

Section I. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Aitkin County's first Generation Water Plan was adopted in July of 1990. The second Generation Water Plan made significant changes and improvements and was adopted in 1995. The third Generation Water Plan started out as a minor revision and evolved into a near total re-write. The fourth generation plan has been expanded to include the great strides forward in technology and data that has occurred since 2002. This is the first plan to use the Priority Concerns Scoping Document (PCSD) as a tool to gather input at the front end of the process. In this plan the PCSD directly follows the Executive Summary. Three counties (Cass, Crow Wing and Aitkin) contracted with RMB to obtain additional information on large lakes and their watersheds in the 3 counties. In Aitkin County we selected six lakes for intensive study. The lakes are: 1.Mille Lacs 2.Hill Lake 3.Rice Lake 4.Farm Island Lake 5.Cedar and 6.Gun Lake. This section follows the Priority Concerns Scoping Document. Ideally, we could complete such a detailed section for all of the lakes in Aitkin County. This may be too large of a task but we will move in that direction with several lakes and hope to expand that effort in cooperation with lake associations. This plan will be in effect from July 2009 until July 2014 (estimated dates).

The Aitkin County Water Planning Task Force mission statement is: ***“It is the mission of the Aitkin County Water Planning Task Force to promote responsible stewardship of water and land resources through education, incentives, and collaboration with individuals, groups and government entities.”***

The Internet contains large quantities of water quality data, aerial photographs, and research results. Some of the applicable Internet sites will be referenced as part of this document. Where possible maps, charts and tables will replace or accompany written descriptions. This will be a concise, easy to understand and user-friendly Water Plan.

The Water Planning Task Force has been a success in Aitkin County. Task Force involvement and interest remains high and is a key factor in our continued success. This plan is intended to be flexible and to be modified by the Task Force Membership as needs and opportunities are identified.

The Water Planning Task Force prepared a Priority Concerns Scoping Document and identified five priority concerns.

- 1.Surface Water Management**
- 2. Land Use and Development**
- 3. Ground Water Quality**
- 4. Fish and Wildlife Habitat**
- 5. Education**

We conduct regular monthly meetings and enjoy input from a good cross-section of citizens. This plan's emphasis will continue to be efforts that make a tangible, measurable difference in land and water use issues in Aitkin County. Incentive versus regulation, voluntary rather than mandatory,

these projects do the most for the effort and dollars expended. We are developing a Conservation Easement Program that will protect high value properties that are currently being compromised by rapidly increasing lakeshore values and development. We help fund and support the County's Shoreland Management Ordinance and the one to one contacts with lakeshore property owners. Native vegetation saved, soils kept in place and education of shoreland stewards are benefits of these personal contacts.

We have compiled a partial list of Water Planning Accomplishments for the years 1990 through 2009:

1. Education
 - a. Assisted 40 Lake Associations w/170 informational newsletters
 - b. Sent county-wide mailings (16000 recipients) three separate years
 - c. Participated in contractor and real estate agent training
 - d. Radio and newspaper articles
 - e. Best management practices guidebooks
 - f. User's Guide to Shoreland Management
2. Implementation
 - a. Created Green Shores buffer program
 - b. Maintained a 25 member Water plan Task Force
 - c. Working with four schools to implement Riverwatch
 - d. Established baseline water quality data on 36 lakes
 - e. Averaged 250 contacts per year re: individual shoreland management
 - f. Fiscal agent and staffing of the Big Sandy Watershed CWP
 - g. Promotion of Forest Stewardship Planning
 - h. Promote and assist with shoreline re-vegetation
 - i. Sampling of lake bottom sediments for phosphorus recycling
 - j. Encourage and fund ISTS upgrade program
 - k. Fund the sealing of abandoned wells
 - l. Monitor water levels (lakes and groundwater)
 - m. Initiate a Conservation Easement program
 - n. Assisting Mille Lacs Watershed project
 - o. Received and administered several implementation grants
3. Ordinances
 - a. Assist landowners with feedlot registration and information
 - b. Shoreland ordinance updates
 - c. Wetland Conservation Act support and assistance
 - d. Participate in the Comprehensive Land Use Plan
4. Coordination
 - e. Work with Federal, State and County agencies
 - f. Geographic Information System
5. Conservation Easements
 - a. Completed a 90 acre permanent conservation easement that includes all the private land surrounding two natural environment lakes
 - b. Completed a 220 acre conservation easement that protects hundreds of feet of a stream that goes directly to Mille Lacs

c,Completed a 7 acre easement protecting a bluff and the outlet of the Prairie River at Big Sandy Lake

Prioritized activities for the next five years:

- Continue a strong LCWP Task Force and expand roles
- Increase public education/property owners/shoreland
- Implement the plan
- Continue funding projects
- Enforcement of Shoreland Ordinance (Zoning/Attorney)

- Maintain autonomy and a strong task force with diverse interests
- Education
- On the ground projects that make a measurable improvement
- Support, encourage and promote those groups, activities and agencies that share our goals

To sum up this plan, the focus will be on implementation goals for the next several years. Data will be presented in maps, charts and tables with accompanying narrative as required. We move forward with clearly defined and attainable goals.

Thank you.

Steve Hughes
Water Plan Coordinator

GUIDE TO AGENCY and ORGANIZATION ABBREVIATIONS

FSA FARM SERVICE AGENCY
NRCS NATURAL RESOURCE CONSERVATION SERVICE
SWCD SOIL AND WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICT
DNR DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES FISHERIES,
WATERS, FORESTRY
ACL D AITKIN COUNTY LAND DEPARTMENT
ACPZ AITKIN COUNTY PLANNING AND ZONING
MN EXT MINNESOTA EXTENSION SERVICE
MHB MISSISSIPPI HEADWATERS BOARD
US F&WS UNITED STATES FISH & WILDLIFE SERVICE
ACOE UNITED STATES ARMY CORPS OF ENGINEERS
BWSR MN BOARD OF WATER AND SOIL RESOURCES
LSOHC LESSARD SAMS OUTDOOR HERITAGE COUNCIL
MPCA MINNESOTA POLLUTION CONTROL AGENCY
CWL CLEAN WATER LEGACY

A PARTIAL LIST OF USEFUL WEBSITES

www.bwsr.state.mn.us
www.dnr.state.mn.us
www.ardc.org
www.mhbriverwatch.dst.mn.us
www.crh.noace.gov
www.riverwatch.noaa.gov

www.pca.state.mn.us
www.co.aitkin.mn.us
www.usace.army.mil
mn.usgs.gov
www.aitkinswcd.com

Section II. AITKIN COUNTY WATER PLANNING PRIORITY CONCERNS SCOPING DOCUMENT JUNE 2008



**Bass Lake Conservation Easement
(completed December, 2007)**