

CRWD History

The area encompassed by the Clearwater River Watershed District (CRWD) is rich in soil and water resources. The presence of those resources has encouraged the growth of two economic mainstays in this Central Minnesota territory – farming and tourism. Around these basics have grown the communities that support their needs. As population and industry grow, those priceless resources, which we often take for granted, may deteriorate.

In the 1960s and early 1970s, those who fished and enjoyed the waters of the Clearwater Chain of Lakes began to notice a decrease in the clarity of those waters, an increase in the number of rough fish (bullheads and carp), and an increase in the growth of algae on the surface of the water. Property owners sought new tests from scientists interested in water quality. Those tests revealed that the nutrient content of the water had increased substantially since 1946 – phosphorus was coming into the lake at a rate almost double the rate considered damaging.

The lakes through which the Clearwater River flowed were aging much too quickly. That process, which is a natural phenomenon called "eutrophication," was being helped along at an alarming rate via pollution entering the river system from cities, farmland, private property, and industry.

Further reports concluded that the rate of phosphorus input could be reduced by as much as 50% if the cities of Watkins, Kimball, and Annandale, and the Modern Craftsmen's Milk Association of Watkins installed on-land waste treatment systems instead of discharging sewage and industrial effluents into the Clearwater River and Warner Creek. In addition, if the phosphorus input from all non-point sources (such as septic tanks, agricultural wastes, storm water runoff, and soil erosion) could be significantly reduced, the water quality in the watershed could be restored to an acceptable level.

After a lengthy series of meetings and legal research, those concerned came to the conclusion that only a watershed district, with its powers of enforcement and its abilities to assess and to obtain federal and state funding, could tackle the pollution problem in the Chain of Lakes. The Clearwater River Watershed District was the culmination of years of hard work and the beginning of many more years of work aimed at undoing some of the damage done over a long period of time to one of our most important resources – our lakes and streams.

The Clearwater River Watershed District was established as a unit of local government on April 9, 1975, by order of the Minnesota Water Resources Board, acting under authority of Chapter 112, MSA (the Minnesota Watershed Act). Though the original thrust of the CRWD and its five-member Board of Managers was the improvement of water quality in the Clearwater River Chain

of Lakes, its scope has grown into a complete program of water management within its boundaries.

General Watershed Information

The Clearwater River Watershed District encompasses the entire drainage area of the Clearwater River. It is 158.8 square miles, with 46.1 square miles in Meeker County, 54.2 square miles in Stearns County, and 58.5 square miles in Wright County. The District extends approximately 22.5 miles from east to west and 16.5 miles from north to south. Municipalities included (all or part) within the District are Annandale, Clearwater, Kimball, South Haven, and Watkins, as well as the Village of Fairhaven. Townships located totally or in part within the CRWD are: Albion, Clearwater, Corinna, Fair Haven, Forest City, Forest Prairie, French Lake, Kingston, Luxemburg, Lynden , Maine Prairie and Southside.

The lakes through which the Clearwater River flows are divided into an Upper and Lower Chain by the Fairhaven dam. The Upper Chain includes Lakes Betsy, Scott, Louisa, and Marie (which includes the Mill Pond). The Lower Chain includes Lakes Caroline, Augusta, Clearwater, Grass, and Wiegand. Other major lakes in the District are: Albion Lake, Bass Lake, Cedar Lake, Clear Lake, Henshaw Lake, Little Mud Lake, Nixon Lake, Otter Lake, Pleasant Lake, School Section Lake, Swartout Lake, Union Lake, Willow Lake. Non-major lakes are: Edwards Lake, Island Lake, Laura Lake, Rohrbeck Lake and Round Lake.

The Clearwater River begins southwest of Watkins and is joined by a tributary known as County Ditch 20 as it meanders south, than east as it enters the Upper Chain. It flows north under State Highway 55 between Kimball and South Haven, then generally east through the Lower Chain until it outlet from Clearwater Lake, where it flows northeast through Grass and Wiegand Lakes, and discharges into the Mississippi River at the City of Clearwater. There are three dams along the river: the Fairhaven Mill Dam at the outlet of Lake Marie (south of the the City of Fairhaven); the Grass Lake Dam at the outlet of Grass Lake, and the Clearwater Dam on Stearns County Road 75 (in the City of Clearwater).

General Maps of the CRWD watershed can be found at: <https://www.crw.org/general-watershed-information.html>

Lake Size and Location Information

County	Name	Acres
Meeker	Betsy	153.66
	Clear	529.07
	Little Mud	37.37
	Rohrbeck	62.67
	Round	33.65
Stearns	Carter	31.25
	Island	80.74
	Laura	139.86
	Lynden	15.74
	Marie	145.81
	Otter	91.75
	School Section	201.02
	Swamp	22.68
Wright	Willow	155.51
	Albion	249.04
	Caroline	135.16
	Cedar	790.31
	Cornell	28.55
	Grass	71.47
	Helmbrecht Pond	8.45
	Henshaw	272.38
	Little John	47.63
	Mead	15.27
	Nixon	59.57
	Pleasant	597.00
	Swartout	292.87
	Unnamed (Goble)	12.07
Unnamed (Hidden)	7.90	
Wright & Meeker	Scott	82.70
	Union	92.94
Wright & Stearns	Augusta	187.12
	Bass	222.47
	Clearwater East	1660.12
	Clearwater West	1498.15
	Edward	100.34
	Louisa	189.43
Wiegand	42.45	
Total Lake Acres		8364.17

