

High Island Creek & Rush River  
Watershed Implementation Projects  
112 5th Street, P.O. Box 161  
Gaylord MN 55334

NONPROFIT  
STANDARD  
US POSTAGE  
PAID  
GAYLORD, MN  
55334  
PERMIT NO 61  
STAMP

## Low-interest loans available for upgrading Non-Compliant Septic Systems

Owners of a Subsurface Sewage Treatment System (SSTS) are eligible for low-interest loans to upgrade their non-conforming septic system. Furthermore, those in the High Island Creek Watershed are eligible for an additional \$500 incentive from the High Island Creek Watershed District. Check with your county contact for further details.

**To be eligible:**

Applicant must be a property owner of a non-conforming septic system:

- Discharge to the surface
- Tiled to drainage or road ditch
- Discharge to cesspool, seepage pits or dry wells
- Less than a 2-foot separation to seasonally saturated soil
- Lack of a system
- Does not meet setbacks to existing well.

**Not eligible:**

- Refinancing a previously installed system
- Septic for new homes
- Non-residential property
- Project started before design and loan approval
- Under court order to repair system.

## Contact Us

**Sibley County**

Ron Otto  
Sibley SWCD  
(507) 702-7077

**Nicollet County**

Mandy Landkamer  
Environmental Services  
(507) 934-0250

**McLeod County**

Jake McLain  
Environmental Services  
(320) 484-4343

**Renville County**

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(320) 523-3760

# RIVER WATCHER



112 5th Street, P.O. Box 161  
Gaylord, MN 55334  
**Summer 2018**  
Vol. 15 Issue 2

High Island Creek & Rush River Watershed 319 TMDL Project—Newsletter

Summer 2018



High Island Creek at Arlington



High Island Creek at Henderson

**Two sites,  
two elevations...  
different water  
clarity results!**

## Submit photos for watershed photo contest

The High Island Creek/Rush River Watershed Dissolved Oxygen TMDL will hold its annual photo contest this fall. The winning photo will be awarded a \$50 prize! Previous winning photos have included pictures of crops, nature, and outdoor recreation. Individuals may email their entries to:

[jack.bushman@sibleyswcd.org](mailto:jack.bushman@sibleyswcd.org)

## High Island Creek Water Quality Monitoring in 2017

Water quality monitoring continued on the High Island Creek in 2017. While 2016 was marked by several large rain events (which made for an interesting year), 2017 will be remembered for its early ice-out, giving field staff an opportunity to collect samples during a time of year that is usually inaccessible.

Samples were taken at two sites along High Island Creek. The first, just off Sibley Co Rd #9 north of Arlington, is at a higher elevation within the watershed, while the second site, just off Scenic Byway Rd #6 outside of Henderson, is at a lower elevation within the watershed and closer to the confluence of High Island Creek with the Minnesota River.

Sampling the creek at the two different elevations gives a better understanding of just how the landscape can affect water quality.

For the 2018 field season, no sampling is planned. However, the Sibley Soil and Water Conservation District in Gaylord and our partners at the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency (MPCA) are excited to pick up things early in 2019.

## In This Issue

- AIS found in Minnesota River
- CREP opportunities & Continuous CRP
- Cover Crops & Open Intake Alternatives
- MN Buffer Law
- Crop Cropping Prevented Planting Acres



# Continuous CRP enrollment open, MN CREP signup also available

Landowners looking for a solution to marginal or environmentally sensitive farmland have several options to consider this summer.

On June 1, the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) announced that it will resume accepting applications for the voluntary Conservation Reserve Program (CRP). Eligible farmers, ranchers and private landowners may sign up at their local Farm Service Agency (FSA) office from now through August 17, 2018.

FSA stopped accepting applications last fall for the CRP continuous signup, excluding applications for the Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP) and CRP grasslands. This pause allowed USDA to review available acres and avoid exceeding the 24 million-acre CRP cap set by the 2014 Farm Bill. CRP enrollment currently is about 22.7 million acres. For this year’s signup, limited priority practices are available for continuous enrollment, including grassed waterways, filter strips, riparian buffers, wetland restoration and others.

MN CREP is also available for producers who have land they would like to see retired into a conservation easement. MN CREP is a voluntary state-federal program designed to improve water quality and habitat conservation. It will protect and restore up to 60,000 acres of marginal cropland across 54 southern and western Minnesota counties, using buffer strips, wetland restoration and drinking water wellhead protection.

Landowners who are accepted in MN CREP will enroll in the USDA’s Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) for 14 to 15 years. At the same time, the land will be put into a permanent conservation easement through the state’s Reinvest in Minnesota (RIM) easement program. Private ownership continues, and the land is permanently restored and enhanced for water quality and habitat benefits.

*To learn more about CREP, stop by the Sibley SWCD office, 112 5th St in Gaylord, or call us, (507) 702-7077. Our staff would be happy to answer your questions about MN CREP and provide more detailed information on payment rates.*



MN CREP is great opportunity for landowners with expiring CRP acres. (Courtesy of Natural Resources Conservation Service)



Rock Tile Inlet in Sibley County

## Open intake alternatives cost-share program success: 59 projects done since 2016

Throughout the watersheds, 59 Open Intake Alternative Conservation Drainage projects were completed since 2016. Unfortunately, all available money for open intake alternatives has been spent. These projects are important in helping the Rush River and High Island Creek Watersheds move toward reaching the water quality goals set by the TMDL study.

## Incentive payments available for cover crops

Landowners interested in installing cover crops are encouraged to stop by the SWCD office to discuss possible incentive payments meant to offset the additional costs of cover crops. Incentives are \$30/ Acre for a single or multi species cover crop.



Multi Species Cover Crop on a Sibley County Field

## 16.5-ft buffer deadline is November 1

The mapping of county ditches, rivers and streams has been done, and most required 50-foot buffers are in place; only one buffer deadline remains to be in compliance with the 2015 Minnesota buffer law.

For those of you who have not yet planned and seeded your required 16.5 foot “filter strips” along public ditches, the day to circle on your calendars is November 1, 2018.

To identify parcels you own or rent, you can view the finalized map completed by the Department of Natural Resources (DNR), found at <http://arcgis.dnr.state.mn.us/gis/buffersviewer/>. If you do not have computer access, visit the SWCD office for assistance. (When viewing this map, please note that waterways lined in green denote the areas labeled as public ditches.)

If you have any questions or would like to look into possible technical assistance to bring your parcel into compliance, stop by or call your SWCD office.



**STOP AQUATIC HITCHHIKERS!**

Be A Good Steward.  
Clean. Drain. Dry.

[StopAquaticHitchhikers.org](http://StopAquaticHitchhikers.org)

## DNR adds Minnesota River to Infested Waters List

In the summer of 2017, the Minnesota DNR added the Minnesota River to the Infested Waters List, after identifying the infestation of **Bighead Carp, Grass Carp and Zebra Mussels**. Locally, the spread of Aquatic Invasive Species (AIS) are also of growing concern. For example, in Sibley County, 11 “invasives” have made the most threatening list: Silver, Bighead, Grass and Common Carp, Zebra Mussels, Faucet Snails, Rusty Crawfish, Starry Stonewort, Purple Loosestrife, Eurasian Milfoil and Curly Leaf Pondweed. With the 2018 boating season underway, boaters, fishermen and others enjoying Minnesota waters need to be mindful and observant before entering and leaving access points on our lakes and rivers:

**CLEAN** all aquatic plants, zebra mussels and other invasive species off any water-related equipment before leaving the boat landing.

**DRAIN** water-related equipment, including ballast tanks, portable bait containers, boat motors and live wells. Remember to keep drain plugs removed and water-draining devices open while transporting watercraft.

**DRY** everything for at least FIVE days OR wipe with a towel before reuse.

Anglers are also reminded to **DISPOSE** of unwanted bait, including minnows, leeches, and worms in the trash. It is illegal to release bait into a water body or transfer aquatic animals from one water body to another.

More information about Aquatic Invasive Species in Minnesota can be found on the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources website or by stopping into your local SWCD office.



## Cover crops on prevented planting acres help make the most out of a bad situation

Due to a prolonged period of excessive rainfall this summer, some farmers may be looking at an unfortunate situation; a field that is too wet to plant into corn or soybeans. While this is certainly unfortunate for this year production, cover crops may help make the most out of a bad situation.

A field that is left unplanted for a prolonged period of time can become prone to erosion from both water and wind. Planting a cover crop once the field dries out will not only help prevent erosion, but can help capture nutrients and build soil health. Healthier soil could make for higher yields in the following growing season. Planting a deep rooted cover crop can also help reduce compaction and increase infiltration rates, which will help reduce run off and pooling during wetter times of the year. Cover crops can help ensure long term productivity even in the midst of a difficult situation such as managing prevented planting acres.

If you are interested in planting cover crops, consider stopping into your local SWCD or NRCS office to discuss any available technical advice or possible financial incentives.