2025 ANNUAL REPORT
LAC QUI PARLE-YELLOW BANK WATERSHED DISTRICT

Lac qui Parle-Yellow Bank Watershed District
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507-829-0394

Manager David Craigmile retired this year and Manager Brent Larson was appointed to fill his expired term.

The Board held 12 monthly meetings with ZOOM option and held 2 special Watershed meetings in 2025.

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
Quintin Peterson, 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
Dave Craigmile, Retired Farmer/past Board Member

The Advisory Board held their annual meeting on December 09, 2025, special meeting #669.1.

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) which is good for 10 years (2032).
The Lac qui Parle-Yellow Bank Watershed District 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 www.lqpybwatershed.org is powered by Streamline. The website is very user friendly.

2025 Budget

A hearing for the 2025 proposed operating budget was held on September 4, 2024 during the regular Board meeting #655. There was no one present from the public for the hearing. The proposed budget and levy request of $380,000 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 2025 budget and levy of $380,000.

1W1P Grants

We use a program called MS4Front to track progress towards our 1W1P goals. This program helps to keep track of projects done for a 10-year cycle that both the SWCD's and WS can implement.

The policy committee met quarterly in 2025 and they recommend approval of non-structural practices over $30,000 and structural practices over $50,000.

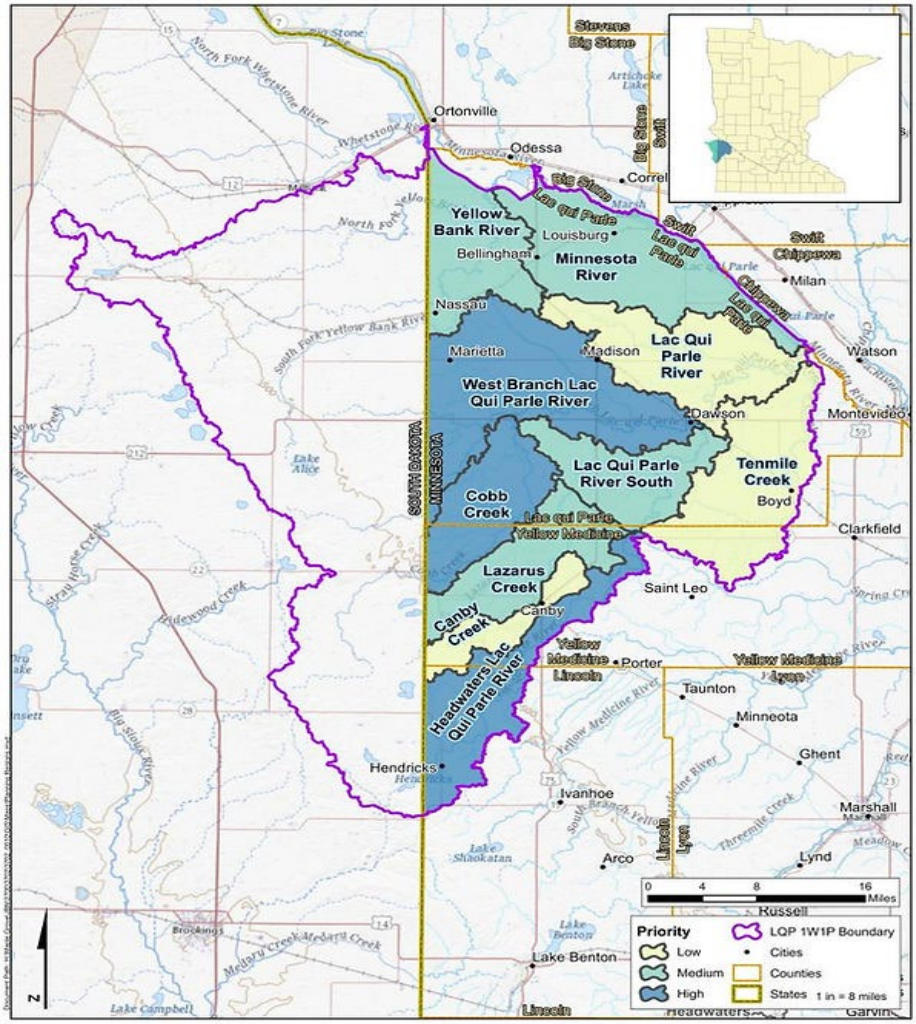
Grant ID: C23-0006 was awarded on 5/16/2023 for $935,410.00 with amended grant end date of 12/31/2026.
In 2025 there were two (2) WASCOB projects completed; 7 basins, 2 diversions, treating 103 acres. This resulted in reductions of 138 tons of sediment per year; 26 lbs of phosphorus per year; and 369 lbs of Nitrogen per year. We also installed 5 cover crops/No Till/Strip Till contracts amounting to 1,150 acres with the following reductions: 970 tons of sediment per year; 166 lbs of phosphorus per year, and 4,284 lbs of nitrogen per year. We also held two very well attended Soil Health Events in the summer of 2025. The Soil Health events were based on a Soil Health Mentor explaining the equipment changes made to demonstrate different practices. The Second event hosted by a Soil Health Mentor had a guest speaker (Russel Hedrick). Very unique and soil specific nutrient questions/topics/actions were discussed, demonstrated, and enlightening.

Grant ID: C25-0264 was awarded on 11/18/2024 for $1,228,526.00 with grant end date of 12/31/2027.
In 2025 there were four Cover Crop/No Till/Strip Till/Pasture and Haying Contracts amounting to 463 acres with the following reductions: 299 tons of sediment per year; 112.29 lbs of phosphorus per year; 2,281.3 lbs of nitrogen per year; and 2.5 Mg/L of total suspended Solids.

These numbers were all reported in eLink as required by the State.

Grant P25-0459 (FY 2025 CRP Incentive Grant) was awarded on 1/13/2025 for $100,000 with a grant end date of 12/31/2026.
In 2025 there was one CRP contract awarded for 36.38 acres with the following reductions: 49.43 tons of sediment per year; 10.34 lbs phosphorus per year; and 83.34 lbs nitrogen per year. This grant was reported and tracked in eLink.

1W1P Planning regions: Yellow is low priority; green medium priority, blue high priority



SSTS Loan Program

The Watershed was approved for a 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. A one- year extension was granted for this loan in 2025 allowing us to expend more dollars from this grant program that were readily available. Of the $750,000 awarded; $514,394.25 has been expensed as of December 2025. In 2025 we replaced nine (9) failing systems with eleven (11) applications approved. The 2025 reductions for these septic systems is as follows:

- BoD = 817 lbs per year
- TSS = 451 lbs per year
- Bacteria = 2.79E + 14 per year
- Phosphorus = 40 lbs per year
- Nitrogen = 133 lbs per year.

Florida Creek Channel Augmentation and Fish Passage Restoration

The Minnesota Department of Natural Resources (DNR) is undertaking a stream restoration project at the Florida Creek Wildlife Management Area (WMA) in section 32, Garfield Township, Lac qui Parle County, to improve in-channel and riparian habitat. This project involves approximately 1000 feet of channel restoration using Natural Channel Design methods, which base the design on high-quality reference locations to address issues like bank erosion and sediment mobilization. The restoration is part of a larger initiative funded through programs like the Lessard-Sams Outdoor Heritage Council (LSOHC). The Florida Creek project is part of a statewide effort by the MN DNR to restore streams and modernize water-related infrastructure. A local sponsor was needed to be the grantee and fiscal agent for this project. The Lac qui Parle-Yellow Bank Watershed District accepted this responsibility. Engineering assistance was needed to

gather additional survey data to augment DNR preliminary design, prepare hydrologic and hydraulic models, prepare plans and specs, facilitate bid letting, oversee construction inspection, and certify the project upon completion. The Watershed District asked Area II Minnesota River Basin Project to provide these services with their relationship with Bolton & Menk. A Scope of Services was prepared with an estimated cost of $111,467. DNR has worked closely with Bolton & Menk to answer questions and obtain required permits. Total grant awarded for this project is $700,000 with $86,105.03 expended for engineering services in 2025. The preliminary design data was obtained from the MNDNR and augmented with additional field survey provided by Area II. Bolton & Menk proceeded with developing 60% construction plans based on guidance from the MNDNR at the kickoff meeting. The MNDNR, LQPYB WD, and Area II reviewed plans at 60% completion and provided feedback on project elements, design considerations, and construction documents. DNR floodplain staff reviewed modeling and analysis supporting the project design and provided recommendations. 90% plans and draft construction specification were reviewed by MNDNR, Watershed district, and Area II. Final permit clearances were obtained from the USACE, and BWSR. As of December 2025, the final design and specifications were nearly complete and a bid letting date of January 16, 2026 was scheduled. Advertising took place in local newspapers as well as the online Quest site. Award of the bid and construction is anticipated to start as soon as possible as construction is to be completed on frozen ground to prevent damage to WMA vegetation. Construction should be completed in 2026.

Lac qui Parle Floodway Conceptual Design

In the fall of 2025, Area II Minnesota River Basin Projects applied for a BWSR Water Quality & Storage Grant for the Lac qui Parle Floodway Project in section 14, 15, 22, and 23 of OshKosh Township, Yellow Medicine County. The grant pays for the conceptual design of projects that provide water storage and water quality benefits at a 90/10 cost-share rate. Area II was successful and was awarded $150,000 to be matched with $15,000 that is shared with Area II, Lac qui Parle-Yellow Bank Watershed District, and Yellow Medicine County. Requests for proposals were requested from six consultant firms; four proposals were received. Through a scoring and ranking process, the project partners selected Barr Engineering and recommended their hire to the Area II Board of Directors as the grantee. Barr will hold a kickoff meeting early in 2026. Virtual and in-person meetings will be held periodically to review the work as it progresses. Final design report will be completed by October 2027 or sooner. The goals of this project will include: 1.) Reconnecting 4.57 miles of the Lac qui Parle River that is currently cutoff. 2.) Analyze and redesign four stream crossings that are perched and prevent fish passage. 3.) Reconnection will flatten the slope of the river and improve fish habitats. 4.) Restoration of the river channel will increase riffle and pool diversity, decrease the slope and stream power, and allow perennial fish to migrate upstream. 5.) Continue to retain the floodwater within the Lac qui Parle watershed.

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 Watershed Ditch #1, Watershed Ditch #32, and Watershed Ditch #55. We contracted with SWCD to use their drone for inspections of Watershed Ditch #1 and #32 and have the footage downloaded into drainage DB to compare for future inspections. Three beaver dams were removed in WS Ditch #55, a beaver dam removal and ditch bank repair was completed in WS Ditch #1, and a tile repair was completed in WS Ditch #11. Watershed ditch #1 and #32 were also sprayed for tree growth in 2025.

The Watershed Board held the preliminary engineer hearing on the improvement for County Ditch #63 in April. The Board approved the preliminary engineer report and at the end of 2025 are currently waiting for the final engineer report so we can hold the final engineer hearing and move into the bidding process.

The Watershed Board received a petition for improvement for County Ditch #57. Houston Engineering was appointed the engineer for the project. An early coordination meeting was held with DNR the end of 2025 and the WS Board is currently waiting on the preliminary engineer report.

We sent a camera up a portion of the main branch of CD #44 to see if we could locate why water was not moving through the system. It was noted that a portion of the main was crushed and a couple branch lines were also plugged. A landowner meeting was held and a bunch of problems were noted throughout the system. Landowners agreed to have a feasibility study done of the system. Houston Engineering was hired to do this and this resulted in two additional

landowner meetings. In November of 2025, landowners petitioned the Watershed Board for an improvement of this ditch system. Houston Engineering was appointed as the engineering firm for this project. We are currently waiting on the preliminary engineer report for this project.

Watershed Ditch #1 from drone inspection 2025

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 40 work orders for maintenance in 2025 with 32 of them completed.

The County Ditch #75 main tile line replacement was completed in 2025. The contractor will return in the spring of 2026 to fix a couple of joints where the gasket was not set properly and then final payment will be made.

We held three landowner meetings on CD #44 prior to landowner petition for improvement.

We had three locations on two ditch systems that qualified for State FEMA funding in 2025 due to a storm event in June. We hired Sando Weed & Brush Control to spray the County Ditches in 2025. They sprayed 14 County ditches and 2 Watershed Ditches for tree & brush control. The Ditch inspector also renewed his pesticide license so he can do spot spraying when necessary. The County hires spraying to be done on the ditches on a three- year rotation cycle.

We inspected 16 county ditch systems and hired the LQP SWCD office to fly the open ditches on the inspection list. We then uploaded this footage into the Drainage DB program so we can compare this footage with future inspections. This was a really great way to inspect the open ditch systems, it took way less time, and the SWCD inspected the buffer on the open ditch as we inspected the ditch system so we split the cost of the drone footage. This was a very cost effective way to inspect the open ditch.

Nuisance beaver have been a problem on the ditch systems in 2025. We have trapped 25 nuisance beaver and then proceeded with the dam removals.

A drainage committee consisting of two LQP Commissioners, Auditor, County Administrator, WS staff, and one WS manager held 11 monthly meetings in 2025. 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 2025, the Board approved 192 permits. There were 169 in LQP, 15 in Yellow Medicine, and 8 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.

Wetland Conservation Act (WCA)

The Watershed Board of Managers are the LGU for the WCA in Lac qui Parle County. Staff & LGU reviewed 202 drainage permit applications for ag related drainage and approved compliant by the LGU. There were 4 joint applications related to WCA impacts that were approved for No Loss as the impacts were either temporary or did not affect wetlands noted on the delineation of the project area. Staff investigated one possible violation site; the project area was reviewed and in office determination showed the project was permitted and followed all setbacks, requirements of partnering agencies, and recommendations of the Watershed Board. One staff member attended all the BWSR WCA training series and attended WCA trainings as required.

Watershed District Buffer Enforcement

The Watershed District staff had no buffer strip violations on the Watershed Ditches noted in 2025.

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 2025. 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 2025, the Watershed District continued its program to pay a bounty on nuisance beavers. The Watershed paid bounty on 243 nuisance beaver. The nuisance beaver were especially busy this fall and the Board authorized an additional $5,000 for 2025 to this program.

Del Clark Lake/Stone Hill Park

Picture of the beach at Del Clark Lake after a 5+ inch/hour storm event in June of 2025

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. In 2025 we added a new dock at the boat launch, an Adirondack chair at the beach, and new garbage containers around the park and also expanded some of the trails and opened them up for winter cross country skiing. The on-line reservations are nice addition that campers are really liking along with the ability to pay at the gate with debit cards.

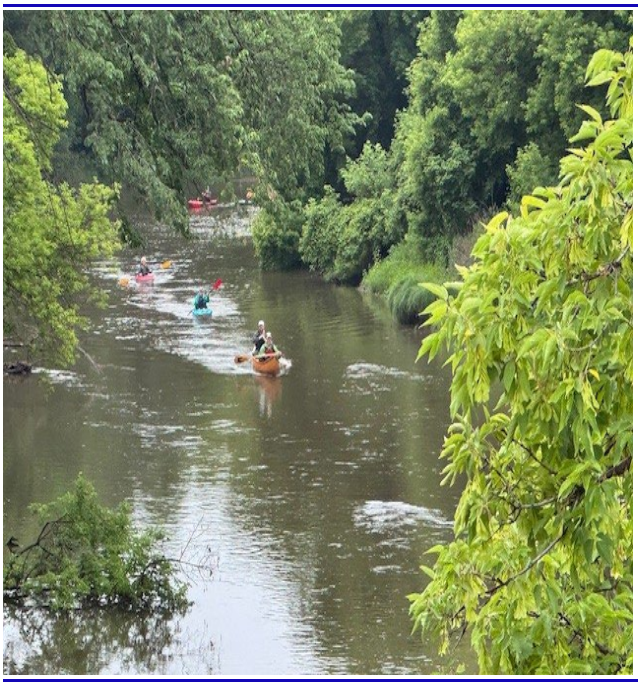
In June of 2025 there was a major storm event that dumped over 5 inches of rain in an hour which flooded the park and beach area (above photo). We ended up bringing in a bunch of sand to replace what was lost during this flood event and we were back up and running within 7-8 days after the water receded.

The annual January fishing tournament sponsored by the area Fireman was with over 150 fish houses on the lake. This has turned into a very popular annual event. We held our 2nd Easter Egg Hunt at the park with eggs scattered on the beach and the big hill which attracted many people from the surrounding areas. The 4th of July parade around the campground, slip-in-slide, and fireworks display is always a huge success and attracts many visitors over the July 4th 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 13, 2025 with 24 paddlers participating. We canoed from the rock rapids in Dawson which is the West Branch of the LQP river and got out about 2 miles north of Hwy 212 on the main stem LQP river after the point where the South and West Branch of the LQP river come together. It was about 7 river miles. We were concerned if we were going to hold it due to early rain, but we did manage to fit it in between rain showers and served a light lunch afterwards. Prior to paddling we talked about the Watershed specific where the two branches come together and what they could expect to see along the route.

2025 Canoe/Kayak pictures

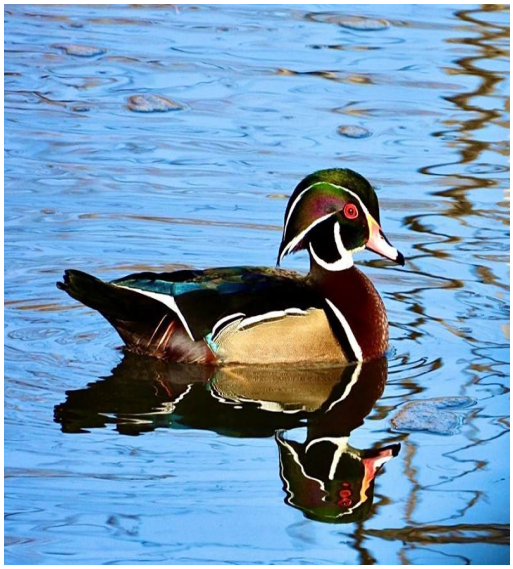


Earth Day Event

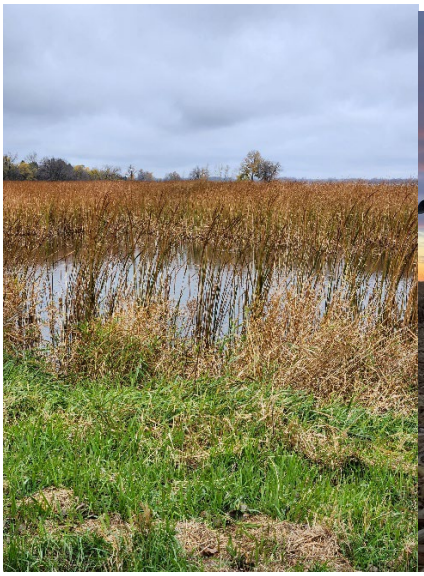
In 2025 the Watershed District along with the LQP County Environmental Office hosted a paper shredding event which was well attended. The Watershed District staff also assisted the LQP SWCD with their Earth Day Fun Run which was also well attended.

Annual Photo Contest

The Watershed Board approved holding the annual photo contest in 2025 and approved making of a 2026 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 Quintin Peterson, 2nd place Julie Stahl, & 3rd place to Carter Moen. Many of the photos are displayed on the Lac qui Parle-Yellow Bank website and were used to make the 2025 calendar.



Wood duck – 1st place



Wetland – 2nd place

Harvest – 3rd place

Environmental Services:

Planning & Zoning: We issued 51 zoning permits in 2025. Issued 36 septic permits in 2025 and Eric Stahl began septic classes to become an inspector and will finish up in 2026. Thirty-two (32) systems were installed this year – eight (8) for new homes, and twenty-four (24) replacement systems. We held six (6) conditional use permits with all of them being approved: 3 gravel pit renewals; 1 bulk liquid storage tank placement; 1 new farm repair shop, and 1 private cemetery. We held six (6) variance requests with all approved. Matt Wold was appointed as the new planning commission member to replace Dave Craigmile. The Cannabis Ordinance was passed and went into effect December 17, 2024. One cannabis event was held in Lac qui Parle County in the fall of 2025. We have not received any cannabis business requests yet. A wind energy system is being planned for the southwest part of LQP County by NextEra Energy with the permitting authority being the Public Utilities Commission and not the County. They are planning about 140 towers with construction to begin in 2030.

Feedlots: Went on 15 feedlot inspections in 2025. There were two non-compliant sites with the producer not aware of record keeping requirements for manure land application.

Recycling & HHW: We held a paper shredding event in April in conjunction with Earth week and collected 7,800 lbs of paper from the LQP County residents. We held two HHW collections in May and September with 12,034 lbs. of HHW collected. Special item collections were held the 2nd Saturday of the month from May-October with 5.57 tons of E-waste, 8.24 tons of tires, 2,327 fluorescent bulbs, 8.16 tons appliances collected. The battery recycling collection is going well with around 350 lbs collected in 2025, as well as donating almost 600 lbs of various electronics and cell phones to a recycling/reuse program. We promoted the annual Pesticide Jug collection for the MN Dept of Ag in June and September. They collected 8.75 tons. We also collected 9 boxes of ink and toner cartridges that we sent in for recycling.

Passports: We had 153 new passports come through the office in 2025 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

- CliftonLarsonAllen conducted the 2024 audit of the Watershed District.
- The Watershed cost-shared a repair to a dam restoration on the Lloyd Schrunk property in Section 7, Norman Township, Yellow Medicine County.
- Working with Lac qui Parle County on switching GIS services to ProWest. This is a switch from Lyon County GeoMoose and has taken some getting used too.
- Dam inspections were held on the Canby Creek dams owned by the Watershed District with some minor concerns noted on R-6. We will send a camera up that pipe in 2026 when conditions allow.
- Staff attended CPR training and safety training sponsored by Lac qui Parle County.
- Spoke at the annual Township Association meeting in March.
- We were on a guest panel at the AMC drainage conference.
- Did a tour with staff and new watershed managers of the Watershed District which was led by former Manager David Craigmile and very informative.
- Did a tour with the LQP County Commissioners and highlighted some Watershed projects and County ditch repair projects, along with some zoning things.

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. We are in the early planning stages of working with local partners to restore a portion of the LQP River in Yellow Medicine County. Look forward to completing 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 and staying compliant with passports.

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