org/waterquality/MonthlyWQReport/2019%2010%20October%20Water%20Quality%20Report.pdf>
- A November 2019 Water Quality Report was completed and posted on the District's website: <http://redlakewatershed.org/waterquality/MonthlyWQReport/2019%2011%20November%20Water%20Quality%20Report.pdf>
- A December 2019 Water Quality Report was completed and posted on the District's website: <http://redlakewatershed.org/waterquality/MonthlyWQReport/2019%2012%20December%20Water%20Quality%20Report.pdf>
- District staff reviewed the Pelican River Watershed District's monitoring plan at their request.
- District staff wrote articles for the 2019 Red Lake Watershed District Annual Report.
- District staff prepared a revised presentation on the use of standard operating procedures for the upcoming Annual Red River Basin Water Quality Monitoring Training.
- The International Water Institute shared a 2019 Year in Review newsletter: <https://mailchi.mp/89779f45c4d5/iwi-river-rendezvous-newsletter-winter-2018-845877?e=b6f98d18cb>

Water quality related notes and minutes from the February 13, 2019 Red Lake Watershed District Board of Managers meeting.

- The District was notified that a U.S. Army Corps of Engineers' permit was approved for the Thief River Falls Westside Flood Damage Reduction Project.
- Administrator Jesme was informed that the Clearwater SWCD was forming an application process to begin the Clearwater River 1W1P process. Jesme indicated the need to form a Policy Committee and Planning Work Group, prior to the start of the application.
- The Board reviewed information on the water quality of the Thief River as it pertains to the City of Thief River Falls' drinking water supply.
- Pennington SWCD submitted a request for a financial donation for the Area I Envirothon. The Area I Envirothon was scheduled for April 29, 2020, at Agassiz National Wildlife Refuge. Motion by Page, seconded by Dwight, to donate \$300 to the Area I Envirothon to promote education and awareness of water quality issues. (The 2020 Envirothon was eventually canceled due to the COVID19 pandemic.)
- Administrator Jesme stated that the Red Lake SWCD has inquired on the possibility of hiring a Joint Engineer between the District and the SWCD's involved in the 1W1P. Jesme will have discussions with the various offices and report back to the Board.

Meetings and Events from February 2020

- **February 7, 2020** – Meeting with Minnesota Department of Health, Minnesota Pollution Control Agency, and city of Thief River Falls representatives in Bemidji to discuss Thief River Falls drinking water issues that have been caused by poor water quality in the Thief River.
 - The drinking water problem in Thief River will be split into two categories:
 - Short-Term Solution (moving the intake to upstream of the Thief River confluence with the Red Lake River)
 - More feasible but will require \$5-7 million
 - The current intake will be kept as a backup

- Long-Term Solutions (addressing sources of sediment and other pollutants in the watershed, including the discharge of sediment and other pollutants from Agassiz Pool during drawdowns)
 - High-level agency discussions with local city and MPCA staff will continue.
- Spring hydrogen sulfide issues at the Thief River Falls dam have lessened since the rock riffle structures were constructed along the JD 11 outlet channel downstream of Agassiz Pool.
- There may be a need to conduct more intensive monitoring in 2020 during Agassiz Pool drawdowns.
- **February 10, 2020** – Thief River One Watershed One Plan conference call
 - Plan submittal to BWSR: District staff will put together the materials for submittal including the plan, 60-day comments, record of public hearing, and responses.
 - Planning for the North Region Committee meeting that will be held on March 4, 2020
 - Memorandum of Agreement status updates: Six of the seven LGUs have approved the MOA.
 - Coordinator role updates/discussion
 - Workplan development and funding request
- **February 20, 2020** – Bartlett Lake Management Planning meeting in Northome
- **February 25, 2020** – Red River Watershed Management Board Monitoring Advisory Committee.
 - A RRWMB Water Quality meeting was held in the District office on February 25th to develop criteria for funding water quality projects, using funds that were appropriated by the RRWMB.
 - Comments on the International Joint Commission water quality standards (0.150 mg/L total phosphorus and 1.15 mg/L total nitrogen) for the Red River of the North were also reviewed.
 - District staff reviewed and provided comments on the Application Packet for Water Quality Projects and the Application Packet for Programs.
 - The RRWMB water quality funding can be used as matching funds for BWSR Clean Water Fund grants (for 1WIP projects). It can be used to help fund projects that didn't "make the cut" for BWSR Clean Water Fund competitive grant funding. The seven member watershed districts are the only organizations that are eligible funding, but they can subcontractor with other entities to accomplish projects.
- **February 27, 2020** – PTMAApp workshop
- **February 27, 2020** – Thief River One Watershed One Plan Planning Workgroup meeting

Red Lake Watershed District Monthly Water Quality Reports are available online:
<http://www.redlakewatershed.org/monthwq.html>.

Learn more about the Red Lake Watershed District at www.redlakewatershed.org.

Learn more about the watershed in which you live (Red Lake River, Thief River, Clearwater River, Grand Marais Creek, or Upper/Lower Red Lakes) at www.rlwdwatersheds.org.

"Like" the Red Lake Watershed District on [Facebook](https://www.facebook.com/redlakewatershed) to stay up-to-date on RLWD reports and activities.