



2009 Activity Report



Greenfield • Independence • Loretto • Maple Plain • Medina • Minnetrista

Table of Contents

	Page
Annual Activity Report	1
The Pioneer-Sarah Creek Watershed Management Commission	1
Meetings	1
Staff and Consultants	2
The Watershed	2
Table 1: Area of Members within the Watershed.....	2
Watershed Management Plan	2
Table 2: Status of Local Stormwater Management Plans	2
Local Water Management Plans	3
Status of 2009 Objectives	3
2010 Work Plan	5
Interest Proposals	6
Financial Reporting.....	6
Wetland Banking	7
 Appendices	
2009 Commissioners, Staff and Consultants	1
Project Reviews	2
Stream Monitoring	3
Lake Monitoring.....	4
River Watch	5
Lake Independence Nutrient Management Program – CWLA	6
Media Release	7
Financial Reporting	8

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for the Pioneer-Sarah Creek Watershed Management Commission
by JASS, Inc.

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*Cover Photograph – Eyes on Your Garden
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Annual Activity Report.

This annual report has been prepared by the Pioneer-Sarah Creek Watershed Management Commission in accordance with the annual reporting requirements of Minnesota Rules Chapter 8410.0150, Subps. 2 and 3. It summarizes the activities undertaken by the Commission during calendar year 2009.

In 2008 the Commission participated in a Level II Performance Review and Assistance Program (PRAP) review by the Board of Water Resources (BWSR). The following recommendations are based on BWSR's evaluation of the performance of the Commission.

- Conduct a strategic planning exercise to address priorities and redefine objectives.
- Address local stormwater plan development.
- Adopt personnel policies.
- Conduct a stakeholder survey.

While not addressed in the PRAP report, it is a goal of the Commission to ensure timely submittal of its annual activity report with detailed information and work plans. In the past the Commission's annual report provided a great amount of detail and served for the Commission and the public record as a stand-alone compendium of all the activities, studies, and programs undertaken in the previous year. It contains extracts and summaries from reports produced not only by Commission staff but also by other agency staff as well as the annual financial audit. Many of those reports are generally not available until at least April or even later, depending on how monitoring samples are processed and the results compiled.

Beginning with this Activity Report, the Commission will limit the contents to the information required by the Rules and will incorporate detailed information about monitoring findings and other special studies into its appendices, which will be published as the information becomes available. The Commission will focus the activity report on a more detailed self-assessment of progress toward management plan goals and the preparation of a more detailed annual work plan. In future years, this work will be accomplished prior to the Commission's annual budget work session so it can be incorporated into the annual activity report for submittal by the end of April. These discussions will also be used to develop budgets for the coming year.

The Pioneer-Sarah Creek Watershed Management Commission was established to protect and manage the natural resources of the Pioneer and Sarah Creek watersheds. It is a joint powers watershed organization formed as required under MN Statutes 103B.201-103B.255 and MN Rules Chapter 8410. A Board of Commissioners comprised of representatives appointed by the member communities was established as the governing body of the Commission. Its current membership is comprised of the cities of Greenfield, Independence, Loretto, Maple Plain, Medina, and Minnetrista. The table in *Appendix 1* shows the names of the Commissioners appointed to serve in 2009.

Meetings. The Commission meets monthly at 4:00 p.m. on the third Thursday at Independence City Hall. The meetings are open to the public and visitors are welcome. Meeting notices, agendas, and approved minutes are posted on the Commission's website, www.pioneersarahcreek.org.

Staff and Consultants. The Commission has no employees. Independent consultants perform technical, legal, administrative, auditing, and wetland services for the Commission and are selected biannually. The current staff and consultants are listed in *Appendix 1*.

The Watershed. Located entirely within western Hennepin County, the Pioneer-Sarah Creek watershed covers approximately 70.5 square miles and includes the watersheds of Pioneer and Sarah Creeks. The Crow River demarcates most of the northern boundary. Portions or all of the six member cities are within the legal boundaries of the Pioneer-Sarah Creek watershed and are listed in Table 1. A map of the watershed can be viewed on the Commission’s website.

**Table 1
Area of Members within the Pioneer-Sarah Creek Watershed**

Local Government Unit	Area Within Watershed (Square Miles)	Percent of Watershed
Greenfield	21.5	30%
Independence	29.7	42%
Loretto	0.3	0.4%
Maple Plain	0.8	1.1%
Medina	7.5	10%
Minnetrissa	10.7	15%
TOTAL:	70.5	

Watershed Management Plan. The Pioneer-Sarah Creek Watershed Management Commission adopted its second generation Comprehensive Watershed Management Plan on December 16, 2004. The plan can be viewed at <http://pioneersarahcreek.org/mgmtplan.shtml>.

The second generation Management Plan includes a section that identifies a number of goals and policies that conform to the overall purpose specified in Minnesota Statutes Section 103B.201. These goals and policies address issues related to water quantity, water quality, recreation, fish and wildlife, enhancement of public participation, information and education, and management of the public ditch system, groundwater, shorelands, wetlands, and soil erosion.

No amendments to the Management Plan have been adopted.

**Table 2
Status of Local Stormwater Management Plans**

Community	Status at 2009 Year-End
Greenfield	First two drafts rejected.
Independence	First draft rejected.
Loretto	Approved January 2009.
Maple Plain	Approved December 2008.
Medina	Approved July 2009.
Minnetrissa	Approved April 2009.

Local Water Management Plans. Member communities must prepare and adopt their own water management plans. Local plans must comply with MN Statutes, Sec. 103B.235 and MN Rules 8410.0160 and 8410.0170 regarding content. Under the statutes, member cities are required to revise their plans to conform with the Commission's plan. Table 2 on the previous page shows the status of the members' local plans.

Status of 2009 Objectives. Following is a summary of the work undertaken by the Pioneer-Sarah Creek Watershed Management Commission in 2009 to meet the goals, objectives, and projected work plan outlined in its *2008 Annual Report*.

§ Reviewed local development/redevelopment plans for conformance with the standards outlined in the second generation Watershed Management Plan. Projects are reviewed for erosion and sediment control, wetland, floodplain and stormwater management, as well as Department of Natural Resources (DNR) permits. The Commission's technical staff performed nine project reviews in 2009. Staff also reviewed the comprehensive plan and local water management plan from one city. A list of each project, its location, and the critical areas reviewed is attached as *Appendix 2*.

§ Served as the local government unit (LGU) for administering the Wetland Conservation Act (WCA) for the cities of Greenfield, Loretto and Maple Plain. In 2009 the Commission reviewed two plans involving wetlands and received no new wetland banking applications. They also participated in four TEPs. Two new potential WCA violations within the watershed were investigated in 2009. The Commission's goal is to assure that WCA rules are properly implemented, wetland violations are resolved and replacement plans are reviewed.

§ After a hiatus due to budget constraints, the Commission resumed its stream monitoring program. Automated monitoring stations located at the outlets of Pioneer and Sarah Creeks provide both flow and water quality monitoring data. Tipping bucket rain gauges are also maintained at both sites. The Commission works with the Three Rivers Park District (TRPD) to operate these stations. It is a goal of the Commission to determine pollutant loading and measure continuous flow in both creeks. Details of the monitoring program and results will be included in *Appendix 3* when they come available.

§ Monitored Halfmoon, Independence, Sarah, Spurzem and the east and west bays of Whaletail lakes in cooperation with Three Rivers Park District. The Park District's 2009 lake sampling results will be inserted into this report as *Appendix 4* when they become available.

§ Funded the monitoring of Ardmore, Little Long and Peter Lakes through Metropolitan Council's Citizen Assisted Monitoring Program (CAMP). Excerpts from the 2009 CAMP Report regarding these three lakes will also be included in *Appendix 4* when they are available. The full report can be requested by contacting Brian Johnson of the Metropolitan Council, brian.johnson@metc.state.mn.us, or (651)602-8743. A table in *Appendix 4* shows the Commission's lake monitoring schedule. As the Commission continues to implement its second generation Management Plan, goals for these lakes will be constantly evaluated.

§ Promoted river stewardship through the River Watch program. Under the guidance of the Hennepin County Department of Environmental Services (HCDES), students from Rockford High School and West Lutheran High School monitored sites on Pioneer Creek and the Crow River. *River Watch 2009*, available from HCDES, includes results from all the Hennepin County monitoring sites. Excerpts from the report on these sites are included in *Appendix 5*. The complete report is available at <http://www.co.hennepin.mn.us>, keyword River Watch.

§ Continued to review Local Stormwater Management Plans for conformance with the Commission's *Watershed Management Plan*. The plans for Loretto, Medina and Minnetrista were approved in 2009.

§ Continued to build its education program by becoming a member of the Education and Public Outreach Committee (EPOC) of the Bassett Creek, Elm Creek, Shingle Creek and West Mississippi Commissions and Blue Thumb. These partnerships offer shared programs at significant cost-savings. These organizations, along with Three Rivers Park District, Hennepin County Department of Environmental Services and other watershed management organizations in the western Twin Cities metro area have formed the West Metro Water Alliance (WMWA) and developed a metro-wide education and public outreach plan (EOP).

§ Continued to seek landowner participation in the Lake Independence Nutrient Management Program for CWL grant funding. The grant funding was used in a cost-share program to reduce pollutant run-off to Lake Independence. The program was designed to help landowners with cost-share assistance to install animal waste practices including animal waste storage facilities, manure hauling services, manure stockpile removal, exclusion fencing, roof water management, vegetative buffer strips, pasture renovation, nutrient management of manure application, and clean water diversion that will reduce nutrients flowing into the lake. Also eligible for grant funding were urban best management practices such as bio-retention/infiltration/filtration, rain gardens, wet detention ponds, shoreline restoration, shoreline/channel stabilization, shoreline buffers, wetland restoration, riparian and wetland buffers, and critical area planting. At program-end, June 30, 2009, \$383,870 grant funds were expended. The final report can be viewed in *Appendix 6*.

§ Continued to develop the Nutrient TMDL and Implementation Plan for Lake Sarah. At year-end the stakeholder group was working toward waste load allocations and ways to reduce the loading by percentage and task. The group was also developing an aquatic vegetation management plan in cooperation with the Lake Sarah Improvement Association (LSIA). View their progress at www.lakesarah.com.

§ Continued to develop a water resource management program that reflects the needs and concerns of the Commission, its member communities and watershed residents. The implementation program is reviewed annually by the Commission during its budget process. Studies and capital improvements identified in the Commission's second generation *Watershed Management Plan* may be completed entirely or partially by member communities, the Commission, or a joint effort between them. Due to funding constraints, the Commission will focus primarily on projects identified in the Lake Independence and Lake Sarah TMDL Implementation Plans and consider other projects as funding becomes available.

§ Sought grant funding to assist with the costs of monitoring water bodies in the watershed for which there is little or no data in anticipation of developing a watershed-wide TMDL.

§ Conducted a strategic planning session to address relevance of current rules and standards and consider updates where necessary, discuss elements of a revised Capital Improvement Program and develop a proposed budget to fund the projects identified in the CIP. This discussion will continue during annual budget development. Commissioners also revised their Bylaws and adopted a Code of Ethics.

§ Participated in the City of Independence-sponsored Clean Water Resources Fair, September 17, 2009.

§ Based on results of a watershed survey conducted in 2007, developed and distributed the brochure, *Ten Things You Can Do to Improve Minnesota's Lakes and Streams*. 8,500 copies were distributed to the member cities. An intended outcome of the survey is a joint educational program for citizens, municipal employees and educators.

§ Maintained a website www.pioneersarahcreek.org to provide news to residents of the watershed and beyond. The Watershed Management Plan, monthly meeting materials, project reviews, Annual Reports, water monitoring results, and other watershed-related information are posted there. In

addition, from time to time, news releases are provided to the member cities and their official newspapers for publication (*Appendix 7*). At year-end accepted a bid to redesign the website to incorporate the latest technologies and interactive capabilities.

§ At their May 21, 2009 meeting the Commissioners adopted a revised 2010 operating budget totaling \$134,500, with total member assessments of \$72,800.

§ Published an annual report summarizing the Commission's yearly activities and financial reporting. The *2008 Annual Report* was approved by the Commission at their September 10, 2009 meeting.

§ One of the objectives the Commission identified in 2009 was to consider revising its existing Shoreline, Erosion and Sediment Control and Stormwater Management model ordinances. This objective has been delayed pending approval of the remaining two local plans, anticipated to occur in 2010.

§ Another objective, development of new nutrient management regulations and wetland buffer model ordinances for adoption by member cities as part of Phase 2 of the Lake Independence TMDL Implementation Plan, has also been delayed. (The *Lake Independence Phosphorus TMDL and Implementation Plan* are available on the Commission's website.)

§ A third objective, participation in and/or coordination of curlyleaf pondweed treatments for Rebecca and Sarah lakes and identification and implementation of nutrient reduction controls for the Spurzem wetland are still being considered by the Commission. These projects will require the Commission and the stakeholders to aggressively seek funding partnerships in order to implement these projects.

§ In its PRAP review BWSR recommended that the Commission adopt personnel policies. The Commission has no employees. Staff will work with BWSR to address administrative guidance for Commissioners such as filing for per diem, travel expenses and conference or special meeting attendance. Since BWSR deemed this recommendation to be a low priority, it will be addressed in 2010.

§ In its PRAP review BWSR also recommended that the Commission conduct a stakeholder survey. This recommendation will be considered in 2011 budget discussions.

2010 Work Plan. The Commission has identified the following activities in 2010:

§ Continue to review local development/redevelopment plans for conformance with the standards outlined in the Commission's second generation Watershed Management Plan.

§ Serve as the local government unit (LGU) for administering the Wetland Conservation Act (WCA) for the cities of Greenfield, Loretto and Maple Plain.

§ Conduct lake and stream monitoring programs to track water quality and quantity conditions.

§ Promote river stewardship through the River Watch program. Encourage participation by local school students and their teachers.

§ Partner with the Hennepin County Department of Environmental Services (HCDES) in the Stream Health Evaluation Program (SHEP).

§ Undertake elements of a Surface Water Assessment Grant awarded to the Commission to complete a condition assessment for all currently unassessed or partially assessed lakes and streams throughout the Pioneer-Sarah Creek watershed.

§ Seek grant funding to assist with the costs associated with development of a watershed-wide TMDL and implementing impairment-reducing projects.

§ Continue as a member of the West Metro Water Alliance (WMWA). The group will be formalized in 2010 and elements of the program will be identified and budgeted for 2011 and beyond. Help to create joint educational program for citizens, municipal employees and educators.

§ Redesign and maintain the Commission’s website to provide news to residents of the watershed and beyond.

§ Adopt personnel policies as recommended by BWSR.

§ Adopt a 2011 operating budget.

§ Undertake a survey of lakeshed residents to determine the extent of their knowledge of how runoff affects the health of their lakes.

§ Publish an Annual Activity Report summarizing the Commission’s yearly activities and financial reporting.

Interest Proposals. The required biennial solicitation for interest proposals for administrative, legal, technical and wetland consulting services was published in the December 22, 2008 edition of the *State Register*. After reviewing the responses, the Commissioners approved the individuals and companies named in *Appendix 1*. This process will be repeated in 2011.

Financial Reporting. *Appendix 8* includes the Commission’s approved budget for 2009, a report of revenues and expenditures for 2009, and the 2009 Audit Report prepared by Johnson & Company, Ltd., Certified Public Accountants. The Commission’s Joint Powers Agreement provides that each member community contributes toward the annual operating budget based on its share of the total market value of all property within the watershed. The 2009 cost allocations to the members are shown as part of the Operating Budget found in *Appendix 8*.

Of the \$378,550 operating budget approved by the Commission for 2009, revenue of \$20,500 was projected as proceeds from application fees, \$235,000 from grant and cooperator funding, and \$4,500 from interest income, resulting in assessments to members totaling \$72,800. \$45,750 was projected as coming from reserves.

The Pioneer-Sarah Creek Watershed Management Commission maintains a checking account at US Bank for current expenses and rolls uncommitted monies to its account in the 4M Fund, the Minnesota Municipal Money Market Fund. Amounts paid by the Commission per the 2009 Audit (*Appendix 8*) are as follows:

General engineering	\$12,369
General administration	\$60,324
Education	\$11,668
Programs	\$2,500
Projects	<u>\$362,516</u>
Total	\$449,377

General engineering work includes review of local plans, review of development/redevelopment projects, attendance at meetings and other technical services.

General administration includes support to technical staff, attendance at meetings, insurance premiums, annual audit, legal counsel, tracking grant opportunities, and other non-engineering services.

Wetland Banking. The Pioneer-Sarah Creek Commission does not have a wetland banking program.

Appendices.

Appendix 1 – Commissioners, Staff and Consultants.

Appendix 2 – Project Reviews.

Appendix 3 – Stream Monitoring.

Appendix 4 – Lake Monitoring.

Appendix 5 – River Watch.

Appendix 6 – Lake Independence Nutrient Management Program – CWLA.

Appendix 7 – Media Release.

Appendix 8 –Financial Reporting.

Questions regarding this report should be directed
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