

Annual Report 2024



Snake River Watershed Plan Partnership

Aitkin Soil and Water Conservation District
Aitkin County
Kanabec Soil and Water Conservation District
Kanabec County
Mille Lacs County Soil and Water Conservation District
Pine County
Pine County Soil and Water Conservation District



2008 Mahogany Street, Suite 3, Mora, MN
<https://www.millelacswwcd.org/snake-river-watershed/>
 320-679-1391

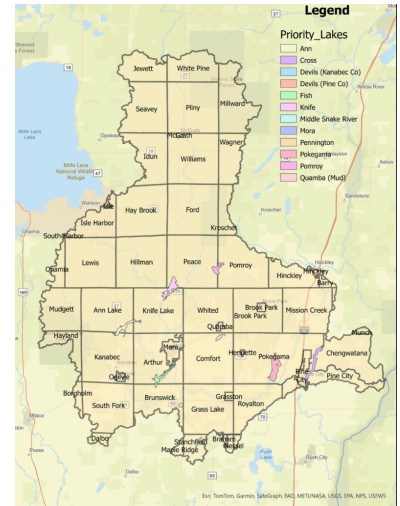
Report prepared by:
 Mary Poelman, Watershed Coordinator
 Kanabec SWCD

mary@kanabecswcd.org



About the Snake River Watershed:

The Snake River Watershed spans 1,006 square miles across six counties: Aitkin, Kanabec, Mille Lacs, Pine, Chisago, and Isanti. It is a diverse region, home to a variety of ecosystems, including forests, wetlands, grasslands, and croplands. With 87 lakes and 128 streams, the watershed supports our valuable natural resources. However, the watershed faces several environmental challenges, including impairments in 25% of its streams and 53% of its lake areas, primarily from bacteria, nutrients, and pollutants. Significant human impact is evident, with alterations to over a third of the watershed's streams and concerns over soil erosion, water pollution, and degraded aquatic habitats. While some water bodies face challenges, including impairments in streams and lakes, the region's rich natural landscapes and ecosystems continue to thrive. The watershed benefits from a largely rural environment, with significant portions of land covered by forests and wetlands, contributing to its overall ecological health.



Groundwater is the primary drinking water source, and efforts are being made to protect its quality amidst growing concerns over contamination. Despite the challenges posed by invasive species, habitat degradation, and climate change, the watershed's strong natural systems, including intact wetlands and riparian areas, play an essential role in maintaining water quality and supporting biodiversity. As the region adapts to changing conditions, collaboration among local communities, landowners, and environmental organizations is key to preserving the watershed's valuable resources and ensuring a sustainable, resilient future for both people and wildlife.

Mission Statement

The mission of the Snake River Watershed Plan Partnership (SRWPP) is to implement the Snake River Comprehensive Watershed Management Plan. The Partnership seeks to facilitate collaboration across its member entities and connect landowners with the resources needed to manage their natural resources.

Vision Statement

The SRWPP strives to work with and empower landowners and partners in the restoration and protection of the watershed's natural resources.

The Snake River Watershed Plan Partnership seeks to implement Watershed Based Implementation Funds (WBIF) predominantly for the promotion and installation of Best Management Practices on private lands.

Key Services Provided

- Installation of Agricultural Best Management Practices (Agricultural BMPs)
- Installation of Livestock Best Management Practices (Livestock BMPs)
- Installation of Forestry Best Management Practices (Forestry BMPs)
- Woodland Stewardship Plan (WSP) Writing
- Comprehensive Nutrient Management Plan (CNMP) Writing Support
- Shoreline and Streambank Restoration and Protection
- Planning, Engineering, and Technical Design of Best Management Practices
- Education and Outreach Events and Resources
- Wetland Restoration
- Septic System Repairs or Replacement (financial assistance available for qualifying low-income households)
- Well Sealing Assistance
- Tree Planting Projects

2024 Key Achievements and Impact

In 2023 and 2024, the Snake River Watershed Plan Partnership made progress with key achievements in planning, project execution, and funding. The partnership adopted its Comprehensive Water Management Plan (CWMP) and by-laws, secured over \$1 million in non-competitive implementation funding, and contracted its first projects, including Shoreline Restoration projects at priority lakes and completing the Pokegama Sub-Watershed Analysis. Several projects were completed in 2024, with more milestones such as the first structural projects including a private septic system replacement. The partnership continued to make strides in improving water quality, increasing habitat protection, and promoting sustainable land management practices.

Total Pollutant Reductions for FY2024

Pollutant	2024 Total Values	10 Year Goal
Phosphorus	71 lbs./year	4200 lbs.
Sediment (TSS)	187.3 tons/year	3500 tons
Total Suspended Solids (TSS)	1.65 mg/liter	Reduce TSS Levels to meet Lake Specific Total Maximum Daily Limit (TMDL) goals

Key Achievements:

- January 2023: Snake River Comprehensive Watershed Management Plan Adopted
- October 2023: By-laws of the Snake River Watershed Plan Partnership Adopted
- December 2023: Watershed Based Implementation Funding fully executed (\$1,024,471)
- January 2024: First projects contracted:
 1. Fish Lake Shoreline Project (Completed)
 2. Stormwater Rain Barrels
- February 2024: Projects Contracted:
 3. Pokegama Sub-Watershed Analysis (Completed)
- May 2024: Projects Contracted:
 4. Snake River Mainstem Assessment (Active)
- June 2024: First completed project (Rain Barrels)
- July 2024: First project over \$20,000 Contracted
 5. Septic Replacement (Completed)
 6. Comprehensive Nutrient Management Plan (Active)
 7. Livestock Watering/Cropland Conversion (Completed)
- August 2024: Projects Contracted
 8. Wetland Restoration (Active)
- October 2024: First Shoreline Project Completed (Fish Lake Shoreline Project)
- November 2024: Contracted:
 9. Well Sealing (Active)
 10. Manure Pit Closure (Active)
- December 2024: Multiple project completions: Cropland Conversion, Shoreland Protection, Septic Replacement, Woodland Stewardship Plan

Financial Overview*

Income: \$1,024,471.00 - Watershed Based Implementation Funding (MN State Tax Funding- Clean Water, Land, and Legacy Funds)
Expenditures:
Staff Time: \$92,362.73 Administration: \$53,203.45 Education/Information: \$12,689.30 Project Development: \$26,469.98
Project Dollars: \$84,378.3 Non-Structural Management Practices: \$5,341.75 Planning and Assessments: \$48,988.25 Sub-Surface Sewage Treatment Systems: \$22,375.00 Stream/Shoreline Protection: \$6,583.30 Urban Stormwater Practices: \$90.00
Total Expenditures: \$175,741.03
Match Leveraged: \$17,552.84

*This report has not been audited or reviewed by an external accountant

Economic Benefits for Communities

The achievements of the Snake River Watershed Plan Partnership have had a notable economic impact, both in terms of direct investments and long-term benefits to the local economy. The partnership secured over \$1 million in Watershed Based Implementation Funding, which was utilized to support projects that improve water quality, promote ecologically beneficial agricultural practices, and protect natural resources.

This funding has supported local contractors, service providers, and communities, driving economic activity while addressing environmental challenges. Additionally, the partnership's focus on projects such as assistance for repairing, upgrading, or replacing failing septic systems, nutrient management plans, and cropland conversion has not only improved the region's environmental health but also supported the local economy by creating jobs and fostering sustainable land practices.

Furthermore, completed projects like the Fish Lake Shoreline and Pokegama Sub-Watershed Analysis enhance the region's appeal for tourism and recreational activities, which provide additional benefits and opportunities for local businesses and job growth. Shoreline protection and habitat restoration efforts also increase property values and promote healthier ecosystems, benefitting agriculture and local industries reliant on water resources. In the long term, these efforts help ensure the sustainability of the region's natural resources, improving resilience against extreme weather events and supporting continued agricultural productivity, all of which are cornerstones of the local economy.

Outreach Efforts

In 2024, the partnership made significant strides in coordinating and implementing water quality projects, focusing on the preparation for WBIF implementation. They successfully organized meetings, developed essential policies, and facilitated outreach efforts through events, publications, and collaboration with partners. New staff were hired, and progress was made on projects within the CWMP work plan. The Partnership's ongoing commitment to education, public engagement, and strategic planning helped build strong partnerships and ensured that water quality initiatives were targeted for maximum impact.

This year, the Snake River Watershed Plan Partnership:

- Coordinated steering meetings, discussed project policies, and prepared for WBIF implementation.
- Provided for administrative (KSWCD) and fiscal services (Pine County)
- Developed service contracts, including for the Pokegama Lake Sub-Watershed Assessment, to guide future project development.
- Attended two outreach events, delivering 17 contact hours and creating six outreach materials.
- Partners shared outreach information through Fish Lake Association meetings, news articles, and the project website.
- Continued efforts in grant reporting, fiscal tracking, meeting coordination, and project development.
- Developed a project ranking system and focused on community involvement and education.

Acknowledgements and Thank You

Many thanks to all the key contributors at our partner organizations as well as those we have interacted with in our communities. Without you, this work would not be possible.

Special thanks to our Board members for all their hard work in bringing the partnership together and in guiding us through our first complete year of funding.

Interested in getting involved?

We are currently in the process of developing a community advisory group to support the work of the Snake River Watershed Plan Partnership. If you are interested in participating, please let us know - we would love to hear from you. Have a project that might be of interest to Partnership activities? Reach out to your local SWCD office. We look forward to working with you.