

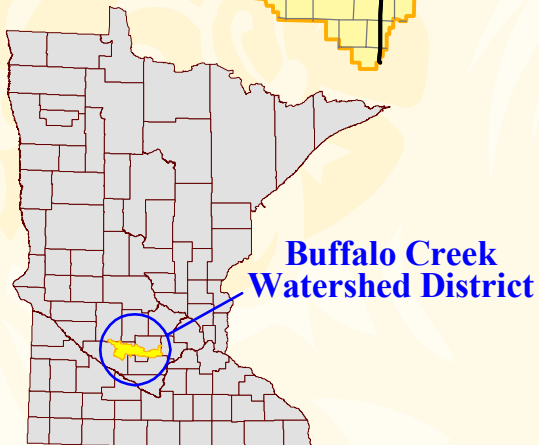
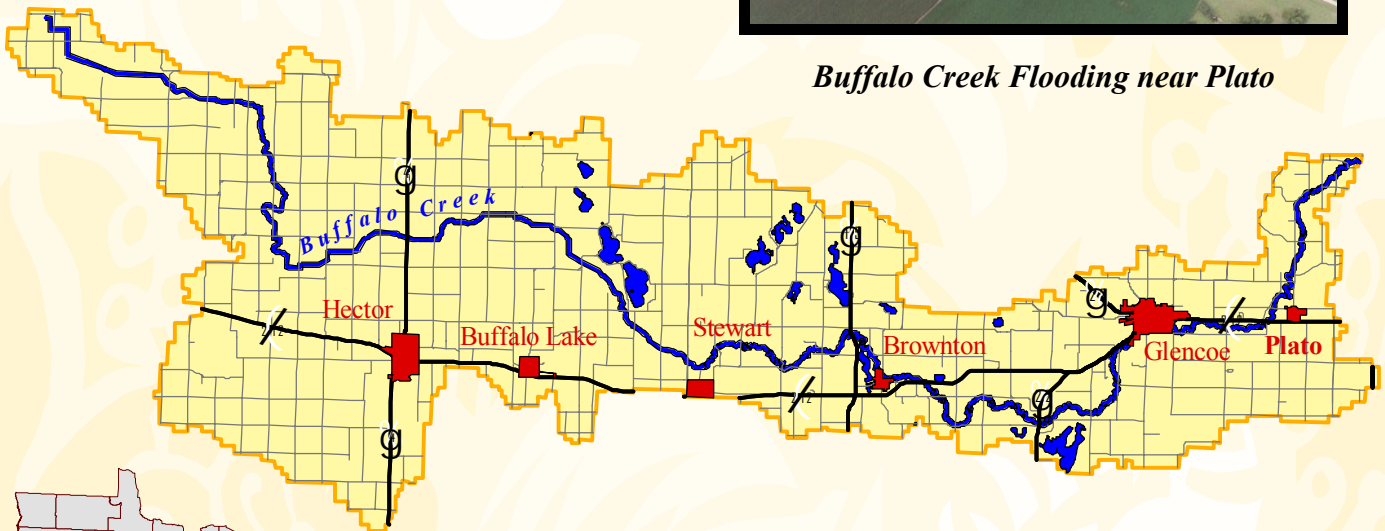
Buffalo Creek Watershed District Overall Plan



Buffalo Creek in Renville County



Buffalo Creek Flooding near Plato



January 2004 - December 2013

*Prepared by the
Buffalo Creek Watershed District and
the Mid-Minnesota
Development Commission*

**IN MEMORY OF
DEAN OLESON**

(January 27, 1928 – May 23, 2003)



~Dean and Phyllis Oleson~

Dean Oleson, a longtime member of the Buffalo Creek Watershed District's Board of Managers, passed away in May of 2003. Dean, with his wife Phyllis at his side, was actively involved in the District's affairs for over 30 years, including the planning process of this Overall Plan. He was also a member of the Minnesota Association of Watershed District's Board, holding positions as treasurer and president. His quiet thoughtfulness, willingness to listen to others' ideas, experience and strong presence on the District's Board of Managers will not be easily replaced. Dean's commitment to water resource management will be sadly missed.

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Common Acronyms

ACOE	Army Corps of Engineers
BCWD	Buffalo Creek Watershed District
BMP	Best Management Practice
BWSR	Minnesota Board of Water and Soil Resources
CD	County Ditch
CLMP, CSMP	Citizen Lake (Stream) Monitoring Program
CLWP	Comprehensive Local Water Plan
CROW	Crow River Organization of Water
CRP	Conservation Reserve Program
CWP	Clean Water Partnership
DA	Ditch Authority
DNR	Minnesota Department of Natural Resource
E&CD	Environment and Community Development
EM	Emergency Management
EPA	U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
EQIP	Environmental Quality Incentive Program
ES	Environmental Services
FEMA	Federal Emergency Management Agency
ISTS	Individual Sewage Treatment System
LAP	Lake Assessment Project
LGU	Local Governmental Unit
LMIC	Land Management Information Center
MDA	Minnesota Department of Agriculture
MDH	Minnesota Department of Health
MGS	Minnesota Geological Survey
MPCA	Minnesota Pollution Control Agency
NRCS	Natural Resource Conservation Service
OHWL	Ordinary High Water Level
PH	Public Health Department
PW	Public Works Department
PZ	Planning and Zoning
RIM	Reinvest in Minnesota Program
SFCR	South Fork Crow River Watershed
SW	Solid Waste Department
SWCD	Soil and Water Conservation District
TMDL	Total Maximum Daily Load
UMES	University of Minnesota Extension Service
USFWS	U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
UST	Underground Storage Tank
WCA	Wetland Conservation Act
WMA	Wildlife Management Area
WP	County Water Planner
WPA	Waterfowl Production Area

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Buffalo Creek Watershed District (BCWD) was established under the order of the Minnesota Water Resources Board (now known as the Minnesota Board of Water and Soil Resources) on January 30, 1969. On February 8, 1974, the District's Board of Managers formally adopted its first Overall Plan, in accordance with Minnesota Statutes, Section 112.46. The plan was developed to protect the public's health and welfare and to conserve the natural resources of the District through land use planning, flood control and other conservation projects. In 1991, the District revisited its Overall Plan and updated necessary data, as well as goals, objectives and action items.

Like many watershed districts, the BCWD's original Overall Plans had a heavy focus on water quality and quantity management. A listing of the District's early goals, as derived from the *1991 Buffalo Creek Watershed District Overall Plan*, is provided below.

- Continue to reduce flooding along streams, waterways and lakes
- Improve the water quality of streams, waterways and lakes
- Reduce or eliminate erosion within the district
- Reduce sedimentation in waterways
- Reduce pollutant sources to streams, waterways and lakes
- Protect groundwater
- Improve fish and wildlife habitat
- Protect shorelands

Over the past decade, the District has undertaken and completed a number of activities in line with goals identified in its Overall Plan. A listing of completed District projects is given below. Many of the projects were done in collaboration with other local units of government.

- Removal of channel obstructions and reconstruction of banks
- Deepening the outlet of Schillings Lake into the Buffalo Creek
- Drainage ditch maintenance and repair
- Erosion control and channel realignment
- Installation of desilting basins
- Water quality and flow monitoring
- Flood damage repair and control studies

In addition, the BCWD has built an extensive working relationship with the Crow River Organization of Water (CROW), which embodies the entire District. In 2003, the CROW completed a Clean Water Partnership (CWP) Phase I Diagnostic Study for the entire Crow River Watershed. Through extensive water quality monitoring and assessment, the CROW has helped to provide the information necessary to identify problems and opportunities that are specific to each of the District's subwatersheds. The CROW is presently working on a CWP Phase II program for the implementation of best management practices (BMPs). Potential BMPs include buffer strips, filter strips, replacement of open tile inlets, wetland restorations, stormwater detention basins, upgrading of septic systems and agricultural feedlots, among others.

Despite advancements in water resource management, the BCWD continues to face several challenges. Overall, the largest challenge has proven to be protecting the District's water resources, while promoting agricultural production. In addition, water resource management projects have often been implemented based upon the availability of funding and not priority.

On January 28, 2003, the District held a public informational meeting regarding the revision of its Overall Plan. This meeting provided the public, as well as local and State governmental units, an opportunity to present information and concerns about water-related issues that they believed should be considered in the revision of the plan. Following the informational meeting, a taskforce was organized to evaluate collected information and establish goals, objectives, policy guidelines and action items for the plan. Listed below are the goals of the BCWD Overall Plan.

- To improve stakeholder participation, cooperation and coordination in implementing the District's initiatives.
- To ensure that an adequate supply of surface water is available for agricultural, commercial/industrial, natural resources and recreational purposes, while minimizing flood related damage.
- To decrease the nutrient and sediment concentration of surface water to the 50th percentile of the Western Corn Belt Plains Ecoregion.
- To protect and enhance the biological resources and recreational amenities of multi-purpose corridors.

This updated, third generation Overall Plan will serve to guide the District in water resource management through the year 2013. During this time, opportunities will exist to amend goals, objectives, policy guidelines and action steps, as needed, to incorporate new data and address issues as they emerge. The District will continue to build on its past accomplishments and encourage new programs and opportunities for the effective management and protection of its water and land resources.

INTRODUCTION

The Watershed Act

In 1955, the Minnesota State Legislature passed the Watershed Act in order to better address water-related issues and concerns occurring in the State within a watershed context. According to the enabling statute, watershed districts are special purpose units of local government that have been created to “conserve the natural resources of the state by land use planning, flood control and other conservation projects by using sound scientific principles for the protection of the public health and welfare and the provident use of the natural resources”. The boundaries of a watershed district generally follow the hydrological boundary of the watershed. In most cases, watershed districts are named for the major surface water resource within the watershed. The BCWD is one of 45 watershed districts that have been formed statewide.

Today, Minnesota State Statutes Chapter 103D, also known as the “Watershed Law”, sets the framework within which districts can exercise their authority to manage and protect water resources. Under the watershed law, a district may be formed for any of the following purposes:

- To control or alleviate damage from flood waters;
- To improve stream channels for drainage, navigation, and any other public purpose;
- To reclaim or fill wet and overflowed land;
- To provide a water supply for irrigation;
- To regulate the flow of streams and conserve the streams' water;
- To divert or change all or part of watercourses;
- To provide or conserve water supply for domestic, industrial, recreational, agricultural, or other public use;
- To provide for sanitation and public health, and regulate the use of streams, ditches, or watercourses to dispose of waste;
- To repair, improve, relocate, modify, consolidate, and abandon all or part of drainage systems within a watershed district;
- To control or alleviate soil erosion and siltation of watercourses or water basins;
- To regulate improvements by riparian property owners of the beds, banks, and shores of lakes, streams, and wetlands for preservation and beneficial public use;

- To provide for hydroelectric power generation;
- To protect or enhance the water quality in watercourses or water basins; and
- To provide for the protection of groundwater and regulate its use to preserve it for beneficial purposes.

The Watershed Law also requires districts to prepare a watershed management plan or “Overall Plan” every ten years to outline their goals and objectives and to define resource management programs. As a part of their plan, districts are required to inventory resources, assess issues and develop policies and strategies based on the conditions and needs of the watershed. Plans must take a comprehensive, holistic approach to resource management.

Overall Plan Content

This plan is divided into eight major sections.

- Introduction
- Chapter 1: General Profile of the District
- Chapter 2: Water Quantity Management
- Chapter 3: Reducing Priority Pollutants
- Chapter 4: Multi-Purpose Corridors
- Chapter 5: Goals, Objectives and Policy Guidelines
- Chapter 6: Implementation
- Chapter 7: Plan Administration

The introduction identifies the statutory components of an Overall Plan, as well as provides an overview of the plan’s content and describes the planning process that was utilized in the development of the plan. Also included in the introduction is a listing of those issues that were identified at the public informational meeting.

Chapter one provides a comprehensive profile of the BCWD. Information contained in this chapter includes: location, history, organizational structure, current mission, programs and completed projects. Also included in this chapter is an overview of the District’s key stakeholders, as well as important demographic, economic and physical environment characteristics.

Chapter two examines the status of water quantity management within the District. Included in this chapter is information on flow monitoring, public drainage systems, stormwater management and floodplain management. Priority issues examined in this chapter include alternative drainage practices, drainage coefficients, stormwater management and water retention and wetlands.

Chapter three focuses on the reduction of priority pollutants. This chapter takes an in-depth look at water quality data, programs and standards. Priority issues examined in this chapter include conservation buffers, erosion and sediment control, feedlots, individual sewage treatment systems and wastewater discharges.

Chapter four provides a profile of the multi-purpose corridors of the Buffalo Creek Watershed District. Included in this chapter are sections on wildlife and recreation, as well as priority issues, which focus on canoeing/innertubing, fisheries, rare biological resources and trails.

Chapter five of the BCWD Overall Plan establishes the District's goals, objectives and policy guidelines. Collectively, they will be used to guide future management activities and decisions. More importantly; however, the objectives and policy guidelines provide a framework that the District's Board of Managers can use to base day-to-day decisions upon.

Chapter six prescribes the action items necessary to achieve the goals of the Overall Plan. Each action item is assigned information on priority subwatershed(s), timeline, coordinating agency(s), potential funding source(s) and estimated cost.

Chapter seven contains information on plan administration, including sections on plan coordination, implementation, schedule, role of the District in implementation, role of other agencies in implementation, recommended changes to State programs, intergovernmental conflicts/resolution process, major plan amendment procedure, minor plan amendment procedure and general information.

Description of the Planning Process

A multiple step planning process was utilized in the development of this plan, with special emphasis on involving citizens, local governments, bordering counties and State agencies. The initial phase of this process involved an informational meeting to identify issues and concerns of the public. These issues were then used to focus the scope of the Overall Plan.

The second phase of the planning process involved the appointment of an Overall Plan Taskforce. Members of the Taskforce included citizens of the District and representatives from various local and State governmental units. The taskforce was responsible for identifying priority issues, which are the issues that are reviewed in depth in chapters two, three and four. Based upon the priority issues and other issues from the public informational meeting, the taskforce developed the goals, objectives, policy guidelines and action items for the plan.

Public Informational Meeting Issues

The following are the issues that were identified at the public informational meeting held on January 28, 2003. Each issue was prioritized by participants based upon the three-tiered system listed below.

Urgent: Issues that must be addressed immediately. These would be issues where serious threats to public health or sensitive resources are possible if they are not addressed or where important opportunities could be lost through inaction.

Important: Issues that will be dealt with as funds and personnel become available.

Noteworthy: Issues that are not crucial to human health or resource protection.

Urgent Issues

- Need to work with outside partners (Ducks Unlimited, lake associations, CROW, etc.)
- Need to continue public educational efforts in the District
- Water retention/water storage
- Development of a drainage management plan
- Stormwater management/retention ponds (need for specifications)
- Implications of the new NPDES regulations
- Recognize and work with watershed and County water plans
- Maintain the County's public drainage system through District controls
- Promotion of alternative drainage practices
- Work to improve agency relationships/cooperation with other LGUs
- Need to increase recreational opportunities along Buffalo Creek
- Promote buffer strips (using available governmental programs) along Buffalo Creek and its tributaries
- Management of urban growth
- Implementation of erosion control BMPs on construction sites
- Need to identify priority subwatersheds for water management
- Need to focus water planning resources on both urban and rural issues

Important Issues

- Floodplain (location, management plan and proper ordinances)
- Conduction of an abandoned well inventory
- Flood damage problems (City of Glencoe)
- Minimize wind and water erosion
- Create a recreation, scenic area and wildlife plan for the District
- Utilization of berms for stream stabilization and walking paths
- Utilize GIS to identify ditch and tile outlets

Important Issues (continued...)

- Continue to promote the proper sealing of abandoned wells
- Provide incentives to landowners to improve water quality (removal/replacement of open tile intakes)
- Need to better utilize water quality information
- Development of manure management plans for larger feedlots
- Creation of a wetland plan (potential restoration projects and compensation)
- Need to better understand EPA's 303d (TMDL) list and work towards improving impaired waters
- Help protect the habitat of rare and threatened species
- Minimize conflicts regarding public land
- Need to protect prime farm land/use of cluster developments
- Work with partners to maintain and expand GIS
- Development of an erosion control ordinance
- Need to better understand the hydrogeology and aquifers of the District (locate recharge areas)
- Conduction of a drained wetlands inventory (USFWS)
- Need to better utilize Soil and Water Conservation District resources
- Promote willing wetland restorations
- Convert open tiles to French inlets to reduce sedimentation
- Use GIS to map and plan
- Update zoning ordinances to provide good land use incentives
- Minimize water use conflicts
- Upgrading of ISTSS
- Sanitary sewer issues
- Identify and address water supply conflicts (large industry)

Noteworthy Issues

- Promotion of short and long term conservation easement programs
- Groundwater protection/MDH Wellhead Protection
- Preserve wet and native prairies where feasible
- Groundwater use conflicts
- Creation of a drought contingency plan
- Utilization outside money sources for water-related projects
- Encourage public/private partnerships (i.e. Ducks Unlimited) in habitat restoration
- Shoreland naturalization
- Promotion of best management practices (BMPs)
- Utilization of the County Biological Surveys
- Use of prescribed burning for prairie maintenance
- Emphasize quality (not necessarily quantity) wildlife habitat
- Identify, protect and restore (where appropriate) native prairie grass
- Restricting access across Buffalo Creek

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