

Coon Creek Watershed District

2019 Annual Report

Board of Managers

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Reporting Requirements

The Coon Creek Watershed District (District) is required to annually report on a variety of activities. These requirements and the state and federal laws that mandate the reporting are:

1. The Minnesota Watershed Act (M.S. 103D.351)
2. The Metropolitan Water Management Act (M.S. 103B.231)
3. The Minnesota Wetland Conservation Act (M.S. 103A)
4. The National Pollution Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) Program.

NOTE: A review and audit of the District's finances is provided in the District's Annual Financial Report and Audit of 2019 performed by the Minnesota State Auditor. The Audit of 2019 has been ordered by the Board of Managers on December 10, 2019.

REPORT and REVIEW OBJECTIVES

Additionally, the objectives of this report and management review are to:

1. Monitor the implementation of the 2013 – 2023 Comprehensive Watershed Management Plan as a whole and of its component projects in relation to changes in the context, operating environment and circumstances of their implementation.
2. Provide a method of evaluating District management and operations.
3. Validate the goals, priorities and program focus areas in the Comprehensive Watershed Management Plan.
4. Evaluate the progress towards long term results and identify barriers to achieving those results.
5. Identify and adopt new ways to improve capabilities for accomplishing results and remove barriers.
6. Adjust management direction to reasonably assure achievement of the District's mission and strategic goals.

COON CREEK WATERSHED DISTRICT AT A GLANCE

Background

The Coon Creek Watershed District was established in 1959 under the Minnesota Watershed District Law (Minnesota Statutes 103D). The District is a special purpose unit of government that addresses comprehensive water and related resource management within the 107 square mile District. The District includes the drainage area of Coon Creek as well as several other smaller watersheds that also drain directly to the Mississippi

District Mission

The District's most basic mission is **to manage surface and ground water systems**. That fundamental, legislatively mandated mission will not change.

The District's current intent **to prevent property damage, maintain hydrologic balance and to protect water quality for the safety and enjoyment of citizens and the preservation and enhancement of wildlife habitat** also will not change.

VISION

The District will remain drainage basin postured and ready to collaborate, deter and correct issues and concerns across the range of conservation needs and drainage area sizes as part of a joint effort. The District will leverage **adaptive and innovative evidence-based practices, empower professionals and citizens and collaborative work efforts** capable of delivering unmatched water resource management capabilities to enable city staff and decision makers to achieve success in preventing, repairing and correcting water resource problems and issues.

Coon Creek Watershed District
2019 Organizational Chart



District Goals

The District has adopted five mission goals and three issue goals. Pursuit of these goals is articulated in the District Comprehensive Watershed Management Plan.

Mission Goals

1. To prevent property damage from flooding, erosion or degraded water quality
2. To ensure balance between inflow, outflow and storage of water
3. To protect and enhance water quality
4. To provide for multiple beneficial uses including the safety and enjoyment by the watershed's residents
5. To preserve and enhance wildlife

Issue Goals

6. To be proactive in aquatic invasive species management through education and projects that improves lake and stream water quality and/or reduces the risk of entry of invasive species.
7. To gather and disseminate weather data and climatic information and provide meteorological expertise in support of water and related resource management decisions and weather-related management activities.
8. To manage groundwater dependent ecosystems under the principles of multiple use and sustainability, while emphasizing protection and improvement of soil, water and vegetation, particularly because of effects upon aquatic and wildlife resources.

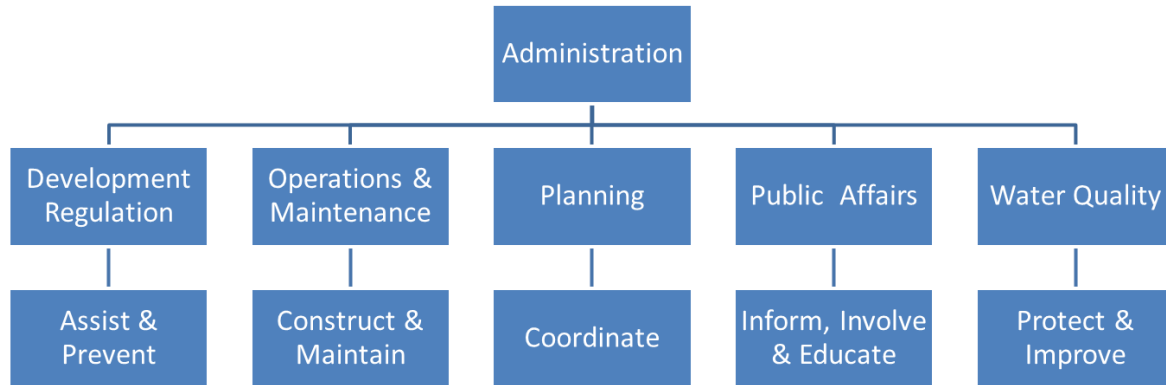
Management Priorities

1. Protect Drinking Water Supplies
2. -Prevent Flooding and Drainage
-Improve water quality in impaired or impacted waters
-Maintain and enhance water quality in waters that are not impaired.
3. Groundwater Recharge
4. Aquatic Life
5. Recreation
6. Hunting & Fishing
7. Irrigation
8. Watering: Livestock & Wildlife
9. Aesthetics
10. Industrial Use and Cooling

Strategy and Concept of Operations

The District's current strategy and concept of operations is based on unified management actions operations executed through decisive action by means of two core competencies; collaborative efforts and watershed-based approach.

Lines of Operation and Effort



Financial Report

On September 9, 2018 the Board of Managers unanimously adopted the following budget for 2019. Also shown is the performance of both revenues and expenditures through December 2019.

The largest variances in 2019 was in capital equipment costs. This variance was driven largely by unbudgeted and unexpected expenses related to repair and rehabilitation of the new office building, but also as a result of several IT and computer equipment failures that required replacement. Professional services were also over the revised budgeted amount as a function of needing to contract for additional permit review and inspection services to respond to the record breaking demands of 2019.

	2019	YTD		
Revenue Sources	Rev Budget	Actual	Variance	Pct Var
Property Taxes	2,478,119	2,441,895	(36,224)	-1%
Special Assessments	-	-	-	-
Fees & Charges	231,030	257,800	26,770	12%
Grants	1,159,673	808,347	(351,326)	-30%
Other Revenue	27,291	141,338	114,047	418%
Fund Balances	634,457	627,087	(7,370)	0%
	4,530,570	4,276,467	(254,103)	-5%
Expenditure Sources	2019	YTD		
	Rev Budget	Actual	Variance	Pct Var
Salaries & Benefits	1,059,398	848,289	211,109	-20%
Professional Services	669,864	932,491	(262,627)	39%
Operating Expenses	151,168	169,849	(18,681)	5%
Program Expenses	2,578,673	1,279,030	1,299,643	-50%
Capital Equipment	88,713	322,535	(233,822)	494%
	4,547,816	3,552,193	995,623	22%

Evaluation of Progress in Implementing the 2013–2023 Comprehensive Watershed Management Plan

Implementation of the 2013 – 2023 Comprehensive Watershed Management Plan is progressing well. The District has successfully implemented approximately 86% of its management objectives. The sections below address recent management actions (2019); the degree to which the District has accomplished the management objectives supporting each mission and issue goal in the District’s Comprehensive management plan; progress in accomplishing strategic objectives and outcomes.

Significant Resource Management Actions in 2019

Administration

- Remodeled and moved into new District office
- Board Meetings in 2019 (Including the Tour): 24
- Consent Item Considered: 80
- Policy Items Considered: 51
- Permit Reviews Considered 166
- Discussion Items Considered: 47
- Informational Items Presented: 36

Development Regulation

- Permit Applications: 97
- Permits on agenda: 163
- Permits issued: 103
- Technical Assistance: 112
- New Wetland applications: 60
- WCA Projects: 79
- Wetland admin hours: 609
- Consultant Wetland hours: 129
- New Regulatory Assistant Hired 1
- Approximate # of Inspections: 543

Issues

Issues	2019	Pct
• AIS	0	0%
• Beaver	18	16%
• Drainage	12	10%
• Erosion	13	11%
• Flooding	24	21%
• Illicit Discharge	4	3%
• Obstruction	33	28%
• Violations	8	7%

• Water Quality	1	1%
• Wetlands	3	3%
<hr/>		
Totals	116	

Operations and Maintenance

- Spring snow melt flooding response
- Completed 9 bank stabilization projects and 2 ditch repairs
- Completed 15 sites of channel tree clearing and obstruction removal
- Inspected and conducted a condition assessment 24.5 miles (17.8%) of the public ditch system consistent with the District’s NPDES permit and 4.8 miles of ditch under public easement owned by a city that primarily provides storm water conveyance.
- Conducted 82 routine or follow-up inspections.

Planning

- FEMA HUC 8 Flood Risk Study
- Oak-Glen Creek Subwatershed Plan
- Water Quality Comp Plan Amendment
- Watershed Assessment Guidelines
- Watershed Based Funding

Public Affairs

- Completed Contaminants of Emerging Concern grant, reaching approximately 90,000 people via online, in-person, & materials distribution
- Received 2019 MAWD Program of the Year award for Contaminants of Emerging Concern outreach program
- Developed 4 successful new activities including interpretive signage, exhibit, and watershed walks for water quality projects -Springbrook Nature Center Biochar Weir demo & Lower Sand creek Corridor Restoration-, and training CAC members as ambassadors for Neighborhood Open House at new office location.
- Increased audience contacts a factor of 4 with 8 additional events and by leveraging new partnerships with Anoka County Outreach Collaborative, Anoka County Parks, Anoka County Libraries, Anoka-Ramsey Community College, and Andover Pollinator Awareness Project
- Added Social Media channels on Facebook and Instagram for additional communication vehicles on water quality and O & M projects, stormwater issues, and office move: (234 posts, 1647 likes)
- Continued activities: public works training offerings (3), 28 articles published, website hits 155,950 set new record; K12- 5 events reached 800 students
 - new -Anoka County Historical Society requested historical District items for their collection

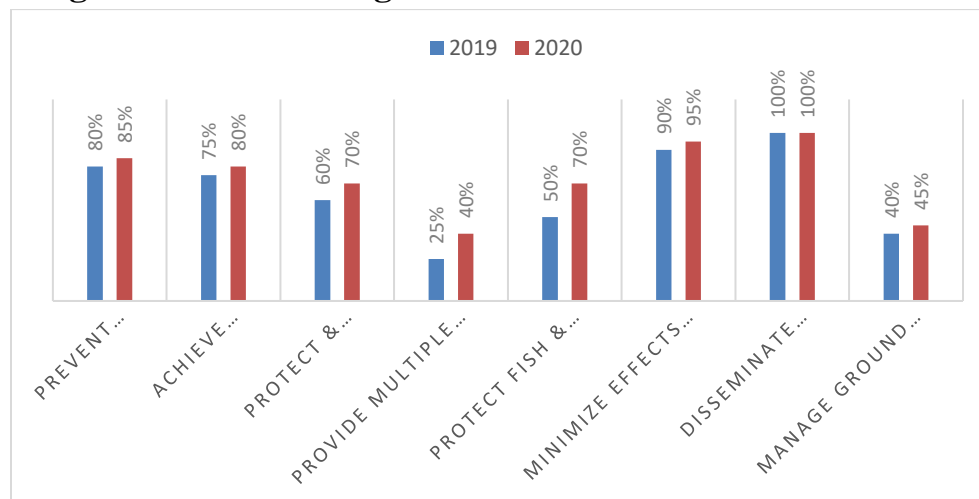
Technical Assistance

- Government 55
- Residential 56
- Total 111

Water Quality

- Secured a \$395,000 state Clean Water Fund grant to implement a stream restoration project in Coon Creek Park in Andover
- Selected as 1 of 20 water management organizations to receive roughly \$750,000 in dedicated federal 319 funding to address non-point source pollution in the Coon Creek subwatershed over the next several years
- Launched a Water Quality Cost Share Program and awarded \$74,200 to our municipal partners to support 4 water quality improvement projects
- Completed the 2nd year of data collection on our novel biochar filter BMP at the Springbrook Nature Center; *E. coli* concentrations were reduced by an average of 89%!
- Started construction on two full-scale biochar- and iron-enhanced sand filter BMPs in partnership with the Cities of Blaine and Coon Rapids to reduce nutrient and bacteria loading to Pleasure and Coon Creek
- Completed the first phase of the Sand Creek Corridor Restoration project downstream of the railroad and started on the second phase just upstream. Combined, we will stabilize 4,750 linear feet of actively eroding streambanks and improve instream and riparian habitat along 1.3 continuous miles of Sand Creek!
- Monitored water quality and/or quantity in 5 lakes, 7 wetlands, and at 30 stream sites across the District.
- Conducted our first winter chloride monitoring and uncovered exceedances of state standards in four streams and one lake in the southern portion of the District.
- Partnered with the Anoka Conservation District to chemically control all 14 populations of invasive Phragmites within the District.

Progress Towards Long Term Outcomes



Evaluation of District Management and Operations

Strengths and Weaknesses

For the 2019 management evaluation, the detailed variables that contribute to the assessment of the District’s strengths and weakness was administered as a survey of staff and the Technical Advisory Committees. The variable under each management category were ranked on a scale ranging from +5 indicating very strong to -5 indicating very weak. The scores reported are the average of all respondents to that management factor. The number of respondents were 75%

Overall, the results indicate that the District is perceived as strong, although not exceptionally strong. The survey also surfaced several issues, and weaknesses that the District need to address.

Managerially (Leadership, decision making and human resources)

<u>Strengths</u>		<u>Weaknesses</u>	
Mission Focused	3.0	Use of Planning & Evaluation	0.1
Ability to Attract & Retain Good People	2.7	Flexibility of Organizational Structure	0.1
Sense of Social Responsibility	2.5	District Image	0.7
Sticking to Established Priorities	2.1	Management Control	0.7
Mission Focused	3.0		

Collaboration (Are we good partners, do we bring value)

<u>Strengths</u>		<u>Weaknesses</u>	
Beneficial Contribution to water resources	3.6	Organizational Image	1.1
Coordinate Joint water Management programs and activities	3.4	Cooperative relationships between all governmental units	1.3
Investment in Inspection and Monitoring	3.1	Clear & Frequent Communication with Collaborators	2.2
Service Strength & Quality	2.8	Collaborator Loyalty & Satisfaction	2.2
		District Ability to address Water Resource Needs	2.2
		Uniqueness of District Role and Services/ How Replaceable are we	2.2

We received calls from several of the TAC members who felt the need to explain their rating as largely a function of their being permitted but that things have been improving

Financial (Assets, facilities, equipment, fiscal efficiency & effectiveness)

<u>Strengths</u>		<u>Weaknesses</u>	
Degree of Leverage: Use of Outside Funds & Grants	3.9	Ease of Exit from Responsibilities	-0.2
Value of Investment to Public Health, Safety & Welfare	2.3	Degree of Financial Capacity Utilized	0.0
Preservation of emergency fund balances	1.8	Adequacy of Taxes & Fees Charged	0.2
Annual review of capital equipment condition	1.6	Capital Investment in the capacity to meet demand & need	0.4
Stability of Costs	1.6	Liquidity: Available Internal Funds	0.6

Technical (Work processes, Stick to core competencies)

Strengths

Technical Skills	3.3
Value Added from Programs	2.9
Meet Review & Construction Schedules	2.4
Product/Service Effectiveness	1.9
Resource & Personnel Utilization	1.9

Weaknesses

Application & Use of Computer Technology	0.6
Intensity of Labor Required in Providing Services	0.8
Level of Technology Used in Products and Services	1.1
Level of Coordination & Integration needed	1.1

Trends in External Environment

The 2019 Annual Report could be named coping with VUCA. The term VUCA is used to describe the District’s world – volatile, uncertain, complex and ambiguous. It is very difficult for anyone to get a total picture. Today’s and tomorrow’s problems and issues increasingly occur as a combination of factors over an undefined time frame, creating volatility in behavior of hydrologic systems, uncertainty in the occurrence of events, complexity and dynamics in the operating environment and ambiguity in the intentions of the state and our local partners. The result limits the relevance and effectiveness of long-range scheduled management plans and the time it takes to gain approval to adapt. Six interconnected trends have shaped this increasingly volatile, uncertain complex and volatile management environment (VUCA).

- **Increased volume and specificity of rules:** The sheer size, complexity and volume of the new rules combined with the tempo which MPCA has continued to promulgate and refine storm water requirements has presented technical, economic and public relations challenges to the District, particularly when viewed in light of the District’s other responsibilities. For the District it has created an environment where, while we understand the need for the BMPs and systems that are required in the MS4 permit, the tactical versus policy orientation has increased the required level of the detail resulting in a flash flood that promises to drown many in the requirements and expectations. The effect of too much too quickly has created financial and public relations problems that have turned collaboration into conflict, support into an overwhelmed apathy and compromised other conservation efforts such as floodplain management. The effect of this trend and the expectation of even more, greater prescriptions in the future present a trend easier to perceive as more threat than opportunity to constructively address water resource issues.
- **Hyper-Connectivity & Automation:** The rapid diffusion and rate of technological change combined with the aftermath of the Covid-19 epidemic will increase demand for working remotely as well as citizen demand for information from their units of government and the ability to participate. Organizations and individuals who adapt will gain a competitive advantage that favors those with agility and creativity to quickly respond and take advantage of emerging capabilities and information.

- **Continued Rapid Growth in Population & Development:** The northern suburbs of the Twin Cities and the portion of Anoka County that contains the District has remained one of the fastest growing areas in the upper Midwest. The demand for housing of different product types and the need to repair and upgrade the local, county and state road networks have contributed to a high operational tempo with high political volatility and multiple demands on the District's water resources. The development community appears to be zeroing in on a post C-19 world where older individuals, who only a few years ago moved to downtown in mass will conclude that the suburbs look like a much safer and healthier place to be
- **Environmental Shifts:** The increase in localized, high intensity-short duration storms has increased both property damage and damage to the fundamental resource functions, such as conveying or storing water, will sooner rather than later affect the politics and the economies of the area. The situation will favor leaders who can see beyond the current budget and election cycle, are agile and creative and willing to invest in value added projects that create and attractive/ appealing physical and social environment. Investments beyond the grind of fixing and repairing existing infrastructure.
- **Green/Organic Movement:** The increase in the population and trend towards health and fitness consciousness has introduced another dimension to growing public interest in purity and concern about water and the environment. With more people expected to work from home and the growth in environmental literacy, there will rise coaches and other experts sharing their knowledge via the internet to assist their clients in pursuing their goals.
- **Increased demand on land and water resources** also plays a significant role creating rapidly increasing economic scarcity¹ and magnifying the conflicts relating to competing demands at the local and state levels. This scarcity is becoming increasingly apparent and the insistence of State agencies to address economic problems with ecological solutions versus ecological economic solutions is compounding problems. These are management problems, not scientific research problems. They require decisions under uncertainty, leadership by the state and definitive decisive action on the part of local resource managers

In 2019 the CCWD doubled its effort to overcome some challenging public and governmental relations challenges by integrating with and synchronizes with our partners and state agencies to fulfill our obligations under the Minnesota Statutes 103A, B, D &E as well as the Clean Water Act. Those challenges are not over. For the District, the critical factor is to adapt to the changes in our operating environment resulting from these trends.

Identify and Adopt New Ways to Improve Capabilities for Accomplishing Results and Remove Barriers

The District's operating concept of *unified operations executed through decisive action by means of two core competencies; collaborative efforts and watershed-based approach* will remain unchanged.

However, the above trends and increased demand on land and water resources means water and related resources are becoming increasingly economically *scarce*¹ and the conflicts of competing demands at the local and state levels are becoming increasingly apparent. The character of water resource conservation is evolving, and the District needs to evolve as well. In 2019 it became increasingly clear that the District needs to refine its approach to be:

- prepared for any water resource associated crises and
- assist collaborative efforts with a well-trained and cost-effective staff across the range of water resource issues and operations.

While we remain ready to respond to extreme events and natural disasters, and address drainage, flood control and water quality, we need to continue to:

- Adapt to the increasing demands and needs of the “*water quality era*” as part of a joint effort with the cities and our sister agencies.
- Shift from a traditional mind set of disciplinary silos, to one of contributing and thriving in value added efforts at multiple scales.
- Work toward providing the citizens and communities of the watershed with disciplined and premier problem-solvers who are a valuable and credible resource for decision makers
- Influence the approach to water management and set the conditions to succeed in preserving, protecting and providing the benefits produced and provided by the watershed.

(¹: Scarcity, in its most basic form, is where demand is greater than supply when the price is zero. Economics, as it is used here, adopts the micro economic definition of the allocation of scarce resources.)

Adjustments in Management Direction to Reasonably Assure Achievement of the District's Mission and Strategic Goals

The District is vital to the watershed and its people by serving through our unique watershed perspective and capabilities:

- Advancing water resource-based partnerships,
- Influencing behavior counter to sound water resource management & conservation
- Executing performance oriented and targeted water resource-based projects and regulations
- Responding to watershed-based crises.

To pursue the above, the District will leverage

- Adaptive and innovative evidence-based practices,
- Empower professionals and citizens
- Facilitate collaborative work efforts

To initiate these changes, the District will:

- Conduct a detailed mission analysis to identify its strategic, operational and tactical requirements
- Review its Concept of Operations to
 - restate its requirements,
 - describe its operations and support activities and lines of effort
 - assess its functional capabilities.