Formation of the District

In 1968, a group of residents of Bloomington, Chanhassen, Deephaven, Eden Prairie, Minnetonka, and Shorewood came together. They wanted to protect the communities they loved from flooding, manage water quality, and restore natural areas.

A community petition

On August 16th, 1968, a group of residents, mostly from the Duck Lake area, petitioned the Minnesota Water Resources Board to establish the Riley Purgatory Creek Watershed District. Their goal was to manage surface water runoff and flood plain preservation, knowing the area was slated for large urban development in the coming decades. The petition involved permission and direction to manage, through regulation and improvement projects, the creeks, lakes, and riparian areas of the district for the benefit of the community as a whole.

The petition allowed for one of two options: enlarge the existing Nine-Mile Creek Watershed District, or create a new one. At that time, financial limits were set at $60,000 in levies for a single district regardless of size, so a larger district would be limited in what it could do. As such, the 70 residents who signed the petition preferred the option of creating Riley Purgatory Creek Watershed District, planned to be approximately 40 square miles in area.

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After the Water Resources Board received the petition, the Division of Water, Soils and Minerals wrote a report defending the enlargement of Nine-Mile Creek rather than the creation of a separate District. The report was presented at a public hearing concerning the creation of the District in March of 1969. However, after the public hearing, the general consensus was that a new watershed district would be more beneficial, and on July 31st, 1969, the Riley Purgatory Creek Watershed District was formed.

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An evolving watershed

It was not until 16 years after the creation of the District that Bluff Creek was added to its boundaries. This was not the only change that the District would see, as it grew and evolved to meet the changing needs of its community.

Expanding boundaries

In the fall of 1983, the Cities of Cheota and Cherokee petitioned to add Bluff Creek to the District. The Division of Waters for the DAB recommended to other extending the District's boundaries south into the Lower Minnesota Watershed District, incorporating Cross Lake as Bluff Creek's flow into it. The report was so as to avoid the dissolution of the Lower Minnesota River Watershed District, and the incorporation of its responsibilities into the surrounding districts, including Bluff-Purgatory Creek Watershed District. These recommendations were not fully implemented, though the proposed boundaries did shift to better accommodate the Bluff Creek Watershed.

After a public hearing in March of 1984, the enlargement was approved on June 6th. 1984 and Bluff-Purgatory Creek Watershed District became Bluff-Purgatory Bluff Creek Watershed District as we know it today.

Historical highlight: Raymond Haik

Raymond Haik had a distinguished career in environmental law that spanned 50 years and some of America’s most prominent cases in water resources law. He served as a Special Assistant Attorney General for the Minnesota Attorney General's office and was involved in the development of the Water Quality Act adopted by the Minnesota Legislature in 1955. He served as Counsel for the State of Minnesota in U.S. Supreme Court litigation involving discharge of water from the Great Lakes and halted the litigation to prevent mineral exploration within the boundary waters of Canada. He was appointed by the President of the United States to serve on the national Water Pollution Control Advisory Board, and the President's Council - Science and Technology Committee. He served as Chairman of the American Bar Association's Section of Natural Resources Law, and President of the State Bar of Minnesota.

As an attorney in private practice with the firm of Prokop Haik, he assisted in the creation of the Purgatory Bluff Creek Watershed District in 1969 and served as the District's first attorney. Mr. Haik also served as the first counsel for the Nine Mile Creek Watershed District, Mille Lacs Creek Watershed District, and worked with the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources and Minnesota park systems. His commitment to the profession included mentoring and creating opportunities for younger attorneys at the Prokop Haik law firm. His firm's core values of fairness, integrity, and public service are lasting legacies for many others. Our natural resources have benefited as well: the watershed model that Mr. Haik had such a large part in shaping is now an inspiration for the rest of the country in confronting our water problems.

Plans change

Water Management Plans are often referred to as “10 Year Plans,” as they plot an expected course of water management over ten years. The district update its Water Management Plan in 1996. In 2001, the district completed a new Water Management Plan. Each management plan update sought to address changing needs for protecting, managing, and restoring water resources in the community.

Understanding that public support is critical for the efficient and effective operation of any government organization, the District emphasized public engagement and outreach throughout the development of the 2018 plan. As a result, the issues identified and emphasized in the plan are a direct result of stakeholder input.

Community connection

Community outreach and engagement has been an important part of the District's work since the beginning. No organization, whether public or private, was too small to be involved in the District's work. The District values the contributions of everyone involved, whether individuals, groups, businesses, or non-profits, or other local and regional governments.

Even more, many of the challenges to clean water are the result of non-point source pollution. Many small actions that together make a significant impact. It follows that only a community of action, working together for clean water, can create meaningful solutions. Whether individuals, groups, businesses, and non-profits, or other local and regional governments, there is an amazing capacity to do this work with the community that the District is lucky to be a part of.