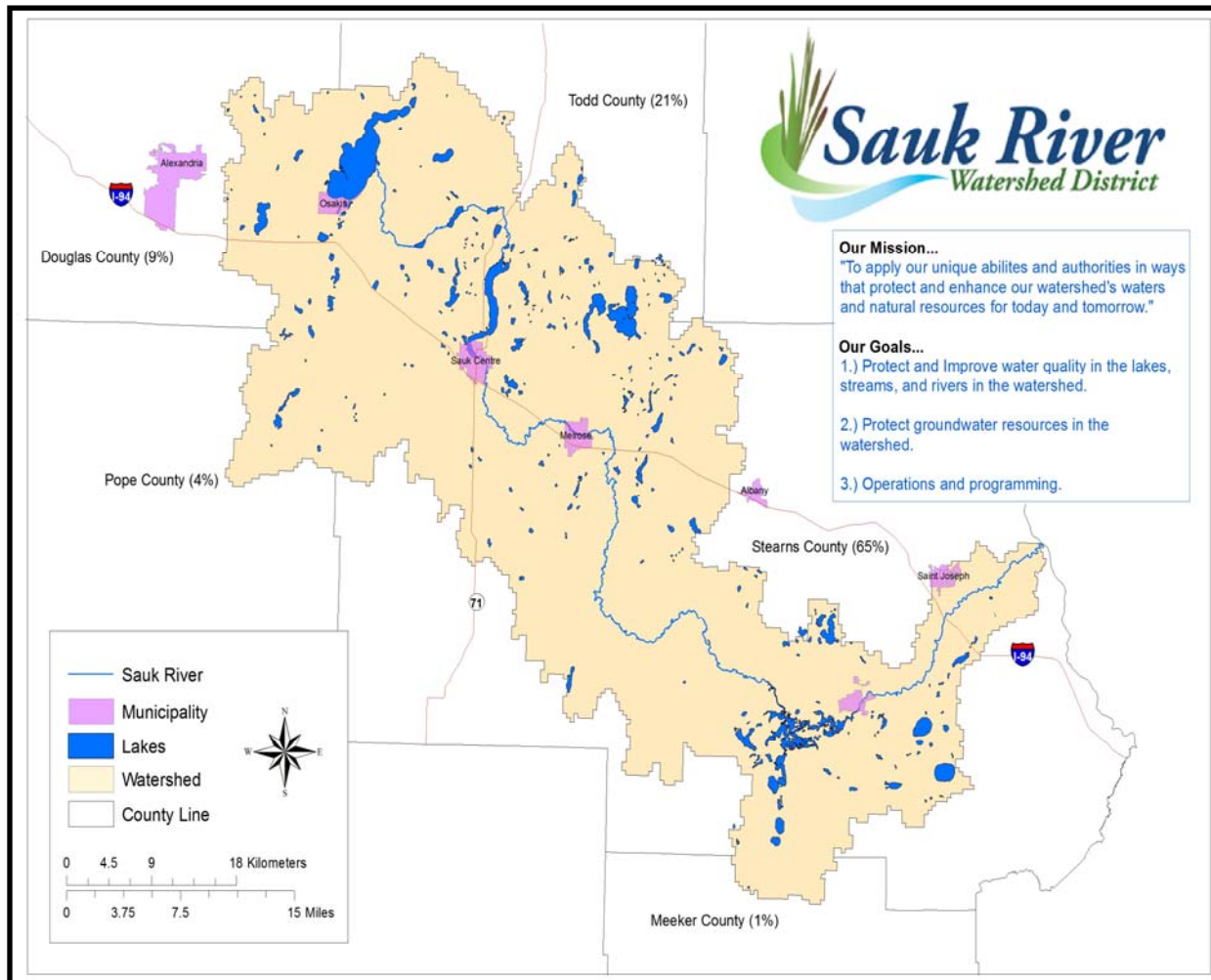


2017 ANNUAL REPORT



"The mission of the Sauk River Watershed District is to apply our unique abilities and authorities in ways that protect and enhance our watershed's waters and natural resources for today and tomorrow."



Vision Statement

The vision of the SRWD is to protect and enhance our waters and natural resources by increasing public awareness and involvement.

The District board and staff will expand programs and projects through technical and financial assistance, apply our regulatory authority, and provide opportunities to support our partnerships, government, industry, producers and residents in achieving the desired water management goals and objectives.”

~*Comprehensive Management Plan*

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Regular Board of Manager Meetings are held the third Tuesday of every month, starting at 6:00 p.m., at the District Office

District Office is located at
524 4th Street South
Sauk Centre, MN 56378

Board

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John Magedanz (Meeker County)

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Jim Bailey (Pope County)

Staff

Scott Henderson (Administrator)

Lynn Nelson (Water Resource Manager)

Sarah Jo Schmitz (Monitoring Coordinator).

Adam Hjelm (Education & Outreach Coordinator)

Jon Roeschlein (Ditch & Permit Coordinator)

Melissa Roelike (Office and Finance Manager)

Kevin Brown (Technician)

2017 was an exciting year for progressing towards our water management goals and objectives. The Sauk River Watershed District (SRWD), along with our partners in Douglas County, Meeker County, Pope County, Stearns County and Todd County, were approved for a 1Watershed, 1 Plan grant and started the process by forming committees and began writing the grant work plan.

The SRWD elected to enforce the State's Buffer Rule, but only for public drainage systems that the Sauk River Watershed Drainage Authority (SRWDA) has jurisdiction. Every public drainage system is required to have a 16.5 ft-wide, vegetative buffer from the top of bank, moving outwards on both sides of the ditch. Any drainage systems that have not undergone the redetermination of benefits process that awards damages (or a financial payment) for placing that land into a vegetative buffer is required to have a buffer installed by November 1, 2018. The SRWDA currently has 2 drainage systems that have gone through a redetermination of benefits and will therefore be required to have a buffer without financial compensation.

The SRWD Board of Managers initiated two water quality projects; the Osakis Lake Area TMDL (OLAT) project and the City of Rockville, Sauk River Stabilization project. The OLAT project will look at expanding the water quality projects within the JD2 watershed in Douglas and Todd Counties. Extra water quality monitoring in 2018 will aid in yielding engineering recommendations on a large scale project in the near future. The Sauk River Stabilization Project will be completed in 2018 and will involve 260 feet of streambank stabilization and resloping to help support safety features of a township road. The project will be funded through the SRWD's Water Management Districts.

Water Management Districts, per MN Statutes 103D.729, are smaller units within the watershed, for the purpose of collecting revenues and paying the cost of projects initiated under other sections of 103D (Watershed Statute). The SRWD Board of Managers passed the policy for implementing these districts at the September 17, 2017, meeting. The plan will be to utilize this funding mechanism in the near future.

The United States Environmental Protection Agency approved the following Total Maximum Daily Load reports: Sauk Lake South Bay (Excess Nutrients Impairment); Ashley Creek, Sauk River, Adley Creek and Stoney Creek (E.coli Impairment); and Maple, Little Sauk, Guernsey, Juergens, Westport, Sand, Henry, Uhlenkolts and McCormic lakes (Phosphorus Impairment).

Todd County and Stearns County Commissioners reappointed to the SRWD Board of Managers, Tyler Carlson (Todd), Dennis Ritter (Stearns), and Lee Bautch (Stearns).

During the 2017 monitoring season, the Sauk River Watershed District (SRWD) staff focused on collecting baseline data for seven sites on the Sauk River and six main tributaries to the river, while also collecting baseline data from three sites on JD2 (tributary to Lake Osakis). This data was collected to continue monitoring trends in the water quality at key locations in the SRWD.

The monitoring coordinator created an annual report template and populated the template with 2016 data. The report is available on the SRWD's website.

2017 was the third year that the SRWD partnered with the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency (MPCA) and the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) for the Water Pollutant Load Monitoring Network (WPLMN) grant. The grant provided funding for one of the SRWD's main river sites, while also funding year round sampling for an additional main river site and one site on the Mississippi River.

Additionally, the SRWD continued implementing the Lake Ranking Process during the 2017 monitoring season. This resulted in monitoring the following lakes McCormic (Stearns), Westport (Pope), Maple (Todd), Smith (Douglas), and Osakis (Douglas/Todd). All of the lakes were funded by the general levy except for Osakis Lake (grant funded).

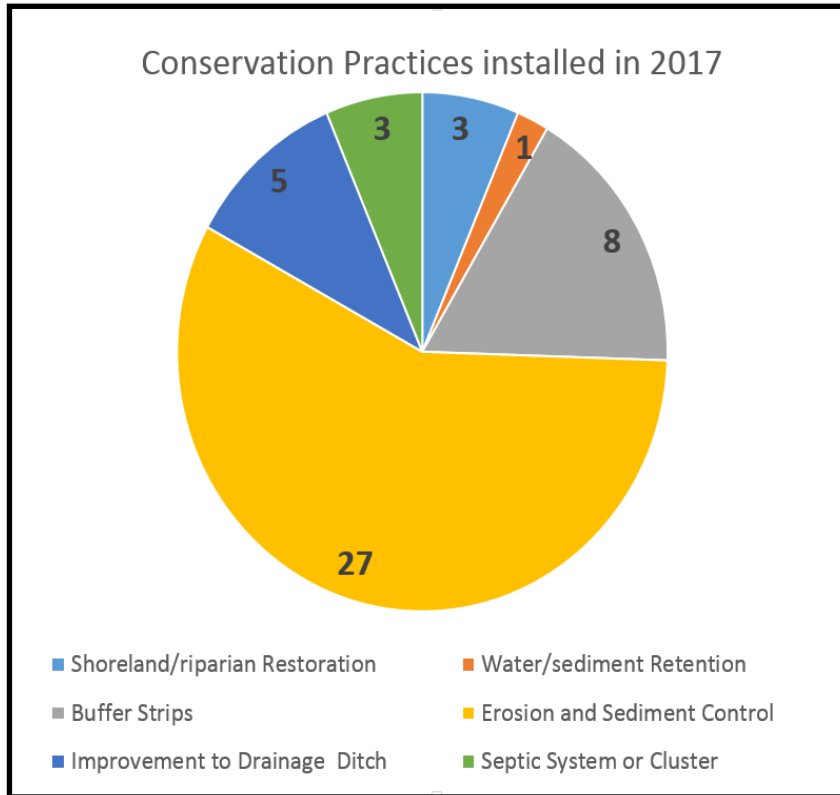
The above efforts resulted in 341 river and lake water chemistry samples, 15 Discovery Farm water chemistry samples, and 144 flow measurements. Furthermore, the SRWD staff maintained water level equipment at 16 of the monitoring sites.



Above: Osakis Outlet at Todd County Road 37

Erosion control and sediment reduction was the primary focus for conservation projects in 2017. During the 2017 construction season, 47 projects were completed utilizing \$297, 108 in grant funds and \$54,536 in loan funds. The modeled reductions from these projects included 1,875 tons of sediment and 2,116 pounds of phosphorus from reaching the water resources within the Sauk River watershed.

In 2017, the SRWD received \$210,570 in grant funds from the Board of Water and Soil Resources for the Pope County Ditch 6 watershed which includes public drainage systems Pope-Stearns JD1 and Pope County Ditch 11. These funds will be utilized to address erosion issues, field runoff and stormwater management concerns for this subwatershed.



10-year Hayable Buffers Implemented in 2017:	
Osakis Watershed	= 23.58 acres
Middle Sauk Watershed	= 39.9 acres
Chain of Lakes Watershed	= 19.21 acres
Total acres	= 82.69 acres



Right: Planted buffer along Getchell's Creek

Education continued to be a bright spot in all that the SRWD does. The SRWD visited numbers of classrooms throughout the watershed. In all, 5,970 students received at least one in-class presentation/instruction from our education coordinator. Majority of the grades visited are 4th, 7th, 10th and other high school electives that focus on science. The more requested topics include macroinvertebrates (bugs), water chemistry, habitats/conservation and water properties. Melrose, ROCORI, Osakis and Sartell lead the way on inviting the SRWD to present in their schools.

Waterfests continued to be a fun and focal part of the SRWD’s education program. Approximately 2,500 4th graders, 200 teachers/parents and 550 volunteers participated in the waterfests. Along with donations from cities and other entities, the SRWD funds the supplies, volunteer lunches, venue rental fees and all of the transportation the schools need to attend the waterfests. It’s a great day to get away from the classroom and learn with hand-on experiences.

To bridge the gap between outreach and education, the SRWD helps maintain outdoor classrooms located at all of the participating schools/communities (Osakis, Sauk Centre, Melrose, Eden Valley, Cold Spring and St. Joseph and Hemker Park & Zoo in Freeport). Most of the educational best management practices (BMPs) are rain gardens or prairies planted with native plants and wildflowers. They are maintained by students as part of a class or workshop and/or by area master gardeners.



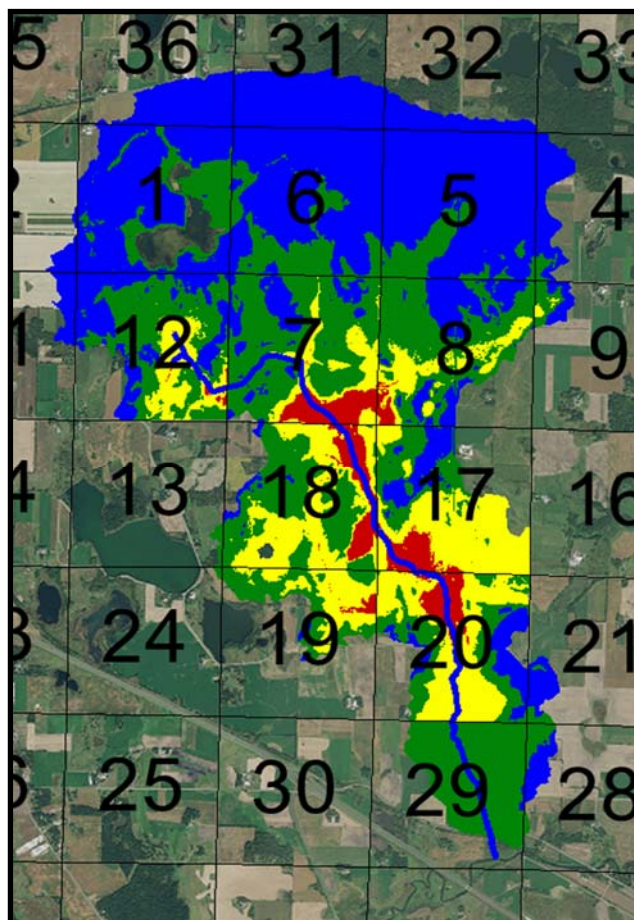
Above: 4th graders at a waterfest



The SRWD continues to expand and grow the adult educational programming that is offered. Adult courses include controlling runoff with rain barrels and rain garden; native plants, landscaping your septic system and septic system maintenance. These courses are mostly offered in the spring and fall in most communities, but they are very popular in St. Cloud.

The Sauk River Watershed Drainage Authority (SRWDA) initiated three Redetermination of Benefits (ROB) proceedings in 2017. Pope County Ditches #6 and #11, along with Pope-Stearns Joint Ditch #1 (Kranz) were ordered redetermined on January 17, 2017. The SRWDA also adopted a resolution of intent to consolidate these three systems into one, since they all function together with PCD #6 serving as the outlet for PCD #11 and PSJD #1.

The SRWDA completed ROBs on Stearns County Ditches (SCD) #9, #11, #19, and Zion-Munson. The viewer's reports were adopted for SCD #19 and Zion-Munson on March 21, 2017 and on May 16, 2017 for SCD #11. The viewer's report for SCD #9 was adopted on December 19, 2017.



Right: ROB map for Stearns CD 11
 Bottom: Culvert replacement and protection during the Stearns CD 11 repair.



SCD #11 repair proceedings continued with the advertisement for bids completed in December 2017 and the bid opening to take place in January 2018.

SCD #26 Repair was completed in 2017. Toe Stabilization work with grant funds continued into 2018.

Buffer Posting on the legal ditch systems continued in 2017 with posting of the portion of SCD #26 south of Interstate 94.

In 2017, the SRWD processed 69 permit applications. The following table summarizes the review activities:

Project Status	#
Approved	65
In Review	2
Incomplete	1
Withdrawn	1

The 69 permit applications breakdown into the following project types:

Project Type	#
Stormwater and Erosion Control	22
Erosion Control	45
Drainage	2
Water Use	0

In November, the Board of Managers passed an After-the-fact Permit Fee policy, which defines the procedures when an applicant begins work prior to acquiring the permit. The policy clearly defines the procedures the District will take to ensure all permitted activities are properly vetted and that applicants will be required to do the best management practice to ensure that water quality standards are maintained.

The SRWD has two types of permits: Standard Permit and General Permit.

The Standard Permit is fully processed by staff and includes details of the project and conditions that are required to meet our administrative rules.

The General Permit is issued to the applicant when they have received a permit from another permitting authority, with the conditions that meet our rules. In these cases, the SRWD does not duplicate the permitting effort, thus saving time and taxpayer money.



Left: Erosion caused by not having proper vegetation growth >80% prior to removing the silt fence between the slope and Sauk Lake.

2017 Revenue		
General Levy	\$	637,344.00
Special Assessments	\$	18,631.00
Licenses and Permits	\$	36,770.00
Intergovernmental	\$	9,511.00
Miscellaneous		
Investment Income	\$	3,053.00
Miscellaneous Income	\$	142,878.00
Total Revenue	\$	848,187.00
2017 Expenditures		
Managers	\$	25,084.00
Operations	\$	277,447.00
Monitoring	\$	64,602.00
BMP Incentive	\$	146,218.00
Ditch	\$	38,924.00
Education	\$	92,350.00
Permit	\$	78,530.00
Capitol Outlay	\$	3,301.00
Total Expenditure	\$	726,456.00
Total Net Financial Position - Governmental Activities	\$	1,839,411.00

Under Minnesota Statute 103D.355.1, the managers must have an annual audit completed of the books and accounts of the watershed district.

Acknowledgements



The Board of Managers of the Sauk River Watershed District would like to thank the following groups and organizations for the valuable assistance they gave to the District in 2017.

Farmer-led Councils of Stearns, Douglas and Todd Counties

Douglas County Commissioners, SWCD and Land and Resource Management Division

Meeker County Commissioners and SWCD

Pope County Commissioners, SWCD and Land and Resource Management Division

Stearns County Commissioners, SWCD and Environmental Services Division

Todd County Commissioners and Soil, Water, Conservation and Development Division

City Council Members and Mayors

Attorneys John Kolb and Kale Van Bruggen (Rinke Noonan)

Wenck Associates

Houston Engineering

RESPEC

I&S-Group

Sauk River Chain of Lakes Association

Big Birch Lake Association

Big Sauk Lake Association

North Browns Lake Association

Osakis Lake Association

Sauk Centre Herald

University of Minnesota Extension

St. Cloud State University

Army Corps of Engineers

Minnesota Association of Watershed Districts

MN Board of Water and Soil Resources

MN Department of Natural Resources

MN Pollution Control Agency

US Fish & Wildlife Service

USDA Farm Service Agency

USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service

Pheasants Forever

City of Sauk Centre

City of St. Cloud