

# Formation of the District

In 1968, a group of residents of Bloomington, Chanhassen, Deephaven, Eden Prairie, Minnetonka, and Shorewood came together. They wanted to protect the communities they loved from flooding, manage water quality, and restore natural areas.

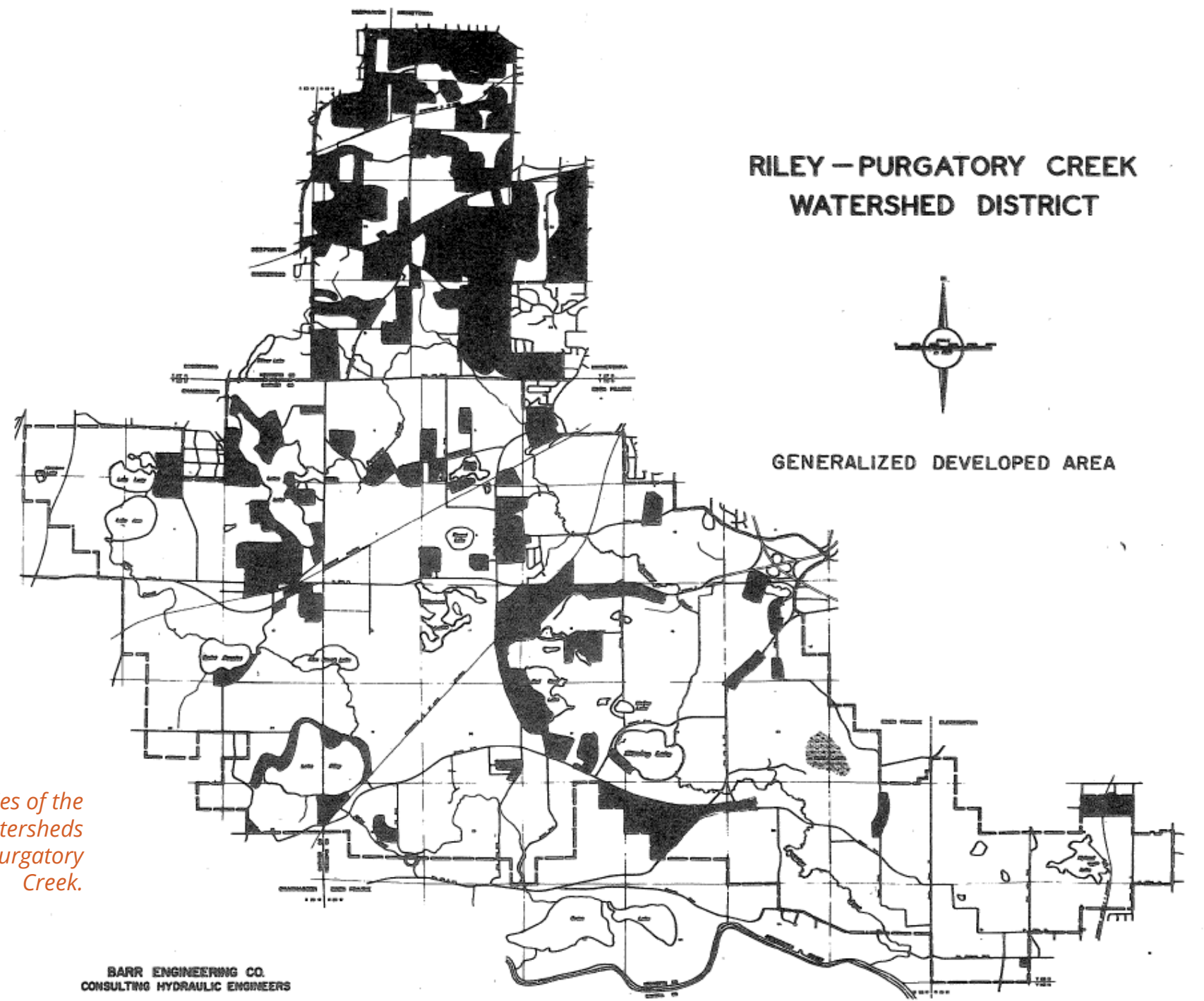
## A community petition

On August 16th, 1968, a group of residents, mostly from the Duck Lake area, petitioned the Minnesota Water Resources Board to establish the Riley Purgatory Creek Watershed District. Their goal was to manage surface water runoff and flood plain preservation, knowing the area was slated for large urban development in the coming decades. The petition involved permission and direction to manage, through regulation and improvement projects, the creeks, lakes and riparian areas of the district for the benefit of the community as a whole.

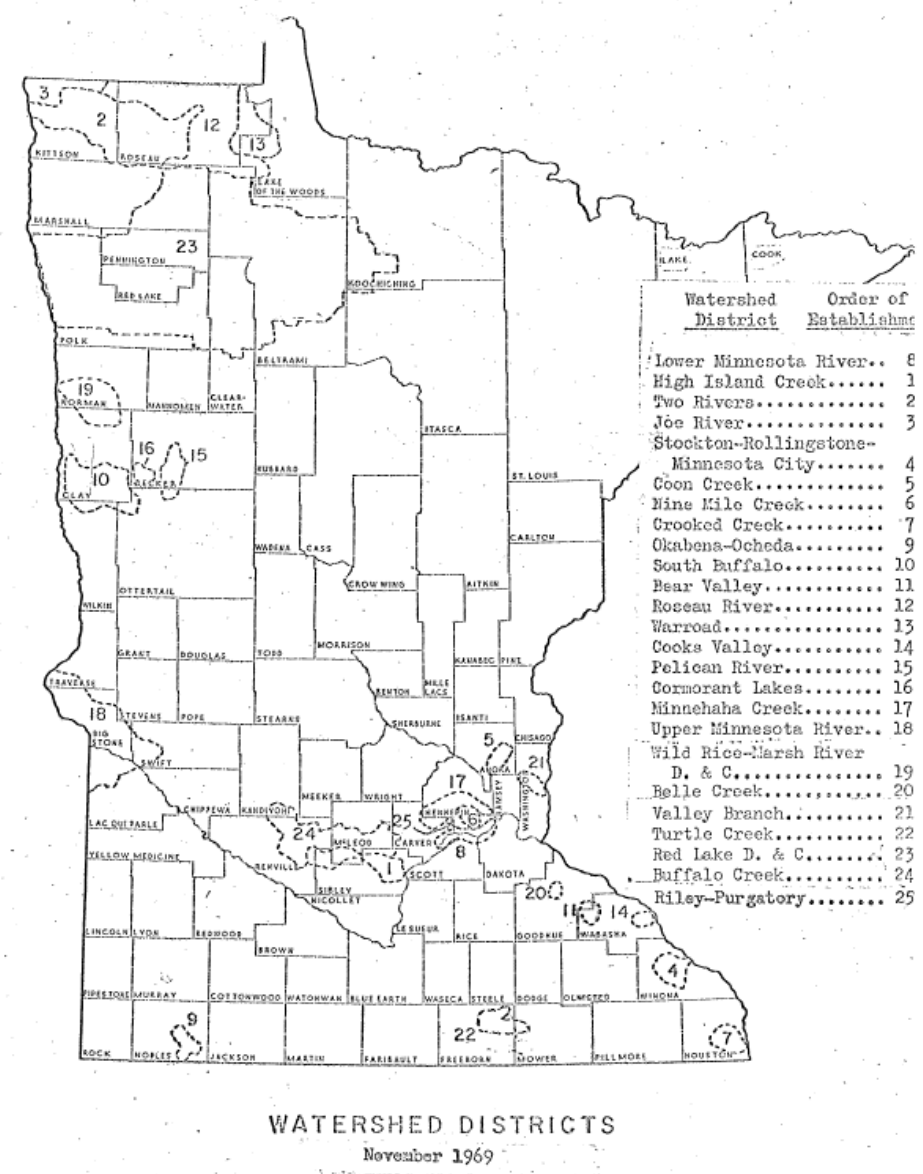
The petition allowed for one of two options: enlarge the existing Nine-Mile Creek Watershed District, or create a new one. At the time, financial limits were set at \$60,000 in levies for a single district regardless of size, so a larger district would be limited in what it could do. As such, the 70 residents who signed the petition preferred the option of creating Riley Purgatory Creek Watershed District, planned to be approximately 40 square miles in area.

After the Water Resources Board received the petition, the Division of Water, Soils and Minerals wrote a report defending the enlargement of Nine-Mile Creek rather than the creation of a separate District. This report was presented at a public hearing concerning the creation of the District in March of 1969. However after the public hearing, the general consensus was that a new watershed district would be more beneficial, and so on July 31st, 1969, the Riley Purgatory Creek Watershed District was formed.

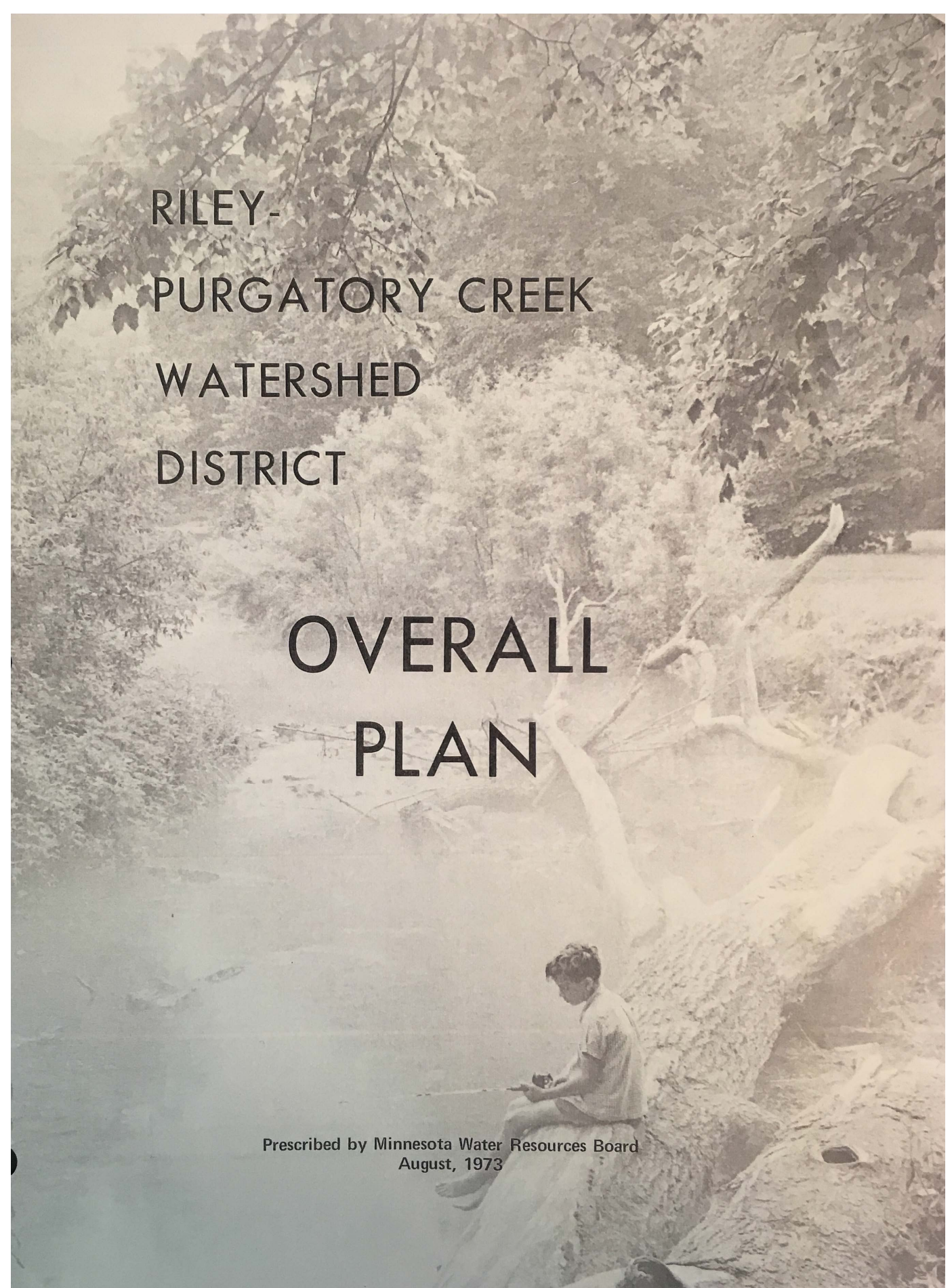
The petition submitted to the state for the formation of Riley-Purgatory Watershed District.



The original boundaries of the District included the watersheds of Riley Creek and Purgatory Creek.



Riley Purgatory Watershed District was the 25th established in the state.



The first Watershed Management Plan (10-Year Plan) was adopted in 1973.

STATE OF MINNESOTA  
WATER RESOURCES BOARD  
Centennial Office Building  
St. Paul, Minnesota 55101

In the Matter of the Petition for the Establishment of the Riley-Purgatory Creek Watershed District located in Hennepin and Carver Counties. )  
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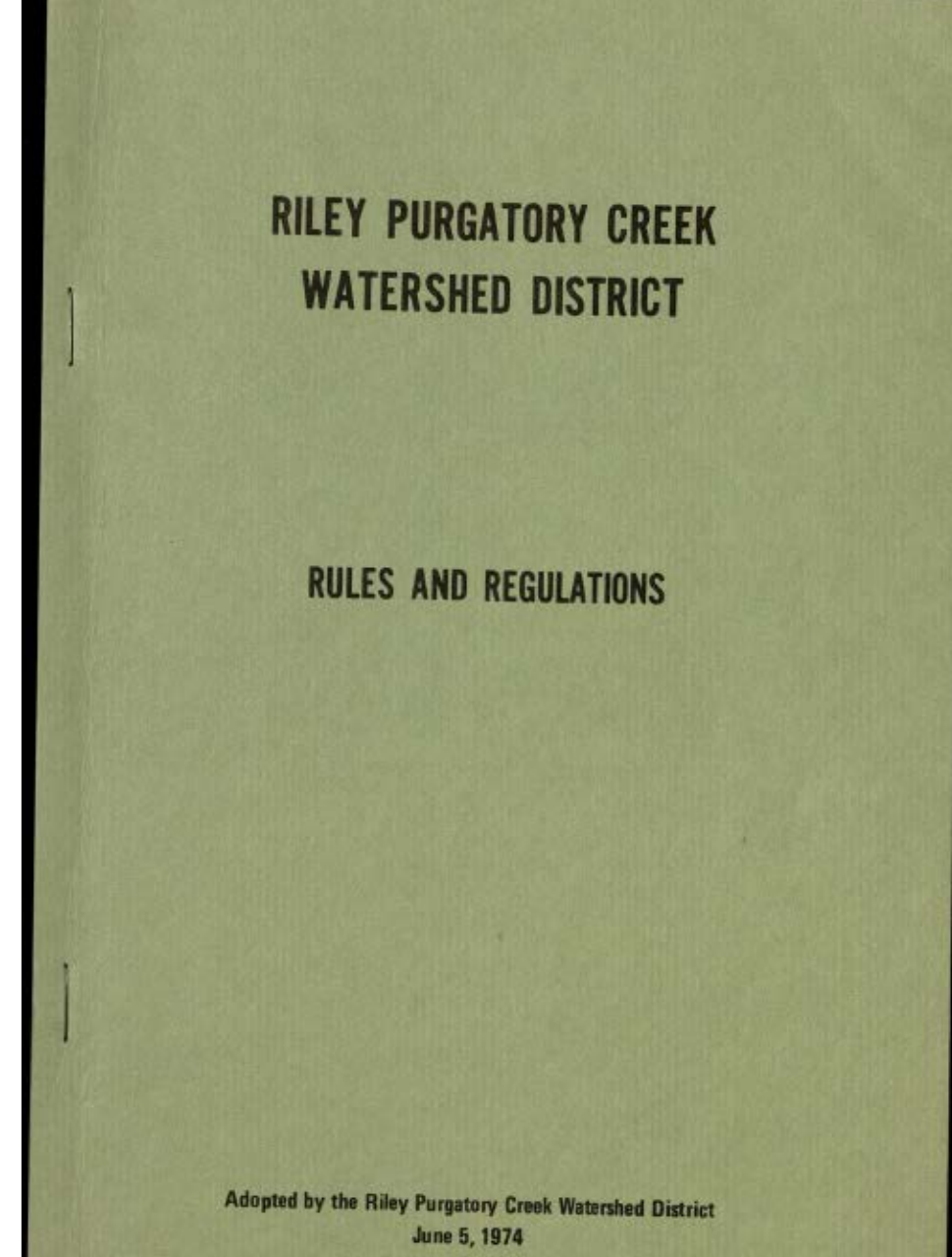
The undersigned petitioners, being resident fresholders of the proposed district, respectfully petition and state to the Minnesota Water Resources Board as follows:

I.

The petitioners seek the establishment of a watershed district to be known as the Riley-Purgatory Creek Watershed District, or in the alternative, the enlargement of the existing Nine Mile Creek Watershed District to include the Riley Creek and Purgatory Creek basins, the entire area to be known as the Nine Mile-Purgatory-Riley Creek Watershed District. Petitioners are proceeding in accordance with Minnesota Statutes §§ 112.36 to 112.39 and § 112.761.

II.

The areas of the proposed district are separate drainage basins tributary to the Minnesota River. The area is contiguous to the existing Nine Mile Creek Watershed District. The petitioners are not certain that the enlarged area can be feasibly administered by the managers of the Nine Mile Creek District by reason of the fact that the financial resources available to a single watershed district may impair the ability of the managers to feasibly



The District's first set of rules and regulations was adopted in 1974. The goal of these rules was to "protect the public health, safety and welfare, natural assets and resources" of the District. In 1977 they were amended. Later, after a period when they were suspended, watershed protection rules were reinstated in 2014.

RILEY PURGATORY CREEK WATERSHED DISTRICT RULES AND REGULATIONS, AS AMENDED

ADOPTED BY THE RILEY CREEK PURGATORY WATERSHED DISTRICT JUNE 5, 1974 AND AMENDED SEPTEMBER 7, 1977

Annual Report for 1973

RILEY-PURGATORY CREEK WATERSHED DISTRICT

The names, addresses and present terms of the managers are:

Howard L. Peterson	7021 Duck Lake Road Eden Prairie, MN 55343	Term expires 7-30-76
Donald F. Pennie	9599 Bluff Road Eden Prairie, MN 55343	Term expires 7-30-75
Howard Merriman	Route 3, Box 116 Chaska, MN 55318	Term expires 7-30-74
Conrad B. Fiskness	8033 Cheyenne Trail Chanhassen, MN 55317	Term expires 7-30-76

The present officers are:

Howard L. Peterson	President
Donald F. Pennie	Vice President
Howard Merriman	Treasurer
Conrad B. Fiskness	Secretary

Managers and Meetings

The district commenced the year 1973 by welcoming Conrad B. Fiskness from Carver County to the Board of Managers. Another new addition to the Board during the year was Frank I. Butterworth from Hennepin County. Unfortunately, Mr. Butterworth was able to serve on the Board only until the end of the year because of his departure to California. The district and its managers welcomed and acknowledged the contributions of Mr. Butterworth and his predecessor, C. Duane Bell, as well as Mr. Fiskness' predecessor, Ray C. Peterson.

Front page of the 1973 Annual Report.

A 1970 article in the Star Tribune quotes first watershed district president Howard Peterson. The other original board members were Donald F. Pennie, Howard Merriman, and Ray C. Peterson, and John Youngstrom.

### They'll work to preserve nature

By BETTY WILSON  
Minneapolis Star Staff Writer

The Riley-Purgatory Creek Watershed District in eastern Carver and southern Hennepin Counties is one of the last active open spaces with relatively clear, clean lakes and streams that remain in the Twin Cities area.

But development in the 43-square-mile district, where two main streams run through Shorewood, Chanhassen, Minnetonka, Eden Prairie and Bloomington, is coming fast.

Howard L. Peterson, president of the watershed district, says "We are in the position of having a choice to deal with potential problems as the community develops."

He hopes to prevent pollution, such as Minnetonka and Nine Mile Creeks have had in developed areas, from occurring in Riley and Purgatory creeks.

"We want to keep anything catastrophic from happening," Peterson said. "Purgatory Creek is classed as a trout stream and has been stocked with rainbow and brown trout by the Minnesota Department of Conservation. It has been described in an engineering study as a 'rather clean stream.'"

Riley Creek is classed as a warm-water stream, suitable for sunnose and rough fish waters. It has been found to have "a moderate degree of pollution."

Both creeks sometimes run dry.

There is little construction yet in the largely agricultural areas along the two creeks, according to Peterson. Much of it is wild, hilly, wooded area. There are 11 lakes in the district, the largest the 300-acre Riley Lake.

Peterson said he would like to see green belts established along the two creeks. A park planner has recommended that Eden Prairie put hiking trails along Purgatory Creek.

The district is preparing a flood-plain map of the area and will issue regulations for building along the creeks and lakes.

"We're not trying just to prevent development. There's a lot more to construction than saying this area is going to remain in its natural state," Peterson said.

Peterson, a mechanical engineer, says, though, that very often construction projects are based on economics.

"When you want to preserve and save things, there are costs involved. He believes Purgatory

### Metro Focus

By Betty Wilson

and Riley Creeks and much of the natural environment of the area can be preserved with "judicious" development.

THE MINNEAPOLIS STAR  
12C  
Tues., May 12, 1970

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### Watershed

from page 1

construction. If any of the plans threaten water quality, the district can refuse to issue permits, thereby halting construction.

Other district activities include:

- CONDUCTING periodic water quality inventories.
- PRESERVING public access to waterways.
- DEVELOPING shoreline management policies.
- PROMOTING groundwater conservation.
- ENCOURAGING city action on water management problems.

Pennie described the district's working relationship with Eden Prairie as "just fine."

The watershed district meets at 7:30 p.m. on the first Wednesday of every month in the EP city hall.

### Eden Prairie's growth rate is fast, but Maple Grove's rate is faster

By Betty Wilson

Eden Prairie is growing at a rapid rate. The city's population is expected to reach 100,000 by the year 2000. Maple Grove is growing at a faster rate. The city's population is expected to reach 100,000 by the year 1990.

### Watershed District's goals: protect people from water, water from people

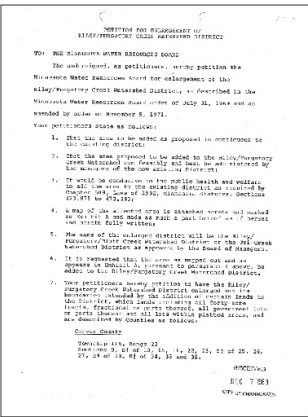
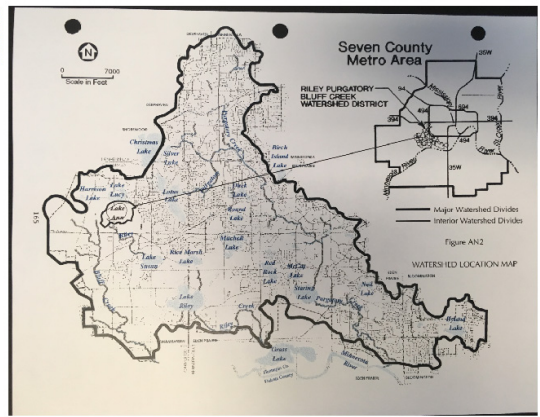
By Betty Wilson

The Riley-Purgatory Creek Watershed District is working to protect people from water and water from people. The district is implementing a variety of programs to improve water quality and protect the environment.

# An evolving watershed

It was not until 16 years after the creation of the District that Bluff Creek was added to its boundaries. This was not the only change that the District would see, as it grew and evolved to meet the changing needs of its community.

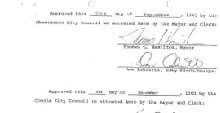
District map from the original watershed management plan, showing the addition of the Bluff Creek Watershed to the western edge of the District.



## Expanding boundaries

In the fall of 1983, the Cities of Chaska and Chanhassen petitioned to add Bluff Creek to the District. The Division of Waters for the DNR recommended further extending the District's boundaries south into the Lower Minnesota Watershed District, incorporating Grass Lake as Riley Creek flows into it. The report went so far as to advise the dissolution of the Lower Minnesota River Watershed District, and the incorporation of its responsibilities into the surrounding districts, including Riley-Purgatory Creek Watershed District. These recommendations were not fully implemented, though the proposed boundaries did shift to better accommodate the Bluff Creek Watershed.

After a public hearing in March of 1984, the enlargement was approved on June 8th, 1984 and Riley-Purgatory Creek Watershed District became Riley-Purgatory-Bluff Creek Watershed District as we know it today.



Copy of the petition to add Bluff Creek to the watershed district's boundaries.

## Historical highlight: Raymond Haik

Raymond Haik had a distinguished career in environmental law that spanned 50 years and some of America's most prominent causes in water resources law. He served as a Special Assistant Attorney General in the Minnesota Attorney General's office and was involved in the development of the Watershed Act adopted by the Minnesota Legislature in 1955. He served as counsel for the state of Minnesota in U.S. Supreme Court litigation involving diversion of water from the Great Lakes and handled the litigation to prevent mineral exploration within the Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness. He was appointed by the President of the United States to service on the national Water Pollution Control Advisory Board, and the President's Quetico Superior Committee. He served as Chairman of the American Bar Association's Section of Natural Resources Law, and President of the Izaak Walton League of America.

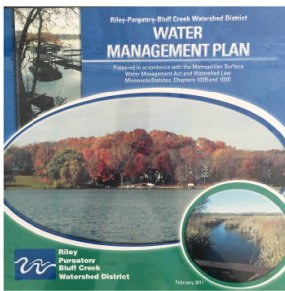
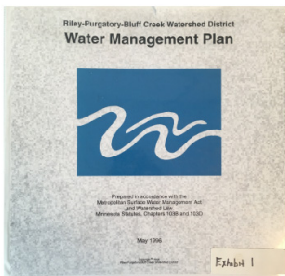


As an attorney in private practice with the firm of Popham Haik, he assisted in the creation of the Riley Purgatory Bluff Creek Watershed District in 1969 and served as the District's first attorney. Mr. Haik also served as the first counsel for the Nine Mile Creek Watershed District Minnehaha Creek Watershed District, and worked with the Minneapolis, Hennepin County and Minnesota park systems. His commitment to the profession included mentoring and creating opportunities for younger attorneys at the Popham Haik law firm. The firm's core values of honor, integrity and public service are lasting legacies for many others. Our natural resources have benefited as well; the watershed model that Mr. Haik had such a large part in shaping is now an inspiration for the rest of the country in confronting our water problems.

## Plans change

Water Management Plans are often referred to as 10 Year Plans, as they plot an expected course of water management over ten years. The District updated its Water Management Plan in 1996, and again in 2011. In 2018, the fourth generation plan was adopted. Each management plan update sought to address changing needs for protecting, managing, and restoring water resources in the community.

Understanding that public support is critical for the efficient and effective operation of any government organization, the District emphasized public engagement and outreach throughout the development of the 2018 plan. As a result, the issues identified and emphasized in the plan are a direct result of stakeholder input.



Top left: cover of the 1996 plan  
Bottom left: cover of the 2011 plan  
Above: cover of the 2018 plan

In 2016, Riley Purgatory Bluff Creek Watershed District received the District Of The Year award from the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources, recognizing its work toward protecting, managing, and restoring local water resources.



## Community connection

Community outreach and engagement has been an important part of the District's work since the beginning. No organization, whether public or private does its work in a vacuum. We all exist within communities, and how these communities understand and engage with our work can directly influence their success. Watershed districts are no exception to this.

Even more, many of the challenges to clean water are the result of non-point source pollution: many small actions that together make an impact. It follows that only a community of action, working together for clean water can create meaningful solutions. Whether individuals, groups, businesses and non-profits, or other local and regional governments, there is an amazing capacity to do this work within the community that the District is lucky to be a part of.

## With frequent mowings comes danger

### Lawn clippings left in street can harm lakes and creeks

By Conrad Eriksson  
 It's a common sight: a car parked on the side of a road with a large pile of lawn clippings in the back seat. The clippings are left in the street, and they can be a problem for the environment. When it rains, the clippings wash into the water, and they can harm the fish and other wildlife that live in the water. The clippings also decompose and release nutrients into the water, which can cause algae blooms and other problems. The District encourages residents to bag their lawn clippings and dispose of them properly. If you can't bag them, please don't leave them in the street. Instead, take them to a local yard waste disposal site.

Near right: a biennial communication from the District  
 Far right: one of the first pamphlets created by the District in the 1970s  
 Top: a 1997 article on cleaning up lawn clippings in the Eden Prairie News. Written by former manager Conrad Eriksson