WHAT IS A WATERSHED?

A watershed is the area of land where all the water that drains off goes into the same place—a river, stream or lake. The smallest watersheds are the drainage areas for small streams and lakes. Think about your local creek or river. Where does it start? What type of landscape does it flow through? Where does it end up? Each small watershed is part of the more extensive watershed for a larger stream or lake in the vicinity. You, your family, and your neighbors have the power to influence water quality for the benefit of your community and thousands downstream from Minnesota. Thank you for all the support and assistance you provide.

YOUR WATERSHED CONTACTS

Have questions? Our volunteer board is ready to respond. Formed in 1981, the Carnelian-Marine-St. Croix Watershed District (CMSWD) oversees a variety of projects and programs to assess and improve the health of our 81-square-mile watershed— which includes 31 lakes, three designated trout streams, hundreds of acres of wetlands, and more than 17 miles of St. Croix River shoreline.

Board of Managers
President - Wade Johnson, 651.356.9573
Secretary - Paul Richard, 612.240.1972
Treasurer - Kristin Tuenge, 612.433.3763
Manager - Eric Lindberg, 612.760.6695
Manager - Andy Weaver, 651.491.2656

District Staff
Administrator - Mike Iensen, mike.isensee@cmscwd.org
Mike Cell - 612-839-6492
Project Assistant - Bobbie Law, bobbie.law@cmscwd.org
Office Phone - 651-433-2150

Visit us online at www.cmscwd.org

Get Involved!

Residents of the District are being sought to join the Citizen Advisory Committee (CAC). The CAC advises the Board of Managers on regular watershed business and special projects such as the budget, aquatic invasive species and capital projects. CAC members are appointed to the committee at any regular board meeting throughout the year. To learn more or to volunteer, contact the District Administrator.

Mike Iensen at mike.isensee@cmscwd.org

WATERSHED UPDATE

YEARS OF HEAVY RAINS LEAD TO HIGH WATER LEVELS

Have you noticed high water on or near your property? You aren’t the only one. 2019 was one of the Carnelian Marine St. Croix Watershed District’s wettest years on record. To make matters worse, it was the seventh wet year in a row. As a result, we are seeing rising groundwater levels, as well as high water in wetlands and lakes throughout the area.

“In 40 years of farming I have never seen the water this high,” said Washington County Commissioner Fran Miron in October. We’re hearing similar concerns from landowners across the watershed who are worried about the increased risk of flooding for their homes, septic systems, driveways, fields, and pastures.

The Minnesota Climatology Center notes that Minnesota weather is getting warmer and wetter. We are seeing more rain, more snow, and more extreme rainfall events. There has also been an increase in average nighttime temperatures, especially during the winter. Both trends are expected to continue into the future.

What to do about flooding on your property:

Insurance: Consider enrolling in FEMA’s National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP) to supplement your homeowner’s policy.

Emergency response: Request sandbags from your city or township to protect buildings at risk of flooding. Washington County Emergency Management coordinates community-level flood response activities.

Septic systems: Relieve pressure on a flooded septic system by using it less or not at all until floodwaters recede and the soil has drained. Avoid digging around the septic tank or driving heavy equipment over the drain field while the soil is water-logged.

Wells: Check to ensure that your well casing extends above the 100-year flood level. If flooding is imminent, disconnect the power supply for your well and install a watertight cap or cover on your well. Be prepared to have your well disinfected and tested after flood waters recede.

Remove structures and debris: Landscaping materials, sheds, and playground equipment from flood-prone areas.

WATERCRAFT INSPECTORS CONTINUE TO PROTECT DISTRICT LAKES

In 2019, the Carnelian Marine St. Croix Watershed District continued to partner with Washington Conservation District, City of Scandia, Big Marine Lake Association, and Square Lake Association to conduct watercraft inspections on Big Carnelian, Big Marine, Goose and Square Lakes. Partners also worked together to educate the public through special mailings, workshops, news articles, and social media advertising. Watercraft Inspectors are trained to observe and document when watercraft enter a public water access with any violations, including boats with attached vegetation as well as watercraft whose drain plugs have not been removed. In 2019, Washington Conservation District staff conducted 8,989 inspections countywide and found a total of 224 drain plug violations and 339 plant/animal violations.

In August, our shared watercraft inspection program successfully prevented the introduction of zebra mussels to Big Marine Lake. According to the inspector on duty that day, the sides and bottom of a boat entering a Big Marine access appeared to be clean. Upon closer inspection, the inspector found a single small mussel on a pipe on the boat. The operator said the boat had been on White Bear Lake earlier that day, where zebra mussels have been present since 2014.

Volunteers Work to Restore Fairy Falls

Nestled deep in the woods on the north side of Stillwater, Fairy Falls is a well-loved and well-guarded local secret. The waterfall and 60 acres of surrounding woods is owned by the National Park Service and is part of the St. Croix National Scenic Riverway. Beautiful as the woods and falls may be, signs of human misuse abound—broken bottles and plastic bags, homemade ropes that dangle from trees and cliffs, graffiti on rocks and a wooden bridge that crosses the stream. This year, community residents Kyle and Nicky TePoe decided it was time for this well-loved destination to get a much needed make-over.

“When both of us remember it being our idea,” Kyle says as we walk through the woods above the falls on a cold November day. “I saw a flyer for the Stillwater Great Idea Competition one day while I was at the gym, and when I talked to Nicky later that day she had seen the same announcement.” The competition, run by the Stillwater Area Community Foundation, provides an annual award of up to $10,000 to citizens, groups, nonprofits, and businesses who have a “great idea” to make the Stillwater area better. In their application, the TePoes proposed to create a Friends of Fairy Falls group that would work with the National Park Service and St. Croix River Association to clean up the property, remove invasive species, and make Fairy Falls safer to visit. It turned out to be a winning suggestion.

Over the summer, the TePoes invited 20 neighbors to a kick-off meeting with staff from the National Park Service and the River Association. Later in the fall, they organized a work day to remove buckthorn and pick up litter. This spring, they plan to continue their restoration efforts and may work on removing garlic mustard as well.

Thanks to the TePoes and the newly formed Friends of Fairy Falls for your efforts!
Salt lowers the freezing temperature of water and consequently melts street-clogging snow and ice. But its public safety benefits do come with environmental impacts. Because of salt’s soluble nature, it accumulates over time in our lakes and wetlands. This is a big concern for water quality and our local fisheries.

This winter, help the fish in our lakes by:

Salt Less Fish More

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- Shoveling: Walkways before applying salt
- Selecting: A different de-icer if temperatures are below 15 degrees.
- Scattering: your application leaving plenty of space between granules
- Sweeping: leftover salt, sand, and de-icer as need

Clean water Minnesota, www.cleanwatermn.org

Climate trends, aquatic invasive species update, fairy falls restoration, upcoming district projects

Q: WHEN WAS OUR WATERSHED ESTABLISHED?

Answer inside

Water Quality Improvements on the Horizon

Imagine that you want to lose ten pounds. Should you cut out your apple-a-day or stop eating ice cream after dinner every night? Either strategy will reduce your overall calorie intake, but skipping the ice cream will probably get you a lot closer to your weight loss goal.

- We all like to get the biggest bang for our buck, whether we are trying to lose weight or working to improve our local lakes and streams. The Carnelian-Marine-St. Croix Watershed District is currently working to identify priority locations and projects to improve water quality in Big Carnelian, Little Carnelian, Square, Jellums, Long (Scandia), Sand and Big Marine lakes. There are many opportunities, but just like in our daily diets, some projects get us closer to our water quality goals than others.

- During 2019, CMSCWD and Washington Conservation District staff met with shoreline landowners on Big Carnelian Lake and the Bliss Addition on Big Marine Lake. In the coming year, we will continue to meet with landowners on the other priority lakes in our district. We are also using computer modeling software, aerial imagery, and on-the-ground research to identify locations and practices that will best help to keep sediment and nutrients from flowing into these lakes. Potential projects will be ranked based on a cost-benefit analysis and the district will seek out grant funding to support implementation of the most cost-effective projects.

In 2015, Paul Keller converted 1.75 acres of turf to prairie at his property located just southeast of Marine on St. Croix. This property drains to Lake St. Croix via Arcola Creek. The project reduced phosphorus flowing to the river by 0.5 lbs per year (equivalent to 250 pounds of algae) and also restored critical habitat for the endangered rusty patch bumble bee and other wildlife species. Local officials visited the Keller prairie during a tour led by St. Croix River Association last fall.

CMSCWD Staff

Mike Isensee - Administrator

Mike Isensee joined the District as the new Administrator in July 2019. He has been working to improve water quality and manage natural resources in Dakota County and Washington County for the last 15 years. Since July, Mike has been working closely with local units of government and landowners to design water quality improvement projects for installation in 2020 and 2021.

Bobbie Law - Program Assistant

Bobbie Law joined the District in fall of 2019 as a shared position with the Washington Conservation District. She is a recent graduate from the University of Wisconsin River Falls where she received a bachelor’s degree in conservation and environmental planning. Her natural resources background and experience with the National Parks will be helpful in making the District more responsive and connected with communities and landowners.

Contact Us

Carnelian-Marine-St. Croix Watershed District staff are available to answer questions and provide assistance for voluntary technical assistance, cost share programs, and the permit process.

Mike and Bobbie can be reached at 651-433-2150.

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WATERSHED TRIVIA

Q: WHEN WAS OUR WATERSHED ESTABLISHED?

(Answer inside)

WATER UPDATE

CARNELIAN-MARINE-ST. CROIX WATERSHED DISTRICT
Scandia Plaza II • 21150 Ozark Avenue • P.O. Box 188 • Scandia, MN 55073

WINTER 2020