

Notice of availability and request for comments on draft Watowwan River Watershed Restoration and Protection Strategies (WRAPS) and Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) Reports

General information

Public comment period begins: July 22, 2019

Public comment period ends: 4:30 p.m. on September 20, 2019

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Draft reports for the Watowwan River TMDL and WRAPS are available for review on the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency (MPCA) draft/public noticed TMDL and WRAPS webpage at <https://www.pca.state.mn.us/water/total-maximum-daily-load-tmdl-projects> or at the MPCA office address listed under the MPCA contact person above. Following the comment period, the MPCA will revise the report(s) and submit the final TMDL to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) for approval. Comments, petitions, and other requests must be received at the MPCA in writing on or before the public comment period end date and time identified above.

Watershed: 07020010 Watowwan River Major Watershed

Description of the Watowwan River TMDL and WRAPS

Required by the federal Clean Water Act, a TMDL is a scientific study, conducted on waters assessed to be impaired, that calculates the maximum amount of a pollutant that a waterbody can receive and still meet water quality standards for that pollutant. The TMDL study is a process that identifies all the sources of the pollutant causing an impairment and quantifies necessary reductions among the sources.

The WRAPS report is required by the state Clean Water Legacy Act and uses TMDL and other information to develop strategies for addressing point and nonpoint pollution sources. The objective of the WRAPS process is to develop strategies that not only restore impaired waters, but also protect the unimpaired waters from degradation. This report is a collaborative effort between the MPCA, other state agencies, local government partners, and other stakeholders.

The Watowwan River Watershed spans approximately 878 square miles and is located in south central Minnesota in the WesternCorn Belt Plains ecoregion. It is 1 of 12 major watersheds in the Minnesota River Basin and drains portions of Blue Earth, Brown, Cottonwood, Jackson, Martin, and Watowwan counties. The river flows 113 miles from within Cottonwood County to the east until its confluence with the Blue Earth River near Garden City, Minnesota.

The Watowwan River Watershed TMDL Report addresses 4 impaired lakes and 10 impaired stream reaches, or assessment units. The lakes have aquatic recreation impairments as identified by eutrophication indicators, and the stream impairments affect aquatic recreation or limited resource value designated uses based on high levels of pathogens (*E. coli*).

Land cover in the Watowwan River Watershed is predominantly agricultural with the dominant crops being corn and soybeans; artificial drainage is common. Very little of the watershed is developed. Potential sources of pollutants include watershed runoff (both regulated and unregulated), municipal wastewater, septic systems and untreated wastewater, livestock, atmospheric deposition, and lake internal loading. High priority pollutant sources include human sources such as septic systems with imminent threats to public health and safety; agricultural sources such as livestock and runoff from cropland; and internal lake phosphorus loading.

Procedure for public participation

As stated in Minn. R. chs. 7000 and 7001, there are three formal procedures for public participation in the MPCA's consideration of this matter. Interested persons may:

- (1) Submit written comments on the draft reports.
- (2) Petition the MPCA to hold a public informational meeting.
- (3) Petition the MPCA to hold a contested case hearing.

Submitting written comments

To submit comments or petitions to the MPCA through the mail or email must state:

- (1) Your interest in the draft TMDL or WRAPS reports.
- (2) The action you wish the MPCA to take, including specific references to the section of the draft report(s) you believe should be changed. It is important to clearly specify which of the two reports the comments pertain to since the reports will proceed along separate tracks for final approval.
- (3) The reason(s) supporting your position, stated with sufficient specificity as to allow the MPCA to investigate the merits of the position.

Public informational meeting

A public informational meeting is an informal meeting during which interested persons can ask questions concerning the proposed project. The MPCA staff will be present to provide information. If an interested person would like the MPCA to hold a public informational meeting, the person should include all information identified above and in addition include a statement of the reasons the person desires the MPCA to hold a public informational meeting and the issues that the person would like the agency to address at the public informational meeting.

Contested case hearing

A contested case hearing is a formal proceeding before an administrative law judge empowered to advise the MPCA regarding issues of fact. As described in Minn. R. 7000.1800, persons who submit petitions for a contested case hearing must also state the issues they propose to address in a contested case hearing, the specific relief requested or resolution of the matter, and the reasons (which may be in the form of proposed findings) supporting an MPCA decision to hold a contested case hearing. Failure to comply with these rules exactly may result in a denial of the request. To the extent known, the petitioner may also submit a list of prospective witnesses to be called at a hearing, a proposed list of publications, references, or studies to be introduced at a hearing and the approximate time required for the petitioner to present the matter at a hearing. The decision whether to hold a contested case hearing will be made under Minn. R. 7000.1900.