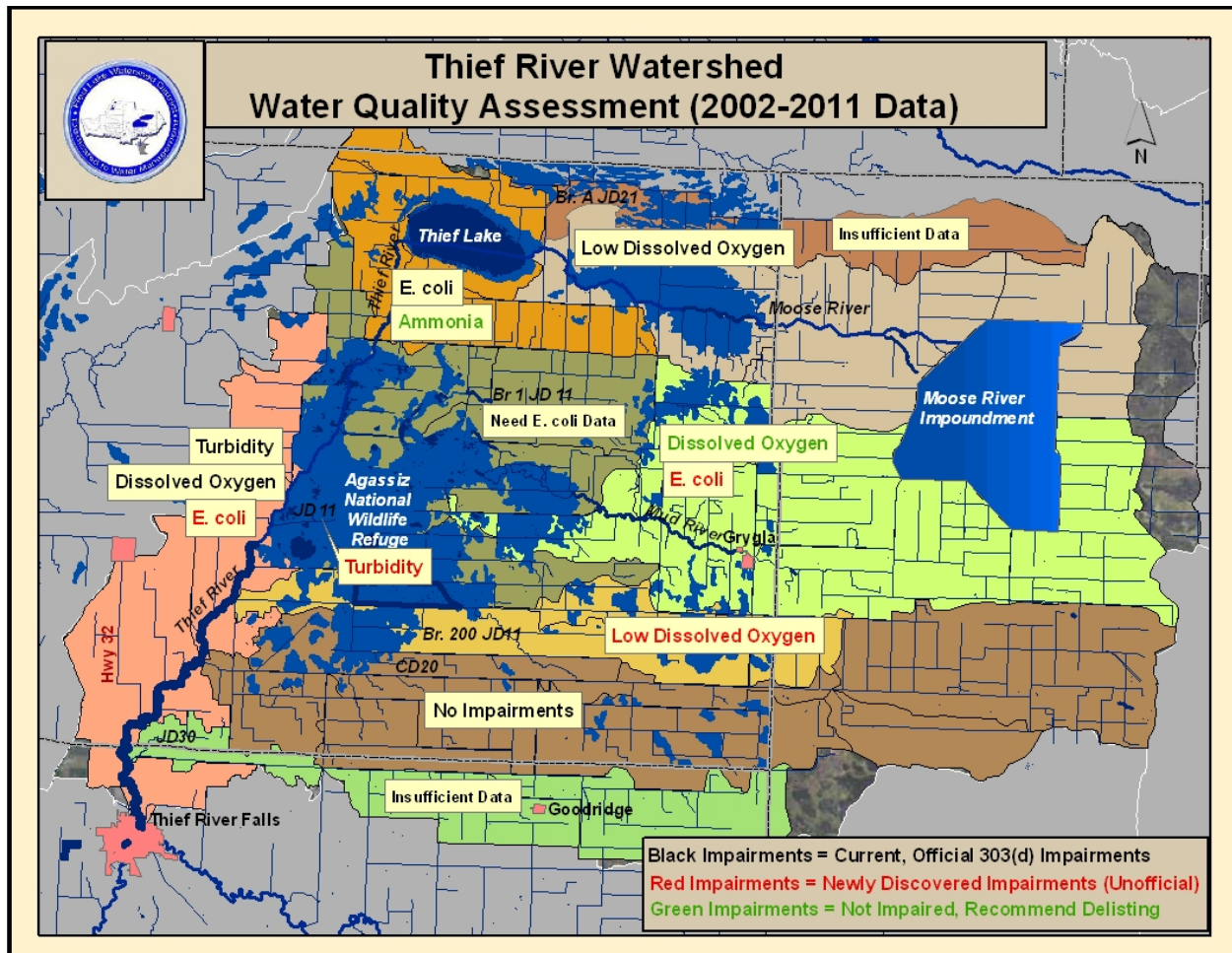


By: Corey Hanson, Water Quality Coordinator  
 For: March 22, 2012  
 Red Lake Watershed District Board Meeting

**Thief River Watershed Assessment Project (Watershed-Based TMDL)**

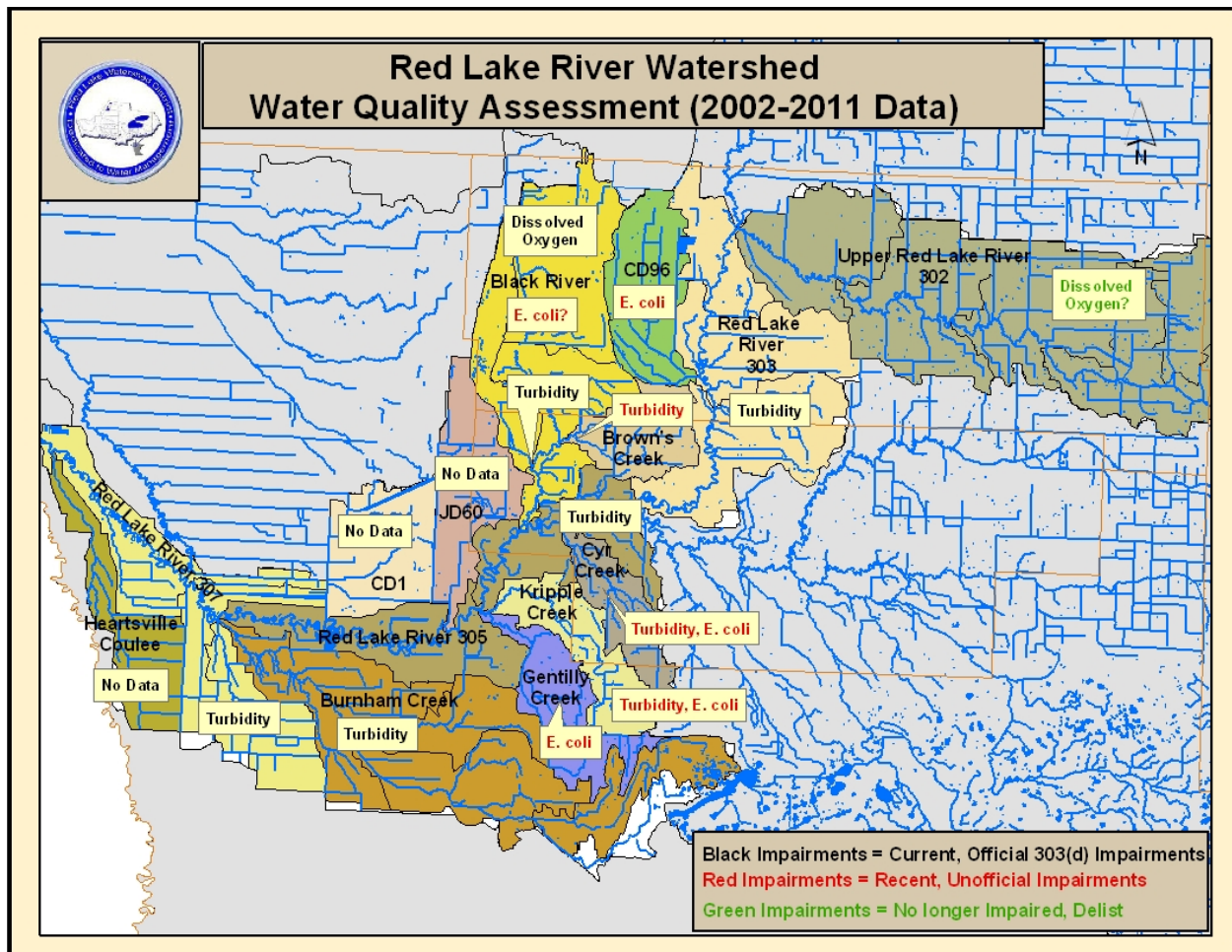
- A work plan for Phase II of this project was written and sent to the MPCA Project Manager.
- Task 1 – Evaluation of Existing Data
  - Data from all sources (RLWD, USGS, River Watch, SWCDs) was compiled by HUC10 sub-basin. There is a separate Excel file for each of these sub-basins.
  - An assessment of water quality conditions was completed for 9 sub-basins of the Thief River watershed using the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency’s methods. Four new impairments have been identified by the intensive monitoring that has been going on recently in the watershed. There is good news, though. It appears that two previously listed impairments should be considered for removal from the 303(d) List of Impaired Waters.



- Task 5 – Stage and Flow Monitoring
  - The RLWD will be monitoring stage in at the Mud River site with HOBO water level loggers until the DNR installs a more permanent gauge (bubbler system) this summer.

**Red Lake River Watershed Assessment Project (Watershed-Based TMDL)**

- Task 1 – Evaluation of Existing Data
  - Data from all sources (RLWD, USGS, River Watch, SWCDs) was compiled and organized by HUC10 or HUC12 sub-basin. There is a separate Excel file for each of these sub-basins.
  - An assessment of water quality conditions was completed for fifteen sub-basins of the Red Lake River watershed using the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency’s methods.



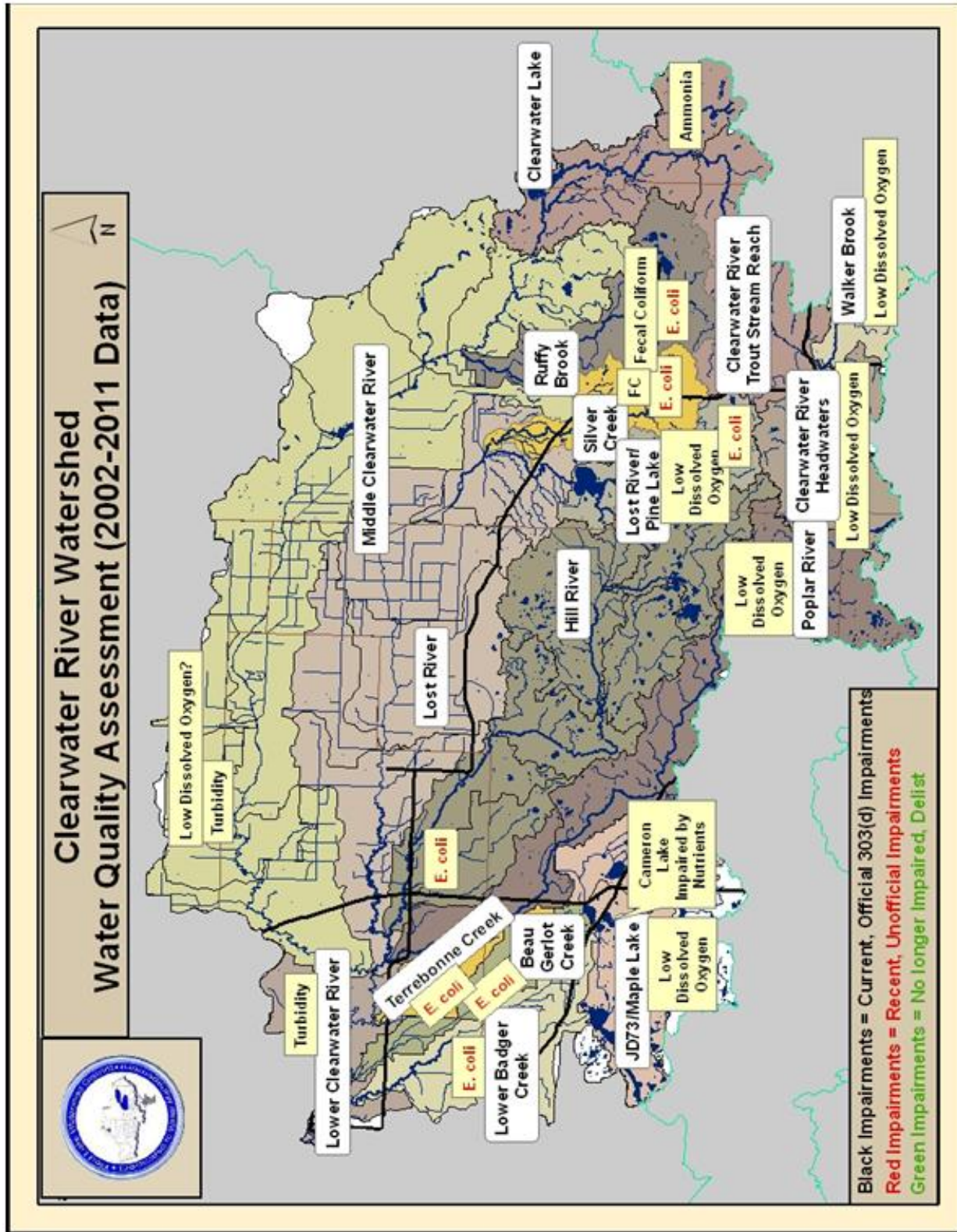
- Task 5 – Flow Monitoring
  - Met with DNR hydrologists about Red Lake River and Thief River stations that will be part of the event-based monitoring program. For a couple tributaries of the Red Lake River, the RLWD will be monitoring these sites using temporary HOBO water level logger deployment pipes until the DNR installs more permanent gauges. These sites are on Kripple Creek and Black River.

### **Red Lake River and Grand Marais Creek Assessment (Surface Water Assessment Grant)**

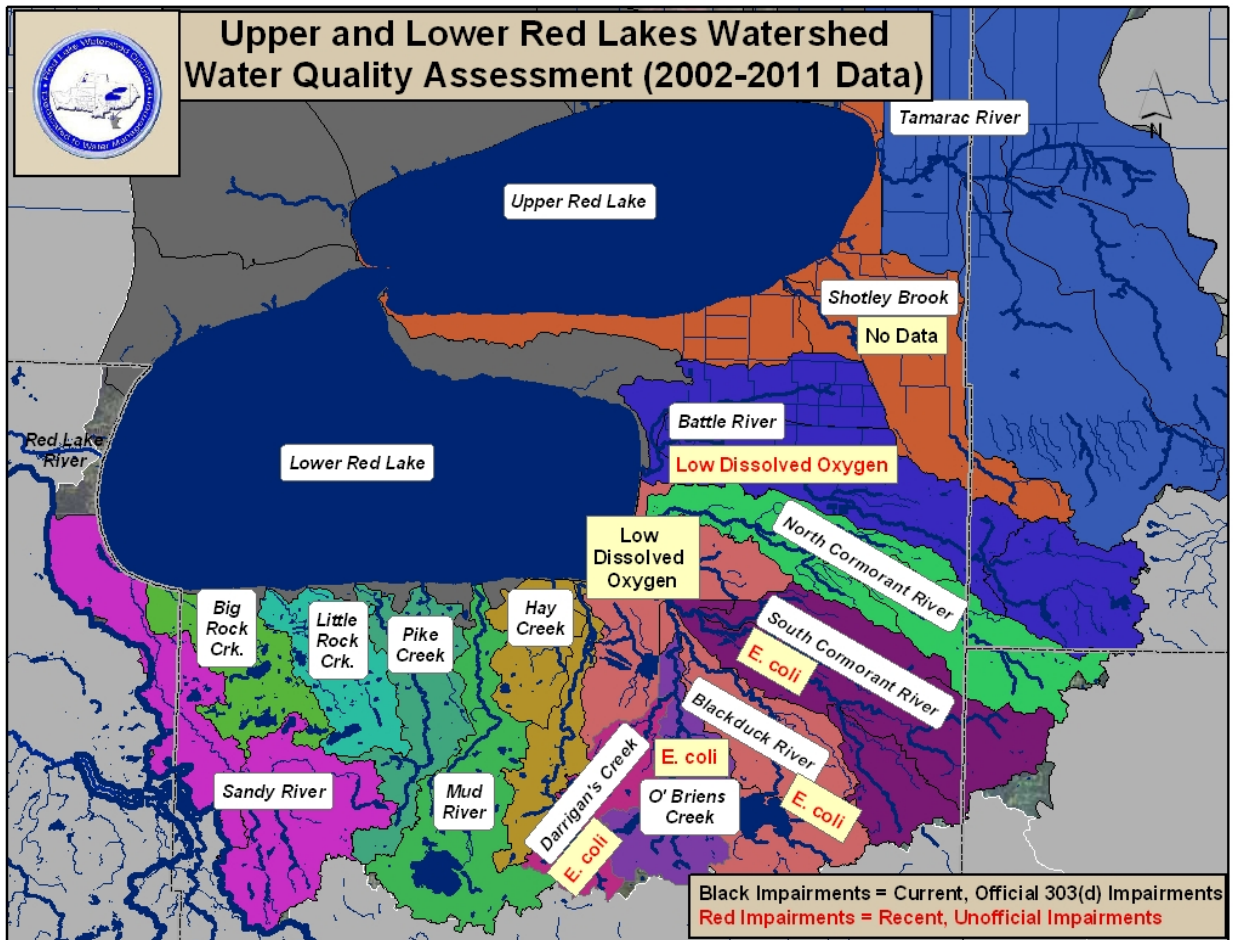
- The Quality Assurance Project Plan for this project was completed, signed by the RLWD, and sent to the MPCA.
- Sent work plans and site information to project partners.
- The Grant Contract received final signatures from the MPCA on February 24, 2012. That is the official start date for the project.

### **Other Notes from February**

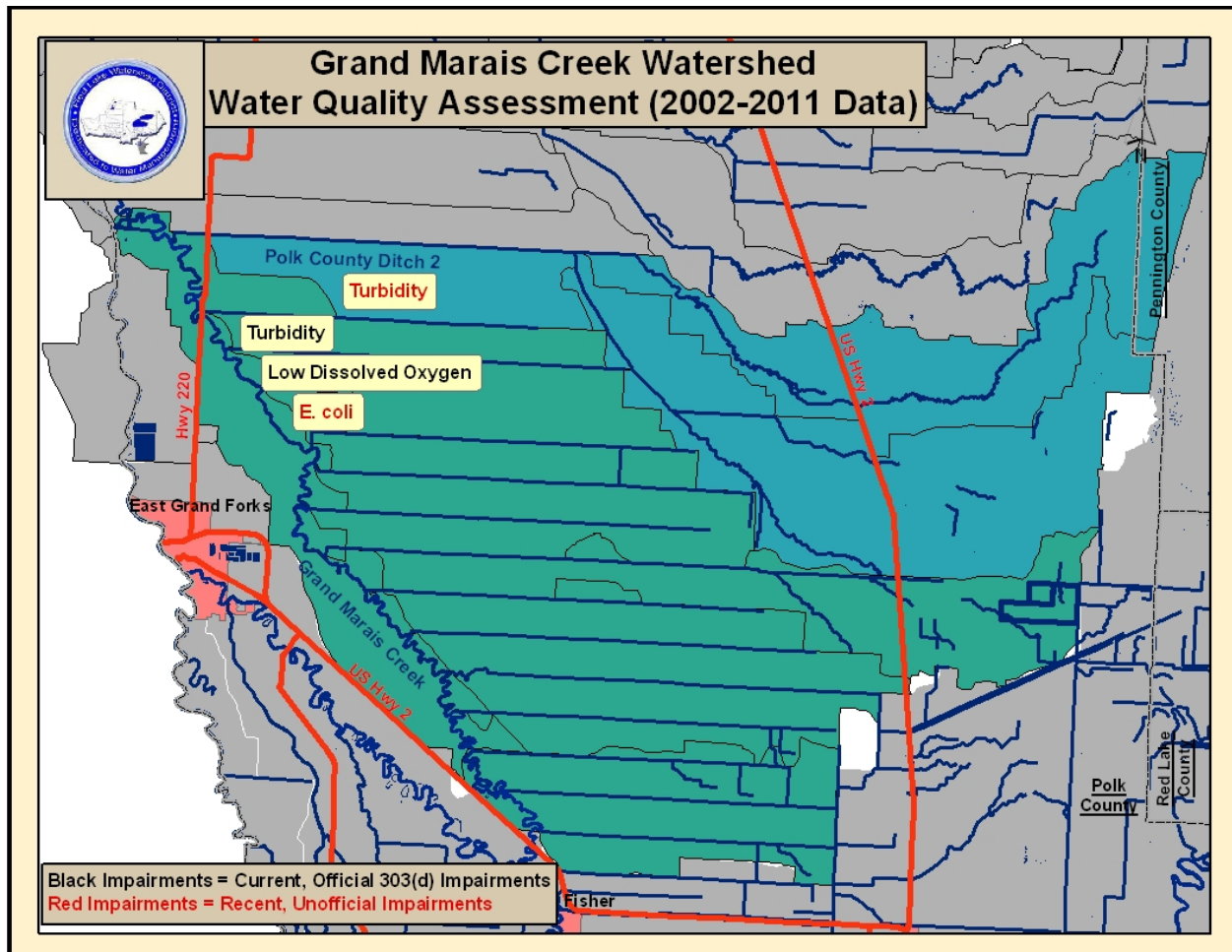
- Completed water quality articles for the annual report.
- A water quality assessment for the Clearwater River watershed was completed. The watershed was divided into fifteen HUC10/HUC12 level sub-basins for the purposes of this assessment. The MPCA's Environmental Data Access website allowed each site's data to be browsed in search of readings that fail to meet one of the water quality standards. Data was compiled from multiple sources (RLWD, SWCDs, River Watch) where there were suspected impairments.
- The last time the MPCA assessed the Clearwater River watershed, in 2009, fecal coliform data was excluded from official assessments and many sites didn't quite yet meet the data requirements for an official E. coli assessment. The RLWD conducted extra sampling in 2009 and 2010 in order to get E. coli caught up to the data requirements. All seven of the new impairments that were identified during this assessment were E. coli impairments. In 2011, the MPCA changed its assessment process so that each watershed would be assessed only once every ten years rather than once every two years. The Clearwater River won't be assessed again until 2016, at the earliest. So, between official State assessments, more responsibility for monitoring and assessing water quality will fall onto local agencies like the RLWD. Even if these impairments are not on the official 303(d) List of Impairments, they still exist and it's important that people know about them so that they can be addressed with projects.



- Water quality assessments were also completed for the Upper and Lower Red Lakes watershed and the Grand Marais Creek watershed. The Red Lake DNR provided some data that was used to assess rivers in the Upper and Lower Red Lakes watershed. They are also working on an assessment of their own. Red Lake DNR and River Watch monitoring has identified low dissolved oxygen impairments on the lower Blackduck River and Battle River. RLWD monitoring on the Blackduck River and its tributaries has identified a new E. coli impairment at each of the four sites that were monitored.



- Over the last two years, the RLWD has bolstered the E. coli dataset for Grand Marais Creek so that it is sufficient for a water quality assessment. The data shows that Grand Marais Creek is impaired by high E. coli concentrations. Also, there is turbidity impairment on Polk County Ditch 2, based on the 25 NTU standard. Because it is a ditch in the Red River Valley Ecoregion, it will most likely be subject to a different, less strict, standard in the future.



- An advertisement for bids for the Grade Stabilization for Reduction of Sedimentation in (CD20 grade stabilization) the Thief River was placed in local newspapers. Bid opening for this project is scheduled for March 5<sup>th</sup>, 2012.

### **February 2012 Meetings and Events**

- February 1, 2012** - BWSR CWF Grant semi-annual progress reports are due.
- February 1, 2012** – Due date for the MPCA Thief River Watershed Assessment Project semi-annual progress report
- February 1, 2012** – Thief River Watershed Buffer Initiative meeting, 10:00 AM, RLWD

### Plans for March 2012

- Sonde maintenance
- Thief River Watershed Assessment Project.
  - Complete a report on the existing data that is available for the watershed.
  - Jim Blix will continue working on terrain analysis to identify potential erosion areas throughout the watershed.
  - Create a webpage dedicated to the Thief River
  - TMDL report and protection plan outlines
- Red Lake River Watershed Assessment Project
  - Complete a report on the existing data that is available for the watershed.
  - Work with Lori Clark to plan a project kickoff meeting.
  - Create a webpage dedicated to the Red Lake River
- Surface Water Assessment Grants
  - Create individualized sampling plans for project partners
  - Purchase calibration standards for project partners
- Windshield surveys in the Thief River and Red Lake River watersheds to look for erosion problems during spring runoff.

### Future Meetings/Events

- **March 6, 2012** – 9<sup>th</sup> Annual Red River Basin Water Quality Monitoring Training , UMC
- **March 13, 2012** – River Watch Forum, University of Minnesota, Crookston campus, 8:30 am - 2:30 pm.
- **March 14, 2012** - Marshall County Water Resources Advisory Committee, Newfolden, 9:30am
- **April 3, 2012**, - Pennington County Water Resources Advisory Committee, 9 AM
- **May 14-17, 2012** – Agassiz National Wildlife Refuge Workshop.
- **August 1, 2012** – BWSR CWF Grant semi-annual progress reports are due.
- **August 1, 2012** – MPCA Thief River Watershed Assessment Project semi-annual progress report is due.
- **January 31, 2013** – The second progress report or final report for the Thief River SWAG monitoring is due.
- **February 1, 2013** - BWSR CWF Grant semi-annual progress reports are due.
- **February 1, 2013** - MPCA Thief River Watershed Assessment Project semi-annual progress report is due.
- **June 30, 2013** – Expiration of the Thief River Watershed Assessment Project Contract.
- **June 30, 2013** – Expiration of the Red Lake River Watershed Assessment Project – Phase I Contract.
- **June 30, 2013** – Final report for the Thief River SWAG grant is due
- **July 30, 2013** – Due date for the final progress report and final invoice for the Thief River Watershed Assessment Project
- **July 31, 2013** – Final payment request for the Thief River SWAG is due.