

# UPPER MISSISSIPPI RIVER SOURCE WATER PROTECTION PROJECT (UMRSWPP)

Scope: Regional/Watershed

Location: Minnesota

## SCOPE:

- » Upper Mississippi River, within state of Minnesota.
- » Focus: The Upper Mississippi River Source Water Protection Project (UMRSWPP) is a collaboration to protect source water serving three cities in the Upper Mississippi River. This area contains many communities that rely on ground water for their public water supply. The UMRSWPP provides a framework to coordinate the drinking water protection efforts of surface water and ground water-based public water suppliers within the approximately 7,700 square mile project area.

## COLLABORATIVE FORMATION:

- » The Minnesota Department of Health prepared Source Water Assessments in accordance with the 1996 Amendments to the Safe Water Drinking Act. In response, three cities in Minnesota voluntarily formed the UMRSWPP in 2002 and developed Source Water Protection Plans. They formed a Joint Powers Agreement in 2011 and have a line item in their budgets for implementation of these plans.
- » As part of Minnesota's Constitutional amendment to dedicate portions of one-eighth of one percent towards clean drinking water, the Minnesota Department of Health has established source water protection grants that help local governments implement activities that protect or improve drinking water resources. UMRSWPP received a \$30,000 grant—combining \$10,000 for each of the three cities, and used the funding to help priority watersheds fund stormwater management projects.

## MEMBERS:

- » St. Cloud Public Utilities
- » St. Paul Regional Water Services
- » Minneapolis Water Works
- » Minnesota Department of Health
- » Minnesota Pollution Control Agency
- » Minnesota Rural Water Association
- » Twin Cities Metropolitan Council

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## COLLABORATING PARTNERS:

- » Anoka Conservation District
- » Central Minnesota Water Education Alliance
- » Crow River Organization of Water
- » Elk River Watershed Organization
- » Mississippi National River and Recreation Area
- » Rice Creek Watershed District
- » Upper Rum River Watershed Management Organization (WMO)
- » Lower Rum River WMO
- » Sauk River Watershed District
- » Stearns County Soil and Water Conservation District
- » Vadnais Lake Area Water Management Organization

## WATER CONCERNS:

Source water protection will be based primarily on watershed management, land use planning, and point and non-point pollution control. The implementation of the source water protection plans will identify and accommodate such high priority land use areas as:

- » Population growth centers;
- » Areas where land use conversion is taking place; and
- » Environmentally vulnerable areas (nitrates, surface water/ground water interaction).

A few examples of contaminants of concern are *Cryptosporidium*, fecal coliform, *Giardia*, other viruses, total suspended solids, sediment, and suspended organics.

## STRATEGIES:

The three cities—St. Cloud, St. Paul and Minneapolis—have prepared, and are now implementing, their respective Source Water Protection Plans voluntarily through the UMRSWPP.

- » UMRSWPP has developed an interactive mapping tool to prioritize source water protection.
- » Members hold monthly meetings in order to coordinate efforts.
- » Provides financial support to nearby initiatives to support SWP, including
  - The Rice Creek Watershed District's "Blue Thumb" initiative. This program helps homeowners use native plant gardening, rain gardens, and shoreline stabilization to reduce runoff from their home landscape in an effort to improve water quality.
  - The Vadnais Lake Area Water Management Organization's Whitaker Pond improvement project. This project aims to improve the quality of stormwater that drains to Lambert Creek and the St. Paul Regional Water Services' water treatment plant.

## RESULTS:

- Improved management of stormwater in source water drainage area.
- Improved collaborative efforts on implementation of protection efforts with watershed districts and water management organizations within priority protection areas.
- Interactive mapping tool resulted in protecting source water from a number of development projects.