

NEWS RELEASE

For Immediate Release:

March 14, 2016

Contact:

Chris Pence

Thirty Lakes Watershed District

(218) 824-1125

Thirty Lakes Watershed seeks disbandment, cites collaboration of resources and opportunity to reduce taxes

After 45 years of natural resources conservation work, the Thirty Lakes Watershed District (the District), is seeking support to disband in an effort to reduce duplication of services, and lower residents' future property taxes.

"By disbanding the Thirty Lakes Watershed District, property owners will continue to receive the high level of services they have been, but without an additional tax in the future," said Tony Bauer, District president. "We are excited that the public will continue to receive excellent ongoing water management services at a reduced cost."

Originally, the District was established by the Order of the Minnesota Water Resources Board in 1971 to address issues including lake water quality, lakeshore development, storm water management and septic system regulations. Since its inception, the work of the District has been funded through an additional property tax paid by property owners within the District.

The Thirty Lakes Watershed District only encompasses 7 percent of Crow Wing County. The remaining 93 percent of the County is receiving the same services with no additional taxation. Since the District operates in addition to regional government units, this tax is in addition to City and County property taxes and is not a line item on District residents' property tax statements.

Over time, other government agencies, including Crow Wing County, the Crow Wing Soil and Water Conservation District, the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency, the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources, the City of Nisswa and the City of Breezy Point, began addressing these water issues, eliminating the need for both the District itself and the additional tax needed for funding.

In fact, the District has not taxed property owners since 2012 due to a lack of approved projects requiring the District's assistance.

On January 11, 2016, District managers unanimously supported the disbandment of the Watershed District after reviewing and approving a report analyzing the purpose and function of the District. The managers concluded it is in the best interests of taxpayers for the District to disband, allowing property owners to continue receiving high-quality water management services, but without additional property taxes.

“As water management has become more mainstream, other organizations have expanded their roles to continue serving our communities,” said Bauer. “This vote gives citizens the rare opportunity to choose to reduce their property taxes, without reducing any services they are currently receiving.”

Full time resident property owners within the District will be contacted via mail with more information, including a petition to sign in support of the disbandment in April.

A public meeting has also been set for 6:30 p.m. on April 19 at Lake Edward Town Hall for full-time resident property owners within the Thirty Lakes Watershed District to discuss and sign the disbandment petition.

In the meantime, residents can call the Crow Wing County Land Services Department at 824-1125 to confirm they are part of the District. More information, including the disbandment report, can be found at www.crowwing.us and searching “Thirty Lakes”.

The Thirty Lakes Watershed District is a local government unit serving west central Crow Wing County including portions of Breezy Point and Nisswa, along with Unorganized Territory (First Assessment), the townships of Lake Edward, Center, Pelican and Mission, and includes lakes such as Clark, Edward, Gladstone, Horseshoe, Hubert, North Long and Pelican.

END