



P.O. Box 161  
Gaylord, MN 55334  
**Winter 2018**  
Vol. 15 Issue 1

# RIVER WATCHER NEWSLETTER

High Island Creek & Rush River  
Watershed 319 TMDL Project

## 2017: A Glance Back

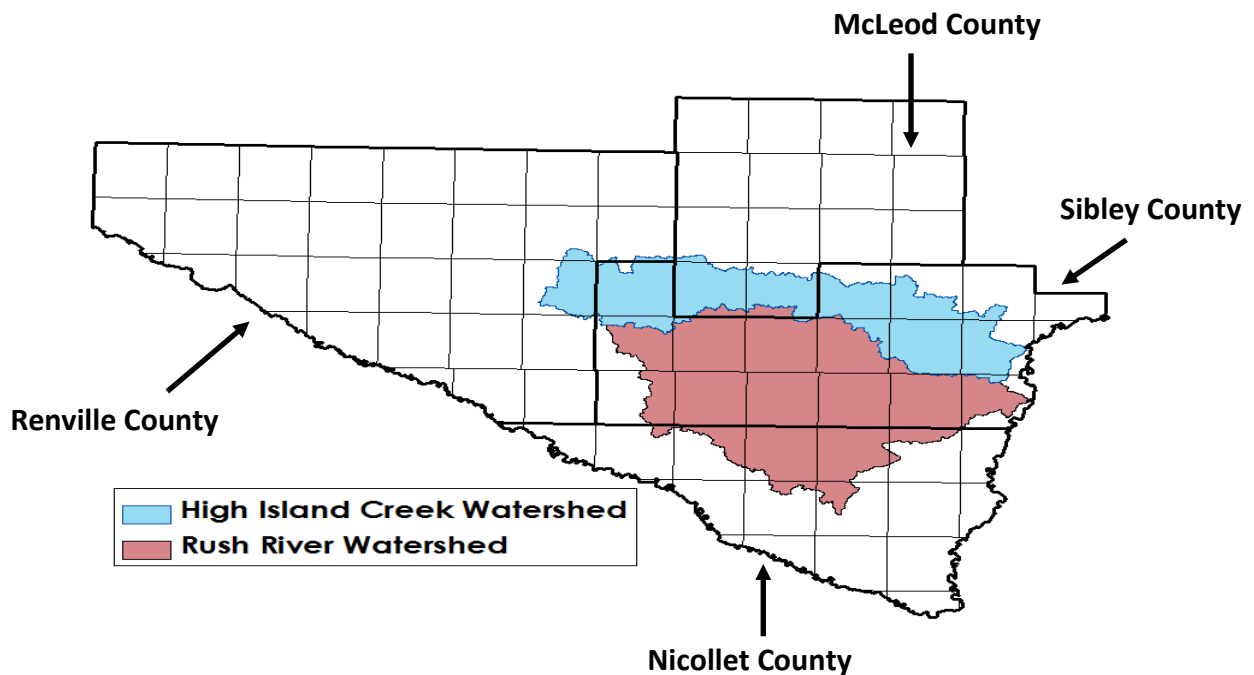
2017 was another busy year in the books for the Sibley SWCD watershed staff. The watershed staff continued to implement Best Management Practices (BMP's), conducted water quality monitoring within the watershed and assisted in educating landowners regarding water quality improvements. Below you can see the breakdown of the BMP's implemented this past year, in fact cover crops implemented this past year doubled those of last year which was tremendous! It's fantastic to see so many landowners and producers that are implementing practices to improve the quality of soil and water. A water quality monitoring summary for High Island Creek can be found on Page 4 and updates for the Lower Minnesota WRAPS can be found on page 5.

2017 Best Management Practices Implemented as part of the TMDL Project For Dissolved Oxygen	
Cover Crop Planted	1264.1 Acres
Open Intake Alternatives Installed	36
Buffer Strip Contracts	94.72 Acres



Cover crops implemented in Alfsborg and Grafton townships in Sibley County

## Watershed Boundaries



## New face/New place

### Meet the new Watershed Coordinator/Conservation Technician

Erik Goetsch grew up in Gaylord, MN with a passion for the outdoors. He graduated from Sibley East High School and decided to pursue his passion for the outdoors by attending South Dakota State University where he received his bachelors degree in Wildlife and Fisheries. Over the years he's worked for the Game, Fish, and Parks in South Dakota, Game and Fish in North Dakota, and a private fisheries organization in Minnesota. Erik has many hobbies some of them include hunting, fishing, and sports. In his free time, he plays baseball for the Gaylord Islanders, participates in winter basketball leagues, and can be found fishing or hunting in the surrounding area. He is excited for the opportunity to learn and apply practices dealing in conservation and water quality to better Sibley County. Here are some ways that you can

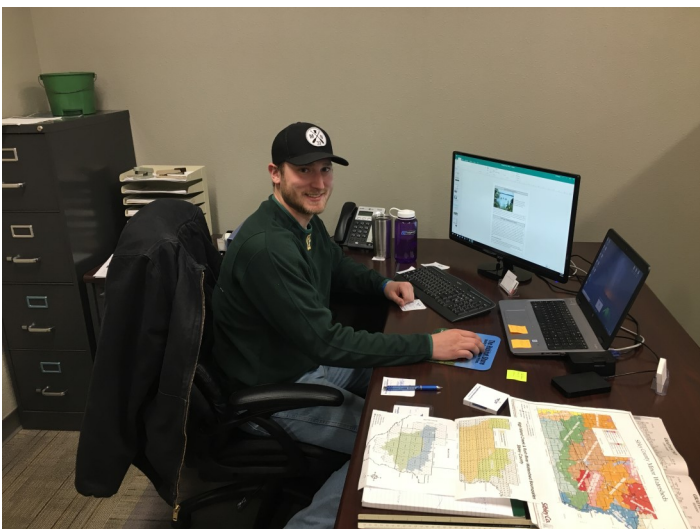
contact him:

**Telephone:** 507-702-7077

**Email:** [erik.goetsch@sibleyswcd.org](mailto:erik.goetsch@sibleyswcd.org)

### New Office Location

112 5th Street  
PO Box 161  
Gaylord, MN 55334



## 2017 Photo Contest Winner is.....



Congratulations to Joy Cohrs the winner of our 2017 Watershed Photo contest! Thanks to all who participated in the contest!

Have a passion for taking photos? We're continuing our annual Watershed Photo contest in 2018. Submit your digital copies to [erik.goetsch@sibleyswcd.org](mailto:erik.goetsch@sibleyswcd.org) or a physical copy to Sibley SWCD 112 5th Street PO Box 161 Gaylord, MN 55334. Watershed staff will judge each photograph and top photo will win a \$50 CASH PRIZE. (Limit 2 Entries per person)

## Cover Crops: Unlocking Secrets in the Soil

Cover crops were around before World War II but fell out of favor during the rise of mechanized agriculture. Farmers are recognizing that soil is living and part of a larger ecosystem. Introducing cover crops provides a balanced diet for the living organisms in the soil. The benefits of cover crops used in combination with no-till and diverse crops rotations can significantly improve the health of the soil. Implementing the right combination will increase soil organic matter, improve soil structure by building soil aggregates, provide armor for the soil surface, and recharge the water in the soil profile increasing productivity and profitability for cash crops. Farmers that have successfully implemented cover crops to their farming practices are reaping the benefits of better nutrient cycling, improved water infiltration and more consistent yields over time and can be an exceptional source of information. Sibley SWCD has continued to work with landowners to plant cover crops by offering an incentive payment as part of the High Island Creek and Rush River TMDL Project for Dissolved Oxygen.

### **Cover Crop Incentive Payment:**

This option provides a cost share contract at \$30 per acre to implement cover crops. Eligible planting areas are defined as land that produced peas, sugar beets or sweet corn during that given year. The planting deadline for cover crops is September 15th.



## High Island Creek Water Monitoring

As many of you know the watershed staff is responsible for monitoring water quality on the High Island Creek. There are two sampling sites on High Island Creek; one of which is off of Sibley County Road 9 north of Arlington and the second being off of Scenic Byway Road 6, just outside of Henderson. There were 22 samples taken from the Arlington site and 21 samples taken from the Henderson site this past year. Data collected from both sites indicated that there are pollution concerns within the watershed. By implementing BMP's we can work towards improving the water quality in our watershed, creating a better environment for our aquatic plants and animals as well as ourselves. The pictures below are from our two sampling sites. The picture on the left is from our Arlington site and the picture on the right from our Henderson site. These pictures depict 2 different landscapes within the watershed. The Arlington site represents a relatively flat landscape while the Henderson site is impacted by nearly a 200 foot elevation change before draining into the Minnesota River. Total Suspended Solid levels and Nitrate levels remain high but can be improved with Best Management Practices (BMP's).

### **BMP's include:**

- Cover Crops - annual ryegrass, barley, buckwheat, clover, tillage radish, oats, sorghum, wheat, etc.
- Open intake alternatives - open intake removals, slotted risers, rock inlets.
- Riparian Buffers - vegetated areas along water resources.
- Grass waterways - broad, shallow channels designed to move surface water across farmland without causing soil erosion.
- Terrace/WASCOB implementation - Terraces/WASCOBs manage concentrated flow erosion on farmland which helps trap sediment then slowly releases surface water through an underground outlet.



**Arlington Monitoring Site May 22nd**



**Henderson Monitoring Site May 22nd**

### **Low Interest Loans available for upgrading of Noncompliant 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, seep-age 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 Information:**

**Sibley County:** Ron Otto  
Sibley SWCD Office  
112 5th Street, PO Box 161  
Gaylord, MN 55334  
507-702-7077

**Nicollet County:** Mandy Landkamer  
Environmental Services Office  
501 South Minnesota Avenue  
St. Peter, MN 56082  
507-934-7074

**McLeod County:**  
Environmental Services Office  
830 11th Street East, Suite 110  
Glencoe, MN 55336  
320-864-1482

**Renville County:** Diane Mitchell  
Renville County Government  
Services Center  
105 S. 5th Street, Suite 311  
Olivia, MN 56277  
507-523-3706

### **Lower Minnesota River Watershed Restoration and Protection Strategy (WRAPS) Update**

The Lower Minnesota River WRAPS group has set up three coffee shop talks to converse with land-owners and producers about ideas to improve land and water quality within the watershed. The purpose of these meetings is for the WRAPS group to gain knowledge of the issues occurring out on the landscape. Attendance is crucial, so please stop in and grab a cup of coffee and doughnut on us and share some ideas or concerns you may have.

#### **Meeting Dates and Locations:**

Gaylord - Prairie House - February 20th 9 AM

Henderson - Roadhouse - February 26th 9 AM

Gibbon - Pit Stop - February 27th 10 AM

**Erik Goetsch - Watershed Grants Coordinator**

**Phone: 507-702-7077**

**Email: [erik.goetsch@sibleyswcd.org](mailto:erik.goetsch@sibleyswcd.org)**



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Watershed Implementation Projects**  
112 5th Street, PO Box 161  
Gaylord, MN 55334

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<p><b>Project Sponsor</b></p> <p>Sibley County</p> <p><b>Sponsors:</b></p> <p>Renville, McLeod &amp; Nicollet Counties,</p> <p>Sibley, Renville, McLeod &amp; Nicollet SWCDs,</p> <p>Sibley County Water Resource Advisory Committee,</p> <p>Renville Co. Water Protection &amp; Management,</p> <p>Environmental Services of Sibley, Renville, McLeod &amp; Nicollet Counties,</p> <p>University of Minnesota Extension Service,</p> <p>High Island Creek Watershed District,</p> <p>Natural Resource Conservation Service</p>	<p><b>Attention High Island Creek Watershed Residents:</b></p> <p>Landowners and renters within the High Island Creek Watershed District must obtain watershed district permits or file notification forms before tiling, ditching, dredging, filling or otherwise altering the natural drainage of an area. Wetlands and stream courses may be protected under the USDA Farm Program, Minnesota Department of Natural Resources, Army Corp of Engineers or Minnesota Wetland Conservation Act laws.</p> <p>Protect your legal status and farm program benefits. Before beginning drainage work, contact Al Kerber—Watershed Ditch Inspector @ 320-510-1783. Failure to obtain a permit may result in a fine of \$500 or more.</p>	<p><b>Sponsors:</b></p> <p>Cities of Arlington, New Auburn, Gaylord, Winthrop, Gibbon &amp; Lafayette,</p> <p>United States Geological Survey,</p> <p>United States Fish &amp; Wildlife Service,</p> <p>Minnesota Board of Water &amp; Soil Resources,</p> <p>Minnesota Department of Natural Resources,</p> <p>Coalition for a Clean Minnesota River,</p> <p>Pheasants Forever: Sibley and McLeod Co. Chapters,</p> <p>Conservation Partners of America,</p> <p>Green Isle Sportsman's Club,</p> <p>Gaylord Protective League</p>
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This newsletter is sponsored by the High Island & Rush River Watershed 319 TMDL Project. This publication is issued quarterly and is funded through the 319 grant program from the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency and various local and state organizations. Both Projects are equal opportunity organizations and employers. Questions and comments can be direct to: **Erik Goetsch Watershed Grants Coordinator/Conservation Technician / Phone: 507-702-7077**