

## Ditch & Culvert Maintenance

If you have a private ditch on your property, you are responsible for its upkeep.

**Routine Maintenance** minimizes erosion and the flow of sediment into the ditch.

- 👉 **Inspect** your ditch at least once per year; easiest is in the early spring when vegetation is minimal or later in early fall when water levels tend to be lower.
- 👉 **Clean out** any trash or other debris from the ditch channel or culvert.
- 👉 **Vegetation** growing on the banks of the ditch is very important for holding soil in place. This helps prevent erosion and so the ditch should need to be cleaned less often.
- 👉 **Clear the banks** of debris & trash.
- 👉 **Do Not Dump** piles of grass clippings or leave on the banks or near the ditch or culvert. They do not decay very fast and shade out other vegetation needed to hold the soil.
- 👉 **Do Seed or plant** bare areas. Long-rooted plants, such as native plants, can hold the soil better.

**Non-Routine Maintenance or Repair** may be needed if your culvert or ditch fails. Get a contractor if you need help.

### Credits

Historical ditch photo:

[www.extension.umn.edu/AgDrainage/history.html](http://www.extension.umn.edu/AgDrainage/history.html)

Farm photo: <http://reflections.mndigital.org/u2/ach,10>

Other photos: Coon Creek Watershed District staff

## WATER IQ #15

© 2011



### Coon Creek Watershed District

12301 Central Ave. NE

Suite 100

Blaine, MN 55434

Email: [info@cooncreekwd.org](mailto:info@cooncreekwd.org)

[www.cooncreekwd.org](http://www.cooncreekwd.org)

Tel: 763.755.0975

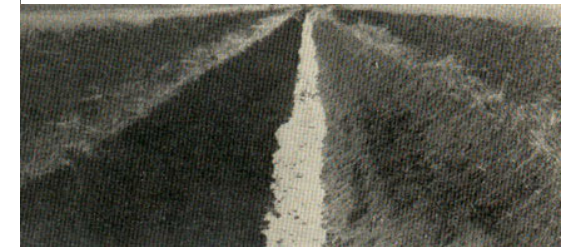
#### Mission

*To manage groundwater and surface water drainage systems to prevent property damage, maintain hydrologic balance, and protect water quality for the safety and enjoyment of citizens, and the preservation and enhancement of wildlife habitat.*

## Coon Creek Watershed District

Water IQ #15

### Private Ditches & Culverts



Ditch dug by hand, 1920s

Fifteenth in a Water Information  
Quest (WIQ) Series by  
Coon Creek Watershed District

Tel: 763.755.0975

## Ditches

All drainage ditches need periodic maintenance and repair. This requires regular inspection. Otherwise, flow can get obstructed and possibly cause flooding upstream and erosion for you.



In Anoka County where our elevation change is only a few feet, obstructions can cause flooding upstream for miles.

### Care of Private Ditches & Culverts

Private ditches are privately owned and are therefore the responsibility of the landowner (including easements, if any).

The landowner is responsible for the maintenance of any private ditch or culvert on your property.

The landowner is responsible for repair of the channel and spoil banks as needed.

#### Plan ahead

More inspection is needed in times of heavy rainfall.

Repair may require use of heavy equipment by a contractor, so it is best to take care of this when the ground is frozen for minimal damage and to avoid emergency work during times of flooding.

## Culverts

Blocked culverts back up flow and can cause flooding and erosion. Please keep your culvert clear of branches, garbage, or other obstructions.

Erosion can pollute the ditch with sediment and alter the channel flow, possibly impacting other landowners.

Maintaining your private culvert will help you avoid costly repairs and soil loss.

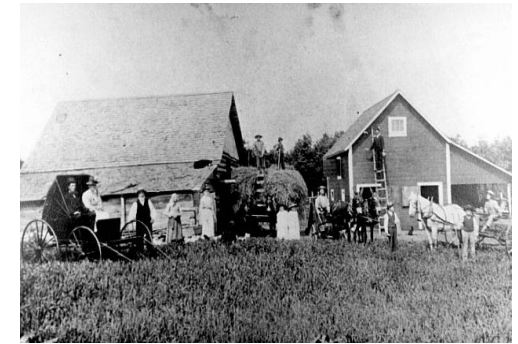


Unsure if you have a private ditch on your property?  
Call the city or watershed district.

Be sure to have your full address plus Section number (from a legal description or a topographic map).

Coon Creek Watershed District  
763.755.0975  
[www.cooncreekwd.org](http://www.cooncreekwd.org)

## Some History



1892, Peterson farm, Soderville (Ham Lake township)

Ditches are common in Anoka County because of our agricultural roots. Here in Anoka County, the soil tends to be very sandy intermixed with areas of other soil types. Sand is made of larger soil particles so is considered porous and good for drainage. The other soil types may not drain as well, and so can retain water. The numerous wetlands encountered by European settlers provided productive farmlands, if drained.

Over a century ago the Minnesota Legislature passed drainage laws “to enable the owners of land to drain and reclaim them when the same cannot be done without affecting lands of others.” As drainage became necessary for agricultural productivity, Coon Creek & Sand Creek were ditched. Farms sprouted up. Ditch construction peaked in the District and Anoka County in 1917. The area was farmed mostly for dairy and root crops.

All public ditches have ditch easements held by a drainage authority. Since its establishment in 1959, Coon Creek Watershed District (District) has had responsibility for approximately 125 miles of public ditches plus issues like erosion and wetland conservation within the District. Easements allow access rights for inspection & maintenance, yet ownership (fee title) is retained by the landowner.