



**Renville**  
**COUNTY**  
Service • Stewardship • Shared Responsibility

## Renville County Environmental Services



# 2021 Annual Report

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## **PLANNING**

### **ZONING ADMINISTRATION**

#### **1. Land Use Ordinance.**

Staff reviews the Land Use Ordinance annually, and recommended changes are brought to the Planning Commission. In 2021, Ordinance amendments were adopted for Chapter Two (Zoning Regulations) and Chapter Fifteen (Renewable Energy 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 2021, staff reviewed and approved 86 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>2017</u>	<u>2018</u>	<u>2019</u>	<u>2020</u>	<u>2021</u>
New House	8	9	8	9	10
House Addition	5	3	7	7	8
Garage/Garage Addition	3	7	10	8	7
Bin	12	18	17	17	13
Livestock Building	6	7	1	2	5
Building/Building Addition	24	28	25	22	24
Solar Energy Conversion System (Commercial)	2	1	1	2	5
Solar Energy Conversion System (Personal)	14	1	2	0	1
Other	<u>8</u>	<u>10</u>	<u>23</u>	<u>13</u>	<u>16</u>
TOTAL	82	84	94	80	89

Nuisance/Zoning Complaint Investigation Breakdown

	<u>2017</u>	<u>2018</u>	<u>2019</u>	<u>2020</u>	<u>2021</u>
Zoning Violations	5	1	3	2	4
Feedlots	1	2	2	4	4
General Environmental	1	2	1	1	1
Other (CUP/IUP Conditions)	1	2	3	8	3

2021 Investigations

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

Investigations Turned Over to County Attorney for Legal Action

	<u>2017</u>	<u>2018</u>	<u>2019</u>	<u>2020</u>	<u>2021</u>
Investigations	0	0	0	0	0
Legal Action	0	0	0	0	0

Compliance Inspections

	<u>2017</u>	<u>2018</u>	<u>2019</u>	<u>2020</u>	<u>2021</u>
CUP	6	49	31	22	38
IUP	2	34	34	29	29
Variance	0	39	32	16	32
Land Use Permits	3	9	12	6	5

## BOARD OF ADJUSTMENT AND APPEALS

The Board of Adjustment and Appeals members include:

Carl E. Rudeen – District 1	12/31/2023 (term expiration)
Jeffrey T. Ruff – District 2	12/31/2023 (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 2021 as compared to the previous years:

	<u>2017</u>	<u>2018</u>	<u>2019</u>	<u>2020</u>	<u>2021</u>
Meetings	5	2	4	4	3
Variance Hearings	11	3	4	5	5
Administrative Appeals	0	0	0	0	0
Official Map Appeals	0	0	0	0	0

### 2021 Variances

<b>Applicant</b>	<b>Request</b>	<b>Zone</b>	<b>Board of Adjustment and Appeals Action</b>
Jordet, Travis	Variance to allow construction of 28' x 64' barn that does not comply with minimum road setback from centerline of U.S. Highway 212.	A	Approved 03/25/2021
Central Region Cooperative	Variance to allow construction of grain bins that do not comply with minimum side and rear setback standards.	A	Approved 03/25/2021
Central Region Cooperative	Variance to allow construction of scale and scale house that do not comply with minimum road right-of-way setback standards.	A	Approved 03/25/2021
Halstrom, Tim and Kay	Variance to allow construction of single-family dwelling, attached garage, driveway, sidewalks, and steps that do not comply with maximum impervious surface lot area coverage of lots.	S	Approved 05/06/2021
Woehler, Steven	Variance to allow temporary dwelling for care facility that does not comply with type of structure as defined.	A	Approved 09/23/2021

## PLANNING COMMISSION

The Planning Commission members include:

Jeffery A. Kramer – District 1	12/31/2022 (term expiration)
David Rieke – District 2	12/31/2023 (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	12/31/2023 (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 2021 as compared to the previous years:

	<u>2017</u>	<u>2018</u>	<u>2019</u>	<u>2020</u>	<u>2021</u>
Meetings	9	9	8	6	9
Conditional Use Permits	16	7	8	7	10
Interim Use Permits	9	0	1	0	3
Ordinance New or Amendments	1	1	2	2	2
Map Amendments	0	1	1	1	1
Plats	0	0	0	0	0

### 2021 Conditional Use Permits

<b>Applicant</b>	<b>Request</b>	<b>Zone</b>	<b>County Board Action</b>
Preston Garden LLC (Norgon, Theodore C. and Dickmeyer Revocable Trust, Everett H. and Mary E.)	CUP to allow construction of one megawatt community solar garden (solar energy conversion system).	A	Approved 02/23/2021
Central Region Cooperative	CUP to allow construction of commercial grain and agricultural commodity storage facility.	A	Approved 04/27/2021
Jakel Pork LLC (Jakel, Steven M.)	CUP to allow expansion of existing swine production feedlot.	A	Approved 06/22/2021
USS Wonder Solar LLC (Bauman, Nicholas James and Breanna Mae)	CUP to allow construction of one megawatt community solar garden (solar energy conversion system).	A	Approved 06/22/2021
USS Mesa Solar LLC (Schroeder, Maurice L. and Harriet A.)	CUP to allow construction of one megawatt community solar garden (solar energy conversion system).	A	Approved 06/22/2021
Central Region Cooperative	CUP to allow bulk storage of liquid fertilizer.	C/I	Approved 07/27/2021
USS Franklin Solar LLC (Gaasch, Edward J.)	CUP to allow construction of one megawatt community solar garden (solar energy conversion system).	A	Approved 08/24/2021
USS Catfish Solar LLC (Gaasch, Edward J. by Contract for Deed from Forsyth, Meyer, and Williams)	CUP to allow construction of one megawatt community solar garden (solar energy conversion system).	A	Approved 08/24/2021
Phare Garden LLC (Fennell, Christopher T.)	CUP to allow construction of one megawatt community solar garden (solar energy conversion system).	A	Approved 10/26/2021
Buffalo Lake 212-1 LLC (Grimm Family Revocable Living Trust and Dobberstein Revocable Living Trust, Brad H.)	CUP to allow construction of one megawatt community solar garden (solar energy conversion system).	A	Approved 10/26/2021

### 2021 Interim Use Permits

<b>Applicant</b>	<b>Request</b>	<b>Zone</b>	<b>County Board Action</b>
Lund, Bradley C.	IUP to allow mining, extraction, and processing of minerals (gravel).	A	Approved 04/27/2021
Woehler, Steven	IUP to allow temporary dwelling, care facility.	A	Approved 10/26/2021
Van Dyken, Jacob	IUP to allow Home Occupation, Level II (promotional clothing).	A	Approved 11/23/2021

2021 Ordinance Amendments

<b>Amendments</b>	<b>County Board Action</b>
Chapter Two (Zoning Regulations) – Renewable Energy Regulations	Approved 05/25/2021
Chapter Fifteen (Renewable Energy Regulations)	Approved 05/25/2021

2021 Map Amendments

<b>Amendments</b>	<b>County Board Action</b>
Central Region Cooperative – Rezone from A to C/I part of N2 of NW4 of 9-112-32	Approved 07/27/2021

2021 Plats

<b>Plat</b>	<b>County Board Action</b>
NONE	

## **ENVIRONMENT**

### **ADMINISTRATION**

#### **1. Subsurface Sewage Treatment System (SSTS).**

Environmental Services reviewed the designs and inspected the installation of 73 septic systems in 2021. The number of system design types installed over the past five years is:

<u>Type I Systems</u>	<u>2017</u>	<u>2018</u>	<u>2019</u>	<u>2020</u>	<u>2021</u>
Rock-Filled Trench	0	2	1	1	0
Gravelless Pipe Trench	0	0	0	0	0
Chamber Trench	1	0	0	3	0
Seepage Bed	10	11	2	9	14
Mound	37	25	39	41	44
At-Grade	6	2	3	10	5
Tank Only					4
<u>Type II Systems</u>					
Holding Tank/Privies	3	1	2	4	6

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

<u>Year</u>	<u>SSTS Permits</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
2020		68
<u>2021</u>		<u>73</u>
TOTAL		1,682

It is estimated that over 792 septic systems (32%) have not been inspected and have a high potential of being noncompliant. There are a total of 2,474 homes (per Renville County Assessor's office) that reside out of city limits and are required to have a septic system.



Investigations Turned Over to County Attorney for Legal Action

	<u>2017</u>	<u>2018</u>	<u>2019</u>	<u>2020</u>	<u>2021</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 through the MPCA. 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 345 feedlots of which 277 are required to be registered. Inspections are conducted on all 277 feedlots once every four years. The remaining 68 feedlots that are not required to register are surveyed once every four years to keep track of livestock numbers. The following achievements were accomplished in 2021:

- Attended feedlot officer trainings and meetings.
- Inspected 53 feedlots.
- Two feedlot closures, and five feedlots are no longer required to register.
- MPCA annual review for 2020 found Renville County met all applicable program requirements.

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

Feedlot Inspections

	<u>2017</u>	<u>2018</u>	<u>2019</u>	<u>2020</u>	<u>2021</u>
Compliance	85	85	88	71	49
New Feedlot Construction Site	0	0	0	0	0
Complaints	<u>1</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>4</u>	<u>4</u>
TOTAL	86	87	90	75	53

Investigations Turned Over to County Attorney for Legal Action

	<u>2017</u>	<u>2018</u>	<u>2019</u>	<u>2020</u>	<u>2021</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 BWSR Southern Regional Committee made a recommendation on December 20, 2021, for the Plan to be sent to the full BWSR Board for final approval. Final approval is anticipated to be the end of January 2022. It is anticipated that the Plan will be completed and executed late summer 2022.

##### 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 anticipated to be June 2022.

South Fork of the 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. In August 2021, BWSR selected the South Fork of the Crow River Watershed planning area for a planning grant. We are currently in the pre-planning phase of the project. The Policy Committee met in December 2021 and approved a preliminary work plan, budget, and timeline that will be sent to BWSR for formal approval. Projected plan completion is June 2024.

Water Management Task Force

The Renville County Water Management Task Force was dissolved in 2021.

BWSR Local Water Management Natural Resource Block Grant (NRBG)

Renville County was awarded Local Water Management NRBG funds in the amount of \$14,047 to assist with implementing programs designed to protect and improve water resources.

In 2021, 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 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).

## 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 290 loans encompassing over \$4 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>2017</u>	<u>2018</u>	<u>2019</u>	<u>2020</u>	<u>2021</u>
Well Construction or Repair	\$106,759	\$141,024	\$158,811	\$168,473	\$243,003
Number of Loans	9	9	9	10	11
Ag Waste / Manure Application Equipment	\$9,500	\$332,000	\$146,249	0	0
Number of Loans	1	2	3	0	0
Septic	0	0	\$128,681	0	0
Number of Loans	0	0	11	0	0
Drainage System	0	\$793,919	\$1,477,122	0	0
Number of Systems	0	7	8	0	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 447 septic loans encompassing over \$3.9 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
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
2021	19	\$246,833

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.

<b>Year</b>	<b># Drainage Systems</b>	<b>MPCA Loans</b>
2020	9	\$1,240,820
2021	0	0

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. Due to substantial changes to the proposed design by the MPCA, the cost of the proposed project will be approximately \$900,000. Conversations have begun with the MPCA on how to get additional funds for the project. No loan money was spent in 2021.

## **ESSD ADVISORY COUNCIL**

The ESSD Advisory Council members include:

Randy Kruse	12/31/2023 (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 62 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 2021.
- Administered overall system operations and fiscal management.
- Continued to assist with the development of the wastewater treatment facility capital improvement plan.
- Worked closely with Stantec Consulting Services Inc. (formerly Wenck Associates, Inc.) on new wastewater treatment facility plans.
- As of December 31, 2021, the MPCA was still reviewing the SDS permit application. The permit is anticipated to be sent to the County in January 2022 for review. After it is approved by the County, the MPCA will place the permit on a 60-day public notice for comment. It is anticipated the new treatment system will be installed by fall 2022.