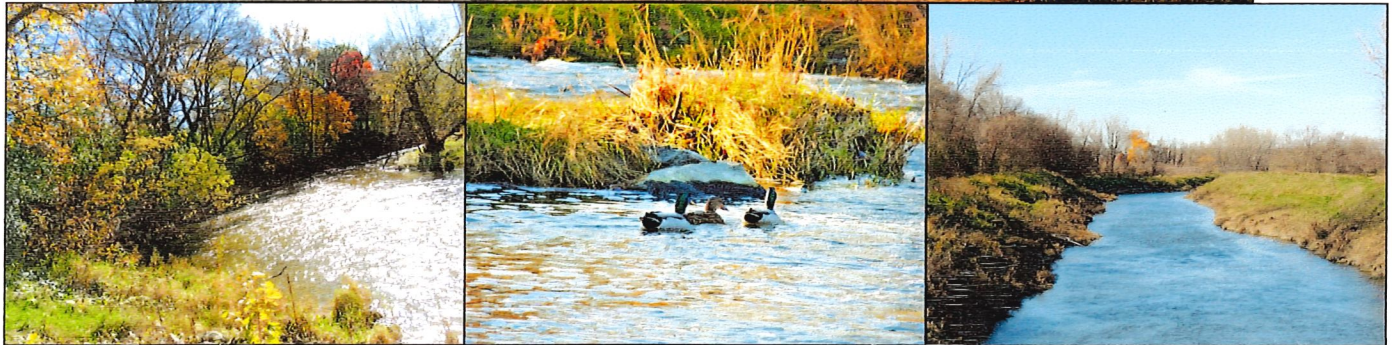


# TURTLE CREEK WATERSHED DISTRICT

## 2018 ANNUAL REPORT



Photo by Cody Crumb



***Celebrating 50 years of Turtle Creek Watershed District (est. 1968)***



### 2018 Board of Managers

*(Pictured left to right starting in back row)*

**Jeff Ravenhorst**  
*Member*

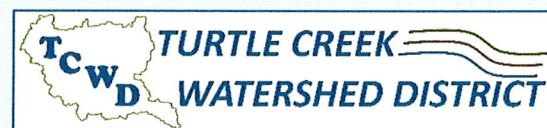
**Jon Erichson**  
*Treasurer*

**Dave Vanderploeg**  
*Vice President*

**Pete Van Erkel**  
*Secretary*

**Michelle Miller**  
*President*

**Nancy Finley**  
*Recording Secretary*



**Turtle Creek Watershed District**

1408 21st Ave NW Ste. #2

Austin, MN 55912

(507) 434-2603

[www.turtlecreekwd.org](http://www.turtlecreekwd.org)

Turtle Creek Watershed District

Established: November 14<sup>th</sup>, 1968

Mailing Address 1408 21st Ave NW Suite 2  
Austin, Mn. 55912

Meeting Date: 3<sup>rd</sup> Tuesday of each month 0500 PM  
City of Hollandale and Riceland Township Government Center  
Hollandale, Mn. 56045

Attorney; Kurt A. Deter—Rinke-Noonan  
1015 W. St .Germain St. Suite 300 PO Box 1497  
St. Cloud, Mn. 56302  
320-251-6700 email: [Kdeter@rnoon.com](mailto:Kdeter@rnoon.com)

Recording Secretary Nancy K. Finley  
24701 515<sup>th</sup> Ave  
Austin, Mn. 55912  
507-433-4819 email: [nancykfinley@gmail.com](mailto:nancykfinley@gmail.com)  
507-438-4473

Terms: 3 years

Michelle Miller	28933 872nd Ave Austin, Mn. 55912 507-438-1939 email: <a href="mailto:shell.ann@outlook.com">shell.ann@outlook.com</a>	Freeborn 11-13-21
Jeff Ravenhorst	82329 290th St. Hollandale, Mn 56045 507-383-6428 email: <a href="mailto:jeffRaven@hotmail.com">jeffRaven@hotmail.com</a>	Freeborn 11-13-20
Jon Erichson	911 18th St. SW Austin, Mn. 55912 507-438-2339 email: <a href="mailto:jon.erichson@austinhra.org">jon.erichson@austinhra.org</a>	Mower 11-13-19
Dave Vanderploeg	28674 810th Ave Hollandale, Mn. 56045 507-383-4981 email: <a href="mailto:daveandkarenavp@gmail.com">daveandkarenavp@gmail.com</a>	Freeborn 11-13-19
Peter H. VanErkel	27843 825 <sup>th</sup> Ave Hollandale, Mn. 56045 507-383-3079 email: <a href="mailto:phvanerk@gmail.com">phvanerk@gmail.com</a>	Freeborn 11-13-20

*The following Officers for 2019 were elected:*

Chairperson	Michelle Miller
Vice Chairman	Dave Vanderploeg
Treasurer	Jon Erichson
Secretary	Peter Van Erkel
Manager	Jeff Ravenhorst

*Turtle Creek Watershed District Advisory Committee  
elected March 1994:*

Larry Reynen	Hollandale, Mn. 56045
Allen Ravenhorst	Hollandale, Mn. 56045
Barry Hoffman	Hollandale, Mn. 56045
Dean Reed	Hollandale, Mn. 56045
John Angell	Blmg. Prairie, Mn. 55917
Arlen Schamber	Austin, Mn. 55912
Thomas Butler	Blooming Prairie, Mn. 55917

The Turtle Creek Watershed Board of Managers held 12 regular meeting during the year 2018.

The following permit applications were approved by the Managers during this year:

24 tiling permits, 1 pump station, 4 ditch cleaning, 1 construct open ditch, and 1 construct berm.

The budget for the year 2019 is as follows:

Attorney fees (Rinke Noonn)	\$ 11,800.00
Recording Secretary & expenses	\$ 4,600.00
Managers	\$ 5,000.00
Administrative Services (Mower SWCD	\$ 15,500.00
Audit & Monthly financial services	\$ 5,700.00
Viewers Assoc. & MAWD Dues	\$ 3,500.00
Insurance	\$ 2,200.00
Advertising & Postage	\$ 1,500.00
Rent	\$ 625.00
Water Monitoring & Water Plan	\$ 10,000.00
Incentives, cost share & Project funding	\$ 16,500.00
Tree Removal	\$ 20,000.00
Beaver Tails	\$ 2,500.00
Clean Water Legacy	\$ 15,000.00
Total	\$ 114,425.00

Prior to the regular monthly meeting in January 2018 a planning workshop was held to review the tasks and priorities for the coming year and review the goals from the previous year.

At the January 2018 meeting the Managers voted to move the monthly meeting time to 5 P.M. start instead of 7 P.M. which was published in two newspaper circulations one in Mower County and one in Freeborn County.

In January 2018 correspondence included an Award certification to Turtle Creek Watershed from Minnesota counties Intergovernmental Trust in recognition of an outstanding loss ratio under 50% property and Casualty plan years 2012-2016.

January 2018 meeting the following motion was made and seconded : Salgoud Creative has provided quotes for revamping the websites for Turtle Creek, Cedar River and Mower SWCD. All three are in need of updating and the new design/format will enable staff to more easily make updates and design changes without involving a web designer. For \$1000.00 per website, each website will have a similar format to each other to save on cost due to ease of design. Salgoud Creative is a graphic and web design company run by an Austin Native Doug Rasmussen. TCWD last update was 2007. After discussion Pete made a motion to authorize up to \$1000.00 to have TCWD web site updated seconded by Dave and carried.

Steve Lawler distributed copies of the Permit Enforcement techniques and trouble shooting from the State Wide Permit program survey that includes tips and tricks from across the state.

*Common advice amongst Watershed districts:*

*Don't be afraid to be annoying--being persistent pays off! No matter what, always be consistent*

At the February 2018 meeting Steve Lawler introduced Dave Copeland, our BWSR Board Conservationist from the Rochester office. Dave attended the meeting to meet the Board and also get a better idea on our priorities and long term goals. Dave will be a contact person to discuss funding opportunities and other items.

At the March 2018 meeting Steve Penkava submitted a copy of the Freeborn County Crop Damage Rate for 2018 as follows:

It is the policy of Freeborn County to set a rate of pay for crop damage that may occur due to repair, improvement, or construction projects. This is done at the beginning of the year for the entire year.

The yield is determined by using a three year average yield for Freeborn county from data received from the USDA (National Agricultural Statistics Services).

The sale price is determined by using an average sale price for corn and beans from four local elevators on January 5, 2018.

Corn damage rate 187.6 bushels @ \$3.10 = \$582 per acre

Bean damage rate 55.9 bushels @ \$8.88 = \$496 per acre

This has been signed by Drainage Ditch Viewers Chris Christianson, Mark Behrends and Robert M. Hanson and Freeborn county Auditor/Treasure Pat Martinson

Also at the March 2018 meeting Steve Lawler reported on the Buffer Law Administration. BWSR inquired about our administration of buffers along public ditches. Steve was able to present them our policies on grass buffer maintenance, inspection schedules and enforcement. Our management of grass buffers was determined to be effective and commendable. The only potential compliance issue is the source of our authority for administration of grass buffers which comes from our policy handbook. It was noted that buffer law will likely require administration by rule which Att'y Deter will be able to guide the Managers through the "rule process".

Steve Lawler discussed the Biennial Budget Request, BWSR is requesting a biennial budget request for fiscal year 20-21. This is an opportunity for local government through the state to identify prioritize conservation projects and practices for these fiscal years. This data informs upcoming budget discussions among state agencies and the legislature. Pete made a motion for Steve to draft what projects and practices the Board will like to have funding for 2019 and 2020 seconded by Dave and carried.

Dave gave a report in April 2018 on his meeting with the Freeborn County Commissioners which the Commissioners complimented the District for their budget guidelines and thanked Dave for attending the meeting and for questions and updates from their Board.

Also at the April 2018 meeting

BWSR inquired about our Administration of buffers along public ditches. This basically has no effect on Turtle Creek as all buffers are in place at this time. Pete made a motion to adopt and implement the rule pursuant to statutes section 103F.48 in the TCWD rules seconded by Jeff and carried.

Statutory authorization: This buffer enforcement rule is adopted pursuant to the authorization and policies contained in Minn. Stat. 103F.48, the Buffer Law, Minn. Stat 103B.101, subdivision 12a, authority to issue penalty orders, and the Watershed District enabling legislation in Minn. Stat. chapter 103D.

Steve Lawler reports The Cedar River Watershed District was able to land a grant with Conservation Corp. of Minnesota to clean up watercourses in the Cedar Watershed including Turtle Creek. This cleanup opportunity would be available to us around May 19th, 2018. A CCM crew would utilize canoes to pull and collect trash from the channel and inner banks, preferably along the urban sections of Turtle Creek. The crews will also deliver any trash collected to the proper disposal facilities. After discussion Pete made a motion for TCWD to approve up to \$2500.00 toward the cost of disposal seconded by Jeff and carried.

In May 2018 Numerous landowners south of 285<sup>th</sup> Street in Section 32, Newry Township attended the meeting. A wetland restoration north of 285<sup>th</sup> Street does not appear to have an outlet and water is seeping under the road, impacting adjacent landowners. After lengthy discussion Dave made a motion to direct Steve Penkava to contact the local agencies working on the project to gather information and meet with them if necessary, seconded by Jeff and carried

In June 2018 discussion continued regarding The RIM Easement in section 32 Newry Twsp was discussed at length. There are seepage issues under the roadway onto farmland on the South side of the township road. It is the understanding of the Board that the lift pumps have been removed

which has allowed water levels to rise and surface water noted flowing from the East basin to the Southwest corner of the property where it is entering JD 24. Dave Copeland BWSR Rochester and Chad Billat NRCS Albert Lea attended the meeting for information and discussion. A request for funding has been submitted, funding approval is required to start the project. After discussing temporary options to drain the water and timeframes to restore an emergency outlet the Board strongly urged Dave and Chad to do a site visit with Barry Hoffman this evening while still daylight to view the area so they have a clear idea of the issues.

Following the regular July 2018 monthly meeting Turtle Creek Watershed District agreed to host a discussion regarding Geneva Lake following their regular Board meeting. At 6P.M. Jeanine Vorland Area Wildlife Manager called this discussion to order.

Attending the meeting were: TCWD Board members, Steve Lawler, Dan Belshan, Rachel Wehner, Todd Piepho, Joel Wagar--DNR Parks and Trails Supervisor, Owatonna, Kassy Hendricks--Ducks Unlimited, Fritz Jensen, Craig Soupir-DNR Waterville Area fisheries Supervisor, Mike McGinn, Bob Hoen, Dan Richards, Jake Jensen, Lee Kostelecky, Ron Carothers, Scott Anderson, and Tyler Nelson.

Jeanine began the meeting with a slide show. Geneva Lake has been sustaining good habitats and fish and wildlife populations for several years. However, the lake is presently showing signs of stress and decline. A few common carp have been observed in the lake and they are always cause for concern. Test netting and other observations this spring indicated that black bullheads are abundant and numbers are high relative to yellow perch and northern pike. Most importantly, some in-lake habitats were severely damaged by flooding in 2016 and these conditions have not been helped by storms and high water this spring and summer.

After the slide show the meeting was open for a question and answer time at which Jeanine states they are working on an updated Management plan.

There was an informational vote regarding a recommendation to the Freeborn Board as follows:

Should the drawdown be only during the winter--2 votes

Should the drawdown be for the winter and summer-- 11 votes

Jeanine thanked the group for their interest and feedback in assisting the Mn DNR and Freeborn County staff to further efforts to improve water quality and maintain a quality fish and wildlife resource at Geneva Lake.

In August 2018

Board received a letter from Mn Counties Intergovernmental Trust stating they are again able to declare a dividend. MCIT's ability to provide dividends reflects positive investment income, members' dedication to risk management and loss control, net income from conservative fiscal program management and better than expected claims development on a pool wide basis. The District's 2018 dividend is \$539.00 allocated as follows: Workers' Compensation \$ 242.00 and Property/Casualty \$297.00. Payments will be issued mid-November 2018.

A hearing was held in August 2018 for the Proposed Administrative budget for the District for 2019 which you will find at the beginning of this report.

Another hearing was held in August at 5:30 P.M. Pete call to order the public hearing for the acceptance of the Buffer Enforcement rule pursuant to Minn. Statutes 103F.48. Nancy verified the publication in the Austin Newspapers in Mower County and Albert Lea Newspapers in Freeborn county. Steve Lawler and Att'y Kurt Deter explained the Buffer rule to the Managers and public attending stating this will have little effect on the District as we are already following these practices. After discussion from the public ceased Pete closed the hearing to the public. Jeff made a motion to adopt and enforce the Buffer Enforcement rule pursuant to Minn. Statutes 103F.48 seconded by Jon and carried. The hearing was adjourned

Also at the August meeting Steve Lawler reported on the Multi-Purpose Drainage Management grant. We have proposed a project on the Christensen and Jensen properties in Section 27 Bath twsp to control erosion on upland farm fields. The project involves the use of water and sediment control basins and waterways, and would total approximately \$60,000. in project costs. Steve requested input from the managers regarding contributions of the District, the landowners etc, and approval of a letter of support from the District. This grant application is due at the end of August. After discussion and questions from both the Managers and public input from Winston Bieser, Jon made a motion to support 12 1/2 percent of the project cost up to \$7500.00 seconded by Jeff and carried. Jon also requested Steve to contact the parties involved to see if this was agreeable before he spends several hours working on a grant that would not be considered. Steve agreed to speak with those involved.

Dave Vanderploeg signed the letter of Intent to Partner for FY 2019 BWSR CWF Multipurpose Drainage Management Competitive Grants Program for Turtle Creek Watershed District as their Intent to Partner with the Mower soil and Water Conservation District for the purposes of applying for the subject grant program and to implement the proposed project, if the grant application is selected for funding.

September 2018 Steve Penkava submitted a review of the repair levy. Last year the Board approved an \$180,000.00 repair levy. Steve presented an outline including fund balance as of August 31st, 2018, taxes, brush control, current payables, redetermination and upcoming fall repairs. After discussion Jon made a motion to levy \$100,000.00 seconded by Jeff and carried. Steve Lawler will forward the appropriate forms to both Mower and Freeborn Counties.

Steve Lawler reported on the proposed project on the Christensen and Jensen properties in Section 27 Bath Twsp to control erosion on upland farm fields. The project involves the use of water and sediment control basins and waterways and would total approximately \$60,000.00 in project costs. Board action last month was clear in requiring landowner contributions of 50% of the match requirement. This amount was not acceptable to the landowners so Steve did not submit a grant application.

October 2018 Pete made a motion for Att'y Deter to send a letter to Freeborn County Soil & Water Conservation District regarding the Buffer Enforcement. As TCWD elected to assume responsibility for enforcement of the buffer law under 103F.48 they are the entity that is responsibility for making decisions on any enforcement actions on county ditch systems within the Turtle Creek Watershed District where they are the Drainage Authority. The Board was surprised, upset, and concerned that enforcement letters went out to landowners within the TCWD on county ditches under their jurisdiction based on incorrect information. The Managers and Engineer spent a great deal of time responding to landowners' concerns and were especially concerned that these letters went out without any involvement of the TCWD or authorization by the District to send out these letters. Jeff seconded the motion for Att'y Deter to send out a letter, the motion carried.

Justin explained the original water plan expired in 2015 but, an extension was approved by BWSR until December 31st, 2018. The Cedar River Comprehensive Watershed Plan (1W1P) will likely not be approved until the end of 2019. Justin ask the Board to approve a new Resolution to extend the original water plan until approval of the new Watershed Plan not to exceed June 30th 2020. Michelle signed the extension for and returned to Justin.

November 2018 CliftonLarsonAllen is again proposing auditing services for the District for the 2018 year. The firm's schedule of fees is proposing an all-inclusive maximum of \$4,460.00, Last year their bid was \$3500.00 and total expenditures for services was \$3500.00. The Managers agreed to stay with this firm for the 2018 audit and authorized Jon to research costs from other companies for the future.

In December 2018 As requested by the Board last month Jon negotiated with CliftonLaronAllen to reduce the schedule of fees for auditing by \$460.00 to a maximum of \$4000.00. Jon was directed to sign and return this proposal to lock in the cost of services.

Emily Javens, Executive Director of MAWD contacted Steve Lawler suggesting she would like to attend a regular meeting to present the Board with the 50th Anniversary Award. Emily will plan to attend the March 2019 meeting.

Jeanine Vorland Area Wildlife Manager attended several meetings through out the year and when not available she sent emails to update the Managers on Geneva Lake.

Several area landowners attending meetings for permits, questions, concerns and project solutions.

Other topics discussed during the year were brush control, tree removal, grass strip maintenance, Buffer laws, Geneva Lake, and incentives grants.

This concludes the annual report for the year 2018.

Respectfully Submitted,

***NANCY K. FINLEY,***

Recording Secretary

Turtle Creek Watershed District.