

Water quality project along Crailsheim Road may advance this year

The Army Corps of Engineers will not require the watershed to do stream mitigation on the project, which means the permitting process will advance as originally planned.



The Okabena-Ocheda Watershed District has developed plans for a water holding structure on District 518 property near Worthington's Intermediate School.

Tim Middagh / The Globe



By [Julie Buntjer](#)

WORTHINGTON — A planned water quality improvement project on District 518 property along Crailsheim Road may move forward this year after all.

During a meeting of the Okabena-Ocheda Watershed District on Tuesday, Administrator Dan Livdahl said the Army Corps of Engineers will not require the watershed to do stream mitigation on the project, which is located on property around Worthington's intermediate school. The decision means the permitting process will advance as originally planned.

"Today (Tuesday) we got notification that stream mitigation is not required," Livdahl told the board of managers. "The stream they're looking at is low enough quality that they didn't want to require stream mitigation."

He said the permit from the Corps should be received within 45 days, and noted the permit from the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources is anticipated to be approved within 60 days. The city of Worthington will also need to grant a permit before construction can take place.

The project calls for a water holding pond, which will store water runoff from area farmland, allowing phosphorus and sediment to settle out before the water ultimately flows into Lake Okabena. Both phosphorus and sediment can help feed algae blooms in the lake, so removing as much as possible should improve water quality.

If the permits are received on time, Livdahl said bidding for the project will be done in May, with project completion by the end of November.

The watershed district received a grant from the Minnesota Board of Water and Soil Resources to help pay for the project, and that grant is good through the end of 2025. Livdahl said if bids aren't favorable this spring, they could delay construction to next year if they needed to.

Once the watershed knows the full cost of the project, Livdahl said the district can seek funding from the E.O. Olson Trust and the city's Clean Water Partnership fund to help pay for it.

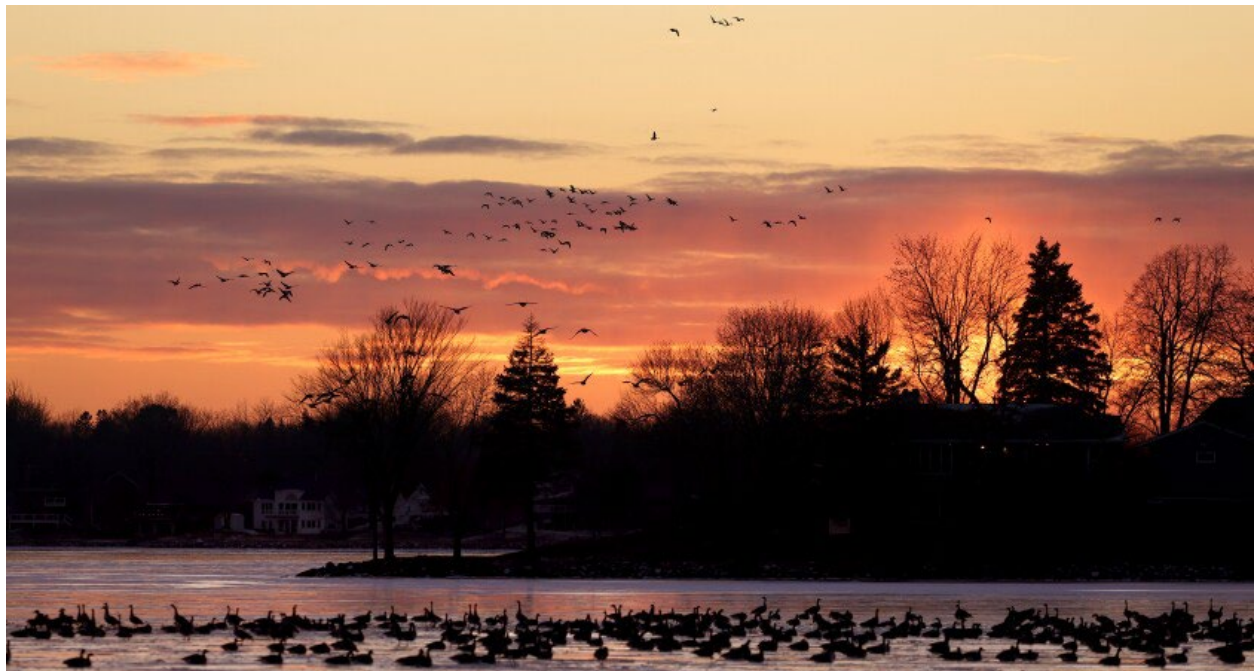
Also on Tuesday, the managers discussed the watershed district's 2024 annual plan. There was a consensus to continue working on carp control in Lake Okabena, and Livdahl was directed to contact Carp Solutions for a proposal.

“The next step would be using electronic fields to direct carp going into Sunset Bay for spawning into a conveyor belt or trap,” Livdahl said, noting that the E.O. Olson Trust may be interested in helping to finance that project as well.

Additional plans include devising a schedule for the clean-out of the sand filters at Prairie View, and coming up with signage to educate the public on toxic algae blooms and invasive species. The signs would be erected around Lake Okabena, near boat landings and public beaches.

Livdahl said he’d also like to address carp control in Lake Ocheda. The district’s advisory board suggested using pumps to do a complete drawdown of the lake after several attempts at wintertime drawdowns failed to produce a massive fish kill. It’s likely Ducks Unlimited could do the engineering for the drawdown, but Livdahl didn’t know what it would cost. He was directed to contact Ducks Unlimited for a cost estimate.

One last project that may be included in the 2024 plan is addressing the restroom situation at Bella Park.



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The geese, estimated at 5,000 strong earlier this month on Lake Okabena, raise phosphorus levels by dropping feces in the lake