



# Highlights: 2023 VRWJPO Annual Activity & Financial Report

## Our Mission

To collaboratively provide education, science, and support to restore and protect the Vermillion River Watershed's natural resources for all who live, work, and play within its boundaries.

## Who We Are

The Vermillion River Watershed Joint Powers Organization (VRWJPO) was founded in 2002 by a joint powers agreement between Dakota and Scott counties. It is the largest watershed in the Twin Cities Metro area at 335 square miles, with 20 cities and townships represented and 49 miles of DNR-designated trout streams.

## Getting Results

Monitoring results have shown consistent improvements and stability in local environmental resources. This reflects VRWJPO's Capital Improvement Program efforts to reduce pollutants and promote healthy habitats.

- **All six of the regularly monitored lakes in the watershed show improvements in phosphorus levels, and five of six show improvements in water transparency since 2007.**
- **Habitat conditions along the Vermillion River and major tributaries are stable, with all but one at "good" or "fair" scores from the MPCA.**

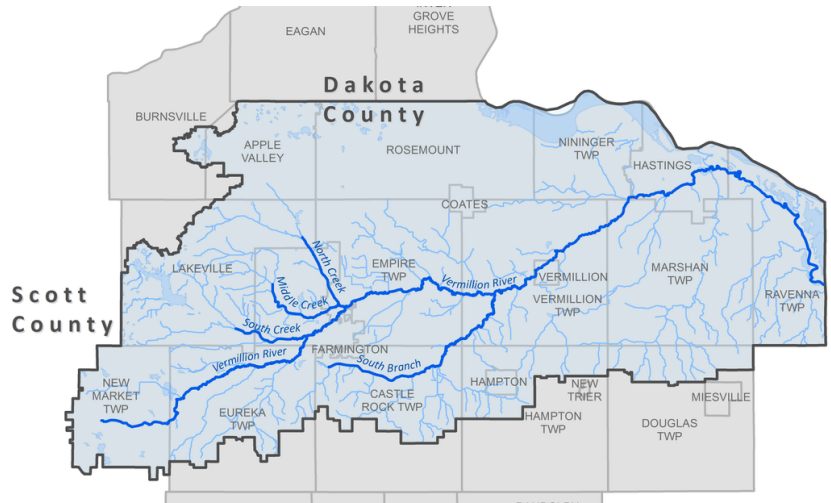
2023 projects funded by VRWJPO are estimated to reduce pollution entering waterbodies by:

- **795 tons per year total suspended solids**
- **774 pounds per year phosphorus**
- **3,951 pounds per year nitrate**



Grants from Minnesota Clean Water, Land & Legacy Amendment funds make many of these projects possible.

## Where We Are



## VRWJPO Board Members for 2023

Dakota County Commissioner Mike Slavik, Chair  
Scott County Commissioner Tom Wolf, Vice Chair  
Dakota County Commissioner Mary Hamann-Roland, Secretary-Treasurer

## Capital Improvement Projects

- East Lake Habitat Improvements, with City of Lakeville
- East Lake Invasive Fish Barrier, with City of Lakeville
- Foxborough Park TSS Reductions, with City of Lakeville and Dakota County
- Middle Creek at Dodd Boulevard, with City of Lakeville
- North Creek at Highview Channel Stabilization, with City of Lakeville



VRWJPO and the City of Lakeville restored and stabilized this reach of Middle Creek at Dodd Boulevard, located in a quickly-developing area.

## Developing the Next Watershed Plan

VRWJPO began developing the 2026-2035 Watershed Management Plan. We consulted with Twin Cities-based planning firm HGGi and began hearing from stakeholders what they'd like to see us work on in the next ten years.

We gathered feedback through:

- Direct outreach to local stakeholders
- Initial planning meeting in October
- Tabling at Brand Farms, Empire
- Virtual stakeholder meetings
- Online and paper surveys
- Displays at libraries in Elko New Market, Hastings, and Lakeville; and at Lebanon Hills Regional Park and Whitetail Woods Regional Park



Apple Valley resident Cindi Dayus provides her input on the watershed plan at the initial planning meeting, October 12, 2023.

## Noteworthy Activities



The Minnesota Board of Water & Soil Resources selected the Vermillion River Watershed for its annual Board Tour in August. More than 60 people attended on a record-hot day, visiting eight project sites showcasing the diverse landscape of the watershed. Attendees included county and city elected officials; BWSR Board members; and staff. Pictured is the group visiting the East Lake Habitat Improvement project in Lakeville. VRWJPO collaborated with BWSR and local partners to host the day-long bus tour.

## VRWJPO Staff

Travis Thiel, Administrator  
 Melissa Bokman-Ermer, Co-Administrator  
 Kelly Perrine, Senior Watershed Specialist  
 Jeff Dunn, Water Resources Engineer  
 Brita Moore-Kutz, Communications & Outreach Specialist  
 Paula Liepold, Water Resources Educator



VRWJPO led School of Environmental Studies students in planting native dogwood and osier trees at a bioretention basin and iron-enhanced sand filter site near Lake Marion, a project completed by VRWJPO and the City of Lakeville, as part of the school's annual Earth Day service learning in April. As it was a rather rainy day, they found plenty of earth worms while digging.

## Contact us

4100 220th St. W. #103, Farmington, MN 55024  
[www.vermillionriverwatershed.org](http://www.vermillionriverwatershed.org)  
 (952) 891-7000  
[vrwjpo@co.dakota.mn.us](mailto:vrwjpo@co.dakota.mn.us)