

Little Rock Creek Area: Upcoming Meeting

The Minnesota Department of Natural Resources, Kimley-Horn and a group of local irrigators have continued to meet regularly over the summer and fall to better understand concerns and opportunities in our efforts to resolve the water use conflict in the Little Rock Creek Area. 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 in the model. We are inviting all to a public meeting Thursday, Nov. 13 to learn about progress as well as plans over the winter.

Upcoming Meeting Announcement

2 p.m. Thursday, Nov. 13, 2025

Old Village Hall
20 E. Main Street, Rice, MN

The team is proposing a higher frequency of meetings over the winter of 2025-2026 to discuss potential solutions, and proposals while moving toward a solution. The small team has tentatively identified meeting dates for Thursday, Dec. 18, 2025 and Thursday, Jan. 22, 2026. Please watch the [Little Rock Creek webpage](#) and your email for updates!

Nov. 13, 2025 Meeting Agenda

The Nov. 13 agenda will be focused on two primary items: updates to the Little Rock Creek groundwater model being done by the DNR and Limno-Tech team, and solutions that are being investigated further based on recommendations from members of your community.

The agenda will include:

- Welcome and introductions
- Groundwater model
- Model updates
- Rationale for modifications
- Future modeling simulations and potential solutions
 - Potential solutions being examined through model modifications
 - Potential solutions presented by local stakeholders
- Potential impoundment discussions led by Kimley Horn
- Next steps/discussion

Irrigation Water Use Survey

The DNR would like to thank those of you who have completed the survey emailed to irrigators in September. 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. To provide an additional input opportunity, the survey link is still open. The DNR strongly encourages all irrigators in the watershed to complete this survey for each permit they manage 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.

The DNR developed a short survey for irrigators in the Little Rock Creek Area. By completing the survey, we can better shape the inputs on a permit by permit and field by field basis based on your operation. **This information will not be used to enforce or modify permitted volumes.**

Information provided so far suggests that many users continue to use a timing device and the authorized pump rate on DNR permits as the source of water use reporting. This suggests that there is room for improvement in the model water use inputs when coupled with additional knowledge of the type of irrigation system.

If you irrigate in the watershed and have questions about the survey, please reach out to Brent Beste at the DNR at brent.beste@state.mn.us.

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, streamflow's, 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.

What's next

- The DNR has completed the process of extending limited permits issued in the QWTA and QBAA zone of influence. If you hold a limited permit that has not been extended through the 2027 irrigation season or if you have questions about your permit, please reach out to [Constance Holth](mailto:Constance.Holth@state.mn.us) (constance.holth@state.mn.us).
- Kimely-Horn, the DNR, and stakeholders will continue conversations about potential solutions and develop scenarios that can be run using the updated groundwater flow model to assess impacts in the Little Rock Creek Watershed.

- To share your feedback or ask questions about specific project items, please contact Kimley-Horn at lrcaprojectinfo@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](#).