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# 2024 ANNUAL REPORT

## LAC QUI PARLE-YELLOW BANK WATERSHED DISTRICT

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Lac qui Parle-Yellow Bank Watershed District  
Courthouse, 600 6<sup>th</sup> Street #7  
Madison, MN 56256  
Phone: 320-598-3117  
Website: [lqpybwatershed.org](http://lqpybwatershed.org)  
E-mail: [trudy.hastad@lqpc.com](mailto:trudy.hastad@lqpc.com)

## BOARD OF MANAGERS AND STAFF

<u>President</u>	Andrew Weber (Lac qui Parle)	PO Box 363, 1714 346 <sup>th</sup> Street	Bellingham, MN 56212	320-226-5679	Term:03/31/2027
<u>Vice-President</u>	John Cornell (Lincoln)	3881 170 <sup>th</sup> Avenue	Canby, MN 56220	507-531-0577	Term:03/31/2027
<u>Secretary</u>	David Craigmile (Lac qui Parle)	3600 140 <sup>th</sup> Street	Boyd, MN 56218	507-828-8454	Term:03/31/2025
<u>Treasurer</u>	Jon Olson (Lac qui Parle)	2751 260 <sup>th</sup> Street	Madison, MN 56256	507-828-7241	Term:03/31/2027
<u>Public Relations</u>	Michael Knutson (Yellow Medicine)	2253 160 <sup>th</sup> Street	Canby, MN 56220	507-829-6312	Term:01/01/2027
<u>Attorney Consulting</u>	John Kolb	Rinke Noonan Attorney	US Bank Plaza, Suite 300	PO Box 1497	St. Cloud, MN 56302
<u>Administrator</u>	Trudy Hastad		320-598-3117		
<u>Coordinator</u>	Eric Stahl		320-598-3319		
<u>Ditch Inspector</u>	Jared Roiland		320-598-7061		
<u>Environmental/Feedlot Specialist</u>	Abigail VanKempen		320-598-3132		
<u>Environmental/HHW Specialist</u>	Jennifer Schuelke		320-598-7282		
<u>Ditch Specialist</u>	Cindy Brehmer		320-598-7283		
<u>Park Manager</u>	Ethan Kack		507-829-0394		

Much to our sorrow, manager John Cornell passed away in November. Lincoln County is working on appointing a person to fill his unexpired term and hope to have this done by February 2025.

The Board held 12 monthly meetings with ZOOM option and held 3 special Watershed meetings in 2024.

## ADVISORY BOARD

Ron Antony, Yellow Medicine County Commissioner

Joseph Drietz, Lincoln County Commissioner

Stacey Tufto, Lac qui Parle County Commissioner

Darwyn Bach, Yellow Medicine SWCD Supervisor

Dale Sterzinger, Lincoln County SWCD

Rhyan Schicker, Lac qui Parle County SWCD

Harvey Swenson, Lac qui Parle County Ag Producer

Nate Ludvigson, Lac qui Parle County Contractor

Jeff Rheingans, Corn & Soybean Growers/Farmer

The Advisory Board held their annual meeting on December 09, 2024, special meeting #658.1.

## *The Lac qui parle Yellow Bank Watershed*

### Mission

*To serve as a partner in water planning and management with the State Agencies, Counties, Cities, and Soil & Water Conservation Districts and assist with the management of water quality and quantity within the Lac qui Parle-Yellow Bank Watershed boundaries.*

### History

The Lac qui Parle-Yellow Bank Watershed District was established on April 19, 1971. The purpose of the District was to aid local citizens who had requested help in controlling flooding in the Watershed. Much cross-over flooding had occurred over farm land between sub-watersheds and had been identified as the highest priority need for the new district to address.

The District as it currently exists consists of approximately 1,712 square miles with 976 in Minnesota and the remaining 736 in South Dakota. Approximately 74% of the land surface is located in Lac qui Parle County, 19% in Yellow Medicine County, and 7% in Lincoln County.

The Lac qui Parle-Yellow Bank Watershed District starts out at Lake Hendricks in Lincoln County. The Lac qui Parle River flows northeastward through Yellow Medicine and Lac qui Parle Counties before entering the Minnesota River near Watson into Lac qui Parle Lake. In the first 60 miles of drainage, the elevation drops more than a thousand feet from the Prairie Coteau. Major tributaries of the Lac qui Parle are the Florida, Canby, and Ten Mile Creek Watersheds. The Yellow Bank River Watershed is to the north side of the Lac qui Parle River Watershed. The river has two main branches, the North and South Forks, which join in Yellow Bank Township, Lac qui Parle County. From that point the river flows almost due North and discharges into the Minnesota River south of Odessa.

The original Watershed District Plan was established, as required by law, in October 1972. The second update of the 10-year management plan was approved by BWSR in 2009. In 2019, the Watershed District requested and was granted a 5-year extension to their plan in order to finish WRAPS and work towards One Watershed One Planning. In December, 2022 BWSR approved the Lac qui Parle-Yellow Bank One Watershed One Plan (1W1P).

The Lac qui Parle-Yellow Bank Watershed District currently is governed by Minnesota Statutes 103D, which provides a broader scope for a local unit of government to manage quality and quantity of water within the hydrological boundaries.

### District Staff

The District maintains one full-time Administrator, Trudy Hastad, who has been the Administrator since 2007 and was the District secretary prior to becoming Administrator. The District employs a full-time Coordinator, Eric Stahl, who is responsible for grant writing, 1W1P, and the WCA delineator in training for LQP County. The WS Board is the LGU for WCA in Lac qui Parle County. The District employs a full-time ditch inspector, Jared Roiland, to help manage the watershed ditches and also the 86 Lac qui Parle County Ditch systems along with the buffer programs. His salary is reimbursed by Lac qui Parle County. The District employs a full-time park manager, Ethan Kack, to manage Stone Hill Park/Del Clark Lake which was created when the Canby Creek Dams were completed in the late 1980's. Park sales are used to provide the salary for this position. In the fall of 2021, Lac qui Parle County approached the Watershed District to oversee the County Environmental Office which includes the County Planning & Zoning, Feedlot Program, HHW/Recycling, Passports, & Demo-Landfill. Abby VanKempen is the Feedlot, Planning & Zoning, SSTS officer and oversees Planning & Zoning, Feedlots, SSTS, & passports specific for Lac qui Parle County with salary reimbursed by the County. Jennifer Schuelke is the HHW/recycling officer and works with the HHW, recycling, transfer station, & passports for Lac qui Parle County. Lac qui Parle County also pays for this position. Cindy Brehmer is the ditch specialist and assists with the Lac qui Parle County Ditch financials and records and as a backup for Watershed financials. The majority of this position is paid for by Lac qui Parle County.

### WEBSITE

The Lac qui Parle-Yellow Bank Watershed District website was updated in 2024. We worked with Streamline to get the Watershed website up to date and in compliance. The website is very user friendly. The web address stayed the same at [www.lqpybwatershed.org](http://www.lqpybwatershed.org).

### 2024 Budget

A hearing for the 2024 proposed operating budget was held on September 5, 2023 during the regular Board meeting #643. There was no one present from the public for the hearing. The proposed budget and levy request of \$340,000 pursuant

to Minnesota Statutes 103D.904 Subd. (3) was presented for approval. There being no questions or concerns from the public, the Board approved the 2024 budget and levy of \$340,000.

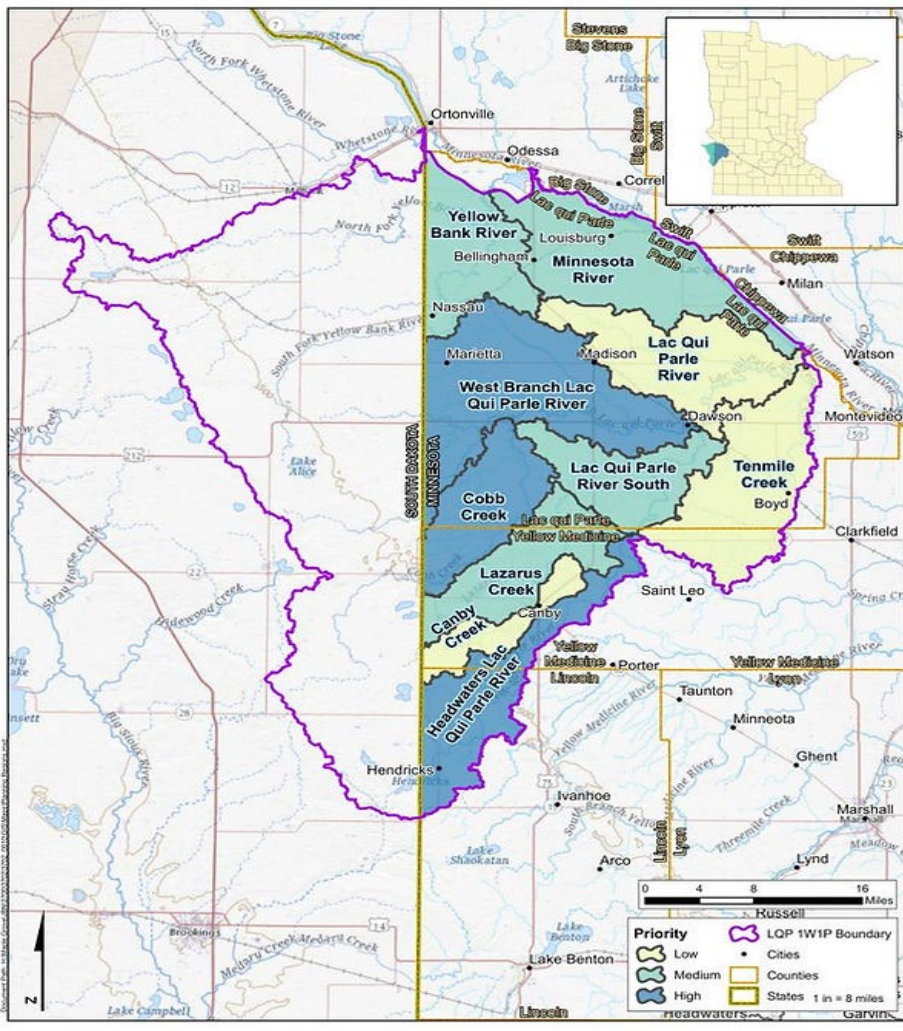
1W1P

The planning grant for the 1W1P was completed and closed in June of 2024. The majority of the first round of FY 23 WBIF grant funds in the amount of \$935,410 have been encumbered. In 2024, we completed 5 WASCB contracts, 1 grassed waterway/WASCB contract, 2 cover crop contracts, 2 strip-till contracts, 2 cover crops with strip-till contracts, & 5 cover crops with no-till contracts in 2024. This resulted in reductions of 8048 lbs./year of nitrogen reduced; 401 lbs./year phosphorus reduced; 1799 tons year of sediment saved (179 dump truck loads) & 658 acres treated. We are waiting on contractors and weather to get the rest of the projects completed. \$97,201.22 of the \$141,312.24 in structural practices will be paid out on 1/9/2025 after the WS board meeting.

We worked with Houston Engineering on a program called MS4Front which we use to track progress toward our 1W1P. It will keep track of projects done for a 10-year cycle that both the SWCD's and WS can implement.

The policy committee meets quarterly and recommends approval of non-structural practices over \$30,000 and structural practices over \$50,000. The work plan for the second round of FY 2025 WBIF grant in the amount of \$1,228,526 was approved and 1<sup>st</sup> half dollars were awarded in December 2024.

Planning regions: Yellow is low priority; green medium priority, blue high priority



SSTS Loan Program

The Watershed was approved for a new CWP loan fund of \$750,000 from MPCA for SSTS loans in August, 2022. The loan repayment is for 7 years at a 3% interest rate collected as a special assessment on property taxes. In 2024 we used the loan fund to upgrade 10 septic systems and bring them into compliance. The estimated reductions were 537 lbs. of Total Suspended Solids (TSS), 48 lbs. of phosphorus, 262 lbs. of nitrogen, 972 lbs. of Biochemical oxygen demand (BOD), and 3.32E+14 Bacteria or Fecal Coliform removed per year.

## Florida Creek Restoration

The Florida Creek restoration hit some rough spots in early 2024 as some of the land switched hands and the new landowner was not interested in the restoration. DNR has revised the project and we will be restoring one mile of stream and some culvert work for fish passage. The Watershed has agreed to be the fiscal agent, and has hired Area II (Bolton & Menk) as the project engineer and hope to begin construction in 2025.

## Lac qui Parle-Yellow Bank Watershed Drainage Authority Work

The Watershed Board of Managers is the drainage authority responsible for eleven ditch systems, with nine being in Lac qui Parle and two in Lincoln County. Inspections were held on two of the Watershed ditch systems in 2024.

The Lac qui Parle CD #42 improvement project construction began in January of 2021. The project had a long punch list of items needing attention with little to no response from the contractor. After many meetings, it was declared that the contractor would not be returning to the project due to problems within their company. In the fall of 2022, the Watershed Board in consultation with their attorney, contractor attorney, bond attorney agreed it was prudent to call in the contractor's bond. The bond was called in and the Watershed board of managers and staff worked closely with the attorney's, engineer's, & bond company to correct and complete this improvement project. In 2023, the Watershed Board hired a new contractor to complete the necessary repairs on the project. This was completed in the fall of 2023, the project was televised, and the final repairs were completed in December 2023. The final hearing for the project was held in 2024 and the project was finally closed out. We worked with our attorney and the bond company attorney and were able to re-coop the bond costs at the end of 2024.

We received a petition requesting an improvement on the County Ditch #63 system in late fall 2024. The petition was approved and Houston Engineering was hired as the Engineer on the project. Hearings should take place in spring of 2025 to see if this improvement will move forward.

Watershed Ditch #92 was sprayed for tree maintenance in 2024 and also had a culvert repaired.

## Lac qui Parle County Ditch Maintenance Work

Lac qui Parle County has contracted with the Watershed District since 2007 to do the maintenance of their 86 County ditch systems. Staff sent out 58 work orders for maintenance in 2024 with 33 of them completed.

The Watershed let for and awarded bids on a main tile line replacement for CD #75 with work to be completed in 2025. We completed nearly the first mile of the JD#4 tree removal/ditch cleanout.

We had 13 ditch systems that qualified for FEMA assistance due to the 2023 spring flooding event. All the FEMA sites have been repaired and all but three have been paid out by FEMA. We have three systems that are in the appeal process being County Ditch #4 (second appeal submitted) and JD #8 and CD #84 (1<sup>st</sup> appeal submitted). Once we hear back from the appeals, we hope to get these systems closed out and complete final paperwork to FEMA for the 2023 flooding event.

We hired Sando Weed & Brush Control to spray the County Ditches in 2024. They sprayed 16 County ditches and 1 Watershed Ditch. The County hires spraying to be done on the ditches on a three- year rotation cycle with spot spraying done by Watershed staff when necessary.

We completed redetermination of benefits on 27 ditch systems in 2024. In the fall of 2024, staff sent out letters to landowners to inform them of the 2025 ditch assessments and gave them the option to pay with no interest if paid in 2024, otherwise would be spread on their property tax statement as a special assessment for three years with 6% interest. We received approximately 85% prepays and the buffer payment was also paid out to the landowners in the fall.

The Joint drainage authority ordered Redetermination of Benefits on JD #23 and JD #26.

A drainage committee consisting of two LQP Commissioners, Auditor, County Administrator, WS staff, and one WS manager held 11 monthly meetings in 2024. This helps to keep everyone updated on the current drainage work coming through the door.

## Regulatory Program: Drainage Permitting

The Watershed District requires landowners to obtain a permit from the District prior to the start of planned drainage/cleanout projects. These permits are good for one year. In 2024, the Board approved 284 permits. There were 228 in LQP, 45 in Yellow Medicine, and 11 in Lincoln County. These permits were for private main tile, seepage tile, ditch cleanouts, culvert replacements, 638 projects, pumps, terracing, & alternative intake replacements. The Watershed also reviews all of the LQP permits for WCA.

The Board started to work on revising their Watershed rules in 2024. A draft plan is being reviewed by the attorney and then the Board will hold public input hearings and hopefully get this updated in 2025. They would like to do this to have the rules align closely with the 1W1P and make permits good for two years to cut down on renewals due to contractors not able to get the work done in a years' time.

### Wetland Conservation Act (WCA)

The Watershed Board of Managers are the LGU for the WCA in Lac qui Parle County. Staff & LGU reviewed 244 drainage permit applications for wetland impacts with five no-loss exemptions used and four approved boundary type approved. Staff investigated three possible violation sites for restoration or clarification purposes. One site was deemed no violation, one was an after the fact permit and one was corrected by the landowner after verbal restoration request. One staff member attended all the BWSR WCA training series and finished the series with taking the test to become a certified wetland delineator in training.

### Buffer Enforcement

The Watershed District staff had no buffer strip violations on the Watershed Ditches noted in 2024.

### LQP County Buffer Enforcement

Lac qui Parle County contracts with the Watershed to oversee the County Buffer enforcement. Staff worked closely with SWCD and happy to report that no administrative penalty orders were sent in 2024. The months of May and October we held radio ads to remind landowners of the importance of the buffer and to also remind their tillage people to not till up the buffer. SWCD also ran ads in the local newspapers. SWCD is now offering cost-share for buffer enhancements including but not limited to: buffer creation along private ditches, seeding enhancements to alfalfa, forage mixtures or more diverse seed mixes. Riparian plantings along public waterways would also be considered, as would any other creative ideas to help “build better buffers”

### Nuisance Beaver Program

In 2024, the Watershed District continued its program to pay a bounty on nuisance beavers. The Watershed paid bounty on 212 nuisance beaver

### COST SHARE PROJECTS:

The Watershed District helped with cost-share to repair the George & Cindy Potz grade stabilization project (small dam) in section 8, Fortier Township for \$8,812.70. We also cost-shared repair to the Nathan Thorpe dam restoration in section 15, Florida Township for \$6,551.88. The watershed assisted with the landowner 25% cost-share.

### Del Clark Lake/Stone Hill Park



Stone Hill Park/Del Clark Lake was formed in the late 1980's with the Canby Creek Structures that protect the City of Canby from flooding. The park currently has 69 campsites. Area A has 33 sites with 28 of them being seasonal spots and 5 spots open for weekend/week campers. Area B has 6 spots open for weekend/week campers and the Glenn is used for seasonal spots. There are five spots available in the overflow. Del Clark Lake is a favorite spot for swimming and fishing.

The Watershed District hires a manager to oversee the park. Ethan Kack is the current manager who lives on site with his family. We hire four seasonal people to help with bathrooms, beach, trash, mowing, tree trimming etc. Some

new additions to the park are expanded trails, a map showing the campsites, trails, playground, swimming beach, BB courts, bathrooms, picnic shelter. The on-line reservations are nice addition that campers are really liking along with the ability to pay at the gate with debit cards.

The annual January fishing tournament sponsored by the area Fireman was cancelled due to nice weather and not enough safe ice on the lake. We held our 1<sup>st</sup> Easter Egg Hunt and small petting zoo which attracted people from the surrounding areas. The 4<sup>th</sup> of July parade around the campground, slip-in-slide, and fireworks display is always a huge success and attracts many visitors over the July 4<sup>th</sup> holiday. The park remains a popular place for camping, swimming, & fishing and attracts people from multiple states.



### Annual Canoe/Kayak Trip

The annual canoe/kayak trip was held on June 28, 2024. We had 29 paddlers for this event. We paddled a portion of the West Branch of the Lac qui Parle River into Dawson and ended at the bridge in Riverside Park. Prior to paddling we talked about the Watershed specific to the west branch of the LQP and what they could expect to see along the route. We provided a light lunch for the paddlers when they were done. We had great weather for this event.



### Earth Day Event

In 2024 the Watershed District along with the LQP County Environmental Office hosted a paper shredding event which was well attended. The Watershed District staff also assisted the LQP SWCD with their Earth Day Fun Run which was also well attended.

### Annual Photo Contest

The Watershed Board approved holding the annual photo contest in 2024 and approved making of a 2025 calendar with the photos. The pictures have to be taken in the Lac qui Parle-Yellow Bank Watershed District and the staff ask to use the rights to the pictures for future advertising and use in promoting the Watershed District. First place winner was Ronald Cram, 2<sup>nd</sup> place Julie Stahl, & 3<sup>rd</sup> place to Ethan Kack. Many of the photos are displayed on the Lac qui Parle-Yellow Bank website and were used to make the 2025 calendar.





### Environmental Services:

**Planning & Zoning:** We issued 60 zoning permits in 2024 and 10 after-the-fact permits. Issued 35 septic permits in 2024; 3 holding tanks, 28 replacement systems, 3 new systems for new homes, 1 permit for a drain field addition. We issued five conditional use permits with all approved at the County level and two variance requests with those being approved by the County Board. Worked on adopting a Cannabis Business and Land Use Ordinance which was approved in 2024.

**Feedlots:** Went on 15 feedlot inspections in 2024 with 14 compliance inspections, 1 permit follow-up. Only 1 non-compliant inspection due to record keeping requirements on manure land application.

**Recycling & HHW:** We held a paper shredding event in April, HHW collections in May and September. Special item collections are held the 2<sup>nd</sup> Saturday of the month from May-October. We started a battery recycling collection in 2024. Working with a private party on film plastic recycling which is also going well. We hold a Holiday lights collection the end of November through the middle of January and work with the local DAC for breaking these down for recycling. Spent a lot of time working with the SWAA group on the regional Solid Waste 10-year plan with hoping to have this completed by mid-January. We promoted the annual pesticide jug collection for the MN Dept of Ag in July. Staff also set up a booth at the County fair on recycling and reusing.

**Passports:** We had 110 new passports come through the office in 2024 along with many renewals (which they send in themselves so we do not have a record of renewals.) Four Watershed staff have completed the annual training and are passport agents.

### Miscellaneous Watershed Items

CliftonAllenLarson conducted the 2024 Annual Watershed Audit.

### Current and Future Goals

The District plans to work with local partners to implement the 1W1P, and look forward to continually working to increase conservation BMPs across the Watershed. We will continue working with local partners for the restoration of Florida Creek. Complete the Ditch improvement projects that are ongoing in the District. Work with landowners on water quality and quantity concerns. Continue to work closely with LQP County on managing the LQP County Environmental Services office.

The Watershed District Board of Managers and staff would like to express our appreciation for the support given to our organization by the various County offices and personnel, as well as the Commissioners of Lac qui Parle, Yellow Medicine, & Lincoln 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 Lac qui Parle-Yellow Bank Watershed District. Prepared by Trudy Hastad, Administrator