

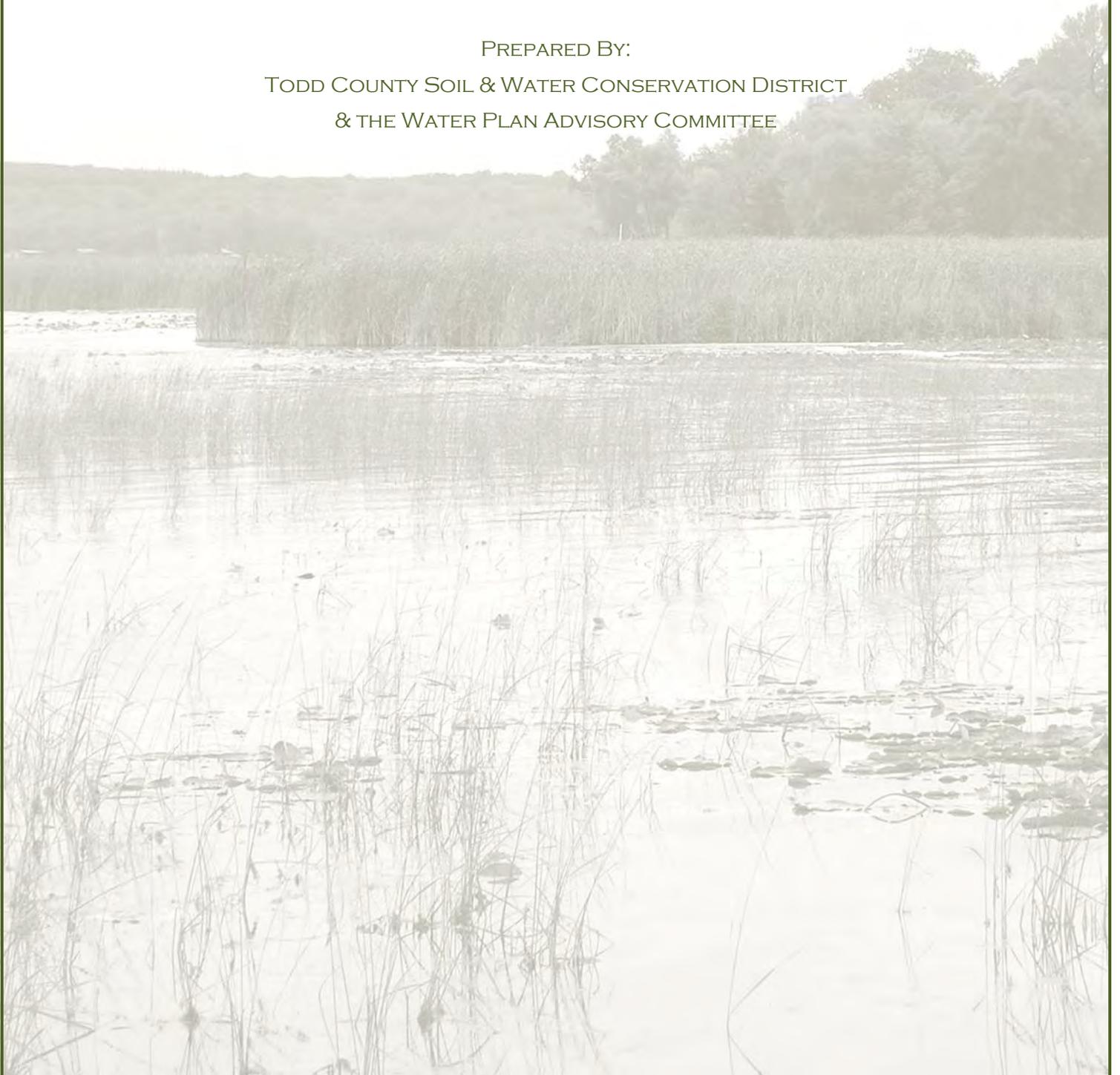
# **TODD COUNTY**

## PRIORITY CONCERNS SCOPING DOCUMENT

FOR THE 2016 COMPREHENSIVE LOCAL WATER MANAGEMENT PLAN UPDATE

PREPARED BY:

TODD COUNTY SOIL & WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICT  
& THE WATER PLAN ADVISORY COMMITTEE



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## INTRODUCTION

### Population Trends

Todd County is a rural county with eleven incorporated cities, eight unincorporated villages and 28 townships spread throughout. Long Prairie is the largest city at 3,458 and the county seat.



The US Census Bureau estimates the population of Todd County to be 24,374 in 2013. The number of households in the county is estimated to be 12,887.

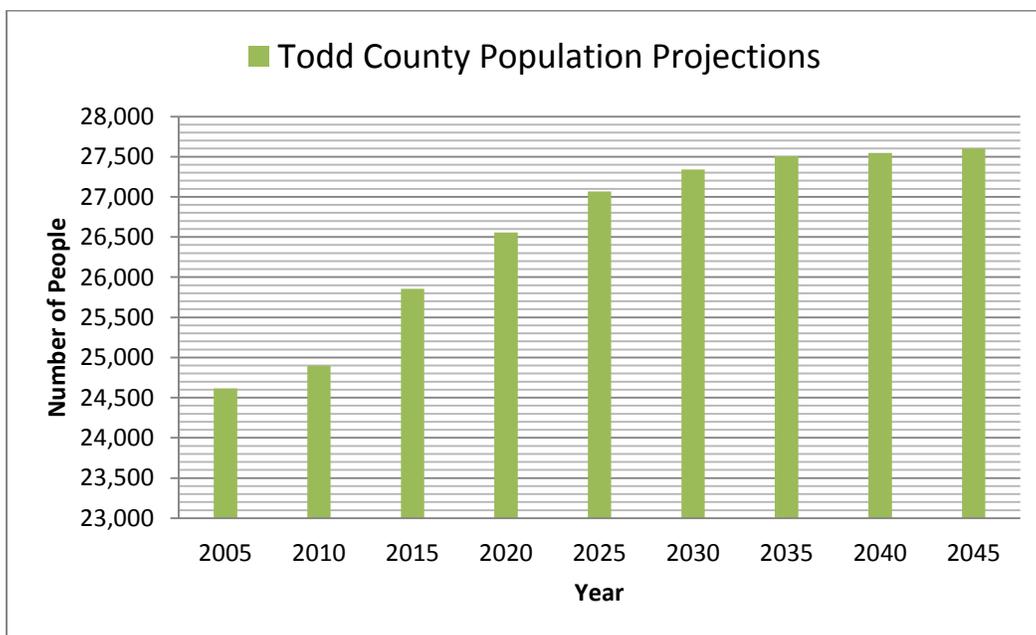


Figure 2: Minnesota State Demographic Center 2015-2045 Population Projections

Population projections for the county show a very steady and slow growth rate of six percent over the next 30 years. The population was expected to rise four percent from 2010 to 2015 yet the actual rise has only been just over 1% from 2005 to 2010.

Todd County is the 41st largest county by population in a state of 87 counties.

Bordering counties (in order of population from largest to smallest) include Stearns, Otter Tail, Douglas, Morrison, Cass and Wadena. Todd County is only larger than Wadena in terms of population.

Figure 3: Tree Map showing the 2015 population projections for Minnesota Counties prepared by the MN State Demographic Center



### Land Use

Todd County is rectangular in shape and has approximately 627,000 total acres. About 1.2 percent of the County is covered by eleven cities, the remaining 968 square miles of unincorporated area is made up of approximately 21,000 land parcels and 8,000 land plats.

The most predominant land use in Todd County today is agriculture. Cropland makes up approximately 42 percent of the county, with another 22 percent in other agricultural uses like hay, pasture, and grassland. Twenty five percent or 135,000 acres are woodland, approximately five percent or 36,000 acres are water or wetlands, with the remainder in urban, rural development and other activities such as mining.

The number of farms increased from 1,825 in 2002, to 1,931 in 2012, corresponding with the increase in acres of land in farms going from 370,272 in 2002 to 393,890 in 2012. Size of individual farms increased slightly from an average 198 acres in 2007 to 204 acres in 2012. Out of a possible 228,715 acres, there were 194,115 acres of reported certified cropland including 2,419 acres of expired CRP land

that went back into crop production in 2009. As of year-end 2014, the Farm Service Agency (FSA) reported Todd County has only 9223 remaining acres of CRP, a decrease of 34% decrease from 2010.

The rise in number of farms has also developed a rise in high-capacity well permits. These high-capacity wells are typically used for purposes of irrigating row-crop fields as well as livestock feedlots and geothermal heat systems. To date, approximately 19,520 acres within the county receive benefit from the strong irrigation effort brought upon by area farmers. The Minnesota Department of Natural Resources regulates high-capacity well permits and continues to monitor groundwater water levels throughout several locations in Todd County.

Todd County is a major agricultural center of the state. It is ranked third in the state for corn used for silage, fourth in the state for forage land used for hay, haylage, grass silage and greenchop and seventh for milk from cows. Livestock is also a significant factor in land use, with Todd County ranked sixth in the state for numbers of beef cows, seventh for poultry and egg production and eighth for numbers of milk cows. Nationally, Todd County ranks eighth for turkey production.

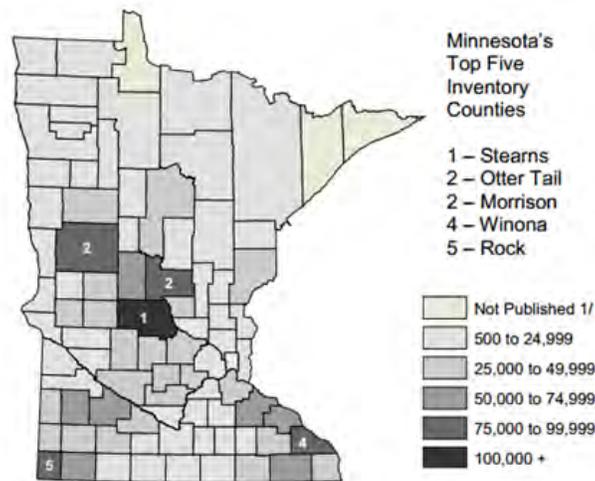


Figure 4: All Cattle and Calves, Number of Head, January 1, 2013

[http://www.nass.usda.gov/Statistics\\_by\\_State/Minnesota/Publications/Annual\\_Statistical\\_Bulletin/](http://www.nass.usda.gov/Statistics_by_State/Minnesota/Publications/Annual_Statistical_Bulletin/)

Most of the 135,000 acres of large, un-cleared woodlands are privately owned and are located in the eastern third of the County, the balance are scattered throughout the rest of the County. Wetlands are dispersed throughout the County, with the larger wetlands found in the northern two-thirds of the County located in one of the few drumlin fields found in Minnesota. Lakes in Todd County tend to be located in the southern and eastern portions of the County in a J-shaped pattern that is part of the St. Croix Terminal Moraine.

There are approximately 21,000 parcels and 8,000 building sites in the unincorporated area of the County. Parcels are typically about 40 acres or larger in the rural agricultural areas. The majority of the smaller land divisions, sub division, and platted areas are found in areas of high amenity – lakeshores, wooded lots and sites with a view. There is a trend towards conversion of lake cabins into full time residences as evidenced by the Todd County Board of Adjustment’s case load.

Todd County’s lakes, rivers and streams are a valuable resource for the County. In Todd County, protected waters such as lakes and rivers cumulatively cover over 32,000 acres. There are 355 bodies of water listed on the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources water inventory, including 118 bodies defined as protected lakes, 178 defined as protected wetlands and 59 protected rivers and streams. These water bodies not only provide great natural beauty, they supply the water necessary for recreation, industry, agriculture and aquatic life.

### Plan Responsibility

The Todd County Board of Commissioners designated the Todd County Soil & Water Conservation District as the Local Unit of Government responsible for the development and implementation of the Comprehensive Local Water Management Plan.

The Todd County water planning process started when the Board of Commissioners passed a resolution on September 19, 1989 to enter into the Comprehensive Local Water Planning process under Chapter 103B.311 and 103B.315. The Original Todd County Comprehensive Local Water Management Plan was completed and adopted in 1991.

In 1995, the County completed the first plan update, with updates following in 2000, 2005 and 2010. The 2016 plan update continues the tradition of promoting better planning and management of our shared natural resources and will serve as a guide for resource protection through the year 2020.

The current plan expires January of 2016.

## IDENTIFICATION AND SELECTION OF PRIORITY CONCERNS

The process selected for identifying priority concerns were four fold and citizen based. First, a notice of decision to revise and update the Todd County Comprehensive Local Water Management Plan was sent to state and local agencies. Water and related land resource plans were solicited as were inputs for priority concerns. Second, a Task Force Committee was selected. The group was made up of local leaders from cities, townships, lake associations, industry and supporting agencies. The process was chaired by the Todd SWCD Board Chairman and facilitated by the Todd County Water Planner. The third venue used to solicit priority concerns was a public hearing. The meeting was advertised county wide as an opportunity for citizens to voice concerns they have about Todd County Water. Lastly, a public survey was released for comments. It asked a series of questions regarding the demographic of the participant as well as their associations, perceptions and concerns they held for the water resource within the county.

Most of the above identified methods for collecting priority concerns were successful. All surrounding water and related land resource plans were collected and reviewed for consistency. Of all the required agencies only BWSR, MDA, Sauk River Watershed District, Todd County Planning and Zoning and SWCD's from Morrison, East Otter Tail and Stearns Counties responded with priority concerns.

In regards to local participation, there was an average of 17 people on the Water Plan Task Force Committee who attended each meeting. An additional 15 people were involved in the process as speakers or special guests to share concerns from their area of expertise. Past Water Plan concerns and efforts were covered as were all the factors which influence water quality within the county. Agency members from DNR, PCA, NRCS and Planning and Zoning all clearly identified their contributing roles in protecting clean water. Maps of major resources were produced to facilitate discussion and to help create a vision of what Todd County looks like on a watershed and subwatershed basis.

The public hearing was held on November 19th during the work day and seventeen people were in attendance. Concerns were heard in a very informal setting which in turn lended itself to information sharing amongst the group and produced materials provided by the Water Planner. The chairman of the meeting has been involved in several Water Plan updates said it was not only the most productive Water Plan meeting he has ever hosted but was the best public meeting he has ever been to. Concerns from the public were recorded and discussed with the Water Plan Task Force several more times throughout the process.

Lastly, the survey was released for public input on the same day as the above public hearing and was open through February 4th, 2015. Questions were designed by the SWCD Director, Water Planner and Task Force Committee after reviewing past surveys completed by surrounding counties for this same purpose. A number of groups were solicited for input which reflected the demographic of the county as well as a public outreach campaign to participate. Paper copy surveys were made available at all public libraries, city offices, county office and the NRCS/USDA Service Center. A total of 350 surveys were received exceeding the goal of the project. An even cross section of age and property ownership type was represented in the data as was there a proportionate response from people living in each of the six watersheds to the watershed size. Summaries of this process were released to the Task Force Committee and taken into consideration along with all of the above methods. A high level of confidence was given to the survey by the Water Plan Task Force Committee due to the high turnout, the even cross section of respondents and the responses correlated with those voiced at the public hearing.

### **PRIORITY CONCERNS ASSESSMENT**

Maps produced for the priority concerns assessment were made on individual watershed scales to facilitate discussion within the Task Force Committee. Maps produced for the watersheds in Todd County included the Redeye River, Crow Wing River, Long Prairie River, Sauk River, Mississippi River – Brainerd and the Mississippi River – Sartell Watersheds. Drinking Water Supply Management Area (DWSMA) maps were created by city.

Resource maps produced for the priority concerns assessment included individual watershed maps of elevation, surficial groundwater aquifers, forest cover, land cover, native vegetation, wetlands, prime farmland, Highly Erodible Lands and impaired waters as identified by the MPCA.

PRIORITY

#### **MAJOR WATERSHEDS OF TODD COUNTY**

- ***Crow Wing River Watershed***
- ***Redeye River Watershed***
- ***Long Prairie River Watershed***
- ***Sauk River Watershed***
- ***Mississippi River- Brainerd Watershed***

## CONCERNS LIST

### Lack of Conservation Ethics and Ecological Understanding

- Technical assistance to landowners

- Aquatic invasive species (AIS)

- Impacts of destructing healthy systems (soils, water quality, wildlife habitat)

- Water conservation and sustainable practices

### Control or Prevent Erosion, Sedimentation, Siltation and Related Pollution

- Sedimentation of waterways

- High sloping crop land

- Best Management Practices (BMPs) for crop producers

- Incorporation of cover crops

### Streambank and Buffer Strips Support

- Loss of buffers in riparian areas

- Wetland restoration and protection

- Wildlife habitat corridors

### Groundwater Recharge Areas and DWSMA Protection

- Septic inspection and maintenance

- Well sealing

- Well nitrate testing

### Chemical Pollution Control

- Wastewater and stormwater discharges

- Hazardous and solid waste disposal

- Targeting nutrient inputs to reduce loss

- BMPs for livestock producers