

Little Rock Creek Area: Summer 2025 Project Update

Over the summer of 2025, the DNR, Kimley-Horn and a group of local irrigators met regularly to better understand concerns and opportunities in our efforts to resolve the water use conflict. These efforts resulted in an amended and extended contract with Kimley-Horn and Associates, a commitment to revise and update the groundwater flow model, and efforts to improve the water use information used in the model. Each of these are described in more detail below.

Contract with Kimley-Horn and Associates Renewed

The DNR's initial contract with Kimley Horn and Associates expired on June 30 with the end of the state fiscal year and culminated with the publication of the [2025 Progress Report](#) in late May. The DNR has completed a contract amendment and extension with Kimely Horn, as of August 2025. The amended scope of work includes all of the stakeholder suggestions that focus on alternative solutions (listed below). Over the next year, the Kimley-Horn team will work on evaluating these options and emphasize engagement with stakeholders in the process.

The modified scope of work includes a feasibility analysis and cost assessment of:

- Enhanced recharge (infiltration galleries)
- Water storage and basins
- Beaver dams and beaver dam analogues off the main channel of Little Rock Creek
- Crop rotations and water conservation initiatives
- Model scenario development and refinement

Kimley Horn will be coordinating outreach to evaluate the options and gain additional knowledge from irrigators to aid in the development of a report on the feasibility of these options. The DNR hopes, with further assessment of these items along with the previously explored solutions, consensus can be reached on a path forward to sustainable groundwater use in the Little Rock Creek Watershed.

Groundwater Model Updates and Revisions

As requested by stakeholders, the DNR agreed to update and revise the groundwater model. The updates will include the ability to simulate different crop rotations and management practices. Model updates will include six more years of measured groundwater levels, stream flows, crop history, rainfall and water use information. The DNR will also incorporate an alternative baseline scenario that replaces alfalfa with trees as requested by irrigators. Adding these new capabilities to simulate crop rotations requires shifting to an alternative surface water and recharge model, which is called Soil Water Balance (SWB). Due to technological improvements since the model was initially developed, SWB will allow the modeling team to assess specific items of interest to

irrigators that the GSSHA model was not designed to do. SWB will allow the DNR and Limno-Tech modeling teams to adjust crop rotations, inputs and conservation initiatives on individual fields.

Irrigation Water Use Survey

Our goal with updating the groundwater model is to use the best information available to produce the most accurate model we can. A flow meter study conducted on nine systems in the area indicates that reported water-use amounts can differ unintentionally from actual water use in some cases.

We need your help to make sure that the water use values we use in the model are as accurate as possible. Better accuracy will benefit everyone. The DNR developed a short survey for irrigators in the Little Rock Creek Area. The information we are requesting will help us improve model accuracy and therefore help find the best solution(s) to the water use conflict. **This information will not be used to enforce or modify permitted volumes.**

If you irrigate in the watershed and did not receive an email directly from the DNR, please reach out to Brent Beste at brent.beste@state.mn.us.

The DNR strongly encourages all irrigators in the watershed to complete this survey to help inform decisions being made surrounding model water use inputs. Again, better information means a better model and a better solution to the water use conflict.

Upcoming Meeting Announcement

November 13, 2025

Time: 2:00 p.m.

Location

Old Village Hall

20 E. Main Street, Rice, MN

What's next

- The DNR is the process of extending the limited permits in the Little Rock Creek Watershed. We expect permit extensions will be completed prior to a planned in-person meeting in November.
- Kimley-Horn will hold off on completing any further designs and evaluations until after the 2025 harvest season and will continue to gather feedback from stakeholders.
- Kimley-Horn and the DNR will plan to meet in person with stakeholders on November 13 to provide a project update and further details about the solutions listed above.
- To share your feedback or ask questions about specific project items, please contact Kimley-Horn at Ircaprojectinfo@kimley-horn.com.

Other work in the Watershed

The DNR wants you to be aware of work being done in the watershed by other agencies that could relate to the Little Rock Creek project.

- **Mississippi River-Sartell One Watershed One Plan**
- BWSR and Local Governments have kicked off the One Watershed One Plan (1W1P) planning process for the Mississippi River – Sartell Watershed, which includes Little Rock Creek. The DNR does not lead but supports and provides technical assistance to the planning teams in the 1W1P process. The DNR encourages landowners to participate in this process, as your comments and input support and help direct conservation planning efforts.

If you have any questions for the DNR, please contact **Brent Beste** (brent.beste@state.mn.us or 651-259-5480).

All project information can be found on the [Little Rock Creek Sustainable Groundwater Use Webpage](#).