

Annual Report 2005

**REDWOOD-COTTONWOOD
RIVERS CONTROL AREA
(RCRCA)**

A Message from the Director . . .



James Doering, Executive Director

This annual report is published to document watershed activities for 2004 of our organization and partners and to again refocus on the goals and objectives of RCRCA. Over the last twenty one years, the purpose of Redwood-Cottonwood Rivers Control Area (RCRCA) has been to develop and implement plans to protect and enhance the Redwood and Cottonwood Rivers. In 2004, we have continued this important task and remain committed to providing watershed residents and our local government members and partners with the support necessary to help accelerate adoption of conservation in both watersheds.

This past year RCRCA and its partners renewed public outreach efforts that were postponed due to the budget crises of 2003. Once again we had our nationally acclaimed "Coffee on the Projects", where we had informational forums with displays and live radio in cafés throughout the watersheds to promote public participation. The annual canoe trips on both rivers were revived and as always were well attended with the same 'awe and amazement' such wonderful recreational opportunities are right here in our own backyard. In 2004 RCRCA held the second annual watershed golf tournament, where

watershed residents are paired with conservation officials who as a team discuss and answer watershed and water quality based questions located at each "T" box. Held at the Sanborn Farmer's Golf and Health Club located directly on the Cottonwood River, it is the perfect setting to stimulate discussion on current conservation issues while enjoying the River's picturesque attributes. These innovative public participation forums provide an avenue to inform watershed residents of project activities, water quality data trends and allow direct feed back which is used to direct current and future project activities. These visible aspects are results of mainstay services taking place on a year around basis through RCRCA projects such as providing additional cost share to implement best management practices in the watershed; providing technical assistance through two Watershed Engineering Technicians; water quality and GIS spatial analysis through two Watershed Technicians and securing additional conservation dollars through grant writing.

RCRCA in 2004 again secured an additional \$161,940 in Cottonwood River best management cost share dollars. Combining with the \$2,790,000 in 2003 grant awards, enhances the opportunity for landowner and operators to implement conservation into their agricultural production operation. Eighty three percent of those dollars secured will actually contribute to on the ground changes in both the Redwood and Cottonwood River Watersheds. Seventeen percent will be used for enhancing public participation and education as well as maintaining the continuous water quality sampling program in both watersheds that measures the success of implementing conservation. These grant dollars will allow RCRCA to achieve it's goals and objectives in both watersheds through 2008. Additional grant requests of \$550,000 for Cottonwood River sediment and phosphorus reduction along with emergency stream bank stabilization were submitted in 2004 and are waiting approval. The grants listed above are new money brought into the watersheds due to the Joint Powers Organization's commitment to improving the Cottonwood and Redwood River Watersheds. Without RCRCA and the commitment of it's partners, these grants would not be accessible to the watersheds.

Looking ahead to 2005, I am very excited to continue acceleration activities in both watersheds once again. The funding secured in 2003 and 2004 will allow the projects to get targeted conservation practices on the land and monitor the success with GIS and water quality data. Very few watershed organizations have the capability to show results through implementing best management practices, recording their effectiveness, showing where they are located and directly tie them to water quality changes. At RCRCA we can accomplish all of that and also evaluate other program related conservation activities and show their effectiveness on a watershed scale. This is increasingly important in the Minnesota River Basin since Governor Carlson's challenge in 1992. There have been large amounts of funding and effort focused in the Minnesota River Basin since the commitment was made in Mankato. RCRCA is striving to account for all Redwood and Cottonwood watershed conservation efforts and correlate them to current water quality/quantity changes.

Conservation starts with you! See what you can do in 2005 to improve your watershed!

Sincerely,

James Doering,
Executive Director

Cover Photo: Grand Prize winning photo from the RCRCA Photo Contest. Courtesy of Joel Irlbeck

About RCRCA

The Redwood-Cottonwood Rivers Control Area (RCRCA) represents the interest of local units of government through a joint powers agreement. Organized in 1983 to protect and enhance the Redwood and Cottonwood Rivers, RCRCA works with local, state, and federal agencies, as well as private foundations to finance and administer programs of benefit to the two watersheds. RCRCA is the fiscal manager of both the Redwood River Clean Water Project and the Cottonwood River Restoration Project.



Member Counties and Soil and Water Conservation Districts include:

- **Brown**
- **Cottonwood**
- **Lincoln**
- **Lyon**
- **Murray**
- **Redwood**
- **Pipestone**
- **Yellow Medicine**

Financial support for RCRCA is provided, in part, through these counties.

RCRCA Mission

Develop and implement plans to:

- *protect property, stream and lakes from sedimentation and pollution;*
- *Maintain and improve water quality in streams, lakes and groundwater;*
- *Control erosion of land;*
- *Protect property from damage of flooding;*
- *And improve recreational and wildlife opportunities.*

Technical Assistance

Through both the Redwood River Clean Water Project and the Cottonwood River Restoration Project, technical assistance is available to watershed residents to assist with design and installation of best management practices (BMPs). Funding, in the form of cost share grants, is available for up to seventy-five percent (75%) of most practices intended to protect water quality. Project staff also help landowners access other state and federal sources of financial assistance.

Education/Information/Outreach

The RCRCA educational program activities are intended to raise the level of public awareness and provide the most current information to all watershed residents. Through the use of various educational components, farmers and the general public will be able to learn about the watershed project and how they can participate in reducing erosion and non-point source pollution on their land. Information includes newsletters, updating written material as well as providing educational information developed for specific audiences and programs. Outreach activities include the coffee on the projects, photo contest, canoe trips down both rivers and a golf outing on the banks of the Cottonwood River.

Cottonwood River Restoration Project



Cottonwood River Watershed Sampling

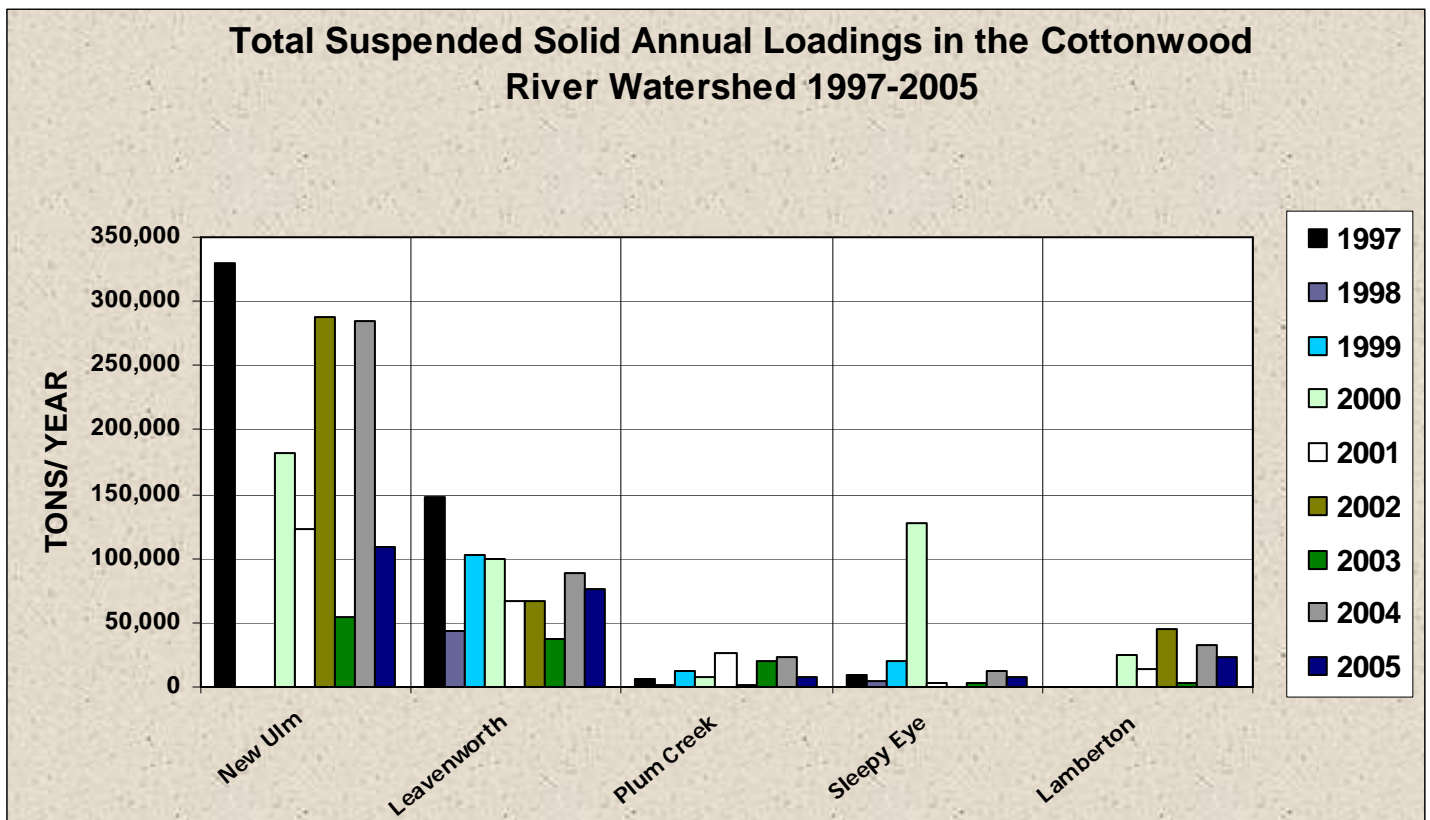
Surface water sampling on the Cottonwood River (three sites) and its tributaries (two sites) continued for a ninth year. Samples were collected monthly (base flow) at each station through the growing season (April – September.) Automated samples were collected in two or four hour intervals, in addition to grab samples, during storm events.

Mission

The mission of the Cottonwood River Restoration Project is to promote sustainable conservation land use changes through establishing watershed identity and be cooperatively working to increase watershed awareness that will lead to the restoration of the river's environmental health and increased recreational use.

Sampling Sites:

- Plum Creek
- Cottonwood River near Lamberton
- Cottonwood River near Leavenworth
- Sleepy Eye Creek near Leavenworth
- Cottonwood River at New Ulm



Overview

The Cottonwood River Restoration Project began in the spring of 1996 with the award of a Clean Water Partnership Grant from the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency. The project is designed to investigate water quality conditions in the Cottonwood River, then design and implement measures to improve the quality and usefulness of the river.

Ten Year Goals

- To achieve the highest water quality attainable for ecoregion non-impacted streams.
- To have watershed residents take an active role in enhancing and protecting the Cottonwood River.
- To develop the Cottonwood River as a major recreational resource within the Minnesota River Basin.

New RCRCA Photo Contest is a Hit

RCRCA added a new outreach program to our organization, the photo contest. This was our first year running this program. The contest had four different categories, all based on the age of the photographer, this gave people of all ages a good chance to win a prize. We received over 130 photos from 43 different people. This was a very good response, given that the contest only ran for three and a half months (Nov. 1 to Feb. 15). We recruited six judges from the local area that were involved in photography. These judges congregated in the private dining room in the Jackpot Junction restaurant to determine the top photos. The photo that was selected best overall is on the cover of this publication, two other submissions are in the 'Pictorial Review of 2005' section. The photo below is also an entry in the photo contest. We will be create calendars from the best photos and make them available to the general public.

We plan to run this contest again. This time we hope to have the contest run for eight to ten months. This should allow more people to enter the contest, as well as give people all four seasons



to use as backdrops for the photos. This contest is a great way to encourage people to explore the watershed, looking for just the right setting for their photo. This is also another opportunity for the whole family to get out there together and enjoy the natural beauty that we have here in Southwestern Minnesota.

Mounds Creek Dam Southwest of Springfield.
Mounds Creek is a tributary of the Cottonwood River.

Photo Courtesy of William Weber

Redwood River Clean Water Project



Redwood River Watershed Sampling

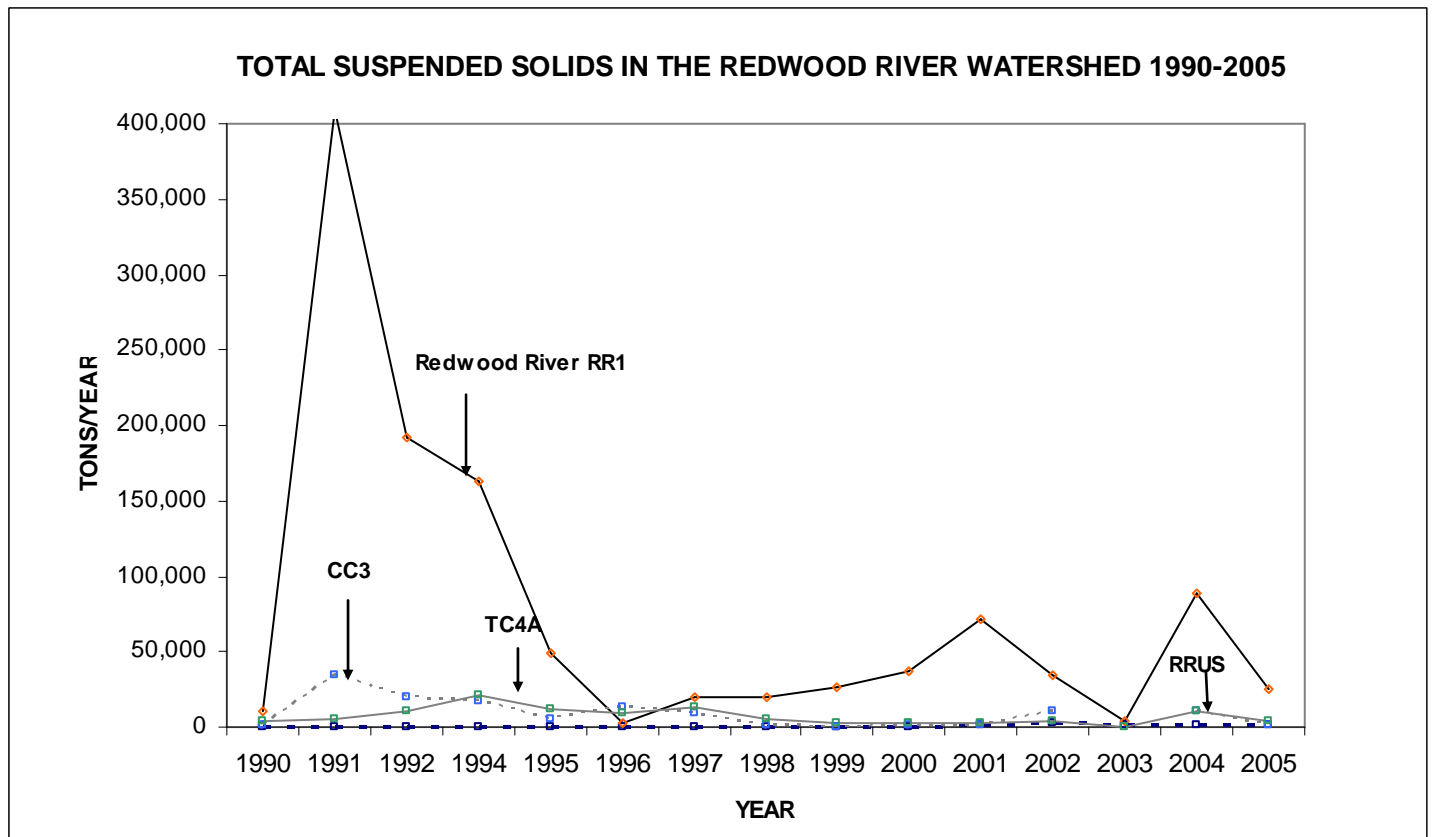
Surface water sampling on the Redwood River and its tributaries continued for a sixteenth year. Samples were collected monthly (base flow) at each station throughout the growing season (April – September). Automated samples were collected in two or four hour intervals, in addition to grab samples, during storm events.

Mission

The mission of the Redwood River Clean Water Project is to create awareness and appreciation for the value of a clean Redwood River, promote watershed identity, and cooperatively achieve land use changes necessary to restore the river's health.

Sampling Sites:

- Three Mile Creek near Marshall (TC4A)
- Redwood River at Russell (RRUS)
- Clear Creek near Seaforth (CC3)
- Redwood River near Redwood Falls (RR1)



Overview

The Redwood River Clean Water Project, set out in 1994 to accelerate best management practice adoption and reduce sediment and nutrient loadings in the Redwood River and Lake Redwood have shown a significant decrease, as illustrated in the graph on page 4. Along with the cooperative work of partner agencies, an increased sense of stewardship and resident participation is behind the adoption of land use practices.

The Redwood River Clean Water Project will continue efforts to reduce point and non-point source pollution by seeking sustainable sources of funding.

Grant Dollars Available in the Redwood River

As a result of the non-compliant dissolved oxygen designation on the lower Minnesota River, RCRCA was able to apply for a grant to reduce phosphorus load contributions to the Minnesota River from the Redwood River Watershed. The Redwood River Clean Water Project received \$290,000 to be used over three years. This grant will fund cost share opportunities on phosphorus reducing best management practices in the watershed. The grant will be broken into two parts. \$200,000 will be used for cost share over the three years and \$90,000 will be used to provide technical assistance and water-quality monitoring services. The grant was received fall of 2004 and will have approximately \$200,000 available to producers in 2006. This grant is in addition to cost share opportunities for producers available through SWCD block grants, EQIP and Continuous CRP programs. Please contact Bill Moldestad, Engineering Technician at 507-637-2142 ext. 127 or william.moldestad@mn.nacdnet.net.

Total Maximum Daily Load Limits on the Redwood River

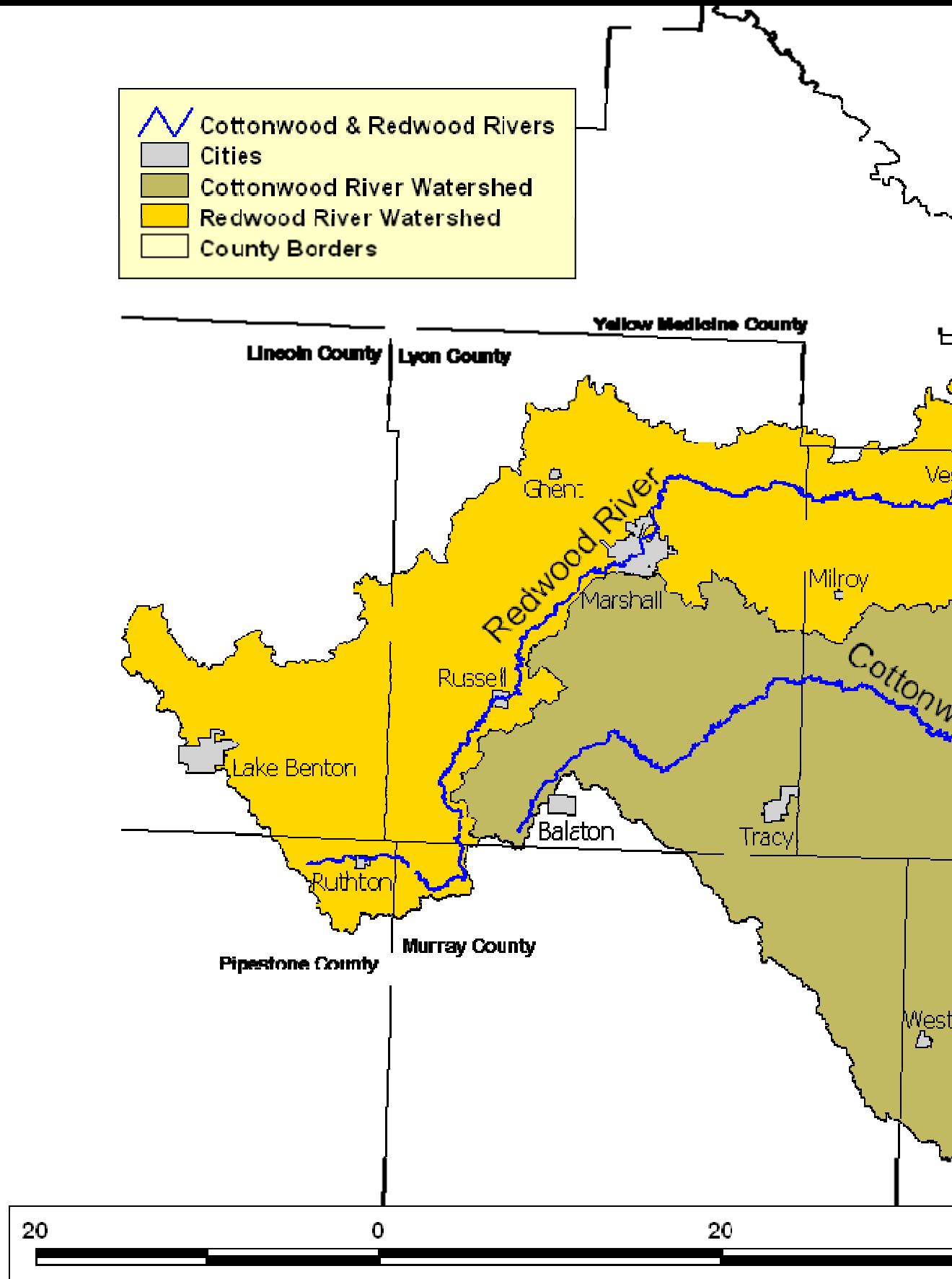
As listed on the 2006 TMDL EPA Clean Water Act 303d list, the Redwood River has non-compliant TMDL listings in different reaches for fecal coliform bacteria, turbidity, mercury, ammonia and supporting biotic integrity.

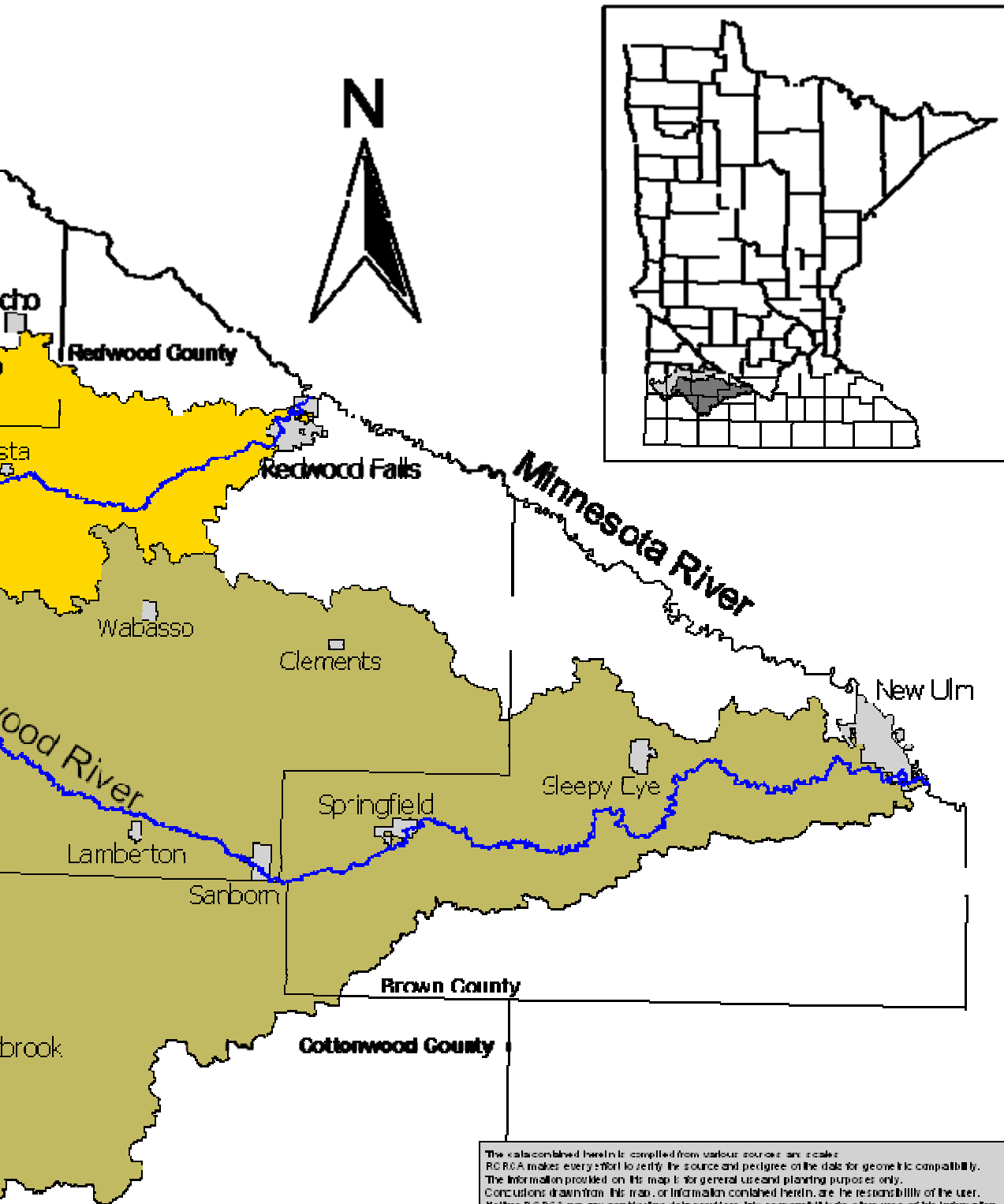
The Redwood-Cottonwood Rivers Control Area is in the unique position to address the current impairments and any new listings. Due to the organizational structure of RCRCA (JPO of Counties and SWCDs), we will be able efficiently determine a Total Maximum Daily Limit and create the implementation plan.

RCRCA will be taking immediate action in completing this planning task to coincide with preset start and finish dates for each TMDL impairment. A set 2004-2006 start window for establishing a TMDL for fecal coliform on two impaired reaches will be the first impairment to be addressed. A work plan has been submitted and planning efforts are projected to begin in May 2007.

The Redwood River Fecal TMDL will be created utilizing the Redwood River Technical Advisory Committee combined with public input meetings as specified by the Minnesota Pollution Control Agencies' 12 step TMDL process.

Map of the Redwood and Cottonwood River Watersheds





The data combined herein is compiled from various sources and scales. RCRCA makes every effort to verify the source and pedigree of the data for geographic compatibility. The information provided on this map is for general use and planning purposes only. Conclusions drawn from this map, or information contained herein, are the responsibility of the user. Neither RCRCA nor any contributing data providers take responsibility for other uses of this information.

Produced for: Redwood-Cottonwood Rivers Control Area (RCRCA)
 Prepared by: Redwood-Cottonwood Rivers Control Area (RCRCA)
 Author: Shawn Wolschke
 Date: February 24, 2005
 Data source: MN DNR MRBDC and RCRCA
 Data file: This map was prepared and composed using ESRI ArcView 3.3
 Projection: NAD83, UTM Zone 15

Activities & Educational Outreach

A Pictorial Review of 2005 . . .



Ramsey falls becomes a roaring waterfall following a heavy spring rain. Look at the photo below for some perspective on how much water is flowing here! This photo was submitted by a watershed resident for the photo contest.

Photo Courtesy of Mary Woodford of Redwood Falls



Automated water samplers allow RCRC to be a leader in water quality testing and reporting. Here Watershed Technician, Doug Goodrich, sets up a sampler for the 2005 sampling season.



Kids play near Ramsey Falls back in 1997. This was one of the photos submitted for our photo contest. It provides a good perspective for how much water is moving in the photo above this one.

Photo Courtesy of William Weber of Springfield



Watershed Technician, Doug Goodrich, teaches elementary students about the water cycle & water resources at the school's environmental day.



The stream table always puts smiles on students' faces, this time during the Environmental Fair held in Marshall.



RCRCA continued annual events like the Coffee on the Projects, golf tournament and canoe trips down both the Cottonwood and Redwood Rivers. The canoe trips provide the best opportunity for local residents to see the rivers from a different perspective. These trips are also provide a great opportunity for a family outing.



RCRCA Employees, Kelly Oliver & Doug Goodrich, dress up for their presentation at the 2005 Annual Meeting. They gave a presentation on the RCRCA phosphorous calculator under development.



A golfer picks out his prize. RCRCA hosted its third annual golf tournament, on the banks of the Cottonwood River in Sanborn. It was a beautiful September day for golf, with lunch and dinner provided for participants. Thank you to the Farmers Golf and Health Club as well the many other great sponsors that provided door prizes for every player!

Watershed Improvements

Cottonwood River Watershed 1999-2005:

Underground outlet (No.)	206
Grade Stabilization Structure (No.)	5
Grassed Waterway (Ft.)	22,159
Pond (No.)	8
Water and Sediment Control Basins (No.)	21
Waste Management System (No.)	4
Terraces (Ft.)	11,275
Subsurface Drain (No.)	424
Shoreland Protection (Ft.)	1300
Dam Repair (No.)	5
Drainage Control Structure (No.)	1



Redwood River Watershed 1994-2005:

Conservation Cover (Ac.)	464.0
Conservation Crop Rotation (Ac.)	4,063.1
Conservation Tillage (Ac.)	5,876
Pasture and Hay Planting (Ac.)	392.5
Prescribed Grazing (Ac.)	288.0
Pond (No.)	1
Grassed Waterway (Ac.)	101.15
Streambank, Shoreland and Roadside (Ft.)	3,062
*with an additional 434.7 (Ac.) treated	
Water and Sediment Control Basins (No.)	161
Terraces (Ft.)	3,660
Diversions (Ft.)	4,050
Waste Management System (Ac.)	4
Critical Area Stabilization (Ac.)	1.1
Sediment Basin (No.)	2
Pest Management (Ac.)	4,216.3
Nutrient Management (Ac.)	4,063.1
Waste Utilization (Ac.)	6,963
Upland Wildlife Habitat management (Ac.)	20
Miscellaneous Acres Treated	5,638.8
Dam Repair (No.)	2

Financial Highlights

Revenues and Expenditures

For the Fiscal Year Ended December 31, 2005

Funding Sources	General Fund	Redwood River Clean Water Project*	Cottonwood River Clean Water Project*	Lincoln/Redwood Clean Water Project*
Beginning Fund Balance	\$293,795	\$62,864	-\$110,279	\$0
<u>2005 REVENUE</u>				
<i>RCRCA Member Counties: appropriations/match funds</i>				
• Brown County	\$7,236			
• Cottonwood County	6,696			
• Lincoln County	3,726			
• Lyon County	14,256			
• Murray County	2,916			
• Pipestone County	702			
• Redwood County	17,874			
• Yellow Medicine County	594			
MN Pollution 319/CWP Grant		\$147,198	\$365,071	\$115,320
Interest/Miscellaneous	17,444			
Total Revenues	\$71,444	\$147,198	\$365,071	\$115,320
<u>2005 EXPENDITURES</u>				
Personnel Services/Benefits	\$42,977	\$44,559	\$154,589	\$6,861
Operation/Supplies	9,289		15,561	
Capital Outlay			5,340	
Information/Education		444	9,032	
Monitoring/Evaluation		4,910	7,270	4,660
Travel/Expense	1,511		4,253	
Other Services/Charges	6,324		5,157	
Total Expenditures	\$60,101	\$49,913	\$201,203	\$11,521
Ending Fund Balance	\$305,138	\$160,149	\$53,589	\$103,799

*Does not reflect in-kind contributions and cost-share funds received/encumbered.

Board of Directors

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Donald Wellner, *Vice Chairman*
Tom Daub, *Secretary*
Steve Johnson, *Treasurer*
Glen Sorensen, *Public Relations & Information*
Phil Nelson, *Member at Large*

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Norman Holmen, Cottonwood Co.
James Johansen, Lincoln Co.
Phil Nelson, Lyon Co.
Kevin Vickerman, , Murray Co.
Luke Johnson, Pipestone Co.
John Schueller, Redwood Co.
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Glen Sorensen, Lincoln
Mark Muelebroeck, Lyon
Paul Posthuma, Murray
LeRoy Stensgaard, Pipestone
Tom Daub, Redwood
Burton Kuehn, Yellow Medicine

Staff

James Doering, Executive Director
Doug Goodrich, Watershed Technician
Bill Moldestad, Engineering Technician
Kelly Oliver, Engineering Technician
Shawn Wohnoutka, GIS/Education Outreach Technician
Sharon Voeks, Administrative Officer

Acknowledgements

Landowners/Operators who established BMPs
•
Watershed Residents
•
Soil and Water Conservation Districts (SWCD)
•
County Environmental Offices
•
County Water Planners
•
Area II, Minnesota River Basin Projects, Inc.
•
Department of Natural Resources (DNR)
•
Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS)
•
Board of Water and Soil Resources (BWSR)
•
Minnesota River Board (MNRB)
•
Minnesota Pollution Control Agency (MPCA)
•
Farm Service Agency (FSA)
•
University of Minnesota Extension Service
•
United States Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS)
•
University of Minnesota
Southwest Research and Outreach Center (SWROC)



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