
2023 Annual Activity Report of the Yellow Medicine River Watershed District



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Mission

The mission of the Yellow Medicine River Watershed District (YMRWD) is to provide an organized means for proper management and protection of the water resources in the Yellow Medicine River Watershed. The YMRWD has three core functions outside of administration: (1) Serve as the drainage authority for systems under its jurisdiction, (2) Provide a regulatory framework that permits a variety of activities that complement the flood reduction and water quality goals of the district, and (3) carry out activities of the watershed management plan.

History of the Yellow Medicine River Watershed District

The Yellow Medicine River Watershed District (YMRWD) is a local unit of government established on August 27, 1971 through a petition of its residents to the MN Board of Water and Soil Resources. The jurisdiction of the organization covers 685 square miles in southwestern Minnesota that drain to the Yellow Medicine River in Lincoln (39%), Lyon (23%), and Yellow Medicine (38%) counties. County Commissioners appoint representatives to a 5-member board of managers that direct and oversee activities of the District. The southeast portion of the Coteau des Prairies, partially located in the southwest of the Yellow Medicine Watershed, comprises one of the distinct regions in Minnesota, known as the Buffalo Ridge. From the Coteau region, the watershed drains to the northeast with 1,125 feet of elevation change to the lower region, called the Flatland region. The Transitional region in between these two regions is where the elevation changes are the greatest, at approximately 45 feet per mile.

District Staff

The District maintains one full time Administrator and one full time technician. Michelle Overholser was the District Administrator and Jeremiah Timm was the District Technician throughout 2023.

2022 Budget

A hearing for the 2022 proposed operation budget took place on August 16, 2021 during the regular board meeting. The Administrator is recommending that there is no levy increase for 2022 a \$240,000 levy for the year was proposed and approved.

The 2022 had a budgeted income of \$355,044 with expenses of the same amount. 2022 had an actual expense of \$242,055.83 with an actual income of \$315,294, which included \$42,349.97 carried over from 2021 of budgeted but unspent funds.

2023 Budget

A hearing for the 2023 proposed operation budget took place on August 15, 2022 during the regular board meeting. The Administrator is recommending that there is no levy increase for 2023. The \$240,000 levy for the year was approved.

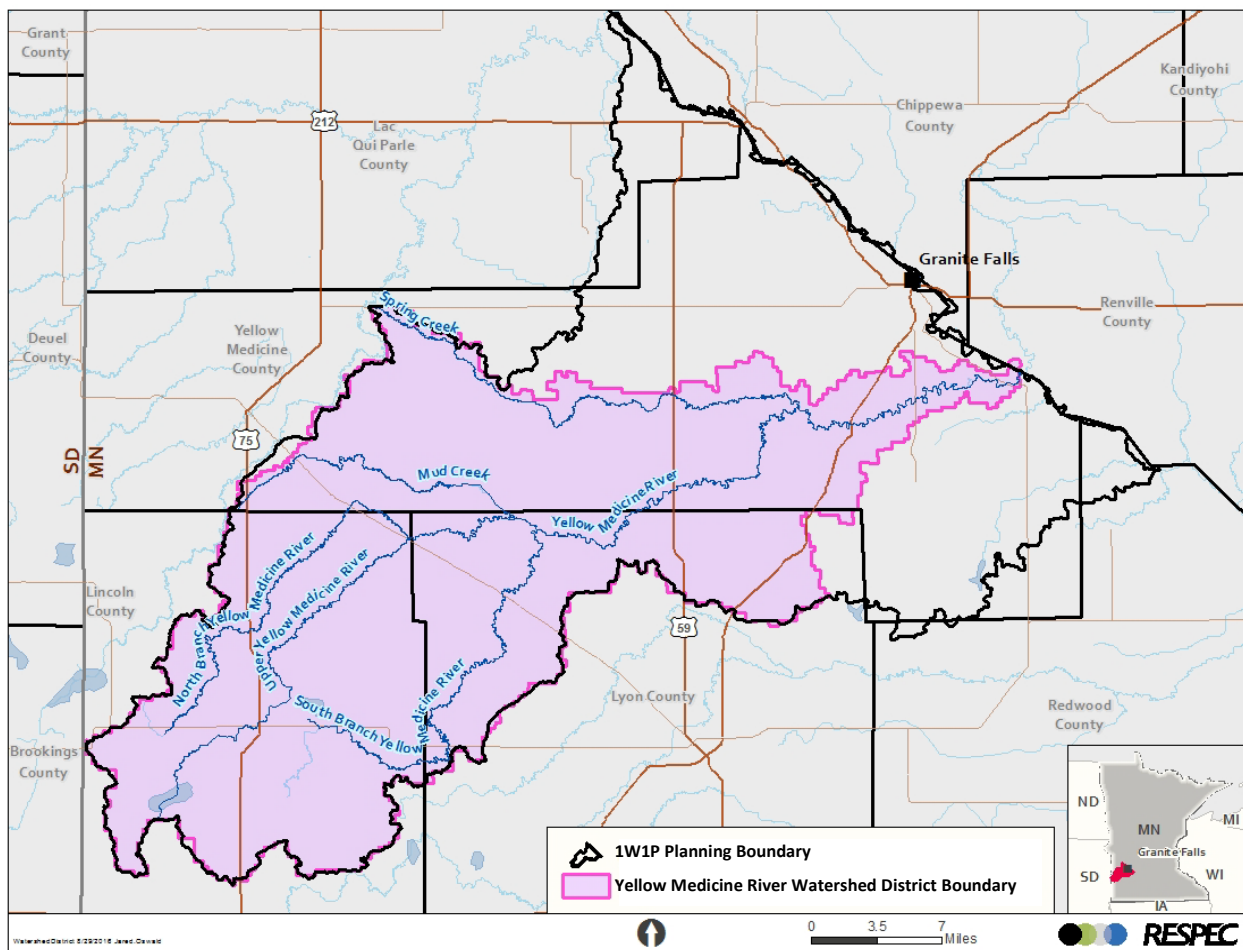
The 2023 has a budgeted income of \$385,544 with expenses of the same amount.

2024 Budget

In 2023, the Minnesota Legislature passed a bill that increased the levy cap for Watershed Districts to \$500,000. A hearing for the 2024 proposed operation budget took place on August 16, 2024 during the regular board meeting. The Administrator presented a variety of budget options from no levy increase to a \$100,000/year increase. After discussion the board moved to increase the levy by \$20,000 to \$260,000.

2024 has a budgeted income of \$380,650.00 with expenses of the same amount.

District and Watershed Planning Boundaries



Current and Future Goals

The YMRWD has adopted the Yellow Medicine One Watershed One Plan as the Districts comprehensive water plan. In 2018 the District became the fiscal agent and Administrator for the Watershed Based Funds Implementation grant and developed a 1W1P implementation plan in partnership with partner local government units.

In 2023, the district continued to lead the 1W1P implementation efforts, working closely with the SWCDs to increase conservation BMPs across the watershed. In the upcoming year, the district aims to continue its efforts to increase the capacity and capabilities of the office and staff to better serve the community.

One Watershed, One Plan

The Yellow Medicine One Watershed One Plan (1W1P) project began in 2014 as one of five pilot projects across Minnesota that set out to align watershed planning along watershed boundaries and move away from county planning boundaries. The plan was completed and approved by the MN Board of Water and Soil Resources on December 14, 2016.

Since plan implementation began in 2018, the YM River Watershed District has acted as the fiscal agent and the plan coordinator, and daily contact for the YM1W1P.

In 2021 the YM1W1P closed out the 18/19 grant. A total of \$357,564 of the grant went directly to cost-share for landowners.

In 2022 the Partnership was awarded a \$814,603 grant to continue the YM1W1 implementation efforts. An extension was granted in 2022 to finish building projects that were unable to be constructed due to contractor availability and or weather. This grant will expire at the end of 2023 and is anticipated to be 100% spent.

In 2023 the Partnership was told that we were preliminarily approved for the 24/25 WBIF grant of just over 1.3 million. The grant agreement and fund request will be finalized at the end of 2023 or early 2024.

The partnership is also pursuing additional funds from the 2022/2023 WBIF supplemental funds being offered. The request for 1 million dollars of additional funding was sent at the beginning of December.

Drainage Authority Work

During 2023, nine ditch systems were under the jurisdiction of the watershed district. In 2023 all of the work completed on the ditch systems was maintenance and ditch inspections. Necessary maintenance will be performed on WD 16 in 2024 and is to have outlet and culvert repairs and to be cleaned out by K & K tiling. WD 1 and WD 4 will have maintenance performed on aging tile outlets and culverts in 2024 by Rite-Way Drainage LLC.

WD 8 had a washout occur on a watershed tile outlet which was promptly repaired by Ground Works Drainage.

WD 1, WD 4, WD 5, WD7, WD 8 and WD 16 were all inspected in 2023.

Regulatory Program: Drainage Permitting

The district continued its permitting program which requires that all non-maintenance drainage projects obtain a permit from the watershed district.

In 2022 110 tiling and drainage permits were approved.
In 2023 59 tiling and drainage permits were approved.

Nuisance Beaver Program

In 2023 the Watershed District continued its program to pay a bounty on nuisance beavers. The district funds a nuisance beaver program to help deter overland flooding and stream bank erosion caused by beaver dams in streams and ditches located in the watershed boundaries. In 2023 the district increase the beaver bounty to \$50 and paid out \$2370 in beaver bounties.

Appreciation

This concludes the 2023 annual report of the Yellow Medicine River Watershed District. The Yellow Medicine River Watershed District Board of Managers and staff would like to take this opportunity to express our appreciation for the support given to our organization, by the various county offices and personnel, as well as the Commissioners of Lyon, Lincoln, and Yellow Medicine Counties. We appreciate the opportunity to work with each of you, in meeting the goals of the Watershed District, in our efforts to successfully manage and monitor the waters of the Yellow Medicine River Watershed.

Respectfully submitted,

Michelle Overholser

Michelle Overholser, 2023 YMRWD Administrator