

WATERSHED
ASSISTANCE
THROUGH
EDUCATION &
RESOURCES

HERON LAKE WATERSHED DISTRICT

Map of the Heron Lake Watershed District

What's Happening?

**August 23, 2011 – HLWD Budget Hearing – 8:00 p.m.
at the HLWD office**

**August 23, 2011 – HLWD Board meeting –
immediately following the budget hearing at the HLWD office**

Note that the HLWD board meeting dates and times are tentative.
Please contact the HLWD office for the exact date and time.



Funding for this newsletter is provided by the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency through a Clean Water Partnership grant.
Please contact us with your questions or concerns! Telephone 507-793-2462; Email: hlwd@roundlk.net

We need your help!

The HLWD does the utmost to pursue every option to educate and inform watershed residents as to how they can help improve the water quality within the watershed and beyond. We also pursue all possible options to bring in additional funds to provide you with the resources needed to help us improve the Heron Lake watershed.

Projects and programs funded through the HLWD are voluntary. We need your help in order to make these efforts successful. In an effort to improve communication and gather information, we would like to hear from watershed landowners. Please contact the HLWD at 507-793-2462 or send an email to hlwd@roundlk.net and tell us your thoughts on the efforts undertaken, the funding mechanisms used, and the need for increased funding to assure that water quality improvement efforts continue.

HERON LAKE WATERSHED DISTRICT

Why watersheds?

The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) promotes a watershed approach on a national basis because managing water resource programs on a watershed basis makes good sense – environmentally, financially, and socially. EPA states that the best approach for addressing nonpoint sources of pollution is education, incentives, and voluntary action. The best method of inspiring people to act and solve pollution problems is through the watershed approach.

Environmentally

- Watersheds are defined by natural hydrology; they represent the most logical basis for managing water resources. The resource becomes the focal point and managers are able to gain a more complete understanding of overall conditions in an area and the stressors which affect those conditions.
- Watershed-based management integrates the needs and values of water quality, water quantity, flood plain management, ecosystems, and land use.
- To best address natural resource issues, watershed boundaries must be used rather than political boundaries.
- By using a watershed approach, greater attention is placed on the resource and the achievement of real ecological results rather than administrative requirements.
- A more thorough understanding of threats and conditions in watersheds provides a stronger basis for targeting priority concerns.



Financially

- Watershed approaches can have the benefit of saving time and money. Whether monitoring, modeling, issuing permits, or reporting, a watershed framework offers many opportunities to simplify and streamline the workload.
- Efficiency is also increased when all agencies with natural resource responsibilities being to work together to improve conditions within the watershed.
- Watershed management generates efficiencies in monitoring, permitting, and reporting, saving time and money.
- The comprehensive, long-term nature of watershed plans helps provide the regulated community with a better understanding of what the environmental policies are and how they are to be achieved.



Socially

- Watershed protection can lead to greater awareness and support from the public.
- Watershed approaches build a sense of community, help reduce conflicts, increase commitment to the actions necessary to meet environmental goals, and improve the likelihood of success for environmental programs.
- Partners gain a sense of common purpose in working out solutions.
- Stakeholder involvement helps ensure lasting solutions.



Why the Heron Lake Watershed District?

The Heron Lake Watershed District (HLWD) was established in 1970 by petition from the watershed residents working through Nobles, Jackson, Murray, and Cottonwood Counties. The HLWD has been successfully managing water at the local level, by employing an effective partnership with the County Boards, Soil and Watershed Conservation Districts (SWCDs), Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), and many others. We plan to continue to work with other local units of government into the future to effectively manage our water resources.

Heron Lake is included on the impaired waters list for phosphorus, a result of decisions that were made in the past and practices that are occurring now. It is the HLWD's responsibility to address these impairments in order to improve the health of the watershed for those that come after us. Water from the headlands is naturally going to flow downstream, so whatever washes away from your property is going to affect your neighbor, and his neighbor, and his neighbor.

How does the HLWD fund pollution reducing projects?

Tax dollars are collected from watershed residents through our general operating levy. In 2011, the HLWD assessed a levy of \$250,000, the maximum amount allowed by Minnesota Statute. On an annual basis, residents' assessments are approximately:

	\$100,000 house	Homesteaded acres	Non-Homesteaded acres
Nobles County	\$18.85	\$0.44 per acre	\$0.88 per acre
Jackson County	\$20.15	\$0.45 per acre	\$0.89 per acre
Murray County	\$19.90	\$0.39 per acre	\$0.78 per acre
Cottonwood County	\$20.60	\$0.46 per acre	\$0.92 per acre

How are your tax dollars being spent?

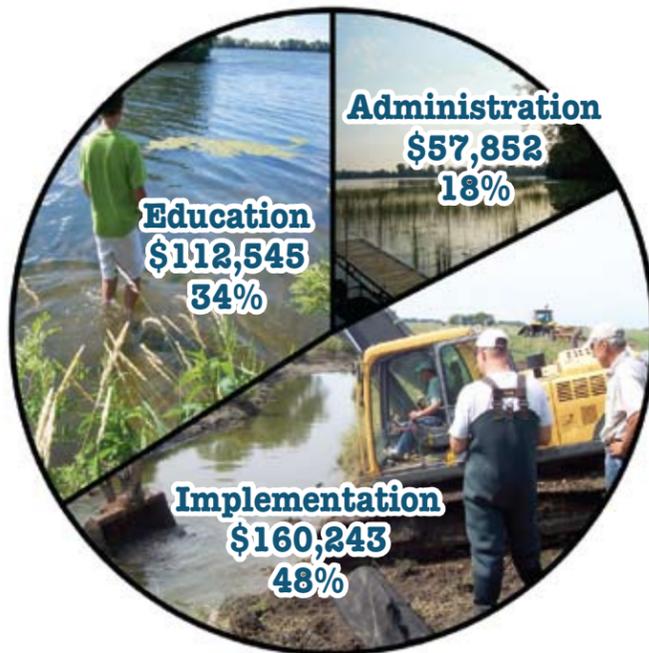
The figure in the left shows the breakdown of expenditures based upon the 2010 audit of our general operating levy. As you can see, 82% of the funds were used for implementation and education. Eighteen percent was used for administration. *Administration* funds consist of board members' wages, office expenses, legal fees, dues, and financial audits. *Education* includes any endeavor that builds awareness of the water quality problems within the watershed. *Implementation* includes the actual "on-the-ground" projects installed to address water quality problems.

Preliminary figures for 2012 indicate a slight increase in funding for implementation and education and a small decrease for administration as shown in the figure on the right.

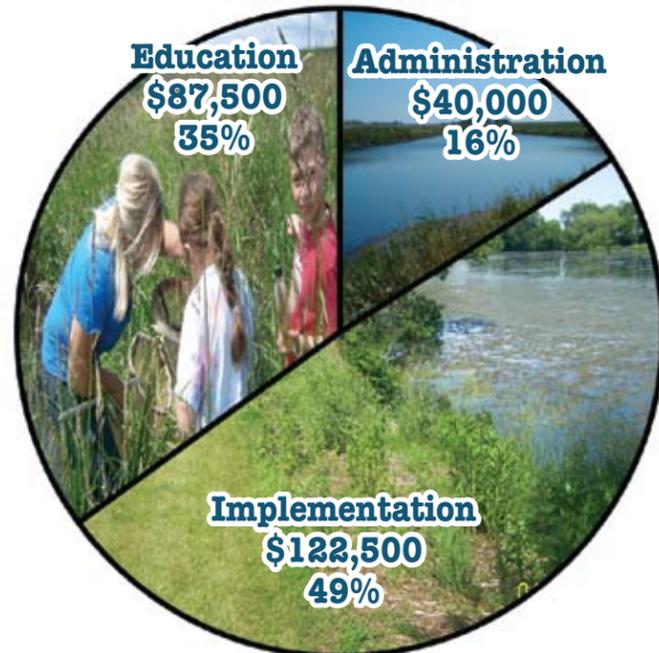
The HLWD has three full-time staff that are funded through the general operating levy. Twenty percent of the district administrator's time is spent on office administration. Otherwise, the remainder of the administrator's time and all of the watershed technician and resource technician's time is appropriated to education and implementation. The majority of staff wages are used to match grants for education and implementation efforts.

The HLWD also employs the West Fork Des Moines River Watershed Coordinator. This position is funded through a Water Quality Management Planning grant.

HLWD 2010 Budget Breakdown \$330,640 Total



HLWD 2012 Proposed Budget Breakdown \$250,000 Total



What other funds have been secured?

Everyone that lives and works in the HLWD contributes to the water quality problems that it faces. Our effort made in securing grant funds to address water resource problems is essential. But, we cannot just pass the obligation to fund pollution-reducing efforts to people who live in other areas of the state. Those problems are OURS. And as such, the residents should share some of the financial responsibility to correct the problems.

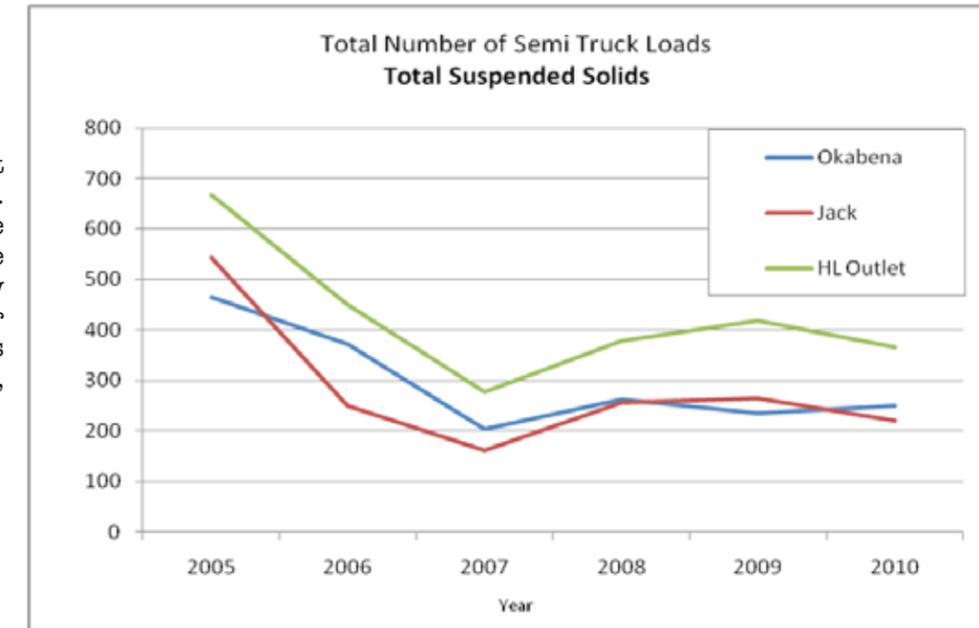
As you know, the HLWD levies taxes on an annual basis. Those funds are used to pay for staff and implement cost-share and incentive programs. The funds are also used to match grants. According to the Office of the Legislative Auditor, the HLWD is the second most successful watershed district in the State of Minnesota in securing grants. Since 1996, the HLWD has brought more than **\$2.2 million dollars** into the watershed for projects, programs, water quality monitoring, and staff. If the HLWD had not done this, these funds would have been used in other areas of Minnesota. We see that as an essential service that has provided great benefits.

Since 1996, landowners and operators within the watershed district have received cost-share and incentive payments of \$982,331.55 for projects that reduce water pollution.

BMPs Installed	
4,960.64 acres of filter strips	3,888.90 acres of no-till
120.59 acres of grassed waterways	2,217.30 acres of strip till
336.38 acres of wetland restoration	475.8 acres of forage residue management
71.2 acres of field windbreaks	nine rain gardens
21.42 acres of farmstead windbreaks	11 wildlife ponds
481 rock inlets	77 septic systems replacements
23,218.52 acres of minimum till	five conservation tillage equipment bans
one feedlot upgrade loan	49 terraces

Is progress being made?

The results are shown by the improvement of the water in our lakes and streams. Analysis of the 2010 data indicates the amount of pollution entering the three stream sites have decreased substantially indicating an improvement in water quality. The figure on the right illustrates the decrease in sediment, organic matter, and algae in terms of semi-truck



Minnesota's commitment to dedicated funding

In 2008, the residents of Minnesota approved an amendment to increase the general sales and use tax rate by three-eighths of one percentage point (0.375%). The HLWD is eligible to apply for funding through two of the new funds:

- the Outdoor Heritage Fund to be spent only to restore, protect, and enhance wetlands, prairies, forests, and habitat for game, fish, and wildlife, and
- the Clean Water Fund to be spent only to protect, enhance, and restore water quality in lakes, rivers, streams, and groundwater, with at least 5% of the fund spent to protect drinking water sources

In order to access these funds, eligible organizations secure willing landowners to install conservation practices on their land that will improve water quality. Matching funds are also a requirement of the grant application. The match can come from both the HLWD and the landowner.

The HLWD is currently considering the implementation of a water management district. Within that water management district, a charge would be placed on the parcels in proportion to the amount of water contributed. If the HLWD would charge even a nominal amount of \$0.50 per parcel per month on average, the revenue could range up to \$50,000 on an annual basis for installing on-the-ground projects. These funds would also be used to match state and federal grants, giving the potential to double the amount of money for on-the-ground projects. *The amount of \$0.50 per month is less than the cost of one can of pop, candy bar, or bottle of water per household per month!*