



Renville
COUNTY
Service · Stewardship · Shared Responsibility

Renville County Environmental Services



2020 Annual Report

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ESSD ADVISORY COUNCIL

ESSD STAFF SUPPORT

PLANNING

ZONING ADMINISTRATION

1. Land Use Ordinance.

Staff reviews the Land Use Ordinance annually, and recommended changes are brought to the Planning Commission. In 2020, Ordinance amendments were adopted for Chapter Two (Zoning Regulations) and Chapter Four (Sewage and Wastewater Treatment Regulations).

2. Shoreland Management Regulations.

The Lake Allie/Preston Lake area continues to be an area in the County of ongoing development. Environmental Services staff spends an increasing amount of time performing site visits in this area to ensure compliance of the Shoreland Management Regulations. Activities performed include site plan reviews, subdivision reviews, shoreline alteration reviews, rain garden inspections, ordinary high water and setback determinations, and compliance inspections.

3. Subdivision Regulations.

In 2001, Environmental Services began implementing Subdivision Regulations. When a land split is brought to the County Recorder's office for recording, the deed and any supporting development information (survey, etc.) are forwarded to Environmental Services for review in light of the Subdivision Regulations and other pertinent sections of the Land Use Ordinance.

During 2020, staff reviewed and approved 83 minor subdivision land splits.

4. Land Use Permits/Complaints.

Environmental Services is charged with administration of the Land Use Ordinance and areas of the Nuisance Ordinance dealing with the environment/land use. The following tables note the number of permits and investigations undertaken over the past five years:

Land Use Permit Breakdown

	<u>2016</u>	<u>2017</u>	<u>2018</u>	<u>2019</u>	<u>2020</u>
New House	8	8	9	8	9
House Addition	3	5	3	7	7
Garage/Garage Addition	6	3	7	10	8
Bin	17	12	18	17	17
Livestock Building	9	6	7	1	2
Building/Building Addition	29	24	28	25	22
Solar Energy Conversion System (Commercial)	0	2	1	1	2
Solar Energy Conversion System (Personal)	2	14	1	2	0
Other	<u>6</u>	<u>8</u>	<u>10</u>	<u>23</u>	<u>13</u>
TOTAL	80	82	84	94	80

Nuisance/Zoning Complaint Investigation Breakdown

	<u>2016</u>	<u>2017</u>	<u>2018</u>	<u>2019</u>	<u>2020</u>
Zoning Violations	22	5	1	3	2
Feedlots	1	1	2	2	4
General Environmental	2	1	2	1	1
Other (CUP/IUP Conditions)	0	1	2	3	8

2020 Investigations

Complaint	Investigations	Investigation Determined Violation – Violation Resolved	Investigation Determined Violation – Enforcement Ongoing
Zoning	2	1	0
Feedlots	4	3	0
General Environmental	1	1	0
CUP/IUP Conditions	8	2	0

Investigations Turned Over to County Attorney for Legal Action

	<u>2016</u>	<u>2017</u>	<u>2018</u>	<u>2019</u>	<u>2020</u>
Investigations	1	0	0	0	0
Legal Action	0	0	0	0	0

Compliance Inspections

	<u>2016</u>	<u>2017</u>	<u>2018</u>	<u>2019</u>	<u>2020</u>
CUP	37	6	49	31	22
IUP	34	2	34	34	29
Variance	39	0	39	32	16
Land Use Permits	10	3	9	12	6

BOARD OF ADJUSTMENT AND APPEALS

The Board of Adjustment and Appeals members include:

Carl E. Rudeen – District 1	12/31/2020 (term expiration)
David Rieke – District 2	12/31/2020 (term expiration)
Helen A. Ruebel – District 3	12/31/2022 (term expiration)
James Boersma – District 4	12/31/2021 (term expiration)
Ryan D. Alderks – District 5	12/31/2022 (term expiration)
ES Director – Secretary	

The Board of Adjustment and Appeals hears and makes decisions regarding Administrative Appeals, Variances, and Official Map appeals. The five-member Board meets on the fourth Thursday of each month (unless there are no public hearings scheduled) at 8:30 a.m. in Suite 313 of the Renville County Government Services Center. One member is appointed by the Renville County Board of Commissioners from each of the five commissioner voting districts. Members serve three-year terms with a term limit of 12 consecutive years. Each Board member is paid a per diem of \$75 per meeting plus compensation for mileage to and from meetings and site visits.

The following actions were taken by the Board of Adjustment and Appeals in 2020 as compared to the previous years:

	<u>2016</u>	<u>2017</u>	<u>2018</u>	<u>2019</u>	<u>2020</u>
Meetings	4	5	2	4	4
Variance Hearings	7	11	3	4	5
Administrative Appeals	0	0	0	0	0
Official Map Appeals	0	0	0	0	0

2020 Variances

Applicant	Request	Zone	Board of Adjustment and Appeals Action
Lippert, Kenneth	Variance to allow construction of single-family dwelling that does not comply with dwelling unit density standards.	A	Approved 02/27/2020
Lueck, Andrew and Katelyn	Variance to allow construction of single-family dwelling that does not comply with dwelling unit density standards.	A	Approved 05/28/2020
Zimmerman, Wade	Variance to allow construction of single-family dwelling that does not comply with dwelling unit density standards.	A	Approved 05/28/2020
Swanson, Steven O.	Variance to allow construction of three grain bins that do not comply with minimum road right-of-way setback standards.	A	Approved 06/25/2020
212 Seed & Ag, Inc.	Variance to allow existing conforming lot or parcel to be split and reduced in size making it nonconforming in lot area.	A	Approved 09/24/2020

PLANNING COMMISSION

The Planning Commission members include:

Jeffery A. Kramer – District 1	12/31/2022 (term expiration)
Douglas R. Pomplun – District 2	12/31/2020 (term expiration)
Helen A. Ruebel – District 3	12/31/2022 (term expiration)
Rick R. Marks – District 4	12/31/2021 (term expiration)
Steve A. Santjer – District 5	12/31/2020 (term expiration)
Neal Johnson – At-Large	12/31/2021 (term expiration)
John A. Robinson – At-Large	12/31/2022 (term expiration)
ES Director – Secretary	

The seven-member Commission meets on the second Monday of each month at 6:00 p.m. in Suite 313 of the Renville County Government Services Center. One member is appointed by the Renville County Board of Commissioners from each of the five commissioner voting districts with two members selected at-large. Members serve three-year terms with a term limit of 12 consecutive years. Each Commission member is paid a per diem of \$75 per meeting plus compensation for mileage to and from meetings and site visits.

The Planning Commission has the following duties and responsibilities:

1. Study, report, and make recommendations on amendments to the official controls including the Ordinance and Official Maps and the Comprehensive Plan prior to adoption of the amendment by the Renville County Board of Commissioners.
2. Conduct public hearings, review all applications, and prepare a report and recommendation to the Renville County Board of Commissioners on the following:
 - A. Conditional Use Permits and Interim Use Permits.
 - B. Major plats for subdivisions of land.
 - C. Planned unit developments.
 - D. Plans for public land acquisition and development.
3. Conduct hearings and make recommendations to the Renville County Board of Commissioners on alleged violations of conditions contained in Conditional Use Permits and Interim Use Permits.
4. Other duties as the Renville County Board of Commissioners may prescribe.

The following actions were taken by the Planning Commission in 2020 as compared to the previous years:

	<u>2016</u>	<u>2017</u>	<u>2018</u>	<u>2019</u>	<u>2020</u>
Meetings	11	9	9	8	6
Conditional Use Permits	8	16	7	8	7
Interim Use Permits	9	9	0	1	0
Ordinance New or Amendments	3	1	1	2	2
Map Amendments	2	0	1	1	1
Plats	1	0	0	0	0

2020 Conditional Use Permits

Applicant	Request	Zone	County Board Action
East River Electric Power Cooperative, Inc. (Stamer, Dale B.)	CUP to allow construction of 69kV electrical substation and associated overhead electrical lines (Essential Services – Major).	A	Approved 03/24/2020
Cascade LLC (Skalbeck Trust, Gloria M.)	CUP to allow construction of one megawatt community solar garden (solar energy conversion system).	A	Approved 05/26/2020
Farmers Co-op Oil Company (Haen, Phillip F. and Sharianne M.)	CUP to allow bulk storage of liquified petroleum gas (LP) and anhydrous ammonia.	C/I	Approved 05/26/2020
Novel Schroeder Solar LLC (Schroeder, Mary Ann)	CUP to allow construction of one megawatt community solar garden (solar energy conversion system).	A	Approved 09/22/2020
Buffalo Lake 212-1 LLC (Grimm Family Revocable Living Trust / Dobberstein Revocable Living Trust)	CUP to allow construction of one megawatt community solar garden (solar energy conversion system).	A	Approved 10/27/2020
Cascade LLC * (Skalbeck Trust, Gloria M.)	CUP to allow construction of one megawatt community solar garden (solar energy conversion system). *RELOCATION	A	Approved 12/22/2020
Northern States Power Company, d/b/a Excel Energy, Inc.	CUP to allow construction of 69kV overhead transmission line (Essential Services – Major).	A	Approved 12/22/2020

2020 Interim Use Permits

Applicant	Request	Zone	County Board Action
NONE			

2020 Ordinance Amendments

Amendments	County Board Action
Chapter Two (Zoning Regulations) – Solar Energy Conversion Systems	Approved 01/28/2020
Chapter Four (Sewage and Wastewater Treatment Regulations)	Approved 01/28/2020

2020 Map Amendments

Amendments	County Board Action
Farmers Co-op Oil Company – Rezone from A to C/I part of NW4 of NE4 of 9-115-36	Approved 05/26/2020

2020 Plats

Plat	County Board Action
NONE	

ENVIRONMENT

ADMINISTRATION

1. Subsurface Sewage Treatment System (SSTS).

Environmental Services reviewed the designs and inspected the installation of 68 septic systems in 2020. The number of system design types installed over the past five years is:

<u>Type I Systems</u>	<u>2016</u>	<u>2017</u>	<u>2018</u>	<u>2019</u>	<u>2020</u>
Rock-Filled Trench	1	0	2	1	1
Gravelless Pipe Trench	0	0	0	0	0
Chamber Trench	2	1	0	0	3
Seepage Bed	9	10	11	2	9
Mound	24	37	25	39	41
At-Grade	4	6	2	3	10

<u>Type II Systems</u>					
Holding Tank/Privies	5	3	1	2	4

The total number of systems installed since 1998 is as follows:

SSTS Permits

<u>Year</u>	<u>Installations</u>
1999	79
2000	93
2001	90
2002	107
2003	93
2004	100
2005	84
2006	105
2007	81
2008	91
2009	60
2010	66
2011	62
2012	72
2013	64
2014	61
2015	43
2016	45
2017	57
2018	41
2019	47
<u>2020</u>	<u>68</u>
TOTAL	1,609

It is estimated that over 876 septic systems (35%) have not been inspected and have a high potential of being noncompliant.

Investigations Turned Over to County Attorney for Legal Action

	<u>2016</u>	<u>2017</u>	<u>2018</u>	<u>2019</u>	<u>2020</u>
Investigations	0	0	0	0	0
Legal Action	0	0	0	0	0

2. Mining.

Staff completed 24 site inspections of permitted mines to determine if they were in compliance with Chapter Seven (Mining Regulations) of the Land Use Ordinance and the conditions of their Interim Use Permits (IUPs).

3. Feedlot Program.

Renville County is a state-delegated feedlot county. The feedlot program offers information and education to feedlot producers along with permitting of feedlots with capacities of less than 1,000 animal units (based on state calculations). Environmental Services staff work to ensure that all areas of the feedlot program are adequately developed to meet the goals of assisting all feedlot owners to achieve compliance with all federal, state, and County rules and regulations. Renville County currently has 344 feedlots of which 276 are required to be registered. Inspections are conducted on all 344 feedlots once every four years. The following achievements were accomplished in 2020:

- Attended feedlot officer trainings and meetings.
- Inspected 75 feedlots (22%).
- One feedlot producer requested to terminate his registration.
- MPCA annual review for 2019 found Renville County met 12 out of 13 (92.3%) applicable program requirements.

The number and type of feedlot inspections over the past five years are as follows:

Feedlot Inspections

	<u>2016</u>	<u>2017</u>	<u>2018</u>	<u>2019</u>	<u>2020</u>
Compliance	86	85	85	88	71
New Feedlot Construction Site	0	0	0	0	0
Complaints	<u>1</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>4</u>
TOTAL	87	86	87	90	75

Investigations Turned Over to County Attorney for Legal Action

	<u>2016</u>	<u>2017</u>	<u>2018</u>	<u>2019</u>	<u>2020</u>
Investigations	0	0	0	0	0
Legal Action	0	0	0	0	0

4. Water Planning Projects and Programs.

In 1989, the Renville County Board of Commissioners adopted a resolution to develop the County's first Comprehensive Local Water Management Plan. The Minnesota Board of Water and Soil Resources (BWSR) approved the Plan in 1991. Renville County has revised the Water Plan four times since 1991. The current Water Plan was approved by BWSR and adopted for implementation by the Renville County Board of Commissioners on August 13, 2013. The Water Plan is effective for a 10-year period until June 26, 2023, with the five-year Implementation Plan having expired in June 2018.

In November 2018, BWSR granted Renville County a waiver to the required amendment of the Implementation Plan in order to transition to One Watershed, One Plan (1W1P) watershed planning. 1W1P is a process established by BWSR to assist in developing a Comprehensive Watershed Management Plan (CWMP). According to BWSR, the new Plan intends to increase efficiencies in both planning and resources by establishing one plan based on watershed boundaries, rather than several smaller plans based on county boundaries, such as our current Comprehensive Local Water Management Plan. The goal of the 1W1P Plan is to establish priorities to protect and improve both surface water and ground water resources on a watershed basis. BWSR is encouraging all Local Water Plans to transition to watershed plans by 2025.

Hawk Creek – Middle Minnesota Watersheds (BWSR Planning Area #53)

In 2019, planning partners from Chippewa, Kandiyohi, and Renville Counties and Soil and Water Conservation Districts (SWCDs) began the planning process of developing a CWMP for the Hawk Creek watershed and portions of the Middle Minnesota watershed. This area encompasses approximately 71% of the watershed area in Renville County. This area also includes a small portion of Nicollet and Sibley Counties, who chose to "opt out" of the planning process.

The project was awarded a \$251,000 planning grant from BWSR. Plan development efforts have been ongoing since 2019. The next steps in the process will be to finalize the draft Plan and for the Policy Committee to identify a structure for governance that will oversee implementation of the Plan once it is approved. The Renville County Water Plan Coordinator serves as a Co-Lead for the planning process. The anticipated completion of the CWMP was January 2021, but this has been delayed due to COVID-19.

High Island Watershed (BWSR Planning Area #55)

In August 2019, the Lower Minnesota River West watershed (the area often referred to as the High Island Watershed) received notification that the planning area was awarded a \$237,000 planning grant from BWSR. The planning area includes Carver, McLeod, Nicollet, Renville, and Sibley Counties. Renville County and Renville County SWCD "opted out" as a "Required Partner" for Plan development due to the small percentage of watershed area located in the County; however, Renville County will be able to utilize the Plan to replace the Comprehensive Local Water Management Plan and have access to future implementation funds. Projected Plan completion is June 2022.

South Fork Crow River Watershed
(BWSR Planning Area #13)

In September 2019, discussions began regarding a 1W1P process for the South Fork of the Crow River Watershed. This area covers the northeast portion of Renville County as well as portions of Carver, Kandiyohi, Meeker, McLeod, Sibley, Wright, and Hennepin Counties. Renville County is a Required Partner in the planning process with approximately 26% of the planning area being in Renville County. The area also includes the Buffalo Creek Watershed District.

The Renville County Board of Commissioners approved a Resolution in May 2020 expressing intent to participate in the 1W1P process and support a planning grant application to BWSR. The application was not awarded funding, and a timeline has not been set to discuss re-submitting the application.

Water Management Task Force

The Renville County Water Management Task Force, or Advisory Committee, usually meets twice a year to discuss Water Plan initiatives and to direct the use of grant funds. Task Force members consist of Board-appointed citizens and representatives from Renville County and state agencies.

Through the years, the Task Force's role has been to guide revisions to the Renville County Comprehensive Local Water Management Plan, as updates were required, and to recommend the use of Natural Resource Block Grant funds.

In 2020, the following water planning projects and programs were completed:

- Provided cost-share to seal six abandoned wells.
- Continued water quality sampling of Lake Allie and Preston Lake.
- Provided funding for a cover crop cost-share program.
- Provided funding for a stormwater improvement study (City of Morton).
- Provided funding to the Hawk Creek Watershed Project to assist with staff activities relating to water quality improvement projects.
- Provided funding to the Renville County SWCD for technical assistance services (i.e., cost-share programs for well sealing and cover crops, eLINK reporting, and other best management practices).
- Provided funding to assist with transitioning to the 1W1P planning process.

5. Minnesota Department of Ag – AgBMP Loan Program.

Since 1995, Renville County has successfully utilized AgBMP funding to assist rural residents with upgrading failing septic systems, purchasing minimum tillage equipment, financing manure handling equipment, and helping landowners with feedlot improvements. In 2012, Renville County established themselves as a Local Lender to provide a financing resource for rural landowners in need of assistance to update deteriorating or contaminated drinking water wells. Historically, Environmental Services has completed approximately 280 loans encompassing over \$3.8 million.

In 2018, a new loan program was created through the AgBMP program in which the Renville County Drainage Authority could utilize loan funding to purchase easements and establish perennial vegetative buffers on redetermined drainage systems.

AgBMP Loans

	<u>2016</u>	<u>2017</u>	<u>2018</u>	<u>2019</u>	<u>2020</u>
Well Construction or Repair	\$196,525	\$106,759	\$141,024	\$158,811	\$168,473
Number of Loans	12	9	9	9	10
Ag Waste /					
Manure Application Equipment	0	\$9,500	\$332,000	\$146,249	0
Number of Loans	0	1	2	3	0
Septic	0	0	0	\$128,681	0
Number of Loans	0	0	0	11	0
Drainage System	0	0	\$793,919	\$1,477,122	0
Number of Systems	0	0	7	8	0

6. Minnesota Pollution Control Agency – Low-Interest Loan Program.

Septic Loan Program:

Since 2001, Renville County has utilized the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency (MPCA) Clean Water Partnership Watershed Loan Program to assist rural residents with upgrading failing septic systems. Environmental Services has completed approximately 428 septic loans encompassing over \$3.7 million. In 2019, the MPCA Clean Water Partnership Watershed Loan Program expired in each of the watersheds. In 2020, Environmental Services received \$900,000 in loan funds to create a new countywide septic loan program.

Year	# Loans	Hawk Creek	# Loans	Middle MN	# Loans	Crow
2016	14	\$144,825	2	\$20,536	2	\$28,110
2017	12	\$132,638	4	\$44,019	5	\$60,560
2018	11	\$130,477	2	\$21,706	5	\$43,853
2019	5	\$60,463	0	\$0	1	\$18,550

Year	# Loans	MPCA
2020	28	\$362,132

Drainage System Loan Program:

In 2020, after exhausting the availability of MDA – AgBMP loan funds, an application was submitted to the MPCA Clean Water Partnership Loan Program to establish a new program where loan funds could be utilized to purchase easements and establish perennial vegetative buffers on redetermined drainage systems. Renville County was awarded \$3,000,000 in loan funds to be used over the next three years.

Year	# Drainage Systems	MPCA Loans
2020	9	\$1,240,820

Lake Allie ESSD Wastewater Collection System Project Loan Program:

In 2020, an application was submitted to the MPCA Clean Water Partnership Loan Program to establish a new program where loan funds could be utilized to upgrade the centralized wastewater collection system for properties located near Lake Allie. Renville County was awarded \$700,000 in loan funds to be used by property owners for the necessary wastewater system improvements.

ESSD ADVISORY COUNCIL

The ESSD Advisory Council members include:

Randy Kruse	12/31/2020 (term expiration)
Brian Fischer	12/31/2022 (term expiration)
Mike Knodel	Unlimited
Richard DeRock	12/31/2021 (term expiration)
Alan Koll	12/31/2021 (term expiration)
Randy Kramer – Commissioner	Ex Officio
Doug Erickson – Commissioner	Ex Officio (Alternate)
Jerome Schueller – System Operator	Ex Officio
ES Director – System Administrator	Ex Officio

The eight-member Advisory Council meets quarterly. The five voting members represent ESSD property owners and the Oakdale Golf Club. Voting members serve three-year terms with a term limit of nine consecutive years with the exception of the Oakdale Golf Club representative whose term is unlimited.

ESSD STAFF SUPPORT

The Lake Allie Waste Treatment Project was completed in 2001 with initial startup in September 2001. The community sewer system serves 60 homes and one commercial business along the north side of Lake Allie with capacity to serve more sites in the future. Environmental Services staff spent considerable time working on the following ESSD issues:

- Provided staff support to the ESSD Advisory Council on Ordinance interpretation and recommendation for monthly service fee and consulting services.
- Worked with System Operator and ESSD Advisory Council on budget, recordkeeping, and operator agreement for 2020.
- Administered overall system operations and fiscal management.
- Assisted with development of a wastewater treatment facility capital improvement plan.
- Worked closely with Wenck Associates, Inc. on new wastewater treatment facility plans.
- Obtained loan money for new wastewater treatment facility project.