*This is the second is a series of monthly columns by local water experts. These columns on local rivers and land use are a collaboration between the League of Women Voters Upper Mississippi River Region and other environmental groups in Anoka County. To learn more about the League of Women Voters, check out our website at* [*www.lwvumrr.org*](http://www.lwvumrr.org) *.*

Anoka County Water Resources Report

Like most of Minnesota, Anoka County is blessed with extensive water resources. Our nation’s river, the mighty Mississippi, forms the southern border of Anoka County, stretching for more than 20 miles from Elk River to Minneapolis. The Rum River, starting at Lake Mille Lacs, passes through Anoka County before meeting the Mississippi at Anoka. Two regionally-important watersheds transect the county from east to west – Coon Creek and Rice Creek – entering the Mississippi in Coon Rapids and Fridley, respectively. Folks up in Linwood Township are actually part of the St. Croix drainage, via the Sunrise River. Our wetlands resources, although greater in pre-settlement times, are still extensive. Groundwater underlies all our land, providing drinking water for 94% our citizens.

As rich as our county is in water resources, we have had our problems. Past waste disposal practices have caused groundwater contamination that is still being cleaned up. Population growth in our cities has led to increasing groundwater use, resulting in groundwater depletion in some areas that affects surface water resources. And the fact that the City of Minneapolis draws its drinking water from the Mississippi lends importance to how the cities bordering the river manage runoff from our roads and businesses.

The soon-to-be-released Anoka County Water Resources Report, prepared by the Anoka County Public Health and Environmental Services Department (PHES), details the work underway to address these problems. The report highlights work by not just the County but also cities, watershed groups, the State of Minnesota, and others. It also includes a discussion of recent developments in water in Anoka County

Our local governments in Anoka County have been forward-thinking in dealing with water problems. In 2016, the Geologic Atlas of Anoka County was completed, with funding from both the state and our local governments. The Geologic Atlas details the varied groundwater resources of our county and provides critical information for our cities as they plan development. Our cities participate in coordinative committees and task forces to deal with issues like groundwater sustainability in specific areas of the County.

Examples:

* Removal of the barrels from the old Waste Disposal Engineering Landfill in Andover. More than two thousand barrels were removed from the site in the winter of 2019-20, along with large amounts of contaminated soil. The clean-up will reduce risk from this site.
* Cities and townships in eastern Anoka County participated with the MN DNR in developing a plan to address concerns about water levels affecting White Bear Lake. Ongoing monitoring will ensure future problems don’t arise.
* The City of Ramsey has encountered limits to its use of local groundwater. The City has investigated and prepared preliminary plans to draw and process drinking water from the Mississippi River if additional cities could be found to help share costs of a treatment plant.
* Runoff from roads and rooftops is called stormwater, and can carry many contaminants into our lakes, rivers and streams. Our cities have taken the challenge of dealing with runoff seriously, implementing many types of treatment to ensure that the water is improved in quality before being discharged. An example stormwater treatment device can be seen in Anoka at the Rum River boat landing off 2nd Avenue.

The Anoka County Water Resources Report is compiled by the PHES and will be published on their website, as well as on the Know the Flow website (<https://knowtheflow.us/>). The report is updated every five years.

Author: Gretchen Sabel, Chair, Anoka County Water Task Force

*Gretchen Sabel is a citizen member of the Anoka County Water Resources Management Task Force. Members of the Task Force include representatives from municipalities, watershed management organizations, State and County agencies, industry, and groups like League of Women Voters, as well as private citizens. The Task Force provides community participation in the preparation of this report. More information on the Task Force is at* <https://knowtheflow.us/directory-of-water-related-agencies-in-anoka-county/#AnokaCountyWaterResourceManagementTaskForce>

PICTURES –WDE BARREL CLEANUP, RAMSEY WATER TOWER, STORMWATER TREATMENT SYSTEM IN ANOKA

(Four articles in the Anoka County Union.)

 <https://www.hometownsource.com/abc_newspapers/news/local/plans-to-remove-waste-pit-from-closed-andover-landfill/article_7fb15c72-8d26-5119-b32e-36f359c0d4fd.html>,

 <https://www.hometownsource.com/abc_newspapers/community/andover-residents-learn-about-landfill-project/article_e090753c-dac3-11e7-95f0-8b6295d8bed8.html>,

<https://www.hometownsource.com/abc_newspapers/free/last-minute-bill-funds-andover-landfill-cleanup/article_2866a474-46a9-11e9-98a6-d3ceb99ac004.html>

<https://www.hometownsource.com/abc_newspapers/community/andover/gov-walz-marks-cleanup-of-peggy-s-pit-in-andover/article_4c487e5e-af12-11e9-ad94-4fd5ea919891.html>