



## Cormorant Lakes Watershed District

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### 2023 Annual Report

**Managers:**

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**Inspector:**

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**Administrator**

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February 1, 2024

The Cormorant Lakes Watershed District (CLWD) was formed and approved by the State of Minnesota Water Resources Board (now the Minnesota Board of Water and Soil Resources - BWSR) on August 22, 1966. The primary mission of the CLWD is to protect and enhance the quality of waters within its jurisdiction and to ensure that appropriate decisions are made concerning the management of streams, wetlands, lakes, groundwater, and related land resources, which affect these waters.

This report covers the primary activities for the year 2023.

Managers and officers were: Ellis Peterson - Chairman; Sam Blattenbauer - Secretary; Mike Foley – Treasurer; Lyle Hansen-Manager & Jeffrey Moritz -Manager. Other associates were Liz Larson- Administrator, Colton Utecht -Shoreland Technician and Sheldon Struble & Cy Abel - Inspectors. Retained District Engineer Erik Jones.

The watershed held 22 meetings, including regular monthly, mid-month (as needed), special meetings and hearings during the year. 34 permits were approved during the year addressing shoreline repair (e.g. riprap, fill, and retaining wall), culvert replacement, tree removal, channel dredging, shoreline buffer re-establishment and other. Cormorant Lakes Watershed District requires no permit fee and provides an opportunity for the Managers to communicate with property owners.

The 2023 Estimated Market Value for the district is \$815,308,600 as compared to 685,904,600 in 2022. A general budget for 2023 of \$154,600 with a levy amount of \$103,200 was approved at a public hearing on September 6<sup>th</sup>, 2022. These funds were augmented by grant and reserve funds to support an approximate \$33,800 increase from the 2022 budget.

Projects and activities completed in 2023 included the following:

- The Watershed continued its support for prevention and control of Aquatic Invasive Species (AIS), through watercraft inspections and education. The Board dedicated \$15,000 in total for AIS programs in the District at a maximum of \$5,000 to an individual program. \$5,000 was awarded to the Big Cormorant Aquatic Invasive Species boat inspections program.
- The Upper Cormorant AIS management project, targeted at reducing curly leaf pondweed growth was paused for 2023. This pilot project began in 2009. A public hearing was held in 2018 in which a resolution was passed by the CLWD Board to establish a levy. The levy expired in 2022 and the CLWD still maintains the funds to pay for curly leaf pondweed. The funds in their account at year end was \$61,408.75. The Upper Cormorant Lake Association indicated they wish to continue the program in 2023 with a levy to begin in the 2024 tax year.
- The Cormorant Lakes Watershed District continued utilizing their new website.
- Lake inspections continued, identifying issues of zoning compliance, runoff control, silt fencing and other needs to be addressed.
- Managers attended various Lake Association meetings held in June 2023. At some of the meetings, managers spoke on topics that the CLWD has been working on.
- Support for testing (Secchi disk, chlorophyll, and phosphorus) of CLWD lakes clarity and nutrient loading continued.
- The CLWD held one Advisory Committee meeting in order to get advice on various topics including: budgeting, dredging advice, district wide education, and one watershed one plan.
- Some members of the Board & staff attended the Minnesota Association of Watershed Districts (MAWD) in Alexandria at the Arrowwood Resort and Events Center.
- The CLWD Board utilized an intern, Taytum Nelson, for part of the 2023 year and will continue employing intern as needed.
- Minutes from 2023 meetings are posted on the CLWD website, [www.clwd.org](http://www.clwd.org).
- Benson, Leitheiser and Soberg, CPA's completed the 2022 annual audit.
- Watercraft inspections were conducted on Big Cormorant Lake during the boating season in an effort to monitor and educate people using the public water access points and prevent the spread of invasive species. CLWD financially supported the program.

- The CLWD has been a part of the Ottertail One Watershed One Plan. Meetings continued throughout the year. The CLWD Administrator is on the Technical Advisory Committee & Manager Jeff Moritz is on the Policy Committee.
- Lyle Hansen indicated that he will be retiring at the close of the 2023 year. Tony Nistler was appointed to continue in his role at the open of the new 2024 year.

#### Focus areas for 2024

- Permit software needs to be implemented
- Blue Water Bay preservation project.
- Continue the partnership with Lake Association members and Advisory committee members to share information and hear issues, successes and concerns.
- Continue education and support for efforts with respect to issues related to the Watershed.
- Implement new ideas for the tree program.
- Offer more engineering support to public on projects.
- Create more outreach content with the public.
- Attend Cormorant Daze on behalf of CLWD.
- Update CLWD Rules to be more in line with Pelican River Watershed & Becker County Zoning.
- Re-convene the Advisory Board. Request more input from Board.
- Maintain the public calendar on website.

Respectfully submitted:

Sam Blattenbauer, Secretary

Prepared by:

Liz Larson, Administrator