

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

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 TMDL and WRAPS reports for the Minnesota River - Mankato Watershed 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: 07020007 Minnesota River - Mankato Major Watershed

Description of the Minnesota River - Mankato Watershed and Draft Reports

The Middle Minnesota River Watershed ([HUC-8: 07020007](#)) drains approximately 826,000 acres through 1,564 miles of streams into the Minnesota River. The watershed is bisected by the Minnesota River and its substantial valley, which was created by the Glacial River Warren.

Portions of nine counties comprise the watershed: Nicollet (24%), Brown (22%), Renville (18%), Blue Earth (13%), Redwood (11%), Le Sueur (7%), Cottonwood (3%), Sibley (3%), and Watonwan (<0.1%). Larger cities in the watershed include Mankato, New Ulm, St. Peter, Lake Crystal, Fairfax, and portions of Redwood Falls. A total of roughly 95,000 people reside in the Middle Minnesota River Watershed, a density of about 115 people per 1,000 acres.

Topography through the upland portions of the watershed is relatively flat and well drained through an extensive network of constructed ditches. The Minnesota River valley, carved by the enormous glacial River Warren, lies hundreds of feet below the upland areas. In the transition between the upland and Minnesota River valley is an active "knick zone" with steep stream slopes that cut down to reach the much lower elevation of the Minnesota River. This knick zone results in steep, eroding banks, bluffs, and ravines, incising channels that limit floodplain connectivity, and waterfalls in areas where the stream cuts down to bedrock.

Current land use in the Middle Minnesota River Watershed is similar to other regions in Southern and Western Minnesota: land use is dominated by warm-season, annual, cultivated, row crops.

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 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 and input between the MPCA, other state agencies, local government partners including county and SWCD staff from Blue Earth, Brown, Cottonwood, Nicollet, Le Sueur, Redwood, Renville, and Sibley counties, and other stakeholders. The primary audiences for the WRAPS report are local planners, decision makers, and conservation practice implementers; watershed residents, downstream states, agricultural business, governmental agencies, and other stakeholders are the secondary audiences. WRAPS and the TMDL inform subsequent local water planning and implementation efforts.

Public participation included meetings with watershed stakeholders to present watershed data. The MPCA worked with county and SWCD staff in the watershed to promote water quality, survey and interview landowners, and create opportunities to explore the social dynamics in the watershed. The implementation strategy sections of both the WRAPS and TMDL highlight an adaptive management process to achieving water quality standards and restoring beneficial uses in the Minnesota River- Mankato Watershed. Implementation strategies include: septic system upgrades, replacement, and maintenance; agricultural best management practices (BMP; e.g., filter strips, riparian buffers, drainage water management, and conservation cover); stream restoration; lake internal load management; and education and outreach.

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.