

May, 2024

NEWSLETTER

Red Lake Watershed District



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Water Quality Monitoring

District staff sampled through the months of April and May at 75 sites throughout the Thief River, Red Lake River, Clearwater River, Upper/Lower Red Lakes and Grand Marais Creek Watersheds. Due to the lack of spring runoff, sampled water thought the district was relatively clean and met water quality standards. Even Grand Marais Creek registered barely detectable concentrations of total suspended solids. Rainfall events in mid-to-late May, however, resulted in higher concentrations of pollutants at the few sites that were sampled after the rain, especially in the Upper/Lower Red Lakes Watershed. RLWD staff will continue to monitor these sites through the month of June and again in August.

Remote Water Level Monitoring

District staff deployed a Lakescout Buoy (made by Winter Recreation Technology, <https://www.winrectech.com>) in Pine Lake, on May 10th. The new buoy will monitor and report water levels and water temperature in the lake. The District closely monitors water levels in Pine Lake to inform decisions about the operation of the outlet structure that is designed to provide flood control and wildlife benefits. The buoy will save staff time by providing real time water level data. This buoy can even be left installed through the winter to monitor ice levels.

Visit the [RLWD website](#) to find a link to [current measurements](#) from the buoy.



Upcoming Events

June, 28 2024, 9:00 am
RLWD District Office
Board Meeting

Open to the public. For more information call (218) 681-5800.

July 4-July 5, Office Closed
Independence Day

July, 11 2024, 9:00 am
RLWD District Office
Board Meeting

Open to the public. For more information call (218) 681-5800.

July—September 2024
60-Day Comment Period for the Upper/Lower Red Lake Comprehensive Watershed Management Plan

Check us out on [Facebook](#) for more information!

River Watch & River of Dreams

River of Dreams, inspired by the book *Paddle-to-the-Sea*, is an interactive and imaginative program that helps elementary students learn about their watersheds. During this program, students learn about the Red River Basin and decorate their own 14-inch cedar canoes, writing a unique journey or dream for each one. Students then release their canoes into local rivers, hoping to track their journey. Canoes were launched throughout May, so keep an eye out, and report any findings online at <https://iwinst.org/mesmerize/watershed-education/river-of-dreams/>

River Watch engages high school students in hands-on environmental science. This program allows students to actively participate in sampling and analyzing water quality and macroinvertebrates in their local rivers and streams. Recently, teams from Win-E-Mac and Red Lake Falls conducted sampling sessions. The Red Lake Falls team even discovered 24 River of Dreams canoes during a River Explorers kayaking trip.



Project Spotlight: Chief's Coulee

The Chiefs Coulee Stormwater Project is a collaboration between the RLWD, the city of Thief River Falls to address drainage concerns and extreme water quality problems in northern Thief River Falls. Investigation of the channel found alarming levels of E. coli, sediment from agricultural and urban stormwater runoff, extremely high phosphorus concentrations, failing septic systems, polluted grain elevator sump discharge, flow obstruction in cattail-choked channels, diesel range organic compounds, and foul odors. Concern about an adjacent junkyard and the fact that the channel fed into the city's drinking water source, additionally highlighted an urgent need for action.

Progress has been made in the Chief's Coulee clean-up effort. State grants and enforcement actions have supported efforts to fix failing septic systems, prevent illicit discharges of polluted water, and clean up fertilizer spillage. Monitoring has shown despite improvements, measures are still need to address pollution from rainfall and snowmelt runoff.

Preliminary plans have been completed for a multi-pronged project that will address drainage and water quality concerns, alike. Drainage concerns will be addressed by diverted some agricultural and residential flow to Pennington County Ditch 70 and by moving the drainage into an underground storm sewer. Compared to existing conditions, the storm sewer will facilitate features to treat stormwater runoff like hydrodynamic separators and stormwater filtering best management practices. Stormwater inlets will be stenciled to discourage dumping of trash and pollutants into the stormwater. The project has received funding commitments from the RLWD, city of Thief River Falls, Minnesota Board of Water and Soil Resources Clean Water Fund, and the Red River Watershed Management Board.

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