



SAND HILL RIVER
WATERSHED DISTRICT



ANNUAL REPORT | 2022

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Location

Located in the center of the Red River Watershed in Northwest Minnesota, the Sand Hill River Watershed is one of the 10 major watersheds in the Red River Basin serving areas of Polk, Norman and Mahnommen Counties

Mission

“The mission of the Sand Hill River Watershed District (SHRWD) is to serve the residents of the District by wisely and judiciously managing water resources in a manner which sustains and enhances the local community and economic resources while being mindful of the natural resources of the District.”



FERTILE, MN

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Project #17 Outlet Stabilization

Sand Hill River Watershed District -
Approved for a CWF Project and Practices
Grant

The district is planning the Installation of 6 grade control structures and 2 side inlets at the outlet of Project # 17 (near Climax, MN). The 6 grade control structures will be installed in the channel bottom. The specific location will be determined after a field survey is completed on the channel. The side inlets will be installed along the south side of the channel, where two "swales"

of concentrated flow result in periodic erosion into the adjacent field. The project will be constructed by the lowest qualifying Contractor to be determined via a competitive bidding process as required by MN Statute. The district anticipate's construction will occur in 2023. The grant is for \$214,400 and the local match is \$53,600.



Six Years of Service



JJ HAMRE
Retiring Secretary

JJ Hamre has served the district since 2017. JJ farms west of Beltrami and he and his wife have three daughters. The board of managers thank JJ for his years of service and contributions he has made to the residents of the Sand Hill River Watershed District. Beginning January 2023, Shawn Brekke of Nielsville will begin his service as a Sand Hill River Watershed District Board manager and he was appointed to serve as Secretary of the board.

Active Project Teams



Use of Project Teams is voluntary. A watershed district, agency or organization interested in solving a water management or water resource problem can determine whether or not they want to employ this process and follow the guidelines and principles established by the FDRWG. Projects developed using this process may have a better chance of building local support, receiving funding and acquiring necessary permits. The Project Team process is especially valuable for projects that are large, complex, or have the potential to be controversial.

Kittleson Creek Storage

Through the Project Team, the district performed a hydrologic model compared to LiDAR topographic data and available aerial imagery. Using this data, several potential sites were identified and placed into the model to determine impacts for various flooding events. The district is working with NRCS for a potential Preliminary Investigation & Feasibility Report (PIFR).

Liberty-Reis Erosion

The project team found favor with an opportunity to pursue a multipurpose project that would bring opportunity for significant outside funding towards solutions of excessive erosion along the Sand Hill Ditch. During 2022, the SH Ditch experienced extensive damages during spring flooding, and the project team efforts have been placed on hold while the district works with FEMA to repair the damages.

Our Mission



The mission of the Sand Hill Watershed District (SHRWD) is to serve the residents of the District by wisely and judiciously managing water resources in a manner which sustains and enhances the local community and economy while being mindful of the natural resources of the District.

Primary Focus Areas

Where we will focus the most effort and funding. Projects the District leads.



Drainage Water Management

Action that has direct effect on the legal drainage systems is a priority. Drainage regulation is administered through the permit program.



Local Flood Damage Reduction and Flood Water Retention

Action that has a direct benefit to District residents (i.e. ring dikes, impoundments, community protection, wetland restoration).



Drainage Restoration

Action to support sustainable drainage on our legal drainage systems.



Education and Outreach

Action to inform and assist District residents, agencies, and legislators including river cleanups, and the promotion of river recreation.

Secondary Focus Areas

What we will work on as funding and opportunities arise. We would be a partner in these projects but leading them would be at the discretion of the SHRWD on a case-by-case basis after all other partners/sponsors have been exhausted.



Stream Restoration for Water Quality

Action to restore aquatic ecosystem with no direct benefit to primary focus areas.



Water Quality

Action to enhance/restore water quality with no direct benefit to primary focus areas.



Basinwide Flood Reduction

Action to benefit Red River Basin flow reduction goals.



Fish Habitat

Action to restore aquatic habitat with no direct benefit to primary focus areas.

STRATEGIC PLANNING EFFORTS

In 2022, the Sand Hill River Watershed District board of managers started a Strategic Planning process to prepare for their One Watershed One Plan planning process. With new staff and new board managers, the board agreed it was a good time to re-establish the district's goals and missions, and provide direction and leadership to staff.

Strategic planning is an organizational management activity that is used to set priorities, focus energy and resources, strengthen operations, ensure that Boards, employees and other stakeholders are working toward common goals, establish agreement around intended outcomes/results, and assess and adjust the organization's direction in response to a changing environment. It is a disciplined effort that produces fundamental decisions and actions that shape and guide what an organization is, who it serves, what it does, and why it does it, with a focus on the future.

Through the process the SHRWD Board and Staff developed their Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats, Primary and Secondary Focus Areas, and a draft Purpose statement. Ultimately they revised their Purpose/Mission statement and developed Primary and Secondary focus areas.

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PERFORMANCE REVIEW AND ASSISTANCE PROGRAM (PRAP)

Authorized by the 2007 Minnesota legislature, the purpose of PRAP is to support local delivery of conservation and water management by periodically reviewing and assessing the performance of local units of government that deliver those services. These include soil and water conservation districts, watershed districts, watershed management organizations, and the local water management functions of counties. In 2022, the Sand Hill River watershed District, received this assessment.

The PRAP program includes an Annual Statewide Summary, and three types of assessments. Depending on the program mandates and needs of the local government unit, review types include both routine and specialized. The Annual Statewide Summary annually tabulates all local governmental units' compliance with basic planning and reporting requirements.

Organizational Assessments, conducted by BWSR once every ten years for each local government unit, evaluate operational effectiveness, partner relationships, and whether the LGU has achieved county water plan, watershed management plan, and/or SWCD comprehensive plan implementation goals. This assessment also evaluates compliance with performance standards, and the Wetland Conservation Act, where applicable.

Watershed-based Assessments are routine reviews conducted with partnerships of local governments working together to implement comprehensive watershed management plans (CWMPs) developed through the One Watershed One Plan Program. This review evaluates progress on plan implementation and analyzes partners working relationships.

KEY FINDINGS

and conclusions

The Sand Hill River WD was commended for their assistance and participation in watershed planning efforts.

The results of the performance standards checklist indicate the WD is compliant with 13 of 14 basic performance standards.

The Sand Hill River Watershed District was commended for:

- Retaining an administrator on staff
- Operational guidelines exist and are current
- Public drainage records meet modernization guidelines
- Coordination with state watershed-based initiatives
- Coordinating with county, swcd, city/township partners
- Meeting high performance standards outlined on the BWSR checklist

RETROSPECT: A LOOK BACK AT 2022

Highlights of 2022 Activities

- Fifty-eight permits were brought before the board.
- In 2021, the district was selected as a recipient for a grant from the Minnesota Historical & Cultural Heritage Grant through the Minnesota Historical Society to perform a historical assessment of the district building. During 2022, the assessment was completed and made available to the public.
- In 2021, the district was accepted as a recipient for the Sand Hill River Watershed One Watershed One Plan. Planning partners include Polk County, Norman County, and Mahnomen County, along with East Polk, West Polk, Norman and Mahnomen County SWCD's. The planning process began in 2022 with public kickoff meetings in August in Fosston, Fertile, and Climax. This feedback was incorporated into issue statements for the watershed. The Advisory and Policy Committees prioritized the issues statements for each region of the watershed to determine where to focus work.
- The district determined damages for the right of way values of Ditch 9 and Ditch 119, pursuant to Minn. Stat. § 103E.315, subd. 8.
- Maintenance was performed on various projects: SH Ditch and Project #24. FEMA funding was solicited for damages along the Sand Hill Ditch during the spring flooding of 2022.
- The district amended their beaver bounty program with townships, increasing the district share for each beaver to \$75, and keeping the township share at \$10 per beaver
- This district continues coordinating with the Red Lake Watershed District to investigate the watershed boundaries on the Northern end along MN 102.
- The assessed area for Project #24 was modified pursuant to Mn Statute 103E.805.
- The district approved moving forward to solicit bids for the district building, aiming to meet the goal of handicap accessibility for the public office. Due to elevated bids, the district rejected the bids and will rebid in 2023.
- Union Lake/Sarah began pumping on May 31, 2022.

Our Team

Board managers are appointed by the Polk County Board of Commissioners annually. Managers serving in 2022 include:

- Stuart Christian, Chairman
- Don Andringa - Vice Chairman
- JJ Hamre - Secretary
- Clayton Bartz - Treasurer
- Craig Engelstad - Manager

The Sand Hill River Watershed employs one full-time employee and one part-time employee

- April Swenby, Administrator
- Donna Bjerck- Admin. Assistant

Approved 2022 Operating Budget

INCOME	
HOMESTEAD/AG CREDIT	\$4,000.00
INTEREST INCOME	\$15,000.00
REIMBURSED EXPENSE	\$1,100.00
TAX LEVY INCOME	\$250,000.00
TOTAL INCOME	\$270,100.00
EXPENSE	
TRAVEL EXPENSES	\$ 8,000.00
CAPITAL IMPROVEMENTS	\$51,200.00
WEB-SITE	\$ 600.00
MISC	\$200.00
MEETING EXPENSE	\$2,100.00
BUILDING MAINTENANCE	\$13,000.00
COMPUTER EXPENSE	\$10,000.00
DUES-MEMBERSHIP	\$4,000.00
EDUCATION	\$4,000.00
FURNITURE-EQUIP	\$15,000.00
MANAGER EXPENSE	\$17,000.00
OFFICE OPERATIONS	\$18,000.00
PAYROLL EXPENSES	\$98,000.00
PAYROLL TAXES	\$ 8,000.00
PROF SERVICES	\$20,000.00
PUBLICITY	\$1,000.00
TOTAL EXPENSE	\$ 270,100.00