

BROWN'S CREEK WATERSHED DISTRICT

Preserving the integrity of the watershed for future generations

WATERSHED NEWS - SPRING 2026

What is the Watershed District?

Watershed districts are local units of government based on hydrologic boundaries (where water flows) to conserve natural resources. The Brown's Creek watershed contains rare and unique ecosystems including Brown's Creek, a cold-water trout stream, and lakes, ponds, and wetlands that support a variety of plants and animals. It includes parts of Stillwater, Oak Park Heights, Lake Elmo, Grant, Hugo, Stillwater Township, and May Township.



Lake Health and Aquatic Plants

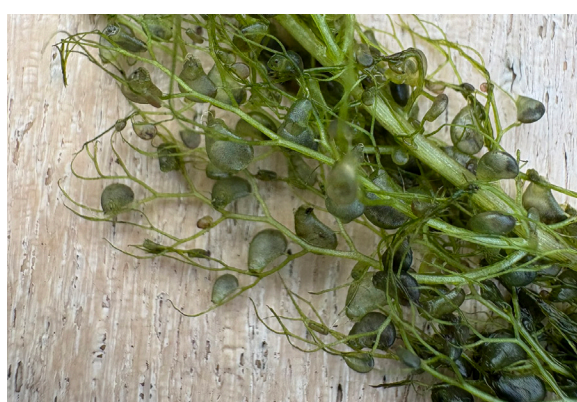
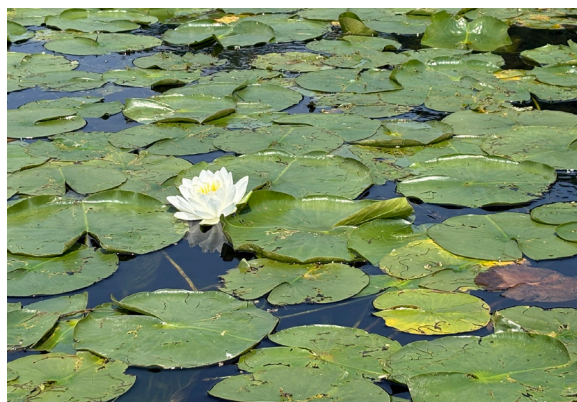
Aquatic plants support lake health by absorbing nutrients to limit algae growth, stabilizing shorelines to prevent erosion, and creating habitat for fish and wildlife. Native aquatic plants are also an indicator of health in shallow lakes, especially if they are rare or sensitive plants, due to the clarity they need to grow. For these reasons, BCWD is excited about the many native aquatic plants found in the watershed's shallow lakes.

That said, aquatic invasive plants like curly-leaf pondweed and Eurasian watermilfoil are also present in some lakes in the watershed, which may warrant treatment when there is a water quality benefit. In 2025, BCWD adopted an aquatic plant management policy, outlining its holistic approach to managing aquatic plants with a primary focus on improving water quality and environmental conditions favoring native plants. The full policy can be found at bcwd.org/aquatic-plants.

Long Lake: A Story of Healing

BCWD has been surveying lakes and ponds in the watershed for water quality as well as aquatic plant communities. The data has shown improving trends in many water bodies, but one notable example is Long Lake in Stillwater. While the lily pads on the lake may seem like a nuisance, they are a great indicator of Long Lake's healing over the years. Long Lake has transitioned from a turbid, algae-covered lake where nothing could grow to a clear, shallow lake supporting aquatic plant growth. This is because the cleaner water, achieved as a result of many projects in the Long Lake area, such as community raingardens and partnerships with the city, has allowed sunlight through to promote plant growth. Underneath those lily pads, there is a great diversity of beneficial aquatic plants.

This year, we have been working with our district biologist and Victoria Bradford Styrbicki at a House Unbuilt to explore the community's connection to Long Lake. We have discovered parallels between human healing and Long Lake's improving water quality and are excited to find ways to connect to the resource through its diversity and artistic means. This July, we are planning a celebratory event at Long Lake to share fun aquatic plant stories and take part in artistic experiences to better connect with this unique ecosystem.



Vision Statement

Brown's Creek Watershed District consists of communities interlaced with natural corridors. These natural corridors improve the function and value of the district's water resources and support a diverse population of plants, wildlife, and fish. BCWD brings people and the environment together to accommodate development that preserves the connection between surface water and groundwater and enhances the quality of these resources.

District Office

Address: 455 Hayward Ave N.
Oakdale, MN 55128

Phone: 651-330-8220

Website: bcwd.org

Board of Managers

Klay Eckles, President

Celia Wirth, Treasurer

Chuck LeRoux, Vice President

Griffin Brod, Manager

Luke Mattson, Manager

Monthly board meetings are typically at 6:30pm on the 2nd Wednesday. See bcwd.org/calendar for the full schedule.

District Staff

Karen Kill,
Administrator
kkill@mnwcd.org

Hannah Peterson,
Communications & Project Assistant
hpeterson@mnwcd.org

Get Involved!

Visit our website or contact us for involvement opportunities.

- Attend or volunteer at an upcoming event: bcwd.org/calendar.
- Apply for a stewardship grant: bcwd.org/stewardship-grants.
- Join the Community Advisory Committee: bcwd.org/cac.
- Request a free site visit: mnwcd.org/site-visit-signup-form.
- Adopt a storm drain: mn.adopt-a-drain.org.
- Find Brown's Creek Watershed District on social media: [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#), and [YouTube](#).

View Online

Scan the QR code or visit bcwd.org/newsletters to view this newsletter and past issues online.

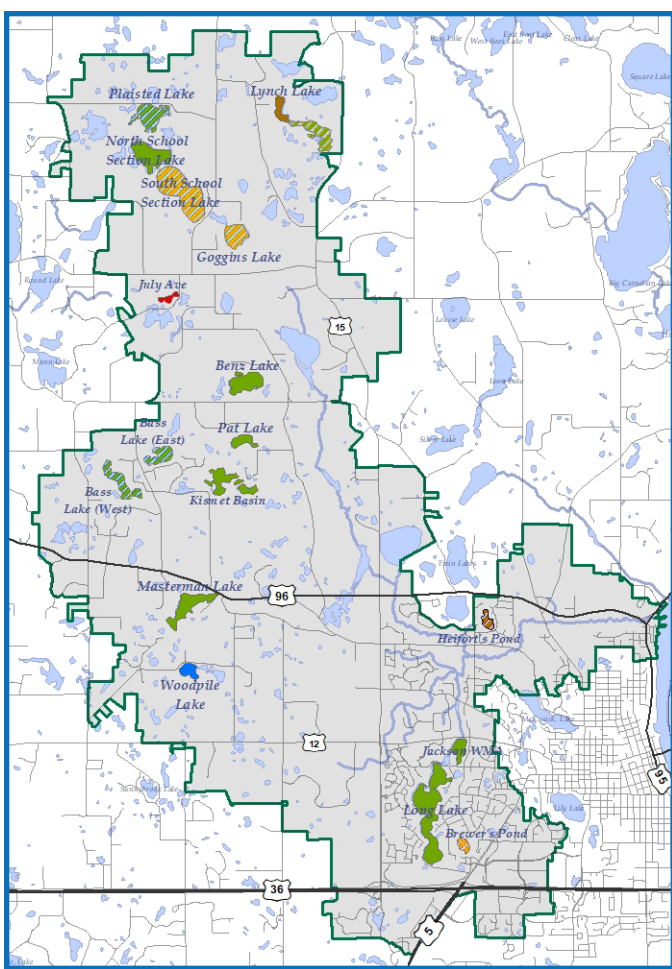


Water Quality Report Card

We partner with the Washington Conservation District to collect and evaluate water quantity and quality data on Brown's Creek and the watershed's major lakes. Continued monitoring provides a clearer picture of how to best restore and protect our resources for the future. The creek's 2025 loads to the St. Croix River were:

- **TSS (Sediment):** 140.17 lbs/acre (Goal: 74 lbs/acre)
- **TP (Phosphorus):** 2,893 lbs/yr (Goal: 1,804 lbs/yr)

The lake grades for 2025 are in the map to the right, and the full monitoring report can be found at bcwd.org/monitoring.



Upcoming Events

Join BCWD at an upcoming family-friendly event! Scheduled events for 2026 include:

- **Volunteer Tree Planting:** May 16th, 9am, Brown's Creek Park (Registration Required)
- **Spring Creek Scene Painting:** May 31st, 2-4pm, Aamodt's Apple Farm (Registration Required)
- **Trail Walk:** June 16th, 6:30pm, the Lakes at Stillwater patio and trail
- **Summer Creek Scene Painting:** June 28th, 2-4pm, Brown's Creek Park (Registration Required)
- **Long Lake Health & Art Event:** July 25th, 10am-2pm, City of Stillwater property between the lake & Croixwood.
- **Community Watershed Celebration & Bird Festival:** Sept 19th, 10am-1pm, Brown's Creek Park
- **Fall Creek Scene Painting:** Oct 11th, 2-4pm, Lift Bridge Brewing (Registration Required)

Visit bcwd.org/calendar for more information and additional events.



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Stewardship Grants

Our Stewardship Grant Program provides residents with grants up to \$500 for projects that benefit water quality and wildlife habitat within the watershed. Examples include native pollinator gardens, raingardens, low-input or wildlife friendly turf alternatives, rain barrels, and targeted water education or outreach. **If you have a plan to implement conservation practices on your property, apply for one of our stewardship grants this year!**



How Our Regulatory Program Protects Lakes

Minnesota statute requires watershed districts to have rules and regulations to conserve natural resources in the state and watershed. Brown's Creek Watershed District's regulatory program includes rules and a permitting process with requirements for stormwater management, erosion and sediment control, buffers, shoreline alterations, water crossings, and flood control.

Buffers are required for development projects under Rule 4.0 (Lake, Stream, and Wetland Buffer Requirements) for lakes in the watershed, as well as Brown's Creek and its tributaries, wetlands larger than an acre, and groundwater dependent natural resources. **Buffers are areas of native plants surrounding a water body that support ecosystem health by protecting water resources and creating habitat. The native plants protect lakes by filtering runoff to remove pollutants before reaching the lake and stabilizing the shoreline with their deep roots to reduce sedimentation.** Buffers can range from 25 to 150 feet wide depending on the criteria it meets, and they must be marked at the buffer's upland edge. Activities that will degrade water quality and habitat are prohibited in the buffer zone. The full details of Rule 4.0 can be found in the rules document found at bcwd.org/permitting.

