

Public Input Sought on Rum River Watershed Management

An effort is underway to protect and improve water quality in the almost one million acre Rum River watershed. The Rum River Watershed Restoration and Protection Project (WRAP) will create a management plan for the entire watershed, including each lake, stream and the river. Public input is being sought through an online survey.

The survey allows respondents to tell managers what issues are important for them, suspected sources of problems and preferred management. It can also address how to keep good quality waterbodies in good condition. Comments can pertain to lakes, wetlands, streams or the Rum River itself. The survey takes about 10 minutes to complete. It is posted at www.URRWMO.org.

With its beginning at Lake Mille Lacs, most of the Rum River is a State Scenic and Recreational Waterway. The Rum is known for canoeing, smallmouth bass fishing, and high water quality. Many of the watershed's tributaries and lakes, including lakes George and East Twin, are also of high quality.

The Rum River WRAP project began in 2013 and will be completed in 2016. It will include:

- Water quality monitoring (2013-14).
- Special investigations of water quality problems (2014).
- Computer modeling to answer "what if" questions (2013-15).
- Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) planning for waterbodies not meeting state water quality standards (2015-16).
- A WRAP report that prescribes future management approaches (2015-16).

After completion of the WRAP, local agencies will implement projects to protect and improve water quality. State funding, including the State Clean Water Fund from the Clean Water, Land and Legacy Amendment, will ensure financial support exists for these projects.

At the local level, the Upper Rum River Watershed Management Organization (URRWMO) will be working for the Rum River and our lakes. The URRWMO is a joint powers organization of the Cities of Bethel, East Bethel, Ham Lake, Nowthen, Oak Grove and St. Francis. Learn more at www.URRWMO.org.

The WRAP is funded and overseen by the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency, and the Anoka Conservation District is the project lead. Nine other counties in the watershed are also involved. For more information on the Rum River WRAP project visit www.pca.state.mn.us and search for “Rum River WRAP” or call Jamie Schurbon at the Anoka Conservation District at 763-434-2030 ext. 12.

