

SAND HILL RIVER WATERSHED DISTRICT

2008 ANNUAL REPORT

The Sand Hill River in its natural state passed north of the City of Beltrami in a poorly defined channel and dispersed into marshes which extended westerly for over ten miles before reappearing as a river which flowed into the Red River of the North. In an effort to confine the Sand Hill River in a fixed channel, two state ditches were constructed during 1894-1898, substantially along the course now occupied by the present channel. The improvements were not adequate and additional construction was completed in 1917.

As drainage and flood problems persisted, the Corp of Engineers began a study of the river in 1942. As a result the Sand Hill Drainage and Conservancy Board was established by an order of the District Court of Polk County, State of Minnesota, on the 18th day of May, 1949 to carry out the Corps project to improve the main channel. The overall purpose of the Board was for "flood control and improvement of the Sand Hill River channel." Construction work was completed in the fall of 1954.

The process to establish the Sand Hill River Watershed District was a Court Hearing at Crookston, MN on August 28, 1974. The place of business of the Sand Hill River Watershed District was determined to be at Fertile, MN. The duties and responsibilities of the old Sand Hill River Drainage and Conservancy Board were given to the new District on May 28, 1975 in accordance with the Minnesota Watershed Act.

In 1976 the Sand Hill River Watershed District signed a joint powers agreement with six other watershed districts to form an organization now known as the Red River Watershed Management board. In 1980 the Buffalo Red Watershed District joined and in 1994, Boise De Sioux also joined.

On March 8, 1978 the Sand Hill River Watershed adopted the Rules and Regulations pursuant to Minnesota Statutes. They were later amended on October 3, 1978.

The District's south boundaries were hydrologically determined and established at a hearing at the Fertile Community Center June 26, 1984. The north boundaries were established from the old Sand Hill Drainage & Conservancy District. The District encompasses 475 square miles, almost wholly in the south part of Polk County, with a small part in Mahanomen and Norman County. The area includes the entire drainage basin of the Sand Hill River.

The average width of the basin is 8 miles and it is approximately 55 miles long. The Sand Hill River originates in Sand Hill Lake, located about four miles south of the City of Fosston and outlets two miles west of Climax into the Red River of the North. Elevation at the eastern end of the watershed is nearly 1,350 feet above sea level with an elevation of 850 feet at the western end.

Approximately 90 percent of the land in the District is used for agricultural or agriculturally related purposes. The watershed can be divided into three areas as follows:

a.) West End: This is the Red River Valley area, which was the bed of Glacial Lake Agassiz. It is nearly level and almost all cultivated. It extends easterly from the Red River of the North to a point about 6 miles west of the City of Fertile.

b.) Central Region: This area is located from 6 miles west of the City of Fertile to a point about 3 miles east of the City with a major drop of nearly 300 feet in elevation from east to west. This area has considerable wetlands, gravel ridges and scrub tree growth.

c.) East End: The upper reaches of the watershed are glacial in origin and its soils support agricultural uses. It is mostly gently rolling terrain with numerous potholes, the majority of which have been drained

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Project # 17



The district coordinated their efforts with the Railroad to resolve the railroad's concerns about the stability of their bridges involved in the project. In November, Zavoral construction began and completed the work required to satisfy the bridge instability issue. Project # 17 is said to be a completed success and has proven to transport water as initially hoped for by the landowners.

Union Lake Erosion Control

At the regular board meeting in May, the managers opened bids for the Union Lake Erosion Control project and awarded the project to Davidson Construction. Four rock drop structures were installed to eliminate the severe erosion flowing into Union Lake. Each structure eliminated four feet of drop.

The district purchased tens acres of land which houses the structures (pictured). Prior to the district's purchase, the land was farmed, adding greatly to the initial erosion problem. It will now be kept in grass cover permanently.



SWCD and Watershed Partnerships

The East Polk SWCD requested cost sharing with the district on projects that establish grass waterways and small retention dams to prevent erosion and improve water quality in our district and along the Sand Hill River. The district managers agreed that interest is present to do so. The managers agreed on up to \$20,000 per year to assist with the proposed projects. The district will cost share the projects at 25% of the cost.

These project typically involve gully erosion on side hills. A dam is constructed at the top with a small tile pipe to carry the water down the slope. The gullies are then filled in and seeded to prevent erosion.

Gary Lee has kept the district well informed of the progress on each project throughout the year.

Overall Plan Update

Public input meetings were held in all four planning regions. Substantial input was received for the attendees. In addition to public meetings, private meetings were held with the SWCD's to obtain their input for the district's plan.

The model was completed. The district anticipates the completion of the Overall Plan in hopes of continuing their efforts in the Garden Slough project.

The Overall is scheduled to be completed in 2010.

Project Team

The Sand Hill River Watershed District Project Team is scheduled to meet the second Tuesday of each month, depending on the availability of it's members. The project team members consist of area agencies such as MN DNR, US Army Corp, BWSR, MPCA, just to name a few. The project team is currently researching the feasibility of the Garden Slough project and is waiting for the district overall plan to be completed.

The Project Team has been collaborating their efforts to follow through with the Points of Concurrence process and to develop a Purpose and Need statement that satisfies the Corp of Engineers permitting process.

The project team meets to evaluate alternatives identified the mediation agreement, formulate new alternatives as necessary, and identifies their preferred alternatives, using an evaluation process that is consistent with the flood damage principles identified in **mediation agreement**.

Sand Hill River Watershed District

STAFF

Daniel Wilkens—Administrator
April Swenby—Administrative Assistant

BOARD OF MANAGERS

Chairman Roger Hanson—Beltrami
Vice-Chair Harold Vig—Fosston
Secretary Bill Brekke—Nielsville
Treasurer Stuart Christian—Erskine
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ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEMBERS

John Balstad-Fosston	Rory Hamre-Beltrami
Helmer Homme-Winger	Rich Johnson-Fosston
David Johnstad-Beltrami	Allen Stromstad-Beltrami
Steve Taylor-Fertile	Jim Todahl-Fertile
Scott Tollefson-Beltrami	Steven Vesledahl-Winger
Roger Ulseth-Crookston	Douglas Burd-Nielsville
DeWayne Engelstad-Nielsville	Gerald Jacobson-Fertile
Jan McWilliam-Winger	Jeff Voeller-Climax

District Activities



- Fourteen permits were presented to the Sand Hill River Watershed District managers in 2008.
- The district again participated in the annual Polk County Fair.
- A petition is circulating to have several ditches in the Nielsville area turned over to the watershed district.
- Paul Wannarka has been hired to replace Don Buckhout at the DNR Bemidji office
- The district has contracted with Brady, Martz & Associates, P.C. for their auditing and accounting needs.
- The Riverwatch Program is continuing it's efforts and has multiple sites that are monitored. Accurate reports are periodically distributed to the district.
- In addition to the scheduled activities, one or more representative from the district attends various conferences like MAWD and meetings such as Red River Basin Commission, Red River Watershed Management Board, Flood Damage Reduction Work Group, MN Drainage Inspectors, International Red River Board, just to name a few.
- The district will assist the LID with funding the screen project at a 1/3 share of up to a maximum project cost of \$250,000 contingent on the County and LID association matching the district on the installation/purchase of the screen.