

# HENNEPIN COUNTY

## MINNESOTA

### Memo

**To:** Hennepin County Board of Commissioners

**From:** Rosemary Lavin, Director

**Date:** July 3, 2025

**Re:** Watershed appointments

To follow up to the discussion in committee two weeks ago and to aid in your preparation for the board action on the Riley Purgatory Bluff Creek Watershed District (RPBCWD) appointments on Tuesday, July 8, Environment and Energy staff recommend the county board consider which applicants<sup>1</sup> will “fairly represent” the hydrologic areas in the district, if appointed.

Since there is no statutory definition of “hydrologic area,” staff recommend you rely on watershed district management plans for guidance.

According to the RPBCWD’s Comprehensive Watershed Management Plan (“Plan”):

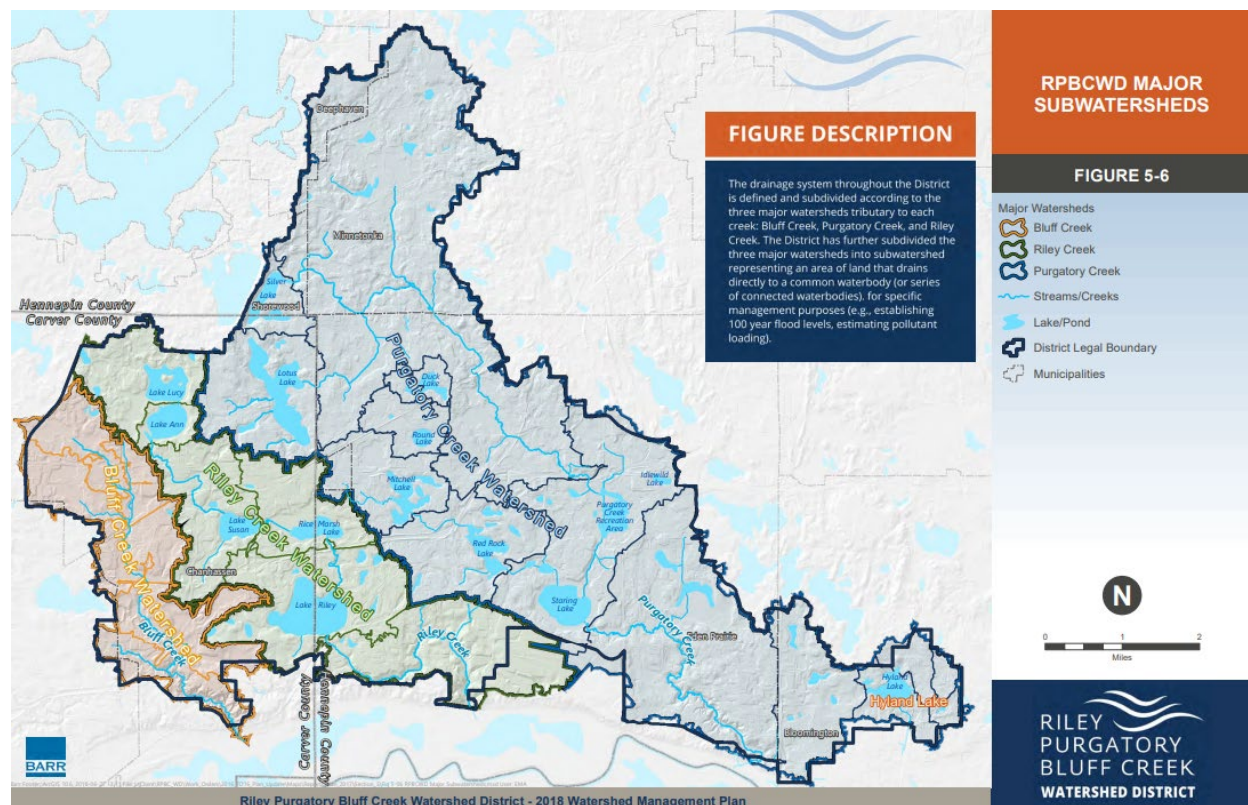
The drainage system throughout the District is defined and subdivided according to the three major creeks: Bluff Creek, Purgatory Creek, and Riley Creek. Also present in the watershed are numerous wetlands, lakes, ponds and conveyance systems which all eventually drain to the Minnesota River. A subwatershed represents an area of land that drains directly to a common waterbody (or series of connected waterbodies). The major subwatersheds identified in Figure 5-6 are further broken down into minor subwatersheds (not shown) for specific management purposes (e.g., establishing 100-year flood levels, estimating pollutant loading).

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<sup>1</sup> The board must appoint city-nominated applicants only if there are at least three such nominations, *and* if appointments made from those applicants would fairly represent the hydrologic areas of the watershed district. Minn. Stat. § 103D.311. In this case, only one applicant received a city-nomination. Because there are not three city-nominated applicants, the board may appoint any applicants that fairly represent the hydrologic areas.

Plan, § 5.7. The Purgatory Creek area for example, is divided into 10 different drainage areas, according to the associated lake (e.g., the Purgatory Creek - Lotus Lake drainage area). Riley Creek has six (6) different drainage areas, and Bluff Creek forms a single drainage area.

These small drainage area divisions are important because the RPBCWD manages the water systems and identifies projects based on these areas.



Based on the RPBCWD's Plan organization, looking at the drainage areas within the three creek areas seems the most appropriate approach in determining the appointments that will "fairly represent the various hydrologic areas within" the RPBCWD.

To assist the county board in determining which applicants will fairly represent the hydrologic areas, a table is provided below which identifies both current, continuing managers and the current applicants for the two vacancies, as residents of specific drainage areas. This watershed district has a total of five (5) managers; four (4) are appointed by Hennepin County, and one (1) is appointed by Carver County. There are currently two (2) seats up for Hennepin County appointments. Of the other three (3) seats held by current managers, all three (3) managers reside in the drainage areas lying within the Purgatory Creek area. There are no current managers or applicants living in either the Riley Creek or Bluff Creek drainage areas.

<b>Creek &amp; Drainage Area</b>	<b>Continuing Managers</b>	<b>Bundgaard</b>	<b>Ziegler*</b>	<b>Vargas-Essex</b>	<b>Duevel*</b>	<b>Stovring</b>
Purgatory Creek – direct drainage	1 (Crafton)			X		
Purgatory Creek – Duck Lake			X			
Purgatory Creek – Hyland Lake						
Purgatory Creek – Lake Idlewild						
Purgatory Creek – Lotus Lake	1 (Nelson – Carver County Appointee)					
Purgatory Creek – Mitchell Lake		X				
Purgatory Creek – Red Rock Lake						
Purgatory Creek – Round Lake						
Purgatory Creek – Silver Lake	1 (Pedersen)					
Purgatory Creek – Staring Lake					X	X
Riley Creek – direct drainage						
Riley Creek – Rice Marsh Lake						
Riley Creek – Lake Riley						
Riley Creek – Lake Lucy						
Riley Creek – Lake Ann						
Riley Creek – Lake Susan						

Bluff Creek						
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\* Denotes incumbent

### **Recommendation:**

Applicant Vargas-Essex resides in the Purgatory Creek-direct drainage area, which is already represented by a current manager. The appointment of applicant Vargas-Essex would then result in one drainage area being represented by two managers. Additionally, applicants Duevel and Stovring both reside in the same Purgatory Creek-Staring Lake drainage area. Appointing both of those applicants to the vacancies would also result in one drainage area being represented by two managers. The board should consider the potential for these drainage areas to be represented by two managers in considering the applicants, and whether that would “fairly represent” the hydrologic areas.

Given the high number of drainage areas in this district (17) and limited number of managers (5 total), most drainage areas will continue to be unrepresented regardless of whether two managers represent the same drainage area. The board should consider the best qualified applicants of the five available applicants who would, by residence, “fairly represent” the hydrologic areas of the RPBCWD, given these circumstances.

If you have questions on this recommendation, please contact Karen Galles, Manager, Land and Water Unit, at 612-235-0712 or Karen.Galles@hennepin.us.

CC: David Hough  
 Lisa Cerney  
 Ben Schweigert, HCAO  
 County Clerk’s Office