

SECTION 2.0 PLAN INTRODUCTION

2.1 Plan Overview

The Watowan River Comprehensive Watershed Management Plan (WRCWMP), developed through the One Watershed, One Plan (IWIP) program represents an evolution from traditional, county-based water planning to watershed-based planning. The IWIP program is a statewide effort which combines local entities that would otherwise have separate local plans into one combined planning effort to address resource issues considered most important during the planning process. In the Watowan River Watershed (WRW), this brings six counties and six soil and water conservation districts (SWCD) together to develop one cohesive, comprehensive, and implementation-focused water planning document.

The WRW IWIP process is intended to result in a more unified, effective, and science-based approach to address resources that are most important locally. The information contained within this plan came from a compilation of existing local water management plans, studies, reports, models, scientific data, and state strategy documents. This comprehensive plan addresses more than just surface water management (rivers, streams, lakes, and agricultural drainage systems), but also considers land stewardship (urban, rural, and riparian/shoreland stewardship), groundwater, and local knowledge base and public awareness. There are a wide variety of actions included in the plan's targeted implementation schedule, aimed to protect and improve these resources and make progress towards stated goals.

This plan is organized into eight plan sections:

- ✦ *Section 1: Executive Summary* provides an overview of each section of the WRCWMP;
- ✦ *Section 2: Plan Introduction* contains background information about the WRCWMP development process;
- ✦ *Section 3: Land and Water Resources Narrative* is a summary of information that was used to help support plan content development;
- ✦ *Section 4: Identification and Prioritization of Resources and Issues* summarizes priorities that will be addressed within the lifespan of the plan;
- ✦ *Section 5: Measurable Goals* assigns measurable goals to each priority issue;
- ✦ *Section 6: Targeted Implementation Schedule*, contains the "to-do" list of the plan, which includes a description of actions, where and when actions will occur, who will implement the action, the cost of implementation, and how progress will be measured;
- ✦ *Section 7: Implementation Programs* describes the overarching implementation programs that will be used to fund and support actions included within the schedule; and lastly,
- ✦ *Section 8: Plan Administration and Coordination* defines the organizational structure for plan implementation.



The Watonwan Watershed Planning Partnership (WWPP) includes all local planning partners primarily involved in developing the WRCWMP. The WWPP was developed through a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) (Appendix A) adopted by the governing boards of the participating entities:

- ☛ The counties of Blue Earth, Brown, Cottonwood, Jackson, Martin, and Watonwan through their respective County Board of Commissioners; and
- ☛ The SWCDs of Blue Earth, Brown, Cottonwood, Jackson, Martin, and Watonwan through their respective SWCD Board of Supervisors.



The WWPP subdivided into three local planning committees:

1. The Policy Committee (PC);
2. The Advisory Committee (AC); and
3. The Steering Team (ST).

The Policy Committee was made up of twelve members, including one County Commissioner and one SWCD Board Supervisor appointed from each of the participating counties and SWCDs in the watershed. Through a recommendation by the Policy Committee, the Watonwan County Board of Commissioners (MOA Fiscal Agent), contracted with Houston Engineering, Inc. (HEI) to assist with meeting facilitation for all committees, plan assessment, and plan writing. The Policy Committee made all final decisions about the content of the plan and its submittal to and approval by the Minnesota Board of Water and Soil Resources (BWSR). The Policy Committee retained ultimate responsibility for plan direction, decisions, and content. Further, the WRCWMP was locally adopted by each individual County and SWCD Board of Commissioners and Supervisors, respectively.

The Advisory Committee was composed of representatives from the state's main water agencies, representatives from agriculture, citizen stakeholders, and municipalities/townships, and members of the Steering Team (see Appendix DE for a list of invited Advisory Committee participants). Advisory Committee members were expected to communicate plan-related activities and identify practical concerns during the plan development process. Members also served a role in speaking about the plan within the community and assisting the Policy Committee in ensuring a credible process.

The Steering Team was responsible for preparing the plan. The Steering Team was composed of local SWCD and county staff, regional BWSR staff, and consultant planning staff. The Steering Team was responsible for day-to-day decision-making in the planning process. In addition, members of the Steering Team were responsible for providing information needed for the planning process, reviewing and recommending draft plan information for Policy Committee approval, and assisting in plan development.

Lastly, the public played an essential role during the development of the WRCWMP. The public was engaged during the plan development process primarily through an initial public kickoff meeting, online issue prioritization survey, the final public hearing, and the planning website. The intent of the public kickoff meeting on January 28, 2019 was to ensure a complete list of resource issues and concerns was developed, and to gather information to support ranking issues impacting the community and the watershed. A 60-day public review period was concluded with public hearings that each County within the WRW was involved in hosting. An additional role of the public was to review and comment upon the final plan during the 60-day public comment period prior to its adoption.

The WRCWMP Participation Plan (Appendix EF) was developed to create a clear process for soliciting input and obtaining comments during plan development. Throughout plan development, comments received from the general public and local committees were documented and used to guide adjustments in plan content. Public comments from the 60-day review period were made available on the WRCWMP website (www.co.watonwan.mn.us/416/Watonwan-Watershed).

Each participating county was responsible for initiating a local review and comment process that conformed to Minnesota Statutes Chapters 103B, including required public hearings. Upon completion of local review and comment and approval of the plan for submittal by a motion of each party under the MOA, the Policy Committee submitted the watershed-based plan jointly to BWSR for review and approval. The parties agreed to adopt and begin implementation of the plan within 120 days of receiving notice of state approval and provide notice of plan adoption pursuant to Minnesota Statutes Chapters 103B.

2.2 Watershed Overview

The WRCWMP area is in south central Minnesota and covers 873 square miles. The plan area is within Blue Earth (11%), Brown (6%), Cottonwood (23%), Jackson (1%), Martin (9%), and Watonwan (50%) counties (Figure 2-1 and Table 2-1).

Figure 2-1: Watonwan River Watershed and HUC 10 planning regions.

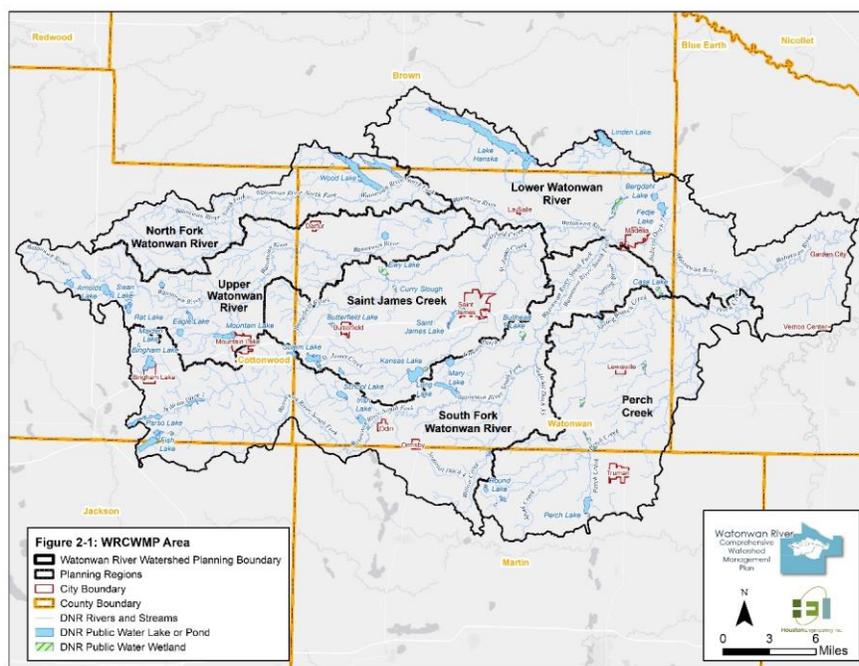


Table 2-1: Counties comprising the WRCWMP area (square mileage and acreage totals indicate portion of County within the WRW).

County	Square Miles	Acreage	Percentage of Plan Area
Blue Earth	92	58,882	11%
Brown	55	35,272	6%
Cottonwood	197	126,230	23%
Jackson	10	6,218	1%
Martin	81	52,016	9%
Watowan	438	280,346	50%

The plan area is comprised of six planning regions (Figure 2-1 and Table 2-2). These planning regions mirror the United States Geological Survey (USGS) Hydrologic Unit Code (HUC) 10 watershed boundaries.

Planning regions boundaries allow the WWPP to account for differences in the types of issues, measurable goals, and implementation actions that are needed across the entire Watershed.

Table 2-2: Planning regions within the WRCWMP area.

Planning Region	Square Miles	Acreage	Percentage of Plan Area
Lower Watowan River	187	120,149	22%
North Fork Watowan River	76	48,503	9%
Perch Creek	150	95,806	17%
Saint James Creek	124	79,370	14%
South Fork Watowan River	214	137,273	24%
Upper Watowan River	122	77,863	14%
Total Plan Area	873	558,964	100%

Each planning region contains one or more important waterways that are tributaries to the Watowan River. From the south working upstream, Perch Creek with its branches Spring Branch Creek and Mink Creek, the South Fork of the Watowan River with its branches Willow Creek and Spring Brook, and Saint James Creek with its branch Butterfield Creek.

Furthest west are the upper reaches of the Watowan River. From the north working downstream, is the North Fork of the Watowan River flowing to the Lower Watowan River. The Lower Watowan River is the name for the most downstream reach of the Watowan River before it outlets from the HUC 8 watershed northeast of Garden City to join up with the Blue Earth River to the south and east of the Rapidan Dam near 181st lane. Another 40 miles north, the Blue Earth River joins up with the Minnesota River coming from the northwest just before the river shifts course to travel north – northeast towards the Twin Cities. The entire WRCWMP area is contained within the Minnesota River Basin (HUC 070200).

The surface waters of the plan area consist of an intermingling of natural and altered watercourses and public and private drainage systems. There are also numerous hydrologically connected lakes within the plan area, including, to the south, Perch Lake, Long Lake ([Watowan County](#)), Long Lake ([Cottonwood County](#)), Irish Lake, Kansas Lake as well as Rat Lake and Mountain Lake. To the north, connected lakes include Wood Lake and Wilson Lake. There are also several smaller ~~closed-basin~~ waterbodies to the

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south, including Case Lake and Bullhead Lake, as well as two large **closed-basin** lakes to the north – Linden Lake and Lake Hanska. The Land and Water Resources Narrative (Section 3) provides a review of the characteristics of the WRCWMP area.