



Northwest Regional Operations
2115 Birchmont Beach Road NE
Bemidji, MN 56601

November 9, 2021

Tracy Halstengard
Roseau River Watershed District
714 6th Street Southwest
Roseau, MN 56751

Dear Ms. Halstengard,

Thank you for inviting the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources (DNR) to provide input as you and other local partners begin developing a Comprehensive Watershed Management Plan for the Roseau River Watershed. I am writing on behalf of DNR Commissioner Sarah Strommen to share our priorities and express our support.

Attached are priorities we encourage you to address in your plan—keys to protecting and improving the health of the watershed. A plan centered on these priorities will help sustain water resources in ways that enhance the quality of life for all who live, work, and enjoy the outdoors in this watershed.

The DNR can supply scientific data and information related to the attached priorities. We also offer tools and services that can help stakeholders get to know the watershed and explore water resource values.

Our lead staff person for this One Watershed One Plan (1W1P) project is Stephanie Klamm, Area Hydrologist, 218-219-8585, stephanie.klamm@state.mn.us, based at the DNR office in Thief River Falls. Please contact Stephanie if you have questions or want more information about the attached priorities or the types of technical support we can provide.

Also feel free to contact me directly if needed. As the Northwest Regional Director, I am committed to ensuring that DNR staff in the region are organized to support 1W1P planning efforts and the resulting plans. We greatly value the opportunity to contribute to the process and hope the information we provide is helpful.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads 'Theresa Ebbenga'.

Theresa Ebbenga
Northwest Regional Director

cc: Stephanie Klamm (DNR), Nathan Kestner (DNR), Barb Weisman (DNR), Matt Fischer (BWSR), Cary Hernandez (MPCA), Dan Disrud (MDH)

DNR Priorities for the Roseau River Watershed

The priority resource concerns and opportunities below were identified in consultation with an interdisciplinary team of natural resource management specialists from multiple DNR Divisions whose work areas include this watershed. The priorities relate most closely to four of the many high-level issues that Comprehensive Watershed Management Plans are expected to consider: water quality, flood damage reduction, water storage and retention, and habitat and outdoor recreation.

High-Level Priority Issue	Priority Resource Concerns & Opportunities
Water Quality	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Channel forming flows (bankfull flows) have increased in excess of 30% since 1992. Erosion from unstable stream and ditch channels in the watershed is contributing to water quality impairments (sediment). <i>The DNR has field survey data that can help target restoration efforts for stream systems such as Hay Creek, Severson Creek and Pine Creek.</i>
Flood Damage Reduction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> With high flows increasing by 50% since the early 1990's, floodplains are being inundated more frequently. It is beneficial that watercourses have access to their floodplains during high water events. Currently some watercourses have reduced access to their floodplains. We recommend assessing subwatersheds to identify reaches where reconnecting of the stream to floodplain or meanders is feasible. <i>The DNR can help assess subwatersheds for floodplain connectivity (example, SD 51 re-meandering project).</i> Improperly sized culverts throughout the watershed can contribute to flooding and costly repairs/replacements. The DNR has a new fact sheet that can be shared with local transportation departments to encourage proper culvert design when old or damaged culverts are replaced. Consider conducting a comprehensive culvert inventory. A culvert inventory in the watershed can help prioritize culverts that are causing connectivity issues (fish passage, floodplain access, etc.). <i>The DNR can help assess culverts and collect information to prioritize for geomorphic design, fish passage concerns and connectivity.</i>
Water Storage & Retention	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Restoring peatlands and wetlands can provide storage and retention of water, provide habitat, and restore connectivity of ground and surface waters. Review areas in the watershed where ditch abandonment through peatlands could be feasible. Review areas in the watershed where wetland restorations would improve conditions and health in the watershed. <i>Work with the DNR, Roseau County and other local entities on ditch abandonment, peatland and wetland restoration in areas such as Lost River State Forest, Roseau Lake Bottom and Sprague Creek.</i>
Habitat & Outdoor Recreation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> In general, flows at all intervals (low, middle, high) have increased causing impacts to fisheries, other aquatic life and stream channel stability. Poor quality habitat in altered or channelized reaches is negatively impacting fish communities. DNR fish surveys show very low species diversity and low abundances, with fish communities dominated by species tolerant of poor water quality and habitat. <i>DNR Fisheries can provide priority areas for efforts to improve fish habitat.</i>

- In general, the Roseau River watershed has a healthy fish population. Improvements in connectivity, hydrologic conditions and habitat could enhance lake sturgeon, channel catfish, northern pike and walleye populations.
The DNR has data that can be used to help identify sites where there is potential to restore healthy fish populations and create new fishing opportunities.
- The Roseau River Watershed is part of an Important Birding Area (also Pine to Prairie Birding Trail) and part of the Aspen Parkland Prairie Core Area. The western and eastern end of the watershed have wildlife management areas. Scientific and natural areas (SNA), the Lost River State Forest are in the northern middle portion of the watershed and little hidden gems like Hayes Lake State Park and Beltrami Island State Forest dot the landscape. These intact areas help keep water clean and provide recreational opportunities (hunting, fishing, UTV riding, berry picking) for the public.
- Of the state lands that fall within the One Watershed One Plan planning area, the majority of the parcels have fiduciary responsibilities to public schools or local governments. The DNR manages these lands for a variety of purposes that include conservation, preservation, recreation, and commercial uses. Our recommendation is that the plan should consider these State lands, and their various management objectives, and leverage them as a benefit to watershed planning when possible.
Ensure that projects completed within the next ten years in the watershed enhance or compliment the management plans and recreational opportunities for the above-mentioned areas and provide benefits of water quality or habitat.