



P.O. Box 1051
Gaylord, MN 55334

Summer 2017
Vol. 14 Issue 3

RIVER WATCHER NEWSLETTER

High Island Creek & Rush River
Watershed 319 TMDL Project

Project Success in the Making

In February of 2016 the High Island Creek and Rush River watersheds were awarded federal 319 grant funding to help improve nonpoint source pollution issues on the landscape. Funds were available to incentivize buffer strips and cover crops along with cost share options for open intake alternatives. During the first few months the project took some time to gain momentum, but as residents became more aware of the available funds and the positive things that can happen to their property due to these best management practices, the project took off and has been utilizing these funds ever since. Currently, after 1.75 years of active status to the project, we have encumbered all funds that were available, combined totaling more than \$100,000 dollars! That is a lot of money going directly toward conservation and water quality improvements on a local scale!



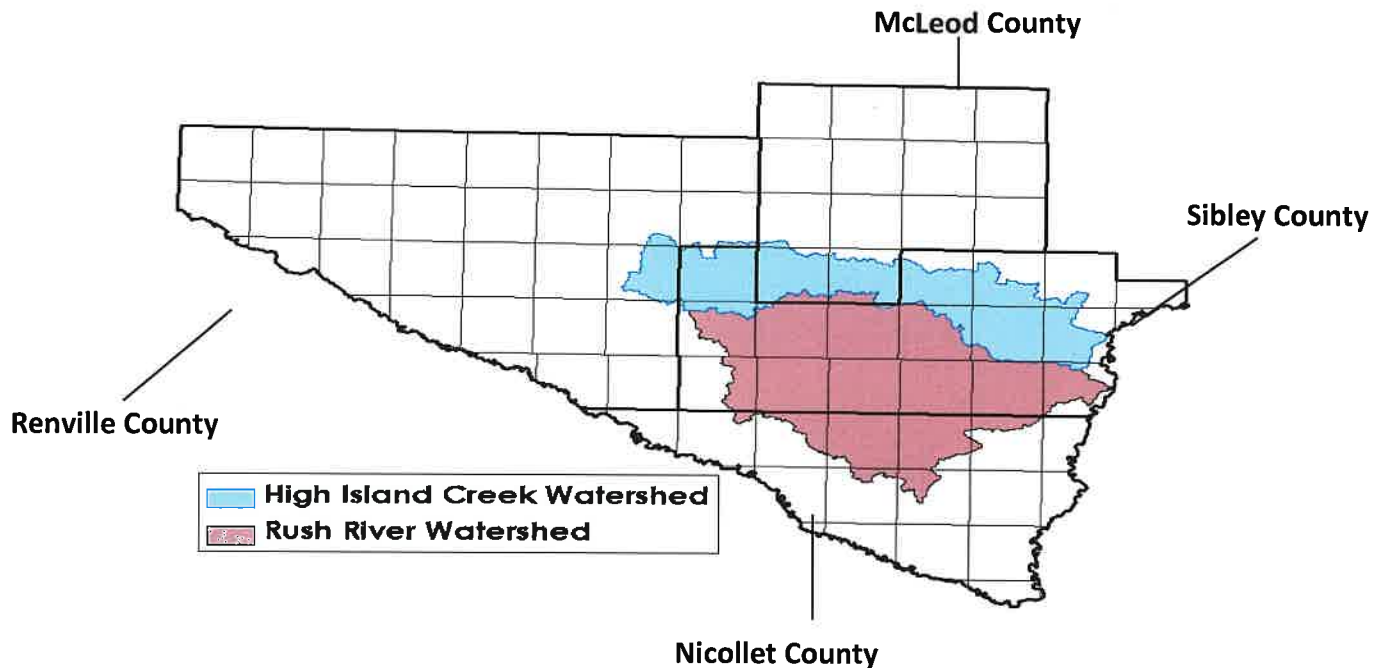
Cover crop implemented in the High Island Creek Watershed.



Rock intake installation in the Rush River Watershed.

Watershed staff would like to extend a big thank you to everyone who has participated in our TMDL Project for low dissolved oxygen within the High Island Creek and Rush River watersheds. This success would never be made possible without the continuous interest and willingness to implement practices from each and every landowner who participated. The water quality improvements that will occur due to the practices that were incentivized or cost shared with during this project will not go unrecognized!

Watershed Boundaries



Buffer Cost Share Program Now Available

Are you a Sibley County resident with land that is non-compliant with the buffer law? The Buffer Cost Share program that is administered through Sibley Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD), can now offer landowners assistance towards achieving compliance with the 2015 Buffer Law. This money passed by the legislature and signed by Governor Dayton at the end of the 2017 legislative session, provides important support to the Governor's Buffer Initiative. The Sibley SWCD received a \$40,000 grant that can only be offered to landowners through December of 2019. This money is available to implement buffer strips at a rate of \$300 per acre or alternative practices at 75% cost share adjacent to public waters and public ditches. If a buffer already exists, Buffer Cost Share funds cannot be used for a greater width beyond the requirement of the law or to install another type of practice in the area; these funds can only be used to reach compliance. Hurry in soon, public waters requiring 50ft buffers need to be addressed by November 1, 2017!

Stop by the SWCD Office or call Joel Wurscher at the number listed below with any questions!

Sibley SWCD Office number:

507-702-7077



Buffer along the mainstem of High Island Creek West

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
111 6th Street, P.O. Box 161
Gaylord, MN 55334
507-237-5435 ext. 105

Nicollet County: Mandy Landkamer
Environmental Services Office
501 South Minnesota Avenue
St. Peter, MN 56082
507-934-0250

McLeod County: Emily Gable
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 318
Olivia, MN 56277
320-523-3760

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

The Lower Minnesota River WRAPS group is currently organizing a field day to educate anyone who is interested in soil health, cover crops, and the effects current conservation concepts have on water quality improvements. Please keep an eye on your mailbox for a post card in the future which will direct you to the correct individuals to RSVP for this event, a limited amount of space will be available! Lunch will be provided for this event! Please keep an eye out for future open session coffee shop meetings as well, attendance at these events are crucial for local soil and water conservation staff to gain knowledge of the issues that are occurring on the landscape. A full calendar of events will be released during our winter newsletter. Please attend one or all of these events if you are able!

For more information please contact:

Coleton Draeger—Watershed Coordinator
507-237-5435 ext.113



High Island Creek & Rush River

Watershed Implementation Projects

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Renville Co. Water Protection & Management,
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University of Minnesota Extension Service,
High Island Creek Watershed District,
Natural Resource Conservation Service

Attention High Island Creek Watershed Residents:

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 programs.

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.

Sponsors:

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Both Projects are equal opportunity organizations and employers. Questions and comments can be directed to: Coleton Draeger

Watershed Coordinator / Phone: (507) 237-5435 ext.113