

OKABENA-OCHEDA WATERSHED DISTRICT 2026 ANNUAL PLAN AND BUDGET



Restored Prairie Wildflowers

OKABENA-OCHEDA WATERSHED DISTRICT
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OKABENA-OCHEDA WATERSHED DISTRICT 2026 ANNUAL PLAN

Implement Clean Water Partnership Joint Powers Board Projects

- Conduct monthly water quality monitoring of Okabena and Ocheda lakes during June through September.
- Conduct water monitoring and data collection and compilation from grab samples during peak flow events.
- Test algae blooms at public beaches and boat landings for microcystins toxins.
- Continue to offer Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) filter strip incentive payments throughout the district.
- Continue to provide administrative and technical services, and financial support, for Okabena-Ocheda-Bella Clean Water Partnership Joint Powers Board.
- Read staff gauges at least monthly during the ice-free season on Okabena, Ocheda, and Bella lakes. Report data annually to the Department of Natural Resources (DNR).
- Do the work needed to maintain and manage the vegetation on the Prairie View site. Provide funding as needed for weed and volunteer tree control.
- Manage Prairie View outlets to minimize the pond water level until vegetation is established around the sand filter benches.
- Do maintenance on the Prairie View sand filter benches as needed to maintain their designed capacity.
- Continue discussions with Worthington about ownership and management of the Prairie View property.
- Do monthly inspections of the Prairie View ponds project site as required by the operation and maintenance plan. Perform maintenance as needed.
- Cooperate with Worthington, Olson Trust, Lake Okabena Improvement Association, Nobles County and other partners to take next steps in a multi-year Lake Okabena carp population control program.
- Work with Worthington to provide for the disposal of carp removed from Lake Okabena and Whiskey Ditch during the spawning season.
- Implement tasks in the Crailsheim Water Quality Improvement Plan project work plan including:
 1. Apply for and receive approved permits from the DNR and Worthington to construct the project. Do wetland mitigation if required.
 2. Complete the project redesign.
 3. Advertise the project for bids during late spring. Choose a contractor and complete construction if bids meet expectations.

Land Acquisition

- Continue to acquire property, as it becomes available, for wetland restorations, groundwater protection, stormwater storage and water quality improvement projects.

Lake Management Projects

- Evaluate the costs, effectiveness, and feasibility of in-lake treatments for reducing the frequency and severity of late season algae blooms in Lake Okabena.
- Monitor vegetation on existing floating island wetlands. Perform maintenance as needed to keep them anchored in place and vegetated.
- Work with Lake Ocheda plan management team to approve the plan addendum and conduct the water level drawdown if permitted.
- Manage Ocheda dam fish barrier to prevent carp migration into the lake.
- Investigate using Best Management Practices, including conservation easements, CRP programs, and local and state partnerships for land purchases to address surface water, groundwater and flooding problems throughout the district.

Plan Implementation and Rules Update

- Work with the local governmental units in the Missouri River Watershed Partnership (MRWP) Joint Powers Organization to receive the state grant and implement the Missouri River Watershed Comprehensive Water Management Plan. A manager will serve as a director on the MRWP joint powers board and staff time will be provided as needed to help implement the plan.
- Review and update district rules as needed.

Implement Information and Education Programs

- Collaborate with ISD 518 teachers and students to demonstrate cover crops and other soil health practices on school district owned agricultural land.
- Develop and implement a social media campaign to educate the public about improving water quality in Lake Okabena and Lake Ocheda.
- Work with Nobles County to provide aquatic invasive species (AIS) education and prevention programs for the county's lakes. Place AIS education signs at boat landings.
- Work with Worthington to place more permanent signs at boat landings and beaches educating the public about avoiding the dangers of harmful algae blooms.
- Work with Worthington to implement the public education components of the city's Stormwater Pollution Prevention Plan.
- Work with Worthington Public Utilities to implement the best management practices and educational components of the wellhead protection plan and plans to supplement the city's water supply.
- Work with the Lake Okabena Improvement Association (LOIA) to do water quality monitoring and non-point source pollution prevention education programs.
- Produce brochures, press releases or newspaper advertisements or website factsheets on non-point source pollution prevention.
- Financially support and provide staff for educational programs at the Prairie Wetlands Learning Area.
- Lead watershed district tours, as requested, for Worthington High School classes, Minnesota West Classes and interested community groups.
- Provide presentations, as requested, for school classes and community groups.

Implement Best Management Practices (BMPs)

- Work with the advisory committee and other partners to update the district's BMP cost-share and incentive programs.
- Identify landowners interested in conservation programs benefitting water quality, reducing flooding, preventing pollution, or improving wildlife habitat. Refer landowners to agencies with appropriate BMP programs for technical or financial assistance.
- Offer CRP filter strip incentives throughout the district.
- Offer cost-share on terraces, waterways, well sealing, septic system replacement, rain gardens, and conservation use acres.
- Create and implement innovative programs, using District levy funding if necessary, to address water quality and flood prevention problems.

Maintain and Improve District Property

- Perform spraying or mowing as needed to maintain native vegetation on the St. John property buffer strip.
- Monitor the water level on the St. John property to determine whether the ditch plug facilitates storage of additional stormwater and improves wetland vegetation. Perform maintenance or improvements to the structure as needed.
- Identify whether it is advantageous to donate the Herlein-Boote diversion ditch property to the DNR or keep it for future watershed district management purposes.
- Perform weed control, litter cleanup, picnic area maintenance and beaver, muskrat and gopher control on district property.
- Maintain roads, trails, and structures at Bella Park. Evaluate the outhouse building and

repair, replace or upgrade it as needed.

- Work with Kiwanis to maintain the bike trail on the St. John property.
- Trim trees as necessary to maintain woody cover at Bella Park.
- Maintain and manage the dock at the Lake Bella boat landing.
- Mow fire breaks and complete controlled burns as needed at Bella Park to maintain native prairie cover.
- Work with the US Fish and Wildlife Service and DNR to manage district property consistently with the adjacent Lake Bella Waterfowl Production Area and Bella Wildlife Management Area.
- Remove beaver dams from streams and culverts as needed.
- Maintain and operate the fish barrier on the Lake Ocheda dam from April through October.

Act on Permit Applications and Monitor and Enforce Permit Program Compliance

- Review permit applications and issue permits when projects comply with district rules and policies.
- Review drainage project notification forms for compliance with district rules.
- Inspect and monitor construction erosion control permit sites. Enforce compliance when necessary to avoid off-site sediment and nutrient pollution.
- Work with Worthington to inspect construction sites of one acre or larger for compliance with state NPDES storm water permit requirements and City and District rules for pollution prevention and erosion control.

Coordinate District Activities with other Local, State and Federal Agencies

- Appoint two managers to the Okabena-Ocheda-Bella Clean Water Partnership Joint Powers Organization board and participate in meetings.
- Appoint a board representative and an alternate to the Missouri River Watershed Partnership Joint Powers Board. Participate in meetings as needed.
- Participate in Worthington wellhead protection taskforce meetings.
- Contract with the Nobles Soil and Water Conservation District for technical services.

Okabena-Ocheda Watershed District 2026 Budget

REVENUES	2026
Nobles County - Administrative Levy	\$250,000.00
Nobles County - Insurance Levy	\$3,000.00
Clean Water Legacy Grant Match - Contributions	\$30,000.00
Clean Water Legacy Grant	\$485,166.00
Investment Interest	\$2,000.00
Permit Inspection Fees	\$200.00
Miscellaneous	\$1,000.00
Worthington Stormwater Program	\$6,000.00
TOTAL REVENUES	\$777,366.00
EXPENDITURES	
Legal/ Accounting	\$6,000.00
Board Compensation & Expenses	\$8,000.00
Insurance and Bonds	\$4,934.00
Miscellaneous	\$1,000.00
Office Expenses	
Rent	\$2,700.00
Phone, Internet	\$1,500.00
Office Supplies	\$1,000.00
Photocopies	\$350.00
Postage & Box Rental	\$500.00
Bookkeeping Software	\$1,500.00
Computer and Printer	\$1,000.00
Third Party Payroll Service	\$1,500.00
Personnel	
Salary	\$73,403.20
PERA	\$5,329.07
Social Security & Medicare	\$5,615.34
Health Insurance	\$6,317.40
Mileage Reimbursement	\$4,500.00
Property Maintenance	\$4,000.00
District Vehicle Purchase	\$50,000.00
District Vehicle Fuel and Maintenance	\$3,500.00
Minnesota Watersheds Dues	\$3,000.00
MN Watersheds Meeting & Training Expenses	\$2,500.00
Public Notice Publications	\$1,000.00
SWCD Administrative & Technical Services	\$5,000.00
Public Education	\$4,000.00
Watershed District Cost-Share	\$15,000.00
Filterstrip Incentive Program	\$40,000.00
Crailsheim Pond Engineering and Construction	\$1,220,300.00
Other Watershed Projects	\$64,500.00
Prairie View Project Maintenance	\$5,000.00
Joint Powers Board Operations	\$3,500.00
Storm Water Education Contract Expenses	\$1,000.00
Water Quality and Flow Monitoring	\$2,000.00
TOTAL EXPENDITURES	\$1,549,449.02