

April 2018



REVIEW POINT 3

## **DRAFT SOUTH BRANCH WILD RICE RIVER WATERSHED PLAN AND ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT**

*Prepared for  
U.S Department of Agriculture – Natural Resource Conservation Service  
and Wild Rice Watershed District (Minnesota)*



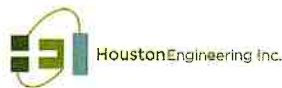
DRAFT  
SOUTH BRANCH WILD RICE RIVER  
WATERSHED PLAN  
AND  
ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

***REVIEW POINT NO. 3  
AFFECTED ENVIRONMENT***

April 24, 2018

Prepared on behalf of:  
U.S Department of Agriculture – Natural Resource Conservation Service  
and Wild Rice Watershed District

Technical Assistance by:  
Houston Engineering, Inc. (HEI #1432-365)



**Draft**  
**Watershed Plan & Environmental Assessment**  
**For**  
**South Branch of the Wild Rice River Watershed**  
**of the**  
**Wild Rice Watershed District**  
**Becker, Clay, Mahnommen, and Norman Counties, Minnesota**

Prepared By:  
U.S. Department of Agriculture, Natural Resources Conservation Service  
In Cooperation With:  
Wild Rice Watershed District, Minnesota

**AUTHORITY**

The original watershed work plan was prepared, and works of improvement have been installed, under the authority of the Watershed Protection and Flood Prevention Act of 1954 (Public Law 83-566) as amended.

**ABSTRACT**

<<<SECTION TO BE COMPLETED FOR NRCS REVIEW POINT 5>>>

**COMMENTS AND INQUIRIES**

Comments and inquiries must be received by \*\*\*\*\* 20\*\*. Submit comments and inquiries to:

<<<SECTION TO BE COMPLETED FOR NRCS REVIEW POINT 5>>>

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This document represents Review Point No. 3 for the South Branch Wild Rice River, NRCS RCPP Watershed Plan – Environmental Assessment (EA) and is primarily focused on Sections 1-4. Section 5-12 content will be added later as future Review Point information is developed.

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**Appendix E1:** MPCA What's In My Neighborhood: Sites within Project Area



## 1 PROJECT SUMMARY

Summary Watershed Plan – Environmental Assessment Document for:	
<b>Name of Watershed:</b>	South Branch Sub-Watershed, Wild Rice River Watershed (see <b>Appendix B</b> for project location maps)
<b>County and State:</b>	Becker, Clay, Mahnomon, and Norman Counties, Minnesota
<b>Congressional District:</b>	7
<b>Authorization:</b>	The Wild Rice Watershed District (WRWD) made application for assistance from the Red River Retention Authority (RRRA) for Watershed Planning under the Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP), administered by the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS). The RRRA authorized the WRWD to proceed in a Cooperative Agreement (No. 68-6322-16-508) with the NRCS to perform Watershed Planning in the Wild Rice River Watershed for South Branch Wild Rice River Watershed Plan. Watershed Planning funded through NRCS RCPP is required to follow Public Law 83-566 requirements. The Watershed Project Plan was prepared per polices and guidelines contained in the NRCS National Watershed Program Manual (NWPM 2014) and National Watershed Program Handbook (NWPH 2014).
<b>Sponsors:</b>	Wild Rice Watershed District
<b>Proposed Action:</b>	<<<TO BE COMPLETED FOR NRCS REVIEW POINT 5>>>
<b>Purpose and Need for Action:</b>	<p>The purpose of the action is to provide flood damage reduction from a 10-yr 24-hr storm for agricultural land and to reduce flood damage to public transportation infrastructure in the South Branch Wild Rice RCPP subwatershed. In addition, the actions should assist to reduce erosion through the beach-ridge area and resultant sedimentation on the lower end.</p> <p>A secondary purpose of this action is to help contribute to the overall basin-wide goal of reducing peak flows on the Red River of the North by 20%. If practical, opportunities for Natural Resource and Water Quality Enhancements should be incorporated in the alternatives that are considered.</p> <p>There is a need for 10-yr 24-hr flood damage reduction for agricultural land and reduction in public transportation infrastructure flood damages in the South Branch Wild Rice RCPP subwatershed. Additional information supporting this need is included in the following list:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Agricultural crop and public infrastructure/transportation damages were extensive during the 2000 and 2002 summer flooding.</li> <li>▪ Channel erosion and degradation is a recognized problem by the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources along many areas of the South Branch Wild Rice River, especially through the beach-ridge area.</li> <li>▪ Sedimentation in the lower reach, below the beach ridge, has been an ongoing problem and maintenance issue for the WRWD.</li> </ul>



	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Flooding in the watershed results in damages to crop land due to channel erosion, delayed planting, prevented planting, and prolonged inundation. Total inundated acres and agricultural acres in the area near the channel are estimated for various synthetic rainfall events based on the hydraulic modeling completed for the project and shown in <b>Table 1</b> below. Note that these measurements were limited to areas of detailed analysis showing in the maps in <b>Appendix C</b> (previously Appendix B in RP2) and do not include all damages.</li> </ul>
<b>Description of Preferred Alternative</b> (no more than 5 lines):	<<<TO BE COMPLETED FOR NRCS REVIEW POINT 5>>>
<b>Resource Information:</b>	<p><b>Latitude and Longitude:</b> NA – this project is at a watershed scale</p> <p><b>Eight-Digit Hydrologic Unit No.:</b> Wild Rice River - 09020108</p> <p><b>Climatology and Topography:</b> The climate within the South Branch Sub-Watershed is continental and characterized by large variances in temperature, both on a seasonal and daily basis. The normal mean monthly temperatures vary from 6°F to 70°F, with a normal mean temperature of 40°F. The movement of cold polar air masses into the area during the winter months result in very cold, dry weather. During the spring and summer, warm moist air from the Gulf of Mexico tends to dominate weather patterns. The growing season between the last frost in the spring and the first frost in the fall averages about 120 days. Approximately 71% of the annual precipitation occurs during the five (5) month growing season of May through September. Snowfall presents about 15% of the total annual precipitation and averages about 32 inches per year. Topography within the project area is level to gently rolling. The maximum elevation in the project area is estimated to be 1,620 (NAVD1988) on the eastern edge of the South Branch Sub-Watershed, and a minimum field elevation of approximately 885 (NAVD1988) near its outlet to the Wild Rice River. LiDAR topography data and derived slope information (used for hydrologic model processing) is presented in <b>Figure C12</b> and <b>Figure C13</b>, respectively.</p> <p><b>Watershed Size (acres):</b> 262 square miles of land or 167,680 acres</p> <p><b>Land Uses (acres):</b> According to the Multi-Resolution Land Characteristics Consortium, 2011 National Land Cover Database (NLCD 2011):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Cultivated Crops - 78% or 130,799 acres</li> <li>▪ Emergency Herbaceous Wetlands – 7% or 11,304 acres</li> <li>▪ Pasture/Hay – 4% or 7,358 acres</li> <li>▪ Developed, Open Space – 4% or 6,289 acres</li> <li>▪ Deciduous Forest – 3% or 4,571 acres</li> <li>▪ Open Water – 1% or 2,397 acres</li> <li>▪ Grassland/Herbaceous – 1% or 1,791 acres</li> </ul>



	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ Woody Wetlands – 1% or 1,784 acres</li></ul> <p>The remaining land use cover types each account for less than 1% of the project area; the full list is presented in Section 4.9 – <i>Land Use</i>.</p> <p><b>Land Ownership:</b> Private (76%) Federal (2%) State-Local (3%) Tribal (18%)</p> <p><b>Population and demographics:</b> The most recent U.S. Census Bureau data was obtained to develop an understanding of demographics within the study area. Demographic statistics for the project area were generated by using Census block data. The South Branch Sub-Watershed area was overlaid on the Census blocks, and all Census blocks, wholly and partially incorporated into the project area were included in this assessment. Therefore, these statistics represent an estimate (<b>Table 9</b>).</p> <p>According to the U.S. Census Bureau data, the estimated population within the project area is 2,833 individuals. The per-capita income for the project area is \$25,230, which is average in comparison to the four encompassed counties (Becker, Clay, Mahanomen, and Norman) but is below the State per-capita income (\$33,225). Approximately 14% of the individuals in the project area are considered in poverty, which is also average in comparison to the four encompassed counties, but higher than the State poverty estimate (9.9%). The population includes approximately 73% white individuals as the predominate race. 19% of the population within the project area account for the predominant minority, classified as American Indian and Alaska Native, which coincides with the project residing within a portion of the White Earth Reservation.</p> <p><b>Relevant resource concerns identified through Scoping:</b> National Economic Development (NED) P&amp;G Air Quality Coral Reefs Cultural Resources Ecologically Critical Areas Endangered and Threatened Species (Federal and State Listed Species) Environmental Justice and Civil Rights Essential fish habitat Fish and Wildlife Floodplain Management Forest Resources Invasive Species Land Use Migratory Birds Natural Areas</p>
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	Parklands Prime and Unique Farmlands, and Farmland of Statewide Significance Public Health and Safety Regional Water Resource Plans Riparian Areas Scenic Beauty Scientific Resources Sole Source Aquifers and Groundwater Resources Social Issues Soil Resources Tribal Lands (added as part of RP3) Water Quality Water Resources Waters of the United States Wetlands
<b>Alternative plans considered:</b>	To be included in future review point
<b>Brief description of components of each alternative:</b>	To be included in future review point
<b>Mitigation measures for alternatives:</b>	To be included in future review point
<b>Project costs:</b> To be included in future review point	PL 83-566 funds: \$XX XX%
	Other funds \$XX XX%
	Total \$XX XX%
<b>Project costs continued:</b> To be included in future review point	Construction:
	Engineering:
	Technical assistance:
	Relocation:
	Real property rights:
	Project administration:
	Annual O&M (non-Federal):
	Other:
TOTAL COSTS:	



<b>Project benefits:</b> To be included in future review point	Monetary benefits (390-NWPM, Part 506, Subp. B, Sec. 506.19 (Table 5); 390-NWPM, Part 506, Subp. B, Sect. 506.20 (Table 5a); and 390-NWPM, Part 506, Subp. B, Sect. 506.21 (Table 6)):
	Number of direct beneficiaries (Onsite – Offsite):
	Other beneficial effects in physical terms:
	Benefit to Cost Ratio (authorized rate):
	Benefit to Cost Ratio (current rate):
	Net benefit effects (NED):
	Funding schedule (budget year + 5):  Federal funds: Non-federal funds:
	Period of analysis:
<b>Project life:</b>	To be included in future review point
<b>Environmental effects, impacts (include context and intensity):</b>	To be included in future review point
<b>Major conclusions (if not already covered elsewhere in the Summary)</b>	To be included in future review point
<b>Areas of controversy/ Controversial issues:</b>	To be included in future review point
<b>Issues to be resolved:</b>	To be included in future review point
<b>Evidence of Unusual Congressional or Local Interest</b>	To be included in future review point
<b>Compliance:</b>	<p> <b>Is this report in compliance with executive orders, public laws, and other statutes governing the formulation of water resource projects? Yes</b> </p> <p>           This project’s Environmental Assessment (Federal, NRCS document) will be written to address the Federal environmental review as well as the Minnesota Environmental Assessment Worksheet (EAW), in accordance with Chapter 6 – <i>Substitute Methods of Environmental Review</i>, in the Guide to Minnesota Environmental Review Rules (May 2010) produced by the Environmental Quality Board.         </p>



	<p>The Purpose and Need for Action along with Scope of the Environmental Assessment presented in the following sections are intended to meet both the Federal and State Requirements. Invitations were sent to state, federal and tribal agencies that have a potential interest in the project. The potential Cooperating Agencies invited included the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• US Army Corps of Engineers</li><li>• US Fish and Wildlife Service</li><li>• Minnesota State Historical Preservation Offices</li><li>• Tribal Historical Preservation Offices (MN, ND, SD, MT, WY)</li></ul> <p>Copies of the letters of invitation are included in <b>Appendix A</b>. The US Army Corps of Engineers has agreed to be a Cooperating Agency in development of the Environmental Assessment for this project. Their letter of concurrence is also included in <b>Appendix A</b>.</p>
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## 2 PURPOSE AND NEED FOR ACTION (REVIEW POINT NO. 2A)

### 2.1 PURPOSE

The purpose of the action is to provide flood damage reduction from a 10-yr 24-hr storm for agricultural land and to reduce flood damage to public transportation infrastructure in the South Branch Wild Rice RCPP subwatershed. In addition, the actions should assist to reduce erosion through the beach-ridge area and resultant sedimentation on the lower end.

A secondary purpose of this action is to help contribute to the overall basin-wide goal of reducing peak flows on the Red River of the North by 20%. If practical, opportunities for Natural Resource and Water Quality Enhancements should be incorporated in the alternatives that are considered.

### 2.2 NEED

There is a need for 10-yr 24-hr flood damage reduction for agricultural land and reduction in public transportation infrastructure flood damages in the South Branch Wild Rice RCPP subwatershed.

Additional information supporting this need is included in the following list:

- Agricultural crop and public infrastructure/transportation damages were extensive during the 2000 and 2002 summer flooding.
- Channel erosion and degradation is a recognized problem by the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources along many areas of the South Branch Wild Rice River, especially through the beach-ridge area.
- Sedimentation in the lower reach, below the beach ridge, has been an ongoing problem and maintenance issue for the WRWD.
- Flooding in the watershed results in damages to crop land due to channel erosion, delayed planting, prevented planting, and prolonged inundation. Total inundated acres and agricultural acres in the area near the channel are estimated for various synthetic rainfall events based on the hydraulic modeling completed for the project, and shown in **Table 1** below. Note that these measurements were limited to areas of detailed analysis showing in the maps in **Appendix C** (previously Appendix B in RP2) and do not include all damages.

Table 1: Inundated Lands Summary\*

Return Period	24-Hour Rainfall (in.)	Total Inundated Acres	**Cropland Inundated Acres	Average Annual Inundated Cropland Acres
2 – year, 24-hr	2.5	5,265	3,685	1,843
5 – year, 24-hr	3.1	8,543	6,438	1,288
10 – year, 24-hr	3.8	12,031	9,452	945
25 – year, 24-hr	4.8	17,440	14,223	569
50 – year, 24-hr	5.7	20,959	17,290	346
100 – year, 24-hr	6.6	24,104	20,006	200
<i>Annual Average Inundated Cropland</i>				5,190

\*This table has been updated for Review Point 3 to reflect the most recent hydrologic and hydraulic modeling and damage assessment analyses for the project.

\*\*Estimated from National Agricultural Statistics Service (2017) GIS data layer

Additional Supplemental Documentation to Support the Existence of the Problems are provided in **Appendix C** (previously Appendix B in RP2). Please note the following figures have been updated since the November 2017, Review Point #2 submittal.

- **Figure C1** – FEMA Floodplain and Federal Disasters Map (previously titled Map 1 and 2)
- **Figure C2.1** – Inundation Map 2-Year 24-Hour Rainfall Event (previously titled Map 3)
- **Figure C2.2** – Inundation Map 5-Year 24-Hour Rainfall Event (previously titled Map 4)
- **Figure C2.3** – Inundation Map 10-Year 24-Hour Rainfall Event (previously titled Map 5)
- **Figure C2.4** – Inundation Map 25-Year 24-Hour Rainfall Event (previously titled Map 6)
- **Figure C2.5** – Inundation Map 50-Year 24-Hour Rainfall Event (previously titled Map 7)
- **Figure C2.6** – Inundation Map 100-Year 24-Hour Rainfall Event (previously titled Map 8)

## 2.3 SUPPLEMENTAL NEED INFORMATION SINCE REVIEW POINT NO. 2 SUBMITTAL (REVIEW POINT NO. 3)

Additional hydrologic and hydraulic modeling and damage assessment work has been completed since the submission of Review Point No. 2 (RP2) in November of 2017. Upon receipt of comment from NRCS on RP2, it is anticipated that this information will be merged in the future Purpose and Need section of this document for future submittals. Previously submitted RP2 information and RP3 information are being separately distinguished in this document to avoid confusion in the interim review process. Because duration is a key factor for flood damages to cropland, the hydraulic model was used to determine the estimated duration of flooding on inundated areas. The table below summarizes the percent of acres inundated for various inundation times for the 10-year rainfall event.

*Table 2: 10-Year, 24-Hr Rainfall Inundation/Duration Summary*

Duration	% Inundated Acres
0 – 24 hours	41
24 – 48 hours	23
48 – 72 hours	14
72 – 96 hours	5
96 – 120 hours	2
> 120 hours	15

Damages also occur to public and private infrastructure. Public health and safety, and commerce is currently susceptible to being compromised during significant snow melt and spring rain events due to the disruptions and damages transportation infrastructure experience. Minnesota State Law provides requirements for minimum recurrence design events for stream crossings based on road authority. Road overtopping often results in damages to the road surface, and in certain instances can result in failure of the culvert. Culvert failures produce a "washout", or a large scour hole in the roadway that presents a public safety issue. Numerous structures are also impacted from flooding within the project area. Floodplains developed from the hydrologic and hydraulic model of the project area were used to estimate a count of structure impacts. There, impacts consisted of both occupied and unoccupied



structures. A summary of both road and structure impacts is presented in the following tables.

*Table 3: Road and Structural Impacts Summary*

Rainfall Event	Incidence of Road Overtopping (Count)	Structure Impacts (Count)
2-year, 24-hr	0	2
5-year, 24-hr	0	4
10-year, 24-hr	2	16
25-year, 24-hr	13	32
50-year, 24-hr	27	45
100-year, 24-hr	36	58

Local roadways within the project area that are susceptible to and experience overtopping and transportation disruptions during 10-year, 25-year, 50-year, and 100-year rainfall events are tabulated in **Table 3**. Hydraulic modeling data for the project was used and shown in **Figure C3**. The downstream/western portion of the project area experience the most severe flood impacts in comparison to the headwaters in this reach. The South Branch is more channelized upstream or east of the beach ridge area, and the channel becomes perched downstream (west) of the beach ridge area. Township roads (150<sup>th</sup> St and 170<sup>th</sup> St, Clay County) within the project area experience floodwaters overtopping the road during 10-year flood flows and greater.

## 2.4 REGIONAL CONCERNS (REVIEW POINT NO. 3)

Flooding in the South Branch Wild Rice River has been a persistent problem in Becker, Clay, Mahnommen, and Norman counties and throughout the Wild Rice River Watershed. The Wild Rice River (including the South Branch Sub-Watershed) is a tributary to the Red River Basin. The Red River Basin is an international, multi-jurisdictional watershed of approximately 45,000 square miles, with 80% of the Basin contained within the United States, and the remaining 20% of the Basin located in Canada. The region is frequently impacted by flooding along the Red River and its tributaries. Impacts experienced along the Red River mainstem are a result of combined tributary subwatershed contributions, which includes the South Branch of Wild Rice River.

## 2.5 OPPORTUNITIES (REVIEW POINT NO. 3)

Opportunities made available through the implementation of this plan include the following improvements to the quality of life and enhancement of environmental values within and extending outside of the project area:

- Consistency with the Red River Basin Commission's Long-Term Flood Solutions Report to help achieve basin-wide commitment to comprehensive integrated water stewardship and management.
- Protect human health and safety and improve the welfare of communities.
- Protect and maintain public and private investments in infrastructure and the transportation system.
- Maintain or increase flood resiliency.
- Protect, maintain, or improve water quality.

- Protect, maintain, or improve fish and wildlife habitats.
- Improve bank stability.
- Promote responsible land stewardship throughout the watershed.

### 3 SCOPE OF THE ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

#### 3.1 REVIEW POINT NO. 2B INFORMATION

Systematic scoping was used to identify resource concerns within the watershed, and to rate their potential significance. An abbreviated list of concerns was initially presented to the public during the June 12, 2017 public meeting in Felton, MN. Additional details of the meeting are included in **Appendix A** (previously Appendix C in RP2). This meeting discussed several known concerns within the watershed, and allowed the general public to rate the level of concern for various considerations. The following concerns were initially presented to the public for consideration:

Identified Resource Concerns:

- Flooding/Flood Damages (i.e. agricultural effects from delayed planting, prevented planting, crop flood inundation, road damages, culvert/bridge damages, breakout flows, field erosion/deposition, floodplain management, etc.)
- Water Quality/Erosion and Sedimentation (water quality, water resources, soil resources, field erosion/deposition, channel erosion/deposition, etc.)
- Wildlife and Habitat (Fish and wildlife, wetlands, endangered and threatened species, invasive species, migratory birds, forest resources, etc.)
- Other

Following the meeting and subsequent public comment period, the South Branch Wild Rice Flood Damage Reduction Project Team reviewed the public input and also considered the following resource concerns as set forth in Section 501.24 of Title 390 – National Watershed Program Manual. Each of the concerns was ranked based on their relevance within the study area. The results of this scoping process are listed in the following table:

Table 4: Summary Scoping Table (Review Point No. 2)

Item/Concern	Relevance to the Proposed Action	Rationale
<b>REQUIRED RESOURCE CONCERN CONSIDERED</b>		
(1) National Economic Development (NED) P&G	MEDIUM	Potential to utilize other local, state, and regional funding
(2) Air quality	LOW	Impacts only likely to be temporary in nature
(3) Coral reefs	N/A	N/A

(4) Cultural resources	LOW	Class 1 Archaeological and Cultural investigations will be completed to determine the presence of historic and culturally significant sites.
(5) Ecologically critical areas	LOW	There are no known ecologically critical areas designated within the project area
(6) Endangered and threatened species	LOW	The project alternatives are not expected to have impact on T&E species
(7) Environmental justice and civil rights	LOW	Not likely to impact Minority and Low-Income Populations
(8) Essential fish habitat	LOW	No designated essential fish habitat is located within the project area.
(9) Fish and wildlife (including coordination requirements)	MEDIUM	State WMA land and USFWS property within the project area.
(10) Floodplain management	LOW	Only limited designated floodplains exist in the study area.
(11) Forest resources	LOW	No significant forest resources in study area.
(12) Invasive species	LOW	No impact to the presence of invasive species within the study area is anticipated.
(13) Land use	LOW	Limited landuse change anticipated to result from alternatives to be considered. Most of the study area is cultivated agricultural land.
(14) Migratory birds	MEDIUM	State WMA and USFWS land within the project area
(15) Natural areas	MEDIUM	State WMA and USFWS land within the project area
(16) Parklands	MEDIUM	State WMA and USFWS land within the project area
(17) Prime and unique farmland, and farmland of statewide significance	MEDIUM	Project alternatives have the potential to impact prime and unique farmland
(18) Public health and safety	MEDIUM	Limited population within study area. However, roadway washouts and road damages resulting from flooding occur.
(19) Regional water resource plans (including coastal zone plans)	LOW	Well head protection plans for adjacent communities should be considered.
(20) Riparian areas	LOW	Limited riparian areas exist along much of the channel with exception of through the beach-ridge area.
(21) Scenic beauty	MEDIUM	Limited natural landscape exists within the study area.
(22) Scientific resources	LOW	No known SNAs within portions of study area.
(23) Sole source aquifers	LOW	Limited impact on groundwater expected
(24) Social issues	LOW	Limited population in study area
(25) Soil resources	LOW	Limited impacts to soil resources expected from project alternatives

(26) Water quality	MEDIUM	Some impact on water quality is expected through reduction in erosion
(27) Water resources	HIGH	Will vary depending the alternatives considered.
(28) Waters of the United States, including special aquatic sites	HIGH	Significant areas of wetlands identified within the study area.
(29) Wetlands	HIGH	Significant areas of wetlands identified within the study area.
(30) Wild and scenic rivers	N/A	N/A
<b>Other concerns identified by SLO, agencies, and the public</b>		
None		

Individual public feedback incorporated any concerns presented by those individuals that attended the public meeting. Concerns raised include:

- Overland flooding below (downstream or west of) the beach-ridge area.
- Road flooding/ road washouts
- Channel erosion/ stream bank erosion through the beach-ridge area.
- Channel sedimentation/blockages/and drainage issues along Clay County Ditch No. 18
- Loss of fish within the channel.
- Sedimentation on the lower end.

### 3.2 UPDATED SCOPING BASED ON ADDITIONAL ANALYSIS (REVIEW POINT NO. 3)

The scoping table has been updated and further refined since Review Point 2:

Table 5: Summary Scoping Table (Review Point 3)

Item/Concern	Relevance to the Proposed Action	Rationale
<b>REQUIRED RESOURCE CONCERN CONSIDERED</b>		
National Economic Development (NED)	MEDIUM	Potential to utilize other local, state, and regional funding
Air quality	LOW	Impacts likely to be temporary in nature
Cultural resources	MEDIUM	Will depend on alternative feature locations and presence of cultural and archaeological resources. Class 1 Archaeological and Cultural investigations will be completed to determine the presence of historic and culturally significant sites.

Ecologically critical areas	MEDIUM	There are MN DNR, NHIS listed animal assemblages, ecological sites, and terrestrial communities that reside within the project area. Project impact to these resources will depend on the locations of project alternative activities in relation to these resources.
Endangered and threatened species	MEDIUM	T&E species are located within the project area; potential impacts to designated species will depend upon locations of alternative project components.
Environmental justice and civil rights	LOW	Not likely to impact minority and low-income populations
Essential fish habitat	NOT PRESENT	Fish habitat exists within and at the border of the streams and rivers located within the study area. There are no designated essential fish habitat identified within the project area.
Fish and wildlife (including coordination requirements)	MEDIUM	State WMA land and USFWS property within the project area.
Floodplain management	LOW	Only limited designated floodplains exist in the study area.
Forest resources	LOW	No significant forest resources in study area.
Invasive species	LOW	No impact to the presence of invasive species within the study area is anticipated.
Land use	LOW	Limited land use change anticipated to result from alternatives to be considered. Most of the study area is cultivated agricultural land.
Migratory birds	MEDIUM	State WMA and USFWS land within the project area
Natural areas	MEDIUM	State WMA and USFWS land within the project area
Parklands	NOT PRESENT	There are no designated state or federal parklands within the project area.
Prime and unique farmland, and farmland of statewide significance	MEDIUM	Project alternatives have the potential to impact prime and unique farmland
Public health and safety	MEDIUM	Limited population within study area. However, roadway washouts and road damages resulting from flooding occur.
Regional water resource plans	HIGH	This project is consistent with local watershed planning and is part of a larger planning effort to increase flood resilience within the Red River Valley. The project is consistent with the local county water management plans.
Riparian areas	LOW	Limited riparian areas exist along much of the channel with exception of through the beach-ridge area.
Scenic beauty	MEDIUM	Limited natural landscape exists within the study area.
Scientific resources	LOW	No known SNAs within portions of study area.



Sole source aquifers	LOW	Limited impact on groundwater is expected.
Social issues	LOW	Limited impacts to the population in study area.
Soil resources	LOW	Limited impacts to soil resources expected from project alternatives.
Water quality	MEDIUM	Some impact on water quality is expected through reduction in erosion.
Water resources	HIGH	Will vary depending on the alternatives considered.
Waters of the United States, including special aquatic sites	HIGH	Significant areas of wetlands identified within the study area.
Wetlands	HIGH	Significant areas of wetlands identified within the study area.
Wild and scenic rivers	NOT PRESENT	There are no designated wild and scenic rivers within the project area.

## 4 AFFECTED ENVIRONMENT (REVIEW POINT NO. 3)

This section describes pertinent physical, ecological, economic, and social information for the watershed and other areas of project impact. This will provide the context for determining the effects of alternatives in later sections. Each of the relevant concerns identified during the scoping process described in the previous section is described in more detail in the following sections.

### 4.1 AIR QUALITY

The National Ambient Air Quality Standards (AAQS) (40 CFR 50), set by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), as directed under the Clean Air Act, define standards for six criteria air pollutants (Carbon Monoxide (CO), Lead (Pb), Nitrogen Dioxide (NO<sub>2</sub>), Ozone (O<sub>3</sub>) Particle Pollution (PM): PM<sub>2.5</sub> and PM<sub>10</sub>, and Sulfur Dioxide (SO<sub>2</sub>)) that are considered harmful to public health and the environment. The Minnesota Pollution Control Agency (MPCA) has the responsibility to ensure the ambient air quality in Minnesota is maintained in accordance with the levels established by the state and federal AAQS and the Prevention of Significant Deterioration of Air Quality Rules.

The EPA developed National Ambient Air Quality Standards (NAAQS) for the criteria pollutants to protect public health and welfare. When a designated air quality area or “airshed” with concentrations of criteria pollutants that are below the levels established by the NAAQS are considered either attainment or unclassifiable areas. To determine whether an area meets the NAAQS, air monitoring networks have been established and are used to measure ambient air quality and determine attainment areas. MPCA operates and maintains a network of ambient air quality monitoring sites throughout the state; there are no monitoring sites within the vicinity of the study area (Minnesota Pollution Control Agency, accessed Feb 8, 2018). The study area is designated to be in attainment or unclassifiable (to be considered in attainment) for all NAAQS (U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, accessed Feb 8, 2018).

## 4.2 CULTURAL RESOURCES

A Class 1 Archaeological and Cultural investigation is underway to determine the presence of historic and culturally significant sites. These reports will be summarized here upon their completion and provided as background documents.

## 4.3 ECOLOGICALLY CRITICAL AREAS

There are some designated areas within the project area that exhibit rare and/or unique natural features and can be considered ecological resources. The MN DNR, Natural Heritage and Nongame Research Program works closely with the Minnesota Biological Survey to curate the state's rare natural resources. The MN DNR, Natural Heritage Information System (NHIS) database (LA-805), Calcareous Fens – Source Features Points and MBS Sites of Biodiversity Significance datasets from the Minnesota Geospatial Commons were used to identify the presence of potentially ecologically sensitive areas within the project area. This section also relates to the natural areas discussed in **Section 4.12**. Specific locations of project activities in relation to these resources will be assessed later in this watershed plan/EA to determine project impact to these resources.

According to the MN DNR, NHIS (LA-805), there are several animal assemblages, ecological sites, and terrestrial communities identified within the South Branch Sub-Watershed area. These sites are shown in **Figure C4**.

*Table 6: Animal Assemblages, Ecological Sites, and Terrestrial Communities within the Project Area (MN DNR NHIS LA-805)*

Category	Site Name	# of occurrences in project area	Location of Occurrence (date of last observation)
Animal Assemblage	Colonial Waterbird Nesting Site	1	Clay County (July 1990)
Ecological	Lake and Wetland Composite (Quaternary)	1	Norman County (1979)
Terrestrial Community	Calcareous Fen (Northwestern) Type	7	Becker and Mahnomen (2000)
Terrestrial Community	Dry Hill Prairie (Northern) Type	2	Becker County (1999)
Terrestrial Community	Mesic Oak Savanna (Northern) Type	2	Norman (1987)
Terrestrial Community	Mesic Prairie (Northern) Type	19	Clay, Becker, Mahnomen, and Norman counties (Becker, 2000)
Terrestrial Community	Wet Brush-Prairie (Northern) Type	3	Clay (1994)

Category	Site Name	# of occurrences in project area	Location of Occurrence (date of last observation)
Terrestrial Community	Wet Prairie (Northern) Type	21	Becker, Clay, and Norman counties (Becker, 2000)
Terrestrial Community	Wet Seepage Prairie (Northern) Type	1	Clay and Norman counties (1985)
Terrestrial Community	Willow - Dogwood Shrub Swamp Type	2	Clay (1994) and Becker (2000) counties

Source: MN DNR, Natural Heritage Information System (NHIS) data (LA-805), accessed Feb 19, 2018. Due to the sensitive nature of this data and per the data license agreement, location and mapping is not provided for these sites.

The Calcareous Fens database contains points that represent calcareous fens as defined in Minn. R., Part 8420.0935, supb. 2. The current list of fens (MN DNR List of Known Calcareous Fens) is posted on the MN DNR's Website ([http://files.dnr.state.mn.us/eco/wetlands/calcareous\\_fen\\_list.pdf](http://files.dnr.state.mn.us/eco/wetlands/calcareous_fen_list.pdf)). According to this most recent dataset from May 2017, there are seven (7) fen sites (listed below) located within the White Earth Reservation and within the project area (**Figure C4**).

- Spring Creek WMA South (3 fen sites)
- Waubun WMA South (2 fen sites)
- Pederson WPA
- White Earth 6

The Waubun WMA South fen site is identified right outside the project boundary, though due to the hydrogeologic connectivity and nature of fen sites, it is included within the project study area. Each of the seven (7) identified fen sites are ranked with a OPp93a Native Plant Community Classification Code, which is based on MN DNR's Field Guide to the Native Plant Communities of Minnesota. These fens are categorized as Prairie Extremely Rich Fen where open graminoid-dominated fens on permanently saturated peat sustained by mineral-rich groundwater discharge, with little influence from surface water inputs. Typically present on sloping sites; peat is sometimes mounded or domed. Small pools and sparsely vegetated marly peat areas are commonly present. Also, each of the fen sites are ranked to best characterize the relative rarity or endangerment of the community in Minnesota. These sites are ranked "S2" representing imperiled in Minnesota because of rarity or because of some factor(s) making it very vulnerable to extirpation from the state. (Minnesota Department of Natural Resources, 2017)

MCBS Sites of Biodiversity Significance are also located primarily within the central and eastern portions of the project area (**Figure C5**). There are four biodiversity significance ranks; outstanding, high, moderate, and below (Minnesota Department of Natural Resources, accessed Feb. 19, 2018):

- "Outstanding" – sites contain the best occurrences of the rarest species, the most outstanding examples of the rarest native plant communities, and/or the largest most ecologically intact or functional landscapes.





- “High” – sites contain very good quality occurrences of the rarest species, high-quality examples of rare native plant communities, and/or important functional landscapes.
- “Moderate” – sites contain occurrences of rare species, moderately disturbed native plant communities, and/or landscapes that have strong potential for recovery of native plant communities and characteristic ecological processes.
- “Below” - sites lack occurrences of rare species and natural features or do not meet MBS standards for outstanding, high, or moderate rank. These sites may include areas of conservation value at the local level, such as habitat for native plants and animals, corridors for animal movement, buffers surrounding higher-quality natural areas, areas with high potential for restoration of native habitat, or open space.

## 4.4 ENDANGERED AND THREATENED SPECIES

The Endangered Species Act (ESA) directs all Federal agencies to work to conserve threatened and endangered species and to use their authorities to further the purposes of the Act. The ESA lists nine (9) species as threatened (likely to become an endangered species in the near future), eleven (11) as endangered (in danger of extinction now), and seven (7) associated designated Critical Habitat areas located in Minnesota<sup>1</sup>.

In addition, the MN DNR maintains a state designated list of threatened, endangered (T&E), and special concern species<sup>2</sup>. Minnesota’s Endangered Species Statute (Minn. Stat. Section 84.0895) and Minnesota Administrative Rules, Chapter 6134 provide the prescribed rules, definitions, and associated list of species designated in the state.

Note that the federal Endangered Species Act of 1973, as amended (16 USC 1531-1544) requires the U.S. Department of the Interior to identify species as endangered or threatened according to a separate set of definitions, and imposes a separate set of restrictions pertaining to those species.

The project area was evaluated to assess the potential presence of federally and state listed species by obtaining a list of species and other resources such as critical habitat under the USFWS and State jurisdictions. The USFWS, online Information Planning and Conservation System (IPaC) program data included the potential occurrence of four (4) federally-listed threatened species and associated designated critical habitat (see **Table 7**, below). The MN DNR, Natural Heritage and Nongame Research Program, Rare Natural Features GIS data (LA-805) was also accessed to identify state-listed species that are known or expected to be on or near the study area. According to the MN DNR, Natural Heritage Information System (NHIS), there are six (6) threatened, three (3) endangered, and no designated critical habitat in the study area (see **Table 7**). Descriptions of the state and federally listed threatened and endangered species and their presence in relation to the project is provided below. State listed Special Concern species are listed in **Section 4.4.2**.

*Table 7: Threatened and Endangered Species*

<sup>1</sup> USFWS, Endangered Species: *Minnesota – County Distribution of Federally-listed Threatened, Endangered, Proposed, and Candidate Species*, accessed Feb 9 2018: <https://www.fws.gov/midwest/endangered/lists/minnesot-spp.html>.

<sup>2</sup> MN DNR, *Minnesota’s List of Endangered, Threatened, and Special Concern Species*, accessed Feb 9 2018: <http://www.dnr.state.mn.us/ets/index.html>.

Species	Type of Animal	Status	County of Occurrence (dates last observed)	Critical Habitat
<b>*FEDERALLY LISTED THREATENED &amp; ENDANGERED SPECIES</b>				
Gray Wolf <sup>3</sup> ( <i>Canis lupus</i> )	Zoological: Vertebrate Animal	Threatened	Becker Mahnomen	There is final designated critical habitat for this species; the project is outside the critical habitat.
Northern Long-eared Bat <sup>4</sup> ( <i>Myotis septentrionalis</i> )	Zoological: Vertebrate Animal	Threatened	Becker Clay Mahnomen Norman	No critical habitat has been designated for this species in this area.
Dakota Skipper ( <i>Hesperia dacotae</i> ) <sup>5</sup>	Zoological: Invertebrate Animal	Threatened	Clay Norman	There is final critical habitat for this species. The project location overlaps the critical habitat (see <b>Figure C4</b> ).
Western Prairie Fringed Orchid ( <i>Platanthera praeclara</i> )	Botanical Vascular Plant	Threatened	Clay Norman	No critical habitat has been designated for this species.
<b>**STATE LISTED THREATENED &amp; ENDANGERED SPECIES</b>				
Dakota Skipper ( <i>Hesperia dacotae</i> ) <sup>6</sup>	Zoological: Invertebrate Animal	Endangered	Project Area (August 1979)	No
Poweshiek Skipperling ( <i>Oarisma Poweshiek</i> )	Zoological Invertebrate Animal	Endangered	Project Area (July 1994)	No
Western Prairie Fringed Orchid ( <i>Platanthera praeclara</i> )	Botanical Vascular Plant	Endangered	Project Area (July 2015)	No
Beaked Spikerush ( <i>Eleocharis rostellata</i> )	Botanical Vascular Plant	Threatened	Project Area (July 1982)	No

<sup>3</sup> USFWS, Environmental Conservation Online System (ECOS): Gray wolf (*Canis lupus*), accessed Feb 13 2018: <https://ecos.fws.gov/ecp0/profile/speciesProfile?sld=4488>. And, USFWS, *Wolf – Western Great Lakes*, accessed Feb 13 2018: <https://www.fws.gov/midwest/wolf/>.

<sup>4</sup> USFWS, ECOS: Northern Long-Eared Bat (*Myotis septentrionalis*), accessed Feb 13 2018: <https://ecos.fws.gov/ecp0/profile/speciesProfile?sld=9045>.

<sup>5</sup> USFWS, ECOS: Dakota Skipper (*Hesperia dacotae*), accessed Feb 13 2018: <https://ecos.fws.gov/ecp0/profile/speciesProfile?scode=1011>

<sup>6</sup> USFWS, ECOS: Dakota Skipper (*Hesperia dacotae*), accessed Feb 13 2018: <https://ecos.fws.gov/ecp0/profile/speciesProfile?scode=1011>

Species	Type of Animal	Status	County of Occurrence (dates last observed)	Critical Habitat
Hair-like Beak Rush ( <i>Rhynchospora capillacea</i> )	Botanical Vascular Plant	Threatened	Project Area (July 2000)	No
Sterile Sedge ( <i>Carex sterilis</i> )	Botanical Vascular Plant	Threatened	Project Area (July 2000)	No
Stream Parsnip ( <i>Berula erecta</i> )	Botanical Vascular Plant	Threatened	Project Area (July 2000)	No
Whorled Nutrush ( <i>Scleria verticillate</i> )	Botanical Vascular Plant	Threatened	Project Area (July 2000)	No
Wilson's Phalarope ( <i>Phalaropus tricolor</i> )	Botanical Vascular Plant	Threatened	Project Area (1988)	No

\*Source: USFWS, Information for Planning and Consultation (IPaC) online database, accessed Feb 9 2018:  
<https://ecos.fws.gov/ipac/>.

\*\*Source: MN DNR, Natural Heritage Information System (NHIS) data (LA-805).

State Listed Species Note: There are multiple occurrences of the species listed above (with the exception of the Dakota Skipper, Beaked Spikerush, Stream Parsnip, of which there is one (1) occurrence of these species within the project area. The most recent observance date has been recorded here.

#### 4.4.1 FEDERALLY LISTED ENDANGERED AND THREATENED SPECIES

The South Branch Sub-Watershed resides in portions of Becker, Clay, Mahnomen, and Norman Counties. Review of the USFWS Endangered Species list from the USFWS Environmental Conservation Online System and the MN DNR, NHIS, for the four counties indicates the following Threatened and Endangered species of concern may be present within the watershed (USFWS, accessed Feb 9 2018):

- Gray Wolf – Threatened
- Northern Long-Eared Bat – Threatened
- Western Prairie Fringed Orchid – Threatened (State listed Endangered)
- Dakota Skipper – Threatened (State listed Endangered)


##### Gray Wolf (*Canis lupus*)

The gray wolf is found in a wide range of habitats throughout the United States, including the grassland habitats found within the watershed boundary. Agriculture lands, however, which dominate the watershed area, are less than ideal habitats for the gray wolf and it is unlikely to be found within heavily cultivated areas.

##### Northern Long-eared Bat (*Myotis septentrionalis*)

The Northern Long-Eared Bat is medium-sized, about 3 to 3.7 inches long, with a wingspan of 9 to 10 inches and is distinguished by its long ears. The northern long-eared bat is found across much of the





eastern and north central United States and all Canadian provinces from the Atlantic coast west to the southern Northwest Territories and eastern British Columbia. White nose syndrome, a disease that has contributed to the population plummet of the Northern Long-Eared Bat was first observed in New York in 2006 and has spread considerably throughout the northeast, Midwest and southeast. In the northeast, population of the Northern Long-Eared Bat has declined by up to 99% (based on hibernacula counts). It is expected the white nose syndrome will continue to spread throughout the United States at an uncertain rate, into the future. Other negative impediments to this species include impacts to hibernacula (e.g., trespassing restriction structures at caves and mines that restrict bat movement and can contribute to changes in the microclimate in the mine/cave), wind farm operations, and loss or degradation of summer roosting habitat. The MN DNR identifies and maintains a listing of counties within the state that contain documented Northern Long-Eared Bat maternity roost trees and/or hibernacula entrances. There are no townships within the project area identified to contain the bat maternity roost trees and/or hibernacula (Minnesota Department of Natural Resources, 2017).

**Western Prairie Fringed Orchid (*Platanthera praeclara*) – Threatened (State listed Endangered)**

The Western Prairie Fringed Orchid is found in Lowland Prairie habitats (grass dominated treeless communities on poorly drained soils, usually in depressions or drainage ways; sedges are often nearly as common as grasses, and broad-leafed herbs (forbs) are typically common. Low shrubs are sparse to common). This plant is rare today because of the widespread conversion of its native prairie habitat to agricultural uses. The species' decline has become so critical that it was listed as state endangered in 1984 and federally threatened in 1989. The Western Prairie Fringed Orchid occurs almost exclusively in remnant native prairies and sedge meadows. The majority of sites occur in full sunlight on moist, calcareous till or sandy soils. None of the sites have a significant history of cattle grazing, although a few have a history of intermittent mowing for wild hay. (Minnesota Department of Natural Resources, accessed Feb 18, 2018)

**Dakota Skipper (*Hesperia dacotae*)– Threatened (State listed Endangered)**

The Dakota Skipper is a “branded” skipper that is completely dependent upon its native prairie habitat. Even so, there has been no evidence that reconstructed prairie provides suitable habitat. The Dakota Skipper seems to prefer native dry-mesic to dry prairie where mid-height grasses such as little bluestem (*Schizachyrium scoparium* var. *scoparium*), prairie dropseed (*Sporobolus heterolepis*), and side-oats grama (*Bouteloua curtipendula* var. *curtipendula*) are a major component of the vegetation. The most productive sites in Minnesota feature some topographic variation. Adults will forage into nearby lowland prairie (mesic or wet prairie) for nectar. Presently, most of the skipper's native prairie habitat throughout its range has been lost through conversion of land use to agriculture. The skipper has disappeared south and east of Minnesota and has become increasingly rare and local in its remaining range (Minnesota Department of Natural Resources, accessed Feb 18, 2018 (2)). The project does contain designated critical habitat for the Dakota Skipper (Dakota Skipper Critical Habitat, Minnesota Unit 6, Norman County) (United States Fish and Wildlife Service, last updated: Dec 14, 2017). See **Figure C4** for its location.

#### **4.4.2 STATE LISTED ENDANGERED, THREATENED, AND SPECIAL CONCERN SPECIES**

Minnesota's Endangered Species Statute requires the MN DNR to adopt rules designating species meeting the statutory definitions of endangered, threatened, or species of special concern. The resulting

List of Endangered, Threatened, and Special Concern Species is codified as Minnesota Rules, Chapter 6134. According to the MN DNR, NHIS data (LA-805), the following State listed Threatened and Endangered species have been identified to occur within the project area:

**Dakota Skipper (*Hesperia dacotae*) – State listed Endangered**

Refer to description provided under the Federal listings.

**Poweshiek Skipperling (*Oarisma Poweshiek*) – State listed Endangered**

The Poweshiek Skipperling occurs in a number of sites in northern Iowa and northeast South Dakota, a few sites in southeast North Dakota, and three sites in southeast Wisconsin. Western Minnesota has been identified by the USFWS to support the majority of known, extant occurrences of the Poweshiek Skipperling. Its habitat has been reduced to small isolated remnants that collectively comprise only a tiny fraction of its formerly vast expanse. Habitats utilized by this skipperling, in Minnesota include wet to dry native prairie but not sand prairie. The Poweshiek Skipperling has never been reported from sedge-dominated wet meadow or fen in Minnesota. (Minnesota Department of Natural Resources, accessed Feb 18, 2018 (3))

**Western Prairie Fringed Orchid (*Platanthera praeclara*) – State listed Endangered**

Refer to description provided under the Federal listings.

**Beaked Spikerush (*Eleocharis rostellata*) - State listed Threatened**

The Beaked Spikerush in Minnesota seems to be confined to calcareous seepage fens and spring fens in acid peatlands, both very rare habitats in the region. This species presence is somewhat of an anomaly as it is chiefly an inhabitant of salt marshes along the Atlantic Coast, among other places. As of 2008, there were 12 known locations for Beaked Spikerush in the state. In the Minnesota River Valley and in the Glacial Lake Agassiz beach ridges in the prairie region, this plant occurs strictly in calcareous fens. (Minnesota Department of Natural Resources, accessed Feb 18, 2018 (4))

**Hair-like Beak Rush (*Rhynchospora capillacea*) - State listed Threatened**

The Hair-like Beak Rush is a vascular plant that occurs with a range-wide distribution throughout the state, though it is predominately restricted to small, fragile, native wetland communities also known as calcareous fens. It is considered very rare west of the Mississippi River, as well as in many portions of its eastern range. (Minnesota Department of Natural Resources, accessed Feb 18, 2018)

**Sterile Sedge (*Carex sterilis*) - State listed Threatened**

Sterile Sedge is generally limited to temperate and boreal habitats in the glaciated regions of North America. In Minnesota, this vascular plant, prefers wetland and peat soil conditions. This plant ranges over a relatively large portion of the state but occurs almost exclusively in small, fragile, calcareous fen habitats. Calcareous fens are specialized wetlands maintained by surface discharge of cold, calcium rich groundwater. These fens in the state occur in the prairie region where agricultural land use competes with native habitats and, in this case, the groundwater upon which the fen habitat depends.

**Stream Parsnip (*Berula erecta*) - State listed Threatened**



Limited information is available on this vascular plant species. The *Berula erecta* (Huds.) Coville cutleaf waterparsnip is listed on the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), NRCS, Plants Database as a perennial forb/herb whose range extends broadly throughout midwestern to western U.S. and into Canada. Growth requirements include fine to medium textured soils with high anaerobic tolerance. (United States Department of Agriculture, Natural Resources Conservation Service, accessed Feb 18, 2018)

**Whorled Nutrush (*Scleria verticillate*) - State listed Threatened**

The Whorled Nutrush is a vascular plant species or slender sedge, which is generally rare or local throughout the northern part of its range, where it is a strict calciphile. This plant has restrictive habitat requirements which limits the species to a rare native plant community called a calcareous fen. Calcareous fens, as previously mentioned, are localized, fragile wetlands that depend on specific hydrologic and geologic conditions, and are also unique and rare features in Minnesota. Whorled Nutrush is usually found in association with other strict fen species such as the Hair-like Beak Rush and Sterile Sedge, which have also been identified to exist within the project area. (Minnesota Department of Natural Resources, accessed Feb 18, 2018)

**Wilson's Phalarope (*Phalaropus tricolor*) - State listed Threatened**

The Wilson's phalarope is a wetland species that breeds primarily in the northwestern quarter of the U.S. and southwestern Canada. They are most common in western and northwestern counties in Minnesota but they have also been documented in some central and eastern counties. Although the number of summer bird observations has remained fairly consistent, nesting has been documented at only a few sites. The species' wetland habitat is especially vulnerable to drainage and degradation from agricultural activities. Wilson's phalaropes are most frequently found in wet prairie, rich fen, and other grass- or sedge-dominated wetlands. The presence of short vegetation in or adjacent to shallow pools of open water is an important microhabitat feature. Human-altered habitats, particularly flooded pastures and municipal wastewater stabilization ponds, may also provide suitable habitat. Most Wilson's phalarope nests are located in the wet meadow zone of wetlands or in nearby upland prairie. (Minnesota Department of Natural Resources, accessed Feb 18, 2018)

**4.4.2.1 STATE LISTED SPECIAL CONCERN AND WATCHLIST SPECIES**

Within Minnesota, designated special concern species are those that are not endangered or threatened, but are extremely uncommon in the state, or have unique or highly specific habitat requirements. Species on the periphery of their range that are not listed as threatened may be included in this category along with those species that were once threatened or endangered but now have increasing or protected, stable populations. Species under the state Special Concern designation or Watchlist are those species not protected under the Minnesota's Endangered Species Statute but are being closely monitored by the state. The table below lists the State Listed Special Concern and Watchlist species within the study area; data was retrieved from the MN DNR NHIS data (LA-805).

*Table 8: State Listed Special Concern and Watchlist Species (NHIS data, LA-805)*

Species	Type of Animal	State Rank	County of Occurrence (dates last observed)
Blanket Flower ( <i>Gaillardia aristata</i> )	Botanical Vascular Plant	Special	Norman (June 1979)
Creek Heelsplitter ( <i>Lasmigona compressa</i> )	Zoological Invertebrate Animal	Special	Clay (June 2002)
English Sundew ( <i>Drosera anglica</i> )	Botanical Vascular Plant	Special	Becker (July 2000)
Felwort ( <i>Gentianella amarella</i> )	Botanical Vascular Plant	Special	Becker (Sept. 1982)
Great Plains Toad ( <i>Anaxyrus cognatus</i> )	Zoological: Vertebrate Animal	Special	Norman (June 1958)
Greater Prairie Chicken ( <i>Tympanuchus cupido</i> )	Zoological: Vertebrate Animal	Special	Clay, Becker, Norman, and Mahanomen (2007 in Clay County)
Marbled Godwit ( <i>Limosa fedoa</i> )	Zoological Vertebrate Animal	Special	Clay, Becker, and Norman (June 2005 in Clay and Norman counties)
Nelson's Sparrow ( <i>Ammodramus nelsoni</i> )	Zoological: Vertebrate Animal	Special	Becker, Norman, and Mahanomen Counties (July 2003 in Norman County)
Northern Gentian ( <i>Gentiana affinis</i> )	Botanical Vascular Plant	Special	Norman (Aug. 1985)
Northern Single-spike Sedge ( <i>Carex scirpoidea</i> )	Botanical Vascular Plant	Special	Becker (July 2000)
Pawnee Skipper ( <i>Hesperia leonardus pawnee</i> )	Zoological Invertebrate Animal	Special	Norman (Aug 1979)
Prairie Vole ( <i>Microtus ochrogaster</i> )	Zoological Vertebrate Animal	Special	Norman (Aug 1979)
Regal Fritillary ( <i>Speyeria Idalia</i> )	Zoological Invertebrate Animal	Special	Norman (Aug 1979)



Species	Type of Animal	State Rank	County of Occurrence (dates last observed)
Short-eared Owl ( <i>Asio flammeus</i> )	Zoological Vertebrate Animal	Special	Becker and Mahnomen (1973)
Small White Lady's-slipper ( <i>Cypripedium candidum</i> )	Botanical: Vascular Plant	Special	Becker, Clay, Norman, and Mahnomen counties (Becker and Mahnomen counties, June 2016)
Spiral Ditchgrass ( <i>Ruppia cirrhosa</i> )	Botanical: Vascular Plant	Special	Becker (Aug 2008)
Trumpeter Swan ( <i>Cygnus buccinator</i> )	Zoological: Vertebrate Animal	Special	Becker (June 2013)
Twig Rush ( <i>Cladium mariscoides</i> )	Botanical: Vascular Plant	Special	Becker (Sept 1981)
Yellow Rail ( <i>Coturnicops noveboracensis</i> )	Zoological: Vertebrate Animal	Special	Clay, Becker, Norman, and Mahnomen counties (Clay, June 2005)
American Bittern ( <i>Botaurus lentiginosus</i> )	Zoological: Vertebrate Animal	Watchlist	Becker, Clay, Norman, and Mahnomen (Norman and Clay counties, June 2005)
Bald Eagle ( <i>Haliaeetus leucocephalus</i> )	Zoological: Vertebrate Animal	Watchlist	Clay (July 2006) and Norman (2004) counties
Sandhill Crane ( <i>Grus canadensis</i> )	Zoological: Vertebrate Animal	Watchlist	Becker (June 1977)
Upland Sandpiper ( <i>Bartramia longicauda</i> )	Zoological Vertebrate Animal	Watchlist	Becker, Clay, Mahnomen, and Norman counties (Clay, June 2005)

Source: MN DNR, NHIS, data license 805, data assessed: Feb 19 2018. There are several records of the Greater Prairie Chicken occurring in each of the counties within the project area. The most recent of the records is in Clay County during 2007. There are also several of the Small White Lady's-slipper occurring in each of the project area counties. The most recent of the records are from June 2016 in Becker and Mahnomen counties.

## 4.5 ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE AND CIVIL RIGHTS

An evaluation of environmental justice impacts is mandated by Executive Order 12898, *Federal Actions to Address Environmental Justice in Minority Populations and Low-Income Populations* (February 11, 1994).



This Executive Order directs federal agencies to identify and address, as appropriate, disproportionately high and adverse human health or environmental effects of its programs, policies, and activities on minority populations and low-income populations.

The most recent U.S. Census Bureau data was obtained to develop an understanding of demographics within the study area. Demographic statistics for the project area were generated by using Census block data. The South Branch Sub-Watershed area was overlaid on the Census blocks, and all Census blocks, wholly and partially incorporated into the project area where included in this assessment. Therefore, these statistics represent an estimate (**Table 9**). Due to the rural nature of the project area and the coverage of the most readily available data, please note the population statistics may be over represented.

The South Branch Sub-Watershed is a predominately agricultural area with a human population estimated to be 2,833 individuals. Distribution of race among the individuals is shown in the table below. According to the census block data, the study area has an average per-capita income in comparison to the counties in which the project resides, but is relatively lower than the State's. The project is located partially within the White Earth Reservation and this is reflected in the predominant minority population consisting of American Indian and Alaska Native people (19% of the population in the project area). The statistics show that the poverty rate in the study area (14%) is average in comparison to the counties (12-17%) that the project is located within, but higher than the State (10%).

*Table 9: Demographic Statistics*

Location	Population	Per-Capita Income	Persons in poverty (%)	Predominant Race	Predominant Minority (approximate percentage)
<b>Project area*</b>	<b>2,833</b>	<b>\$25,230</b>	<b>14%</b>	<b>White, 73%</b>	<b>American Indian and Alaska Native alone, 19%</b>
<b>Becker County**</b>	33,734	\$27,188	12.7%	White, 88%	American Indian and Alaska Native alone, 8%
<b>Clay County**</b>	62,875	\$27,165	12%	White, 92%	Hispanic or Latino, 5%
<b>Norman County**</b>	6,579	\$26,270	12.1%	White, 94%	People of two or more races, 3%
<b>Mahnomen County**</b>	5,465	\$20,233	17.5%	White, 47%	American Indian and Alaska Native alone, 44%
<b>Minnesota**</b>	5,519,952	\$33,225	9.9%	White, 85%	Black or African American, 6%

Source:

\*Population for the Study area was determined using the 2010 Census Blocks. All other data for the Study area was determined at the block group level, using the 2015 American Community Survey (U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey (ACS) 2015, <https://www.census.gov/programs-surveys/acs/>)

\*\* U.S. Census Bureau, *QuickFacts*: Minnesota; Becker County, MN; Clay County, MN; Mahnomen County, MN; Norman County, MN; and Minnesota. Population estimates, July 1, 2016: accessed Feb 19 2018:

<https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/fact/table/MN,mahnomencountyminnesota,normancountyminnesota,claycountyminnesota,beckercountyminnesota,US/PST045216>

## 4.6 FISH AND WILDLIFE

### 4.6.1 ECOLOGICAL SETTING

As classified by the MN DNR, Ecological Classification System, the South Branch Sub-Watershed resides within the Red River Prairie Subsection of the Red River Valley Section within the Prairie Parkland Province. The Prairie Parkland Province traverses western portion of the state and extends into neighboring Midwest States and northward into Canada. In Minnesota, this province coincides with the part of the state historically dominated by tallgrass prairie. The land surface was heavily influenced by the most recent glaciation. Ice sheets crossed the province several times during the Wisconsin glaciation, depositing a mantle of drift 100 to 600 feet thick in most places. The last lobe of ice, the Des Moines lobe, deposited calcareous drift in the southern part of the province. The ice lobe was fronted to the north by the largest pro-glacial lake in North America, Glacial Lake Agassiz, which deposited deep-water sediments over the northern portion of the province in Minnesota. The Red River Valley Section is characterized as being formed predominately of a single landform, the deep-water basin of Glacial Lake Agassiz. This area is drained by the Red River of the North and this Section is the flattest, driest, most fire-prone region of Minnesota and therefore this region was historically dominated by communities of the Upland Prairie and Wetland Prairies systems, which covered more than 90% of the section.

### 4.6.2 FISH AND WILDLIFE


The primary water resource within the study area that contains fish habitat is the South Branch of the Wild Rice River (and tributaries). Several small intermittent to perennial lakes or ponds are also present within the project area (see **Figure C18** for water resources within the project area), which provide habitat for fish and wildlife. As a tributary to the Red River, water resources within the Wild Rice River Watershed contribute to and are similar to the fish species found within the Red River (Goldstein, Water-Resources Investigations Report 95-4047). This includes over 50 species of fish and many gamefish including northern pike, catfish, trout, perch, bass, and crappie. Minnows and suckers are also present.

As further detailed in Section 5.11 - *Land Use*, the study area is heavily cultivated (78%). Much of the study area pre-settlement habitat has been altered to accommodate agriculture. However, the study area provides appropriate habitats for a variety of mammals, including deer, elk, fox, racoon, coyote, skunk, and also supports amphibian and reptile populations (toads, turtles, snakes, and lizards).

The project is located on the border between the Central and Mississippi migratory bird Flyways. More information regarding migratory bird species is discussed in **Section 4.11**, below. The project area contains some WRP and CRP lands, designated Waterfowl Production areas (WPA), Wildlife Management Areas (WMA), and Scientific Natural Areas (SNAs) (**Figure C9**) that provide high-quality wildlife habitat.

## 4.7 FLOODPLAIN MANAGEMENT

The floodplain within the upstream portion of the project area (in the eastern portion of the project area) is small, as the river channel is relatively confined and well defined in this area. From the eastern/upstream portion of the project area up to 190<sup>th</sup> Street Street North / Highway 27, in Hagen Township, southeast of



Borup, and exacerbated further downstream/in the western extents of the project area, the South Branch floodplain transitions to most agricultural land, with generally mild slopes. Therefore, in the western portion of the project area, the main channel of the South Branch becomes perched and capacity is limited, resulting in water being pushed over the banks into the adjacent fields, where it is intercepted by several field drains and roadway ditches. These ditches convey water west and north back toward the South Branch. If floodwaters continue to rise the water will breakout away from the main channel of the South Branch and head directly toward the Wild Rice River through other natural and manmade conveyance paths.

There is limited designated floodplains in the project area. Communities in the northwestern extents of the study area participate in the National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP). Floodplain maps and designations are developed by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA). The current Digital Flood Insurance Rate Map identifies Special Flood Hazard Areas that are regulated through the participating community's floodplain ordinance. These areas are subject to inundations by the 1% annual chance flood are designated by zones A, AE, AH, AW, AR A99, V, and VE. The 1% annual chance flood, also known as the base flood or 100-year flood, has a 1% chance of happening or being exceeded each year. The Base Flood Elevation is the water-surface elevation of the 1% chance flood.

**Figure C1** provides a map showing the designated FEMA Flood Zones within the project area. Areas along the South Branch Wild Rice River and Stiner Creek are classified as Zone A and AE, which are defined below (U.S. Department of Homeland Security, accessed Feb 28, 2018). These areas in northwestern extents of the project area have been determined to be subject to inundation by the 1% annual-chance flood event.

**Zone A**

Areas subject to inundation by the 1% annual-chance flood event generally determined using approximate methodologies. Because detailed hydraulic analyses have not been performed, no Base Flood Elevations (BFEs) or flood depths are shown. Mandatory flood insurance purchase requirements and floodplain management standards apply.

**Zone AE**

Areas subject to inundation by the 1% annual-chance flood event determined by detailed methods. BFEs are shown. Mandatory flood insurance purchase requirements and floodplain management standards apply.

The study area has flood prone locations that continually face impacts from flooding. Refer to **Figures C2 and C3**, which show existing flooding conditions within the study area.

## 4.8 FOREST RESOURCES

The project area is predominately agricultural-type land use. Forest resources are not prominent in this area. Refer to **Section 4.10 – Land Use** for a description of the land uses and cover types in the project area.

## 4.9 INVASIVE SPECIES

Invasive species are species that are not native to Minnesota and cause economic or environmental harm or harm to human health. Invasive species can occur on land or in the water. Minnesota has several state laws intended to minimize the introduction and spread of invasive species of wild animal and aquatic plants in the state. Using a four-tiered system, invasive species are classified as *prohibited*, *regulated*, *unregulated nonnative species* (or are unclassified), and remain as *unlisted nonnative species* (Minnesota Department of Natural Resources, accessed Feb 9, 2018). This classification system establishes the level of regulation and allowable uses for each species and the MN DNR has regulatory authority over aquatic plants and animals, and terrestrial vertebrates. The MDA has regulatory authority over terrestrial plants (noxious weeds) and plant pests. Below is a table summarizing several current state regulated invasive species and **Figure C6** show locations of known invasive species and infested waters in the project area.

Table 10: *Prohibited and Regulated Invasive and Nonnative Species*

Prohibited Invasive Species		
<p><b>Aquatic Plants:</b>            African oxygen weed;            aquarium watermoss or            giant salvinia; Australian            stone crop; brittle naiad;            curly-leaf pondweed;            Eurasian watermilfoil;            European frog-bit;            flowering rush; hydrilla;            Indian swampweed; purple            loosestrife; starry            stonewort; water aloe or            water soldiers; water            chestnut; the aquatic            plants listed in Code of            Federal Regulations, Title            7, Section 360.200, are            also designated as            prohibited invasive            species except for            Chinese water spinach</p>	<p><b>Fish:</b>            Amur sleeper; bighead            carp; black carp; crucian            carp; Eurasian minor;            European perch; grass            carp; largescale silver carp;            northern snakehead fish;            Oriental weatherfish;            Prussian carp; roach; round            goby; rudd; ruffe; sea            lamprey; silver carp; stone            moroko; tubenose goby;            wels catfish; western            mosquitofish; white perch;            zander</p>	<p><b>Invertebrates:</b>            Faucet snail; New Zealand            mud snail; quagga mussel;            red swamp crayfish; yabby;            zebra mussel</p> <p><b>Mammals:</b>            Asian raccoon dog;            European rabbit; European            wild boar; nutria</p>
Regulated Invasive Species		

Prohibited Invasive Species		
<b>Aquatic Plants:</b> Brazilian waterweed; Carolina fanwort or fanwort; Chinese water spinach; nonnative waterlilies; parrot's feather; water hyacinth; yellow iris or yellow flag	<b>Birds:</b> Egyptian goose; mute swan; Sichuan pheasant  <b>Fish:</b> Alewife; common carp, koi; goldfish; rainbow smelt; tilapia	<b>Invertebrates:</b> Banded mystery snail; Chinese mystery snail; rusty crayfish; spiny waterflea  <b>Reptiles:</b> Red-eared slider
Unregulated Nonnative Species***		
<b>Fish:</b> Atlantic salmon; brown trout; coho salmon; Chinook salmon; pink salmon; rainbow trout; subtropical/tropical/ and saltwater fish, except anadromous species	<b>Invertebrates:</b> Subtropical/tropical/ and saltwater invertebrates  <b>Mammals:</b> Rat	<b>Birds:</b> Chukar partridge; helmeted Guinea fowl; house sparrow; Hungarian partridge, gray partridge; peafowl; pigeon or rock dove; ring-necked pheasant; starling

\*Prohibited invasive species: certain invasive species that can threaten natural resources and their use have been designated as prohibited invasive species in Minnesota. It is unlawful to possess, import, purchase, transport, or introduce these species except under a permit for disposal, control, research, or education.

\*\*Regulated invasive species: It is legal to possess, sell, buy, and transport regulated invasive species, but they may not be introduced into a free-living state, such as being released or planted in public waters.

\*\*\*Unregulated nonnative species: are not subject under Minnesota Invasive Species Statutes, but refer to fishing and hunting regulations for regulations on fishing, hunting, or transporting these species.

Source: MN DNR, *Minnesota invasive species laws*, accessed Feb 9 2018: <http://dnr.state.mn.us/invasives/laws.html>.

#### 4.9.1 AQUATIC INVASIVE SPECIES

The MN DNR will add a lake, river, pond, or wetland to the infested waters list if it contains an aquatic invasive species that could spread to other waters, or if it is connected to a body of water where an aquatic invasive species is present. A waterbody is listed as infested if it contains or is connected to a waterbody that contains the following species: bighead carp, Brazilian waterweed, brittle naiad, Eurasian watermilfoil, faucet snail, flowering rush, grass carp, New Zealand mud snail, red swamp crayfish, round goby, ruffe, silver carp, spiny waterflea, starry stonewort, viral hemorrhagic septicemia, white perch, and/or zebra mussel. There is one (1) waterbody within the project area that was listed on the MN DNR Infested Waters list (most recently updated Dec. 29, 2017); Tilde Lake (DOW No: 14-0004). Tilde Lake resides in Clay County (X portion of the project area) and was listed in 2016 for red swamp crayfish infestation (Minnesota Department of Natural Resources, last updated December 29, 2017).

#### 4.9.2 TERRESTRIAL INVASIVE SPECIES

Minnesota Noxious Weed Law (Minnesota Statutes 18.75-18.91) includes provisions to control the spread of noxious weeds. The Minnesota Department of Agriculture (MDA) maintains a state-wide Noxious Weed List that includes State Prohibited Noxious Weeds, Restricted Noxious Weeds, and Specially Regulated Plants (Minnesota Department of Agriculture). The most recent MDA, Noxious Weed List (2018) is

incorporated here by reference, due to its length (Minnesota Department of Agriculture, 2018). The MDA coordinates the efforts of county, city, and township officials to inspect and destroy noxious weeds. County boards are responsible for developing County Noxious Weed Lists through an official county resolution and assume all responsibility for enforcement. Becker and Clay counties have county approved noxious weeds; see list below.

Table 11: Terrestrial Invasive Species

Minnesota County	County Approved Noxious Weeds
Becker (2011; 2014)	<i>Bertero incana</i> (L.) DC., Hoary Alyssum
	<i>Artemisia absinthium</i> L., Absinthe Wormwood
	<i>Cynoglossum officinale</i> L., Houndstongue
	<i>Hieracium aurantiacum</i> L., Orange Hawkweed (2014)
Clay ( 2011 & 2014)	<i>Hieracium caespitosum</i> Dumort, Yellow Hawkweed (2014)
	<i>Cirsium vulgare</i> (Savi) Ten., Bull Thistle
	<i>Bassia scoparia</i> (L.) A.J. Scott, Kochia
	<i>Carduus nutans</i> L., Musk Thistle

Source: Minnesota Department of Agriculture, *County Approved Noxious Weeds*, accessed Feb. 16, 2018: <http://www.mda.state.mn.us/plants/pestmanagement/weedcontrol/noxiouslist/countynoxiousweeds.aspx>.

#### 4.10 LAND USE

National Land Cover Data (NLCD) developed in 2011 was acquired and reviewed to assess land use within the Wild Rice Watershed. Cultivated Crops and Pasture/Hay make up 82% (138,156 acres) of the South Branch Sub-Watershed. The remainder of the project area is Emergent Herbaceous and Woody Wetlands (8%), Developed lands (4%), Forest/Shrub/Grassland (4%), and Open Water (1.4%). NLCD 2011 data is presented in **Figure C7**.

Table 12: Land Use and Cover Types (NLCD 2011)

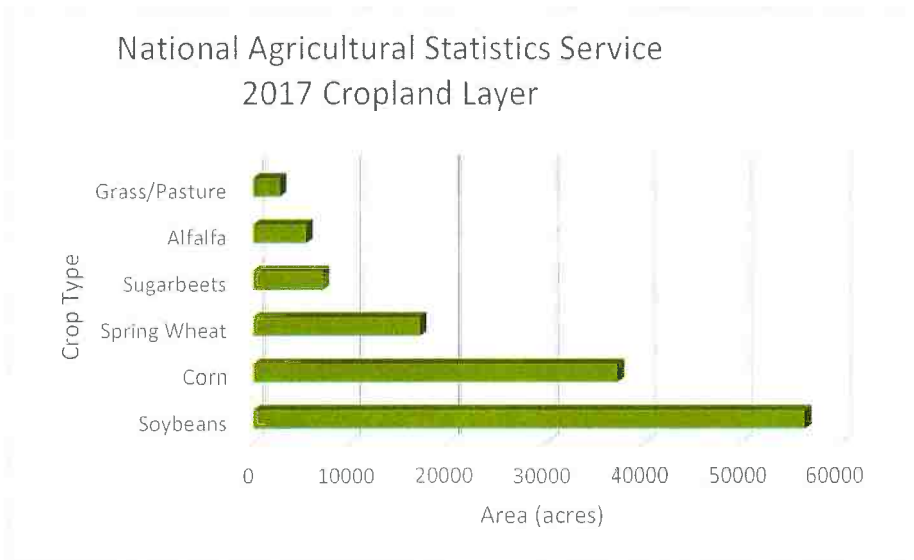
NLCD 2011 - Cover Type	Acres	Percentage of Total Area
Cultivated Crops	130,799	77.98%
Emergent Herbaceous Wetlands	11,304	6.74%
Pasture/Hay	7,358	4.39%
Developed, Open Space	6,289	3.75%
Deciduous Forest	4,571	2.73%
Open Water	2,397	1.43%
Grassland/Herbaceous	1,791	1.07%
Woody Wetlands	1,784	1.06%
Developed, Low Intensity	748	0.45%
Evergreen Forest	363	0.22%
Mixed Forest	139	0.08%
Developed, Medium Intensity	89	0.05%

NLCD 2011 - Cover Type	Acres	Percentage of Total Area
Shrub/Scrub	49	0.03%
Developed, High Intensity	24	0.01%
Barren Land (Rock/Sand/Clay)	19	0.01%
Total Acreage:	364,227	100%

Source: Multi-Resolution Land Characteristics Consortium (MRLC), National Land Cover Database (NLCD) 2011. Accessed Feb. 22, 2018: <https://www.mrlc.gov/finddata.php>.

The 2017 National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS) Cropland Layer was also reviewed to determine leading crops within the watershed. The most notable crops are the following: Soybeans (34%), Corn (22%), Spring Wheat (10%), Sugar Beets (4%). More information on land use, as defined by the 2017 NASS Cropland Layer, is presented in the chart below and in **Figure C8**.

Table 13: National Agricultural Statistics Service, 2017 Cropland Layer



Source: National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS), 2017 Cropland Layer.

Only crops grown that represent 1% or greater of the crops that are grown in the project area are shown in this graphic.

Additionally, various State and Federal Interest Lands exist within the Wild Rice Watershed District. Identified lands include Wetlands Reserve Program (WRP), Reinvest in Minnesota (RIM), Waterfowl Production Areas (WPAs), and Wildlife Management Areas (WMAs) as presented in **Figure C9**. These areas are discussed in more detail under **Section 4.13 – Natural Areas**.

## 4.11 MIGRATORY BIRDS

The project resides along the borders of the Central and Mississippi flyways. The flyways represent designated migration routes of birds. The project is also located within the U.S. portion of the Prairie

Pothole Region which makes Minnesota and encompassing states an important breeding area and significant contributor to continental waterfowl populations.

The U.S. Migratory Bird Treaty Act makes it illegal for anyone to take, possess, import, export, transport, sell, purchase, barter, or offer for sale, purchase, or barter, any migratory bird, or the parts, nests, or eggs of such a bird except under the terms of a valid permit issued pursuant to Federal regulations. The Migratory Bird Treaty Act Protected Species list was last updated in October 2013 and includes the following species that have the potential to be present within the project area.

Table 14: Migratory Birds Potentially Within the Project Area

Bird Species		Breeding Season
American Bittern	<i>Botaurus lentiginosus</i>	April 1 - August 31
American Golden-plover	<i>Pluvialis dominica</i>	Breeds elsewhere
Bald Eagle	<i>Haliaeetus leucocephalus</i>	Dec 1 to Aug 31
Black Tern	<i>Chlidonias niger</i>	May 15 - August 20
Black-billed Cuckoo	<i>Coccyzus erythrophthalmus</i>	May 15 - October 10
Bobolink	<i>Dolichonyx oryzivorus</i>	May 20 - July 31
Buff-Breasted Sandpiper	<i>Calidris bairdii</i>	Breeds elsewhere
Cerulean Warbler	<i>Dendroica cerulean</i>	Apr 22 to Jul 20
Chestnut-collared Longspur	<i>Calcarius ornatus</i>	May 1 to Aug 10
Eastern Whip-poor-will	<i>Antrostomus vociferous</i>	May 1 to Aug 20
Franklin's Gull	<i>Leucophaeus pipixcan</i>	May 1 to Jul 31
Golden Eagle	<i>Aquila chrysaetos</i>	Jan 1 to Aug 31
Golden-winged Warbler	<i>Vermivora chrysoptera</i>	May 1 to Jul 20
Henslow's Sparrow	<i>Ammodramus henslowii</i>	May 1 to Aug 31
Hudsonian Godwit	<i>Limosa haemastica</i>	Breeds elsewhere
Least Bittern	<i>Ixobrychus exilis,</i>	Aug 16 to Oct 31
Lesser Yellowlegs	<i>Tringa flavipes</i>	Breeds elsewhere
Marbled Godwit	<i>Limosa fedoa</i>	May 1 - July 31
Nelsons Sparrow	<i>Ammodramus nelsoni</i>	May 15 - September 5
Red-headed Woodpecker	<i>Melanerpes erythrocephalus</i>	May 10 - September 10
Rusty Blackbird	<i>Euphagus carolinus</i>	Breeds elsewhere
Semipalmated Sandpiper	<i>Calidris pusilla</i>	Breeds elsewhere
Short-billed Dowitcher	<i>Limnodromus griseus</i>	Breeds elsewhere
Sprague's Pipit	<i>Anthus spragueii</i>	May 10 to Aug 31
Willet	<i>Tringa semipalmata</i>	Apr 20 to Aug 5
Willow Flycatcher	<i>Empidonax traillii</i>	May 20 to Aug 31
Wood Thrush	<i>Mylocichla mustelina</i>	May 10 to Aug 31



Source: Migratory Bird Treaty Act Protected Species (10.13 List), accessed Feb 12 2018: <https://www.fws.gov/birds/management/managed-species/migratory-bird-treaty-act-protected-species.php>, and USFWS, Information for Planning and Consultation (IPaC) resource list obtained Feb 9 2018: <https://ecos.fws.gov/ipac/>.

## 4.12 NATURAL AREAS

As described in Section 4.11 – *Land Use*, the project area is predominately composed of cultivated lands, however there are non-cultivated natural areas scattered sporadically throughout the project area (see **Figure C9** showing designated natural areas). According to the National Conservation Easement Database (NCED), there are 38 sites, encapsulating approximately 4,767 acres (7.5 mi<sup>2</sup>) of Federal, State, and jointly held designated conservation lands. The Wildlife Management Area (WMA), Geographic Information System data shows 13 sites, encompassing approximately 4,670 acres (7.3 mi<sup>2</sup>) within the project area. Additionally, other designated natural areas include USFWS Waterfowl Production Areas (WPAs), which account for 33 sites and 6,400 acres (10 mi<sup>2</sup>) within the project area. There is one (1) designated Scientific and Natural Area (Twin Valley Prairie), which is discussed in **Section 4.18**.

## 4.13 PRIME AND UNIQUE FARMLAND, AND FARMLAND OF STATEWIDE SIGNIFICANCE

Protection for prime and important farmland and prime rangeland and forest land is established in the Farmland Protection Policy Act (FPPA), USDA regulations implementing the FPPA (7 CFR Part 658), and USDA DR No. 9500-3, Land Use Policy. Section 658.5 of the FPPA offers criteria for federal agencies to consider when identifying the potential adverse effects of federal programs on farmland. Federal agencies are to consider actions that could lessen adverse effects on farmland and assure that federal programs, to the extent practicable, are compatible with state, local government unit, and private programs and policies that protect farmland.


Some of the designated farmlands within the project area are currently affected by the existing flood conditions within the watershed. The project area is predominately farmland; approximately 16% of the project area classified as not prime farmland. According to the USDA, NRCS, SSURGO soils database, farmland classifications within the project area are tabulated below and shown on **Figure C10**.

*Table 15: Farmland Classifications*

Farmland Classification	Acres	Percent
Prime farmland if drained	73,380	44%
All areas are prime farmland	53,206	32%
Not prime farmland	26,112	16%
Farmland of statewide importance	14,977	9%
<b>Total</b>	<b>167,676</b>	<b>100%</b>

## 4.14 PUBLIC HEALTH AND SAFETY

The Minnesota Pollution Control Agency (MPCA) maintains the *What's In My Neighborhood* database, which provides information about environmental permits issues by the MPCA, registrations and



notifications required by the MPCA, and investigations of potentially contaminated properties undertaken by the MPCA or its partners (MPCA, accessed Feb 13, 2018). According to this MPCA data, there are 130 individually listed environmental sites within the study area. A map and associated listing of recorded environmental sites are provided in **Figure C11** and **Appendix E**.

Public health and safety services within the project area include local police and fire departments, along with hospital facilities. Nearby police departments are located in Ada, and the White Earth Police Department in the eastern portion of the project area. Norman County Sheriff is also located in Ada, MN. Medical facilities located within the project area include Sanford Health Ulen Clinic (Ulen, MN) and the White Earth Health Center in Ogema, MN. Nearby fire departments include the Ada Fire Department (Ada, MN; north of the project area), and the Felton Fire Department (Felton, MN; just south of the project area).

Flood impacts to transportation corridors within the study area remain a public health and safety concern within and directly downstream of the study area. Safe, reliable transportation corridors that are engineered to accommodate local water resources (including flood conditions) is crucial to the communities and commuters that reside in and visit the area. Roadways that are currently impacted by the existing flood conditions are shown in **Figure C3**.

#### **4.15 REGIONAL WATER RESOURCE PLANS**

Many resource and flood damage reduction studies have been conducted on various portions of the Wild Rice Watershed over the years. Some of the investigations were regionally driven like the Red River Basin Commission, *Long Term Flood Solutions* (LTFS), while others were initiated locally. The following is a list of applicable studies that have been conducted that have included the project area:

- Red River Basin Commission – Long Term Flood Solutions (LTFS) Plan (2011)
- Wild Rice Watershed District Expanded Distributed Detention Strategy (2013)

The project will address adverse flood-related conditions locally within this sub-watershed and is part of a larger scale approach to water resources management within the Red River Basin. The Red River Basin is a multi-jurisdictional 45,000 square mile watershed. Eighty percent (80%) of the Basin resides within the United States, and the remaining 20% within Canada. Flooding along the Red River and its tributaries is a prolonged issue for the region. Substantial damages are often experienced during periods of excessive runoff. Impacts experienced along the Red River mainstem are a result of combined tributary sub-watershed contributions. Since the flood of 1997, severe flooding has been observed to occur on a more frequent basis. In response to this, the Red River Basin Commission began development of the *Long-Term Flood Solutions* report. This report was developed with broad input from local, state, and federal officials to provide recommendations for acceptable levels of flood risk within the Red River Basin.

The Wild Rice Watershed District, Expanded Distributed Detention Strategy (2013) identified flood water detention locations aimed at meeting peak flow and volume reduction goals specified in the Red River Basin Commission's LTFS. The 2013 Expanded Distributed Detention Strategy sets forth a strategy that would alleviate the flood risk throughout the basin by reducing the flood volume enough to provide a 20% peak flow reduction on the Red River main stem.



Additional water plans associated with the project area include:

- Becker County 2017-2027 Local Water Management Plan is in the process of being drafted (Becker County).
- Clay County 2017-2026 Local Water Management Plan (Clay County)
- Mahnomon County 2008-2018 Comprehensive Local Water Management Plan (Mahnomon County)
- Norman County 2017-2026 Local Water Management Plan (Norman County )

#### **4.16 RIPARIAN AREAS**

Riparian areas occur at the interface between land and a watercourse (river, stream, or tributary) or water body. Typical examples include flood plains and stream banks. They are distinctly different from surrounding lands because of unique soil and vegetation characteristics that area strongly influenced by the presence of water.

Riparian habitat throughout the South Branch project area varies. In the western extents of the project, the channel has been manipulated and ditched. One side of the channel is highly vegetated with trees and other more dense vegetation (e.g., brush, shrubs, perennials, grasses), while the opposite side was used for sites of dredged sediments excavated from the South Branch channel; these areas exist as lightly vegetated bermmed areas. East of 240<sup>th</sup> Street and south of Highway 39, the channel was straightened and limited natural riparian habitat exists. East of Highway 110, the beach-ridge area contains meandering channel with vegetated floodplains adjacent to agricultural use lands. The remainder of the South Branch channel extending further east from Ulen, including Stiner Creek, have limited riparian habitat throughout its corridor. Also, limited riparian habitat exists along the tributaries with some exception to the last 1-1.5 miles prior to their confluence with South Branch.

#### **4.17 SCENIC BEAUTY**

The scenic beauty or aesthetic nature of a viewshed includes the existing natural and built features visible to a viewer. The visual quality of a particular environment is also dependent upon the unique individual perceptions of a viewer. Changes to or introduction of new features can impact the aesthetic nature and perceived scenic beauty of an area. In particular, impact to visually sensitive areas, such as those listed below, may influence the scenic beauty of an area:

- Historic properties and potentially, archaeological resources;
- Cultural resources, traditional cultural places, and cultural landscapes;
- Areas of scenic beauty, such as scenic overlooks, and highways;
- Wilderness areas, parks, and forests;
- Wild and scenic rivers, recreational, or nationwide inventory rivers; and
- Areas adjacent to rural residences.

The project is located within a rural, agricultural setting and includes the small communities of Borup (Norman County), Ulen (Clay County), and Ogema (Becker County). The majority of the viewshed within the project area includes fields, hayland, and some rural residences. There are no designated scenic byways, scenic waterways, or other visually sensitive areas within the project area. Natural areas that

hold some aesthetically pleasing nature are covered under **Section 4.12 – Natural Areas**. Historic and cultural resource surveys are underway to determine the presence of historic and/or cultural resources.

## 4.18 SCIENTIFIC RESOURCES

According to the MN DNR, designated Scientific and Natural Areas (SNAs) include world-class peatlands in northern MN, native prairie remnants in western and southern MN, unique shorelines along Lake Superior, and the blufflands of the southeastern portion of the state. SNAs protect native plant communities, populations of rare species, and geologic features, and may contain successional processes, relict flora or fauna, natural formations, fossil evidence, habitat for concentrations of animals, or vantage points for observing migration routes or other animal concentrations. (Minnesota Department of Natural Resources, accessed Feb 23, 2018)


There is one (1) designated SNA within the project area (Norman County). The Twin Valley Prairie SNA is owned by the Nature Conservancy and encompasses approximately 252 acres within the northwestern portion of the project area (**Figure C9**). Twin Valley Prairie contains a prominent beach ridge of Glacial Lake Agassiz that supports plant communities ranging from wet to dry prairie. This site is known for its presence of wildflowers and ferns; grasses and sedges; trees and shrubs; and birds. Bird and wildlife watching, hiking, photography, and snowshoeing and cross-country skiing are typical activities in this area. Other characteristics are listed below (Minnesota Department of Natural Resources, accessed Feb 23, 2018):

- Identified as an Audobon Important Bird Area.
- This site is one of several in the area that are important to the long-term survival of the greater prairie chicken.
- Other rare and distinctive plant and animal species include Dakota skipper, sandhill crane, marbled godwit, upland sandpiper, and prairie vole.
- Neal WMA is located adjacent to Twin Valley Prairie.

## 4.19 SOLE SOURCE AQUIFERS

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) defines a sole source aquifer (SSA) as one where: 1) the aquifer supplies at least 50% of the drinking water for its service area; and 2) there are no reasonably available alternative drinking water sources should the aquifer become contaminated (U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, accessed Feb 12 2018). According to the EPA SSA dataset, there are no SSAs within the study area.

In regard to groundwater, the subsurface geology determines the locations of groundwater within the watershed. Glaciers moved over the area three or four times during the Pleistocene Age, dropping loads of rock fragments which they had picked up and transported from other locations. Neither deposits of undifferentiated glacial till nor those of the lake silts yield much water. Groundwater throughout the watershed is found in the aquifers, such as glacial drainage channel deposits, lake deltas and beach deposits, outwash bodies, and small lenses of sand and gravel interbedded within the glacial till. The regional movement of groundwater in the glacial drift is westward from the rolling uplands of the morainal



area to the lake plain and the Red River of the North. Locally, groundwater moves toward depressions and valleys within the uplands.

The most important aquifers in the western part of the County are surficial-drift aquifers made up of glacial and beach ridge deposits. Major aquifers in the eastern portion of the watershed are almost entirely made up of surficial-drift aquifers. Glacial tills cover most of this part of the watershed with some sand and gravel deposits.

The project is not located within a wellhead protection area.

## 4.20 SOCIAL ISSUES

The reoccurring flooding within the project area results in various social issues that impose pressures on the communities and rural residents within this area. Risk for flood damages exist for residents living within flood prone areas along the South Branch of the Wild Rice River and its tributaries. This flood risk has potential to result in loss or damage to personal property, and in extreme events, potentially loss of life. Residents in flood prone areas have many indirect impacts from disruptions to transportation and infrastructure. Flooding results in potential for inundation of buildings along with public and private infrastructure, transportation disruptions, and commerce disruptions. Flooding also puts a strain on the emotional and psychological health of individual communities as they deal with loss and recovery.

## 4.21 SOIL RESOURCES

### 4.21.1 HISTORICAL GEOLOGY

The project resides within a large lake plain formed by the ancient Glacial Lake Agassiz. The old shorelines of Glacial Lake Agassiz are known today as the beach ridges, which is characteristic and unique to the project area. The central portion of the project area is located along a portion of the beach ridges, and this represents an area of steep relief and an area prone to erosion and sedimentation issues. This glacial lake plain is characterized with silty, sandy, and clayey lacustrine deposits and is typically level, uniform, and featureless, broken by wetlands, meandering waterways, and old beach ridges.

### 4.21.2 TOPOGRAPHY

Topography within the project area is level to gently rolling. LiDAR data collected in 2008 and 2009 is available for the Wild Rice Watershed (Red River Basin Mapping Initiative, International Water Institute). This information indicates a maximum elevation of 1,620 (NAVD1988) on the eastern edge of the South Branch Sub-Watershed, and a minimum field elevation of approximately 885 (NAVD1988) near its outlet to the Wild Rice River. Using GIS processing techniques and LiDAR, the topographic slopes were derived for hydrologic model processing. LiDAR topography data and derived slope information is presented in **Figure C12** and **Figure C13**, respectively.

### 4.21.3 SOILS

Soils information provided by the USDA through the SSURGO Soils Database was compiled and reviewed for the Wild Rice Watershed (Soil Survey Staff). The SSURGO Soils Database allows for

extraction of various characteristics; the following variables were extracted from the database and are presented in **Figures C14-C16** (Farmland Classifications are covered under **Section 4.13**):

- Hydrologic Soils Group (**Figure C14**)
- Crop Productivity Index (**Figure C15**)
- Normal Year Range Production (**Figure C16**)

Hydrologic soil groups are classified by the NRCS into four groups (A, B, C, and D) based on the soil's runoff potential; A's generally have the smallest runoff potential and D's have the greatest (Purdue Engineering). The hydrologic soil groups within the South Branch Sub-Watershed are dominated by *Group B* soils (silt loam or loam; moderate infiltration rate when thoroughly wetted) with scattered *Group D* soils (clay loam/silty clay loam/sandy clay/silty clay/clay; highest runoff potential, low infiltration). *Group A* (sand/loamy sand/sandy loams; low runoff potential, high infiltration rates) and *Group D* soils are present through the Lake Agassiz Beach Ridge, and slightly heavier *Group C* soils (sandy clay loam; low infiltration rates when thoroughly wetted) cover the outlet area into the Wild Rice River.

With exception to areas near the beach ridge, Crop Productivity Index (CPI) and Farmland Classification data suggest that the entire sub-watershed has the capability of highly productive farm land. Nearly all of the sub-watershed is prime farmland or could be prime farmland if it was drained. However, isolated areas along the beach ridge are classified as not prime farmland.

As displayed on **Figure C16** the upper half of the sub-watershed exhibits average Normal Year Range Production levels, with much lower through the beach ridge and significantly higher levels downstream of the beach ridge.

## 4.22 TRIBAL LANDS

The eastern portion of the project area is located within the White Earth Reservation. The White Earth Reservation is located in Becker, Clearwater, and Mahnommen counties in north-central Minnesota. Created in 1867 by a treaty between the United States and the Mississippi Band of Chippewa Indians, it is one of seven Chippewa reservations in Minnesota (White Earth Nation - Gaa waabaiganikaag, accessed Feb 13 2018). Refer to **Figure C17** to see the location of the White Earth Reservation in relation to the project area.

## 4.23 WATER QUALITY

Section 303(d) of the Clean Water Act of 1986 (CWA) requires states to monitor and assess their waters to determine if they meet water quality standards supporting the beneficial uses they are intended to provide (33 U.S.C. 1313(d)). Waters that do not meet their designated uses due to water quality standard violations are listed as impaired. States are required to develop a list of impaired waters that require total maximum daily load (TMDL) studies and to submit an updated list of impaired waters to the USEPS every two years. The Minnesota Pollution Control Agency (MPCA) maintains this list of impaired waters for the State of Minnesota.

According to the MPCA 2018 proposed Impaired Waters list, the South Branch Wild Rice River is listed as an impaired stream. This water body has a 2B (aquatic life and recreation; cool and warm water fisheries (not protected for drinking water)), 3C (industrial use and cooling) use class and is listed impaired for aquatic life and aquatic recreation. Currently, total maximum daily load (TMDL) studies are needed for Escherichia coli and aquatic macroinvertebrates bioassessments within the South Branch Wild Rice River. (Minnesota Pollution Control Agency, accessed Feb. 20, 2018)

## 4.24 WATER RESOURCES

The project area is characterized with prairie potholes and the ancient Lake Agassiz beach ridges. Water resources residing within the project area include streams, lakes, and wetlands (wetlands are discussed in Section 4.27). Major, named streams and lakes residing within the project area are listed below and shown in **Figure C18**:

### Streams

- South Branch Wild Rice River
- Coon Creek
- Spring Creek,
- Stiner Creek

### Lakes

- Baker Lake
- Dump Ground Lake
- Johnson Lake
- Melbye Lake
- Morrison Lake
- Ogema Lake
- Otto Lake
- Rat Farm Lake
- Rustad Lake
- Sand Lake
- Tilde Lake

The South Branch Sub-Watershed is somewhat elongated and relatively narrow, which can lead to offset peaks between the upstream area and the downstream area during given flood events. Runoff from the upstream portion of the South Branch Sub-Watershed is currently regulated by the Upper Becker Dam and the Lower Becker Dam. In the lower reach of the South Branch, channel configuration is a "perched channel" in which the channel banks have formed higher than the adjacent field elevations. Therefore, the channel has limited capacity and will breakout into the fields and flow overland during larger events. The upstream portion of the South Branch is relatively well channelized and flooding is mostly contained to the main channel.

Minnesota public waters are designated as such to indicate which lakes, wetlands, and watercourses over which the MN DNR has regulatory jurisdiction. According to the MN DNR, Public Waters Basin and Watercourse Delineations GIS data there are 78 designated public waters basins and 19 designated public waters watercourses (including segments of South Branch) residing within the project area, which are shown in **Figure C19**. It is important to note that the Norman County, Protected Waters and Wetlands maps (MN DNR, 1989), identify the most northwestern extents of South Branch as protected public

ditches. The status of waters will be further assessed during the alternatives and environmental consequences portion of this document.

Lastly, there are three (3) dams located within the project area. All three are operated and maintained by the Wild Rice Watershed District. **Table 15** provides additional data on each.

*Table 16: Dams within the Project Area*

Name	Location	Construction Date	End of Design Life
Rockwell (MN00825)	Rockwell Township	1974	2024
South Branch Wild Rice Upper (MN00912)	Riceville Twp./Spring Creek Twp.	1981	2031
South Branch Wild Rice Lower (MN00913)	Riceville Twp.	1981	2031

End of design life is based on a standard 50-year life expectancy for these types of structures.

#### 4.25 WATERS OF THE UNITED STATES, INCLUDING SPECIAL AQUATIC SITES

Section 404 of the federal Clean Water Act (CWA) regulates discharges of dredged or fill material into waters of the United States (WOTUS), including wetlands (wetlands are discussed in Section 5.29). The term WOTUS is defined in 40 CFR 230.3(s). The current definition of WOTUS includes:

- All waters which are currently used, or were used in the past, or may be susceptible to use in interstate or foreign commerce, including all waters which are subject to the ebb and flow of the tide;
- All interstate waters including interstate wetlands;
- All other waters such as intrastate lakes, rivers, streams (including intermittent streams), mudflats, sandflats, wetlands, sloughs, prairie potholes, wet meadows, playa lakes, or natural ponds, the use, degradation, or destruction of which could affect interstate or foreign commerce including any such waters:
  - which are or could be used by interstate or foreign travelers for recreational or other purposes; or
  - from which fish or shellfish are or could be taken and sold in interstate or foreign commerce; or
  - which are used or could be used for industrial purposes by industries in interstate commerce;
- All impoundments of waters otherwise defined as waters of the United States under this definition;
- Tributaries of waters identified in paragraphs (s)(1) through (4) of this section;
- The territorial sea;
- Wetlands adjacent to waters (other than waters that are themselves wetlands) identified in paragraphs (s)(1) through (6) of this section; waste treatment systems, including treatment ponds



or lagoons designed to meet the requirements of CWA (other than cooling ponds as defined in 40 CFR 423.11(m) which also meet the criteria of this definition) are not waters of the United States.

Water resources within the project area are shown in **Figure C18**. The South Branch Wild Rice River is located toward the southern (upstream) end of the Red River Basin and is a tributary to the Red River of the North; the Red River of the North is identified as a Section 10, navigable waterway. The study area includes many wetlands, as identified through the National Wetland Inventory (NWI) (see **Section 4.26 – Wetlands**). While an official Jurisdictional Determination has not been completed within the study area (a request to the US Army Corps of Engineers to identify WOTUS) it is assumed that at least a portion of these wetlands may be identified as WOTUS. Wetlands that are generally isolated on the landscape (separated by upland from other water resources) are likely not waters of the US, and therefore would not be regulated under Section 404 of the Clean Water Act (CWA).

There are no Section 10 waterways within the study area, however, as stated above, the Red River of the North is identified as a Section 10 waterway. There are no special aquatic sites within the study area.

## 4.26 WETLANDS

The project resides within the Prairie Pothole Region, which represents an area that is characterized with prairie potholes, or depressional wetlands (primarily freshwater marshes) that may be permanent or temporary in nature (EPA, accessed Feb 22, 2018). Wetlands are defined in 1977 Executive Order 11990, Protection of Wetlands, and in Section 404 of the CWA as those areas that are inundated by surface or ground water frequently enough to support, under normal circumstances, a prevalence of vegetative or aquatic life that requires saturated or seasonally saturated soil conditions for growth and reproduction. There are three parameters that define a wetland: hydric soils, hydrophytic vegetation, and hydrology (Environmental Laboratory, 1987).

The USFWS, National Wetlands Inventory (NWI) was developed in 1970's to aid in wetland conservation efforts. The NWI classifies wetlands into different types using the USFWS Cowardin Classification System (Cowardin). The US Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) National Wetlands Inventory (NWI) data was extracted for the South Branch Sub-Watershed. The sub-watershed is covered with approximately 13,500 acres (8%) of wetlands and ponds as presented in **Figure C20**. The USFWS NWI data provides a general index of wetlands within the South Branch Sub-Watershed, however more detailed field review may be needed to assess wetlands throughout the planning process.

Table 17: NWI (2016) - Wetlands in Project Area

Wetland Type	Estimated Area
Freshwater Emergent Wetland	9,890 acres (15 mi <sup>2</sup> )
Freshwater Forested / Shrub Wetland	1,232 acres (2 mi <sup>2</sup> )
Lake	1,095 acres (2 mi <sup>2</sup> )

Wetland Type	Estimated Area
Riverine	888 acres (1 mi <sup>2</sup> )
Freshwater Pond	396 acres (1 mi <sup>2</sup> )
<b>Total NWI Wetland Areas</b>	<b>13,500 acres (21 mi<sup>2</sup>)</b>

Source: USFWS, *National Wetlands Inventory* (NWI) dataset (2016). <https://www.fws.gov/wetlands/>.

## 5 ALTERNATIVES (REVIEW POINT NO. 4)

xxxx

### 5.1 FORMULATION PROCESS

Xxxx

### 5.2 ALTERNATIVES ELIMINATED FROM DETAILED STUDY

xxx

### 5.3 ALTERNATIVE DESCRIPTION

xxxxx

#### 5.3.1 ALTERNATIVE NO. 1 – NO ACTION ALTERNATIVE (FUTURE WITHOUT PROJECT CONDITION (FWOP))

xxxx

#### 5.3.2 ALTERNATIVE NO. 1 – 1111111

xxxx

#### 5.3.3 ALTERNATIVE NO. 2 – 2222222

xxxx

#### 5.3.4 ALTERNATIVE NO. 3 – 3333333

xxxx

### 5.4 SUMMARY AND COMPARISON OF ALTERNATIVE PLANS TABLE

xxxxx

## **6 ENVIRONMENTAL CONSEQUENCES (REVIEW POINT NO. 5)**

This section provides the analytical basis for the comparisons of effects presented in the alternatives. This section will describe the economic, environmental, and social effects of each alternative. The relevant concerns identified in the scoping section are discussed in this section of the plan for each alternative.

### **6.1 NATIONAL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT (NED) P&G**

XXXX

### **6.2 AIR QUALITY**

XXXX

### **6.3 CORAL REEFS**

XXXX

### **6.4 CULTURAL RESOURCES**

XXXX

### **6.5 ECOLOGICALLY CRITICAL AREAS**

XXXX

### **6.6 ENDANGERED AND THREATENED SPECIES**

XXX

### **6.7 ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE AND CIVIL RIGHTS**

XXX

### **6.8 ESSENTIAL FISH HABITAT**

XXX

### **6.9 FISH AND WILDLIFE (INCLUDING COORDINATION REQUIREMENTS)**

XXX

### **6.10 FLOODPLAIN MANAGEMENT**

XXX





## **6.11 FOREST RESOURCES**

XXX

## **6.12 INVASIVE SPECIES**

XXX

## **6.13 LAND USE**

XXX

## **6.14 MIGRATORY BIRDS**

XXXX

## **6.15 NATURAL AREAS**

XXXX

## **6.16 PARKLANDS**

XXXX

## **6.17 PRIME AND UNIQUE FARMLAND, AND FARMLAND OF STATEWIDE SIGNIFICANCE**

XXXX

## **6.18 PUBLIC HEALTH AND SAFETY**

XXX

## **6.19 REGIONAL WATER RESOURCE PLANS (INCLUDING COASTAL ZONE PLANS)**

XXXX

## **6.20 RIPARIAN AREAS**

XXXX

## **6.21 SCENIC BEAUTY**

XXXX

## **6.22 SCIENTIFIC RESOURCES**

XXX



## **6.23 SOLE SOURCE AQUIFERS**

XXX

## **6.24 SOCIAL ISSUES**

XXX

## **6.25 SOIL RESOURCES**

XXX

## **6.26 TRIBAL LANDS**

XXX

## **6.27 WATER QUALITY**

XXX

## **6.28 WATER RESOURCES**

XXXX

## **6.29 WATERS OF THE UNITED STATES, INCLUDING SPECIAL AQUATIC SITES**

XXXX

## **6.30 WETLANDS**

XXXX

## **6.31 WILD AND SCENIC RIVERS**

XXXX

## **6.32 OTHER CONCERNS IDENTIFIED BY SLO, AGENCIES, AND THE PUBLIC**

XXXX

## **6.33 CUMMULATIVE IMPACTS**

Describe the impacts that result from the incremental impact of the action when added to other past, present, and reasonably foreseeable future actions regardless of what agency (Federal or non-Federal) or person undertakes such other actions. Cumulative impacts can result from individually minor but

collectively significant actions taking place over a period of time. Further guidance can be found in the NECH and at the "Considering Cumulative Effects Under the National Environmental Policy Act" Web site:

<http://ceq.hss.doe.gov/nepa/ccenepa/ccenepa.htm>.

## **6.34 COMPLIANCE WITH FEDERAL, STATE, AND LOCAL LAWS (INCLUDING ANY PERMIT REQUIREMENTS).**

Xxxx

## **7 CONSULTATION, COORDINATION, AND PUBLIC PARTICIPATION (REVIEW POINT NO. 6)**

### **7.1 AGENCY CONSULTATION**

#### **7.1.1 LOCAL**

xxxx

#### **7.1.2 STATE**

- 7.1.2.1 MINNESOTA DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES**
- 7.1.2.2 MINNESOTA STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICE**

#### **7.1.3 FEDERAL**

- 7.1.3.1 U.S. ARMY CORPS OF ENGINEERS**
- 7.1.3.2 U.S. FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE**

#### **7.1.4 TRIBAL**

### **7.2 PROJECT TEAM COORDINATION**

xxxx

### **7.3 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**

Xxxx

## **8 THE PREFERRED ALTERNATIVE (REVIEW POINT NO. 6)**

xxx

## 8.1 DESCRIPTION

XXXX

## 8.2 RATIONALE FOR PREFERENCE

XXX

## 8.3 NATIONAL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT (NED) PLAN

XXX

## 8.4 MITIGATION FEATURES

XXX

## 8.5 PERMITS AND COMPLIANCE REQUIREMENTS

XX

## 8.6 OPINION OF PROBABLE COSTS

XX

## 8.7 INSTALLATION SEQUENCE AND RESPONSIBILITIES

XXX

## 8.8 FINANCING OF THE PROJECT

XX

## 8.9 OPERATION, MAINTENANCE, AND REPLACEMENT RESPONSIBILITIES

XXX

## 8.10 ECONOMIC AND STRUCTURAL TABLES

Economic tables must include information relevant to the costs and benefits of the project plan. Structural tables must include information relevant to the design of the measure. The economic and structural tables (tables 1-6) are found in the exhibits in 390-NWPM, Part 506, Subpart B.

## 9 REFERENCES (REVIEW POINT NO. 6)

This section provides the sources of the information contained in the document. If supporting

data are incorporated by reference, then the material being referenced must be briefly summarized for the reader to understand the context of the material being incorporated. This section also includes information on how the reader can arrange to obtain and review the material being referenced. Material based on proprietary data that are not available for review may not be incorporated by reference (40 CFR Section 1502.21).

## **10 LIST OF PREPARERS (REVIEW POINT NO. 6)**

The list of preparers includes the key NRCS State, area, and field office personnel who were directly responsible for significant input in preparing the watershed project plan. Consultants, individuals, and personnel from other agencies are included if they made significant input. The list must include the person's name, current title, education, experience, employer, and other pertinent qualifications, publications, and professional licenses (see exhibit "List of Preparers—Example" in 390-NWPH, Part 606, Subpart B, Section 606.22).

## **11 DISTRIBUTION LIST (REVIEW POINT NO. 6)**

This is a listing of the agencies, organizations, and persons to whom the watershed project plan-EA or Plan-EIS is sent.

## **12 INDEX (REVIEW POINT NO. 6)**

This section lists key words, phrases, or subheadings along with appropriate page numbers. Examples of entries include alternatives, archeological resources, installation costs, land treatment, mitigation, NED plan, operation, maintenance, replacement, plan elements, sedimentation, and water quality. If other agencies or organizations are mentioned in the document, they must be included in the index.



# Appendix A

## Comments and Responses

### A1: Cooperative Agencies Information

- Letters of Invitation
- US Army Corps of Engineers Cooperating Agency Request





United States Department of Agriculture

June 13, 2016

Natural Resources  
Conservation Service

Minnesota  
State Office

375 Jackson Street  
Suite 600  
St. Paul, MN 55101

Ph: 651-602-7900  
Fax 855-823-7656  
[www.mn.nrcs.usda.gov](http://www.mn.nrcs.usda.gov)

Regulatory Functions Branch  
US Army Corps of Engineers  
180 5<sup>th</sup> St. East, Suite 700  
St. Paul, MN 55101-1678

Dear Sir:

Subject: Formal Request to be a Cooperating Agency on the Wild Rice River Watershed  
District – South Branch Wild Rice River Watershed Plan – Environmental  
Assessment

In accordance with the Council on Environmental Quality regulations implementing the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) at 40 CFR Part 1501.6, NRCS is formally requesting that your agency become a cooperating agency in the planning and development of the Wild Rice River Watershed District – South Branch Wild Rice River Watershed Plan – Environmental Assessment (EA).

This request is being made because your agency has been identified as having special expertise or jurisdiction by law related to this project. The EA is being prepared to fulfill NRCS NEPA compliance responsibilities pertaining to our potential federal financial assistance through the Watershed Protection and Flood Prevention Program (Public Law 83-566) for this project. As your agency may also have NEPA compliance responsibilities concerning this project or other future projects that may be evaluated in this EA, preparation of this EA should also assist in fulfilling environmental review requirements for your agency or other federal agencies and meet the NEPA intent of reducing duplication and delay between agencies.

If your agency is unable to participate as a Cooperating Agency, please return a written explanation why your agency can not participate. Please note that a response declining to be a Cooperating Agency is required to also be submitted to the Council on Environmental Quality per 40 CFR Part 1501.6(c). Upon acceptance of this invitation, roles can be defined in an informal agreement or formal MOU can be established.

Thank you for your timely response and cooperation with this project. If you have any questions or comments, please contact Keith Weston, Red River Basin Coordinator on my staff at [keith.weston@nd.usda.gov](mailto:keith.weston@nd.usda.gov) or via phone at 701-356-6641 or cell phone 701-318-8566.

Sincerely,

CATHEE PULLMAN  
State Conservationist

cc: Kevin Ruud, Administrator, Wild Rice River Watershed District, 11 East 5th Avenue,  
Ada Minnesota 56510  
Keith Weston, Red River Basin Coordinator, NRCS, 1120 28th Avenue N., Ste B, Fargo, ND



United States Department of Agriculture

June 13, 2016

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Regional Director  
US Fish and Wildlife Service  
5600 American Blvd. West, Suite 990  
Bloomington, MN 55437-1458

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Subject: Formal Request to be a Cooperating Agency on the Wild Rice River Watershed  
District – South Branch Wild Rice River Watershed Plan – Environmental  
Assessment

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State Conservationist

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Kevin Ruud, Administrator, Wild Rice River Watershed District, 11 East 5th Avenue,  
Ada Minnesota 56510

Keith Weston, Red River Basin Coordinator, NRCS, 1120 28th Ave. N., Ste B, Fargo, ND



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www.mn.nrcs.usda.gov

Sarah J. Beimers  
Manager, Government Programs and Compliance  
State Historic Preservation Office  
345 Kellogg Boulevard West  
St. Paul, MN 55102

Dear Ms. Beimers:

Subject: Invitation to Participate in NRCS RCPP Watershed Planning Process on the Green Meadow Watershed Plan-Environmental Assessment, Moccasin Creek Watershed Plan-Environmental Assessment and South Branch of the Wild Rice River Watershed Plan-Environmental Assessment

The Wild Rice Watershed District (WRWD) made application for assistance from the Red River Retention Authority (RRRA) for Watershed Planning under the Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP), administered by the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS). The RRRA authorized the WRWD to proceed with a Cooperative Agreement with NRCS to perform Watershed Planning in the Green Meadow, Moccasin Creek and South Branch of the Wild Rice River watersheds. The WRWD is committed to develop solutions to flooding, erosion, drainage issues and related natural resource concerns within these watersheds. This work includes developing a NRCS watershed plan and National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) document. RCPP watershed plans are required to conform to Watershed Protection and Flood Prevention Program (Public Law 83-566).

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During the planning process a number of public meetings are scheduled. You will be notified of such meetings. I hope you or a representative from your office can attend and participate at these meetings.

The NRCS and the WRWD requests your office identify and provide any new point of contact information to the WRWD administrator as it relates to Green Meadow Watershed-EA, Moccasin Creek Watershed-EA and South Branch of the Wild Rice River Watershed-EA.

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Sincerely,

CATHEE PULLMAN  
State Conservationist

cc:

Kevin Ruud, Administrator, Wild Rice Watershed District, 11 E 5th Ave, Ada, MN 56510  
Keith Weston, Red River Basin Coordinator, NRCS, 1120 28th Ave. N., Ste B, Fargo, ND 58102



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www.mn.nrcs.usda.gov

John Murray  
Tribal Historic Preservation Office  
The Blackfeet Nation  
850 Government Square  
Browning, MT 59417

Dear John Murray:

Subject: Invitation to Participate in NRCS RCPP Watershed Planning Process on the Green Meadow Watershed Plan-Environmental Assessment, Moccasin Creek Watershed Plan-Environmental Assessment and South Branch of the Wild Rice River Watershed Plan-Environmental Assessment

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Sincerely,

CATHEE PULLMAN  
State Conservationist

Enclosure

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Kevin Ruud, Administrator, Wild Rice Watershed District, 11 E 5th Ave, Ada, MN 56510  
Keith Weston, Red River Basin Coordinator, NRCS, 1120 28th Ave. N., Ste B, Fargo, ND 58102



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Alvin Windy Boy, Sr.  
Tribal Historic Preservation Office  
Chippewa Cree Tribe of the Rocky Boy's Reservation  
9740 Upper Box Elder Road  
P.O. Box 230  
Box Elder, MT 59521

Dear Alvin Windy Boy, Sr.:

Subject: Invitation to Participate in NRCS RCPP Watershed Planning Process on the Green Meadow Watershed Plan-Environmental Assessment, Moccasin Creek Watershed Plan-Environmental Assessment and South Branch of the Wild Rice River Watershed Plan-Environmental Assessment

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State Conservationist

Enclosure

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Kevin Ruud, Administrator, Wild Rice Watershed District, 11 E 5th Ave, Ada, MN 56510  
Keith Weston, Red River Basin Coordinator, NRCS, 1120 28th Ave. N., Ste B, Fargo, ND 58102



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Ira L. Matt  
Tribal Historic Preservation Office  
Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes  
P.O. Box 278  
Pablo, MT 59855

Dear Ira L. Matt:

Subject: Invitation to Participate in NRCS RCPP Watershed Planning Process on the Green Meadow Watershed Plan-Environmental Assessment, Moccasin Creek Watershed Plan-Environmental Assessment and South Branch of the Wild Rice River Watershed Plan-Environmental Assessment

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CATHEE PULLMAN  
State Conservationist

Enclosure

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Kevin Ruud, Administrator, Wild Rice Watershed District, 11 E 5th Ave, Ada, MN 56510  
Keith Weston, Red River Basin Coordinator, NRCS, 1120 28th Ave. N., Ste B, Fargo, ND 58102



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www.mn.nrcs.usda.gov

Emerson Bull Chief  
Tribal Historic Preservation Office  
The Crow Tribe of Indians  
P.O. Box 159  
Crow Agency, MT 59002

Dear Emerson Bull Chief:

Subject: Invitation to Participate in NRCS RCPP Watershed Planning Process on the Green Meadow Watershed Plan-Environmental Assessment, Moccasin Creek Watershed Plan-Environmental Assessment and South Branch of the Wild Rice River Watershed Plan-Environmental Assessment

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CATHEE PULLMAN  
State Conservationist

Enclosure

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Kevin Ruud, Administrator, Wild Rice Watershed District, 11 E 5th Ave, Ada, MN 56510  
Keith Weston, Red River Basin Coordinator, NRCS, 1120 28th Ave. N., Ste B, Fargo, ND 58102





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Michael J. Black Wolf  
Tribal Historic Preservation Office  
Fort Belknap Indian Community  
656 Agency Main Street  
Harlem, MT 59526

Dear Michael J. Black Wolf:

Subject: Invitation to Participate in NRCS RCPP Watershed Planning Process on the Green Meadow Watershed Plan-Environmental Assessment, Moccasin Creek Watershed Plan-Environmental Assessment and South Branch of the Wild Rice River Watershed Plan-Environmental Assessment

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Keith Weston, Red River Basin Coordinator, NRCS, 1120 28th Ave. N., Ste B, Fargo, ND 58102



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Darrell Youpee  
Tribal Historic Preservation Office  
Fort Peck Assiniboine and Sioux Tribes  
501 Medicine Bear Road  
P.O. Box 1027  
Poplar, MT 59255

Dear Darrell Youpee:

Subject: Invitation to Participate in NRCS RCPP Watershed Planning Process on the Green Meadow Watershed Plan-Environmental Assessment, Moccasin Creek Watershed Plan-Environmental Assessment and South Branch of the Wild Rice River Watershed Plan-Environmental Assessment

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CATHEE PULLMAN  
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Kevin Ruud, Administrator, Wild Rice Watershed District, 11 E 5th Ave, Ada, MN 56510  
Keith Weston, Red River Basin Coordinator, NRCS, 1120 28th Ave. N., Ste B, Fargo, ND 58102



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www.mn.nrcs.usda.gov

Teanna Limpy  
Tribal Historic Preservation Office  
Northern Cheyenne Tribe  
P.O. Box 128  
Lame Deer, MT 59043

Dear Teanna Limpy:

Subject: Invitation to Participate in NRCS RCPP Watershed Planning Process on the Green Meadow Watershed Plan-Environmental Assessment, Moccasin Creek Watershed Plan-Environmental Assessment and South Branch of the Wild Rice River Watershed Plan-Environmental Assessment

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Keith Weston, Red River Basin Coordinator, NRCS, 1120 28th Ave. N., Ste B, Fargo, ND 58102



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Wilfred Ferris  
Tribal Historic Preservation Office  
Shoshone Tribe of the Wind River Reservation  
P.O. Box 538  
Fort Washakie, WY 82514

Dear Wilfred Ferris:

Subject: Invitation to Participate in NRCS RCPP Watershed Planning Process on the Green Meadow Watershed Plan-Environmental Assessment, Moccasin Creek Watershed Plan-Environmental Assessment and South Branch of the Wild Rice River Watershed Plan-Environmental Assessment

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cc:

Kevin Ruud, Administrator, Wild Rice Watershed District, 11 E 5th Ave, Ada, MN 56510  
Keith Weston, Red River Basin Coordinator, NRCS, 1120 28th Ave. N., Ste B, Fargo, ND 58102



June 29, 2016

Natural Resources  
Conservation Service

Minnesota  
State Office

375 Jackson Street  
Suite 600  
St. Paul, MN 55101

Ph: 651-602-7900  
Fax 855-823-7656  
www.mn.nrcs.usda.gov

Darlene Conrad  
Tribal Historic Preservation Office  
Northern Arapaho Tribe  
P.O. Box 396  
Ft. Washakie, WY 82514

Dear Darlene Conrad:

Subject: Invitation to Participate in NRCS RCPP Watershed Planning Process on the Green Meadow Watershed Plan-Environmental Assessment, Moccasin Creek Watershed Plan-Environmental Assessment and South Branch of the Wild Rice River Watershed Plan-Environmental Assessment

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Sincerely,

CATHEE PULLMAN  
State Conservationist

Enclosure

cc:

Kevin Ruud, Administrator, Wild Rice Watershed District, 11 E 5th Ave, Ada, MN 56510  
Keith Weston, Red River Basin Coordinator, NRCS, 1120 28th Ave. N., Ste B, Fargo, ND 58102



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Elgin Crows Breast  
Tribal Historic Preservation Office  
Mandan, Hidatsa and Arikara Nation  
404 Frontage Road  
New Town, ND 58763

Dear Elgin Crows Breast:

Subject: Invitation to Participate in NRCS RCPP Watershed Planning Process on the Green Meadow Watershed Plan-Environmental Assessment, Moccasin Creek Watershed Plan-Environmental Assessment and South Branch of the Wild Rice River Watershed Plan-Environmental Assessment

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Dr. Erich Longie  
Tribal Historic Preservation Office  
Spirit Lake Tribe of Fort Totten  
P.O. Box 76  
Fort Totten, ND 58335

Dear Dr. Erich Longie:

Subject: Invitation to Participate in NRCS RCPP Watershed Planning Process on the Green Meadow Watershed Plan-Environmental Assessment, Moccasin Creek Watershed Plan-Environmental Assessment and South Branch of the Wild Rice River Watershed Plan-Environmental Assessment

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Waste'Win Young  
Tribal Historic Preservation Office  
Standing Rock Sioux Tribe  
P.O. Box D  
Fort Yates, ND 58538

Dear Waste'Win Young:

Subject: Invitation to Participate in NRCS RCPP Watershed Planning Process on the Green Meadow Watershed Plan-Environmental Assessment, Moccasin Creek Watershed Plan-Environmental Assessment and South Branch of the Wild Rice River Watershed Plan-Environmental Assessment

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CATHEE PULLMAN  
State Conservationist

Enclosure

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Keith Weston, Red River Basin Coordinator, NRCS, 1120 28th Ave. N., Ste B, Fargo, ND 58102





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Bruce Nadean  
Tribal Historic Preservation Office  
Turtle Mountain Band of Chippewa  
P.O. Box 900  
Belcourt, ND 58316

Dear Bruce Nadean:

Subject: Invitation to Participate in NRCS RCPP Watershed Planning Process on the Green Meadow Watershed Plan-Environmental Assessment, Moccasin Creek Watershed Plan-Environmental Assessment and South Branch of the Wild Rice River Watershed Plan-Environmental Assessment

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Bill Latady  
Tribal Historic Preservation Office  
Bois Forte Band of Chippewa Indians  
1500 Bois Forte Road  
Tower, MN 55790

Dear Bill Latady:

Subject: Invitation to Participate in NRCS RCPP Watershed Planning Process on the Green Meadow Watershed Plan-Environmental Assessment, Moccasin Creek Watershed Plan-Environmental Assessment and South Branch of the Wild Rice River Watershed Plan-Environmental Assessment

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www.mn.nrcs.usda.gov

Marcu Ammesmaki  
Tribal Historic Preservation Office  
Fond du Lac Band of Lake Superior Chippewa  
1720 Big Lake Road  
Cloquet, MN 55720

Dear Marcu Ammesmaki:

Subject: Invitation to Participate in NRCS RCPP Watershed Planning Process on the Green Meadow Watershed Plan-Environmental Assessment, Moccasin Creek Watershed Plan-Environmental Assessment and South Branch of the Wild Rice River Watershed Plan-Environmental Assessment

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Mary Ann Gagnon  
Tribal Historic Preservation Office  
Grand Portage Band of Lake Superior Chippewa  
P.O. Box 428  
Grand Portage, MN 55605

Dear Mary Ann Gagnon:

Subject: Invitation to Participate in NRCS RCPP Watershed Planning Process on the Green Meadow Watershed Plan-Environmental Assessment, Moccasin Creek Watershed Plan-Environmental Assessment and South Branch of the Wild Rice River Watershed Plan-Environmental Assessment

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www.mn.nrcs.usda.gov

Amy Burnette  
Tribal Historic Preservation Office  
Leech Lake Band of Ojibwe  
190 Sailstar Drive NW  
Cass Lake, MN 56633

Dear Amy Burnette:

Subject: Invitation to Participate in NRCS RCPP Watershed Planning Process on the Green Meadow Watershed Plan-Environmental Assessment, Moccasin Creek Watershed Plan-Environmental Assessment and South Branch of the Wild Rice River Watershed Plan-Environmental Assessment

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Michael Bergervoet, M.S.  
Tribal Historic Preservation Office  
Prairie Island Indian Community of Minnesota  
5636 Sturgeon Lake Road  
Welch, MN 55089

Dear Michael Bergervoet, M.S.:

Subject: Invitation to Participate in NRCS RCPP Watershed Planning Process on the Green Meadow Watershed Plan-Environmental Assessment, Moccasin Creek Watershed Plan-Environmental Assessment and South Branch of the Wild Rice River Watershed Plan-Environmental Assessment

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Grace Goldtooth-Campos  
Tribal Historic Preservation Office  
Lower Sioux Indian Community  
39527 Reservation Highway 1  
Morton, MN 56270

Dear Grace Goldtooth-Campos:

Subject: Invitation to Participate in NRCS RCPP Watershed Planning Process on the Green Meadow Watershed Plan-Environmental Assessment, Moccasin Creek Watershed Plan-Environmental Assessment and South Branch of the Wild Rice River Watershed Plan-Environmental Assessment

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If you have any questions or comments, please contact Keith Weston, Red River Basin Coordinator on my staff at keith.weston@nd.usda.gov or via phone at 701-356-6641 or cell phone 701-318-8566 or Kevin Ruud, WRWD Administrator at Kevin@wildricewatershed.org or by phone at (218) 784-5501.

Sincerely,

CATHEE PULLMAN  
State Conservationist

Enclosure

cc:

Kevin Ruud, Administrator, Wild Rice Watershed District, 11 E 5th Ave, Ada, MN 56510  
Keith Weston, Red River Basin Coordinator, NRCS, 1120 28th Ave. N., Ste B, Fargo, ND 58102



June 29, 2016

Natural Resources  
Conservation Service

Minnesota  
State Office

375 Jackson Street  
Suite 600  
St. Paul, MN 55101

Ph: 651-602-7900  
Fax 855-823-7656  
www.mn.nrcs.usda.gov

Natalie Weyaus  
Tribal Historic Preservation Office  
Mille Lacs Band of Ojibwe  
43408 Oodena Drive  
Onamia, MN 56359

Dear Natalie Weyaus:

Subject: Invitation to Participate in NRCS RCPP Watershed Planning Process on the Green Meadow Watershed Plan-Environmental Assessment, Moccasin Creek Watershed Plan-Environmental Assessment and South Branch of the Wild Rice River Watershed Plan-Environmental Assessment

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Enclosure

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Sara Childers  
Tribal Historic Preservation Office  
Upper Sioux Community  
P.O. Box 147  
Granite Falls, MN 56241

Dear Sara Childers:

Subject: Invitation to Participate in NRCS RCPP Watershed Planning Process on the Green Meadow Watershed Plan-Environmental Assessment, Moccasin Creek Watershed Plan-Environmental Assessment and South Branch of the Wild Rice River Watershed Plan-Environmental Assessment

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State Conservationist

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Keith Weston, Red River Basin Coordinator, NRCS, 1120 28th Ave. N., Ste B, Fargo, ND 58102



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Cayla Olson  
Tribal Historic Preservation Office  
White Earth Nation of Minnesota Chippewa  
P.O. Box 418  
White Earth, MN 56591

Dear Cayla Olson:

Subject: Invitation to Participate in NRCS RCPP Watershed Planning Process on the Green Meadow Watershed Plan-Environmental Assessment, Moccasin Creek Watershed Plan-Environmental Assessment and South Branch of the Wild Rice River Watershed Plan-Environmental Assessment

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State Conservationist

Enclosure

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Keith Weston, Red River Basin Coordinator, NRCS, 1120 28th Ave. N., Ste B, Fargo, ND 58102



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Steven Vance  
Tribal Historic Preservation Office  
Cheyenne River Sioux Tribe  
P.O. Box 590  
Eagle Butte, SD 57625

Dear Steven Vance:

Subject: Invitation to Participate in NRCS RCPP Watershed Planning Process on the Green Meadow Watershed Plan-Environmental Assessment, Moccasin Creek Watershed Plan-Environmental Assessment and South Branch of the Wild Rice River Watershed Plan-Environmental Assessment

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State Conservationist

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Keith Weston, Red River Basin Coordinator, NRCS, 1120 28th Ave. N., Ste B, Fargo, ND 58102



June 29, 2016

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Darrell Zephier  
Tribal Historic Preservation Office  
Crow Creek Sioux Tribe  
P.O. Box 50  
Fort Thompson, SD 57339

Dear Darrell Zephier:

Subject: Invitation to Participate in NRCS RCPP Watershed Planning Process on the Green Meadow Watershed Plan-Environmental Assessment, Moccasin Creek Watershed Plan-Environmental Assessment and South Branch of the Wild Rice River Watershed Plan-Environmental Assessment

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James B. Weston  
Tribal Historic Preservation Office  
Flandreau Santee Sioux Tribe  
P.O. Box 285  
Flandreau, SD 57028

Dear James B. Weston:

Subject: Invitation to Participate in NRCS RCPP Watershed Planning Process on the Green Meadow Watershed Plan-Environmental Assessment, Moccasin Creek Watershed Plan-Environmental Assessment and South Branch of the Wild Rice River Watershed Plan-Environmental Assessment

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State Conservationist

Enclosure

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Keith Weston, Red River Basin Coordinator, NRCS, 1120 28th Ave. N., Ste B, Fargo, ND 58102



June 29, 2016

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Dennis Yellow Thunder  
Tribal Historic Preservation Office  
Oglala Sioux Tribe  
P.O. Box 129  
Kyle, SD 57752

Dear Dennis Yellow Thunder:

Subject: Invitation to Participate in NRCS RCPP Watershed Planning Process on the Green Meadow Watershed Plan-Environmental Assessment, Moccasin Creek Watershed Plan-Environmental Assessment and South Branch of the Wild Rice River Watershed Plan-Environmental Assessment

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Russell Eagle Bear  
Tribal Historic Preservation Office  
Rosebud Sioux Tribe of Indians  
P.O. Box 809  
Rosebud, SD 57570

Dear Russell Eagle Bear:

Subject: Invitation to Participate in NRCS RCPP Watershed Planning Process on the Green Meadow Watershed Plan-Environmental Assessment, Moccasin Creek Watershed Plan-Environmental Assessment and South Branch of the Wild Rice River Watershed Plan-Environmental Assessment

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Keith Weston, Red River Basin Coordinator, NRCS, 1120 28th Ave. N., Ste B, Fargo, ND 58102



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Dianne Desrosiers  
Tribal Historic Preservation Office  
Sisseton-Wahpeton Oyate  
P.O. Box 907  
Sisseton, SD 57262

Dear Dianne Desrosiers:

Subject: Invitation to Participate in NRCS RCPP Watershed Planning Process on the Green Meadow Watershed Plan-Environmental Assessment, Moccasin Creek Watershed Plan-Environmental Assessment and South Branch of the Wild Rice River Watershed Plan-Environmental Assessment

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Keith Weston, Red River Basin Coordinator, NRCS, 1120 28th Ave. N., Ste B, Fargo, ND 58102





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Lana M. Gravatt, RPA  
Tribal Historic Preservation Office  
Yankton Sioux Tribe  
800 Main Avenue SW  
P.O. Box 1153  
Wagner, SD 57380

Dear Lana M. Gravatt, RPA:

Subject: Invitation to Participate in NRCS RCPP Watershed Planning Process on the Green Meadow Watershed Plan-Environmental Assessment, Moccasin Creek Watershed Plan-Environmental Assessment and South Branch of the Wild Rice River Watershed Plan-Environmental Assessment

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Sincerely,

CATHEE PULLMAN  
State Conservationist

Enclosure

cc:

Kevin Ruud, Administrator, Wild Rice Watershed District, 11 E 5th Ave, Ada, MN 56510  
Keith Weston, Red River Basin Coordinator, NRCS, 1120 28th Ave. N., Ste B, Fargo, ND 58102



June 29, 2016

Natural Resources  
Conservation Service

Minnesota  
State Office

375 Jackson Street  
Suite 600  
St. Paul, MN 55101

Ph: 651-602-7900  
Fax 855-823-7656  
www.mn.nrcs.usda.gov

Kade M. Ferris, MS  
Tribal Historic Preservation Office  
Red Lake Band of Chippewa Indians  
P.O. Box 274  
Red Lake, MN 56671

Dear Kade M. Ferris, MS:

Subject: Invitation to Participate in NRCS RCPP Watershed Planning Process on the Green Meadow Watershed Plan-Environmental Assessment, Moccasin Creek Watershed Plan-Environmental Assessment and South Branch of the Wild Rice River Watershed Plan-Environmental Assessment

The Wild Rice Watershed District (WRWD) made application for assistance from the Red River Retention Authority (RRRA) for Watershed Planning under the Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP), administered by the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS). The RRRA authorized the WRWD to proceed with a Cooperative Agreement with NRCS to perform Watershed Planning in the Green Meadow, Moccasin Creek and South Branch of the Wild Rice River watersheds. The WRWD is committed to develop solutions to flooding, erosion, drainage issues and related natural resource concerns within these watersheds. This work includes developing a NRCS watershed plan and National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) document. RCPP watershed plans are required to conform to Watershed Protection and Flood Prevention Program (Public Law 83-566).

The NRCS and the WRWD would like to invite your Tribe to participate in these planning efforts. The planning process will identify watershed natural resource concerns and problems, define a scope of action, evaluate resource issues and develop a range of alternatives to address the watershed needs, and ultimately identify a preferred alternative for the watershed. These watershed plans require communication with a Watershed Stakeholder's Committee and/or Project Team consisting of concerned citizens and local governing units. You will be invited to participate in these meetings and provide input into the planning process; especially as it relates to your historical and cultural interests within the watershed planning area (see attached map).

During the planning process a number of public meetings are scheduled. You will be notified of such meetings. I hope you or a representative from your office can attend and participate at these meetings.

The NRCS and the WRWD requests your office identify and provide any new point of contact information to the WRWD administrator as it relates to Green Meadow Watershed-EA, Moccasin Creek Watershed-EA and South Branch of the Wild Rice River Watershed-EA.

If you have any questions or comments, please contact Keith Weston, Red River Basin Coordinator on my staff at keith.weston@nd.usda.gov or via phone at 701-356-6641 or cell phone 701-318-8566 or Kevin Ruud, WRWD Administrator at Kevin@wildricewatershed.org or by phone at (218) 784-5501.

Sincerely,

CATHEE PULLMAN  
State Conservationist

Enclosure

cc:

Kevin Ruud, Administrator, Wild Rice Watershed District, 11 E 5th Ave, Ada, MN 56510  
Keith Weston, Red River Basin Coordinator, NRCS, 1120 28th Ave. N., Ste B, Fargo, ND 58102



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www.mn.nrcs.usda.gov

Leonard Wabasha  
Tribal Historic Preservation Office  
Shakopee Mdewakanton Sioux Community of Minnesota  
2330 Sioux Trail N.W.  
Prior Lake, MN 55372

Dear Leonard Wabasha:

Subject: Invitation to Participate in NRCS RCPP Watershed Planning Process on the Green Meadow Watershed Plan-Environmental Assessment, Moccasin Creek Watershed Plan-Environmental Assessment and South Branch of the Wild Rice River Watershed Plan-Environmental Assessment

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If you have any questions or comments, please contact Keith Weston, Red River Basin Coordinator on my staff at keith.weston@nd.usda.gov or via phone at 701-356-6641 or cell phone 701-318-8566 or Kevin Ruud, WRWD Administrator at Kevin@wildricewatershed.org or by phone at (218) 784-5501.

Sincerely,

CATHEE PULLMAN  
State Conservationist

Enclosure

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Kevin Ruud, Administrator, Wild Rice Watershed District, 11 E 5th Ave, Ada, MN 56510  
Keith Weston, Red River Basin Coordinator, NRCS, 1120 28th Ave. N., Ste B, Fargo, ND 58102



REPLY TO ATTENTION OF  
REGULATORY BRANCH

**DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY**  
ST. PAUL DISTRICT, CORPS OF ENGINEERS  
180 FIFTH STREET EAST, SUITE 700  
ST. PAUL, MN 55101-1678

SEP 09 2016

Cathie Pullman  
State Conservationist  
Natural Resource Conservation Service  
375 Jackson Street, Suite 600  
St. Paul, Minnesota 55101-1678

Dear Ms. Pullman:

This letter is in response to your requests for the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE), St. Paul District to participate as a Cooperating Agency in development of Environmental Assessments (EA) for the following projects:

- Middle-Snake-Tamarac Watershed District Judicial Ditch #14 Watershed Plan
- Middle-Snake-Tamarac Watershed District Judicial Ditch #19 Watershed Plan
- Boise De Sioux Watershed District Direct Watershed Plan
- Two River Watershed District Klondike Clean Water Retention Project
- Red Lake Watershed District Four Legged Lake Watershed Plan
- Red Lake Watershed District Pine Lake Watershed Plan
- Wild Rice River Watershed District Green Meadow Watershed Plan
- Wild Rice River Watershed District South Branch Wild Rice River Watershed Plan
- Wild Rice River Watershed District Moccasin Creek Watershed Plan
- Roseau River Watershed District Beltrami Island State Forest Watershed Plan
- Roseau River Watershed District Whitney Lake Watershed Plan

It is our understanding that the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) is the lead Federal Agency initiating the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) process due to financial assistance to the Sponsoring Local Organization provided through the Watershed Protection and Flood Prevention Program (Public Law (PL) 83-566).

The USACE St. Paul District appreciates your invitation and agrees to be a cooperating agency for the development of these EAs. We understand the agency roles and responsibilities will be defined in a separate Memorandum of Understanding. We appreciate your request for comments, and look forward to continued coordination on these projects.

Mr. Craig Jarnot from our Bemidji Office has been assigned as the project manager for this review. If you have any questions, please contact him in our Bemidji office at (651) 290-5337 or Craig.L.Jarnot @usace.army.mil.

Sincerely,

Chad S. Konickson  
Chief, Regulatory Branch

cc:

Brent Silvis, Middle-Snake-Tamarac Watershed District  
John Roeschlein, Boise de Sioux Watershed District  
Dan Money, Two River Watershed District  
Myron Jesme, Red Lake Watershed District  
Kevin Ruud, Wild Rice River Watershed District  
Tracy Halstensgard, Roseau River Watershed District  
Keith Weston, NRCS

