

NEWS RELEASE

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FOR MORE INFORMATION
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"What's in Your Water?"

Watershed residents are invited to attend meetings on June 23 and 30, outlining a water quality improvement project.

What would you invest in the Buffalo River? Do you rely on it for drainage or recreation? How do you think it should be managed?

People interested in answering these and other questions are invited to open houses hosted by the Buffalo Red River Watershed District (BRRWD), on June 23 at Barnesville's Hildebrand Hall, or June 30 at the Hawley Community Center.

The meetings will combine formal presentations and an informal open house. Doors open at 7:30 p.m. each night. Residents are encouraged to come early to view displays about water quality and pollution management in the watershed.

The BRRWD was awarded one of two pilot project grants by the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency, in response to concerns they raised about the way water resources are managed in the state through the Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) process. The Buffalo Watershed Water Quality Improvement Project is applying the watershed based TMDL concept to the entire watershed rather than individual reaches.

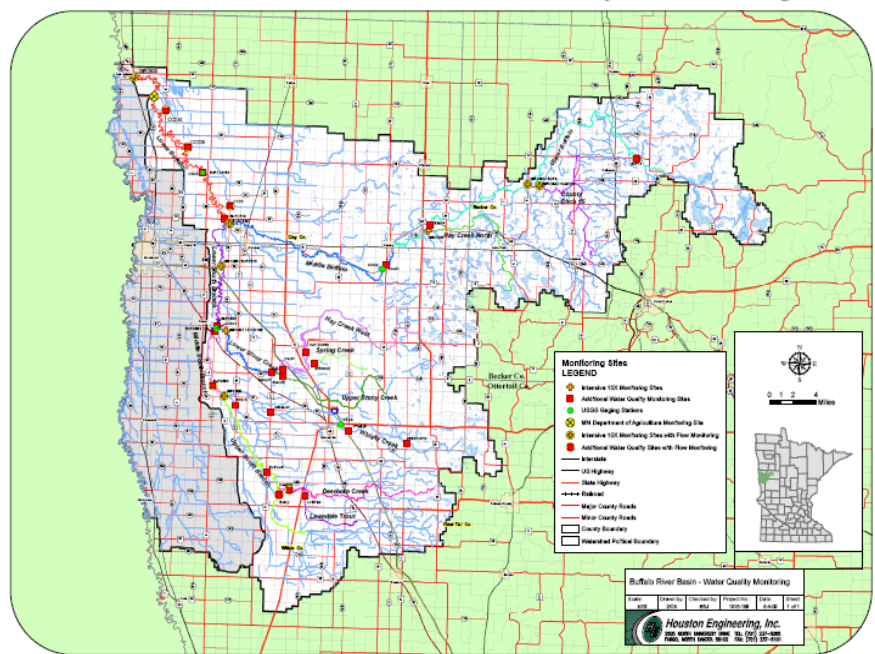
"The state looks at issues one problem at a time," said Bruce Albright, BRRWD administrator. "We told them that we know that problems in a watershed are linked, that what happens upstream has downstream impacts. We asked them to help us look at the problems on a watershed, not a problem, basis, and they accepted our challenge," Albright said.

"We are asking residents to get involved in this process, to help us understand why the watershed's waters don't meet standards, to understand the sources of water quality pollution, and to help us craft a response to solving these problems," Albright said. "For those who want to get involved, there will be a series of public meetings over the next 18 months. We hope that the Buffalo Watershed Water Quality Improvement Project becomes a model for other watersheds in northwestern Minnesota and throughout the state."

The MPCA has designated reaches in the Buffalo River watershed as impaired, meaning that water quality does not meet state standards. Excessive turbidity, or lack of clarity, is thought to be the most pervasive water quality issue in the watershed. The Buffalo Watershed Water Quality Improvement Project will address that issue as well as others that may become apparent through monitoring for other problems, including bacteria, insufficient dissolved oxygen, and low numbers of different fish species.

"We agree with the BRRWD that water quality problems are best solved on a watershed basis," says Jim Ziegler, supervisor of the MPCA's watershed unit based in Detroit Lakes. "The MPCA grant will enable the BRRWD to add a chapter to its Comprehensive Plan devoted to water quality. The water quality chapter will assess the condition of

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the Buffalo and its tributaries, identify sources of pollution and stressors that may create pollution, and identify strategies to reduce pollution to water bodies.”

“The Buffalo River and its tributaries have many uses,” Albright said. “Some of these uses are regulated by the MPCA and others, which provide the means to manage pollution. However, reducing other sources of pollution depends on the participation of people who live with the river. We are holding these meetings to introduce this project to the residents of the watershed and to solicit their input and participation,” he said.

For more information about the Buffalo River Watershed Water Quality Improvement Project, call the BRRWD office at 218/354-7710 or Dan Olson, MPCA, 218/846-8110. You can also find additional information on the BRRWD Web site: <http://www.brrwd.org/>