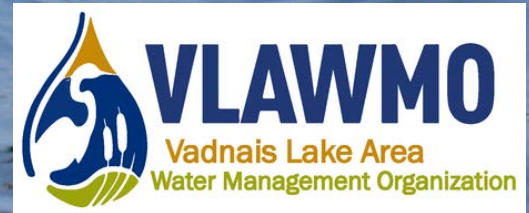


Vadnais Lake Area Water Management Organization

2025 Annual Report





Vadnais Lake Area Water Management Organization
800 County Road E East
Vadnais Heights, Minnesota 55127

- Website: www.vlawmo.org
- Email: office@vlawmo.org
- Phone: (651) 204-6070
- Fax: (651) 204-6173



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ABOUT VLAWMO

Letter from the Administrator

Greetings,

As we reflect on the past year for the Vadnais Lake Area Water Management Organization (VLAWMO), partnership stands out as a central theme. In 2025, collaboration remained critical to our work of protecting and enhancing the watershed's resources.

VLAWMO pursued several partnership-based capital projects in 2025. Thanks to partnership with the City of White Bear Lake, Ramsey County Soil and Water Conservation Division (RCSWCD), and funds from VLAWMO's Landscape Level 2 Grant Program, a completed bioswale at the White Bear Lake Sports Center will protect water quality in Birch Lake. The first three phases of an alum treatment on Tamarack Lake were completed in partnership with RCSWCD, Ramsey County Parks and Recreation, and Tamarack Nature Center to work toward lower phosphorus levels. The invasive carp removal program on Pleasant Lake continued in 2025, with biomass successfully reduced to below the water quality standard. VLAWMO partnered with the City of Vadnais Heights to study project opportunities in a historic flooding area, investigating possibilities for building community resilience.

VLAWMO's water monitoring program remains the backbone to our data-driven work, guiding our decisions and shaping projects that protect and improve water quality.

A supportive community is another key ingredient of VLAWMO's work. In the last year, the development of a new website helped residents learn about VLAWMO's work and how they can get involved. Educational programs took place throughout the watershed, offering chances to learn and deepen connections.

In 2025, VLAWMO's grant programs continued to gain momentum with high demand and growing impact, a tangible example of the value of water-wise landscapes that support healthy lakes, streams, and wetlands.

It is an honor to work with VLAWMO's array of outstanding municipal and local partners, our Board of Directors, Technical Commission, and the staff team of Brian, Dawn, Lauren, and Angela. Collaboration will remain vital to VLAWMO's work as we look to future watershed opportunities.



Phil Belfiori
Administrator



Understanding Watersheds

A watershed is an area of land that all drains to one waterbody, such as a lake or stream. Choices made on the land within a watershed have a direct impact on the health of the waters. Water within the VLAWMO watershed ultimately drains to East Vadnais Lake.

A Watershed Management Organization (WMO) is a special unit of local government tasked with protecting the water resources within its boundaries. All land within the metropolitan area must be within an organized watershed (State Statutes Chapters 103B & 103D). Watershed Management Organizations are governed on the municipal level.

The VLAWMO watershed covers approximately 24 square miles in the northeast metro area. It includes all or parts of Gem Lake, Lino Lakes, North Oaks, Vadnais Heights, White Bear Lake, and White Bear Township.

VLAWMO's mission is to protect and improve the water and natural resources within the watershed.

VLAWMO's work includes water quality monitoring, wetland protection, water quality enhancement projects, grant programs, and education and outreach.



History

VLAWMO was formed in 1983 to protect the Vadnais Lake Watershed, an area spanning northern Ramsey County and a small portion of Anoka County. Our organization was formed through a Joint Powers Agreement ratified by the six municipalities within VLAWMO's boundaries to comply with the State of Minnesota's Metropolitan Surface Water Management Act.



Overarching Goals

VLAWMO shares responsibility with its member communities to:

- Protect surface water quality
- Protect groundwater quality and recharge areas
- Provide public education on water stewardship
- Protect and manage wetlands through the Wetland Conservation Act
- Collaborate with public and private organizations
- Manage stormwater and control flooding through the use of Best Management Practices (BMPs)

VLAWMO'S APPROACH

Partnerships are vital to watershed work. Staff collaborate with local governments and regional, state, and federal organizations to guide our community toward a resilient, water-wise future.

Given the use of East Vadnais Lake as a drinking water reservoir for approximately 450,000 customers in the Saint Paul area, VLAWMO frequently partners with Saint Paul Regional Water Services (SPRWS) on water quality monitoring and improvement projects.

FUNDING

VLAWMO is funded by a storm sewer utility fee. Property owners within the watershed are charged a fee based on the stormwater that runs off their property. This public utility fee is determined by land use (such as residential or commercial) and is included in county property tax statements. Minnesota State Law determines the authority to charge and collect a stormwater utility fee.

Water Resources

Lakes

VLAWMO contains 16 lakes dispersed throughout its member communities.

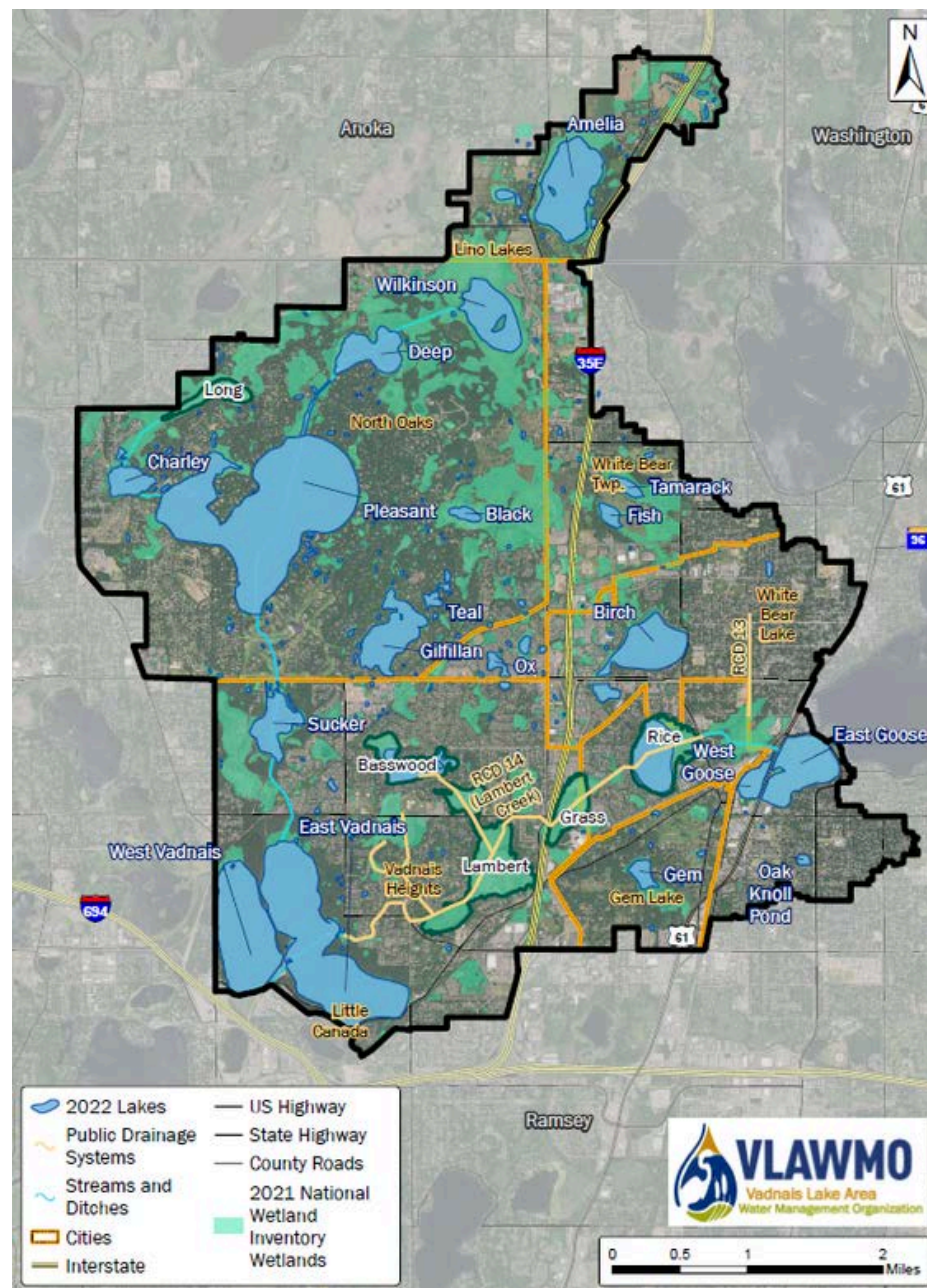
East Vadnais Lake is the drinking water reservoir for Saint Paul Regional Water Services, which supplies drinking water to over 450,000 customers. Water pumped from the Mississippi River in Fridley flows through an underground aqueduct into Charley Lake in North Oaks before flowing to Pleasant, Sucker, and finally East Vadnais Lake.

Lambert Creek

VLAWMO is the ditch authority for Lambert Creek, 4.5 miles of creek that runs from West Goose Lake and Whitaker Pond before emptying into East Vadnais Lake.

Wetlands

There are over 500 wetlands within the VLAWMO watershed. Tamarack, Grass, Wilkinson, Rice, Lambert, and Sobota Slough are some of the watershed’s largest wetland complexes.



Section 2:
YEAR IN
REVIEW

Projects

Projects that reduce stormwater runoff and improve water quality are an essential element of VLAWMO's work. Pursuing these projects through partnership allow for tangible and lasting watershed impacts.



Above: a curb cut rain garden in White Bear Lake, photo by VLAWMO staff;
Below: a view of the Wilkinson deep-water wetland restoration, photo by VLAWMO staff

Project Spotlight: White Bear Lake Sports Center Bioswale

This large bioswale is adjacent to the White Bear Lake Sports Center parking lot. Project partners include VLAWMO, the City of White Bear Lake, and the Ramsey County Soil and Water Conservation Division (RCSWCD).

The City of White Bear Lake’s completion of a parking lot retrofit project in close proximity to the south lobe of Birch Lake provided an opportunity to add a water quality treatment practice. During construction, the City created a curb cut for use in a future water quality practice and approached VLAWMO and RCSWCD to further explore opportunities for the property.

An existing swale already received directed runoff, but it wasn’t providing any water quality treatment. In 2024, the partnership group worked with a consultant to complete a feasibility study to collect data, create a conceptual design, and draft construction documents for a project. The study found that retrofitting the existing swale to a bioretention swale would be the most effective water quality treatment practice for the Sports Center.

The bioswale project was completed in July 2025. Its total size of 10,800 square feet captures runoff from over 23 acres of impervious surfaces from the Sports Center parking lot, South Birch Lake Boulevard, and adjacent neighborhoods to help protect the water quality of Birch Lake. Development of public educational signage is in progress.



The completed bioswale, with freshly installed erosion control blanket, in July 2025.

Bioswale features include:

- **Two structural pretreatment devices** to capture sediment, trash, and debris before they enter the swale. These include one sumped manhole with baffle (for street and neighborhood runoff) and one Rain Guardian structure at the outlet of the parking lot (to capture sediment and silt from the parking lot).
- **Riprap rock checks** to slow down stormwater runoff and settle any additional debris before it can reach Birch Lake.
- **Amended soils and native vegetation** that provide water quality treatment by filtering stormwater runoff.
- **A drain tile** to promote drainage, as the underlying soils are not conducive to infiltration.
- **Riprap and soil lifts with native shrubs** to stabilize an existing eroding channel.
- **Native seed mix** that includes 35 species benefitting pollinators.

Project Spotlight: East Vadnais Lake Subwatershed Resiliency Study

A recent flood feasibility study has fueled subsequent partnership projects that seek to reduce flooding, boost resiliency, and provide water quality treatment for East Vadnais Lake and its surrounding areas.

In 2024, Ramsey County completed a flood feasibility project for a historic flooding area in Vadnais Heights. They partnered with VLAWMO, the City of Vadnais Heights, and Saint Paul Regional Water Services (SPRWS) to study this area which leads directly to East Vadnais Lake, the primary drinking water reservoir for SPRWS, which provides drinking water to over 450,000 customers. The intersection of Centerville Road, Vadnais Lake Boulevard, and Edgerton Street has been a documented flooding hot spot since the 1950s. Such flooding has led to intersection closure, a hazard for this high-traffic route that serves surrounding communities and emergency vehicles. The flood feasibility study examined this intersection and which projects could help alleviate the flooding while providing water quality treatment for East Vadnais Lake.



Centerville Road, Edgerton Street, Vadnais Boulevard intersection during a flood event in 1978.

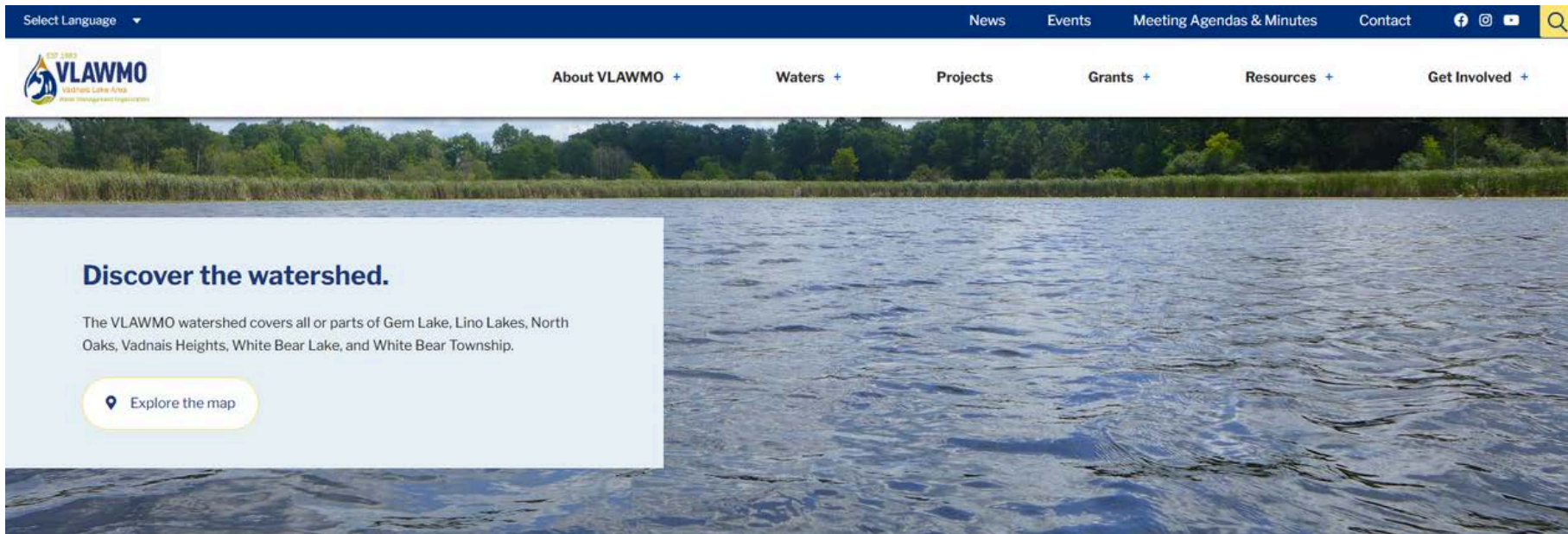
VLAWMO was interested in expanding Ramsey County’s flood feasibility study and project further upstream of the subwatershed to try to reduce water runoff and pollutants before they drain to the historic flooding area. This led to a continued partnership with Ramsey County, SPRWS, and the City of Vadnais Heights to pursue a resiliency study for the larger East Vadnais Lake subwatershed, which has an approximate drainage area of 280 acres of largely developed land. The study was completed in 2024.

As part of the 2024 study, an existing and future conditions hydrologic and hydraulic model was created to define flood risk and evaluate water quality improvement options. The study identified nine possible project locations for alleviating flooding and providing water quality benefits. Partners chose to combine three of the nine possible locations into one potential project to study further. A large-scale project was determined to be necessary to achieve the desired goals and maximize impact. This large project opportunity is currently being studied for potential future implementation and funding.

In 2025, the City of Vadnais Heights and VLAWMO partnered on a successful MPCA Sewer Overflow and Stormwater Reuse Municipal Grant to further study this project opportunity and begin plan development. Another state grant application is currently in the review process for pursuing potential project implementation.

Project Spotlight: Website Update

In 2025, VLAWMO's website was updated to improve ease of navigation and alignment with web design, communication, and accessibility best practices. The new website is now live.



Key features of the new website

- **Organizational information** has been clarified, reformatted, and reorganized to aid the general public in learning more about VLAWMO and its work.
- **Water quality information and waterbodies** have their own dedicated tab and individual pages.
- **Projects** are searchable by project type and waterbody and listed in descending order of recency.
- **Grant program pages** have been revitalized to feature more examples and a site visit form to increase staff efficiency.
- **Resources** are easier to locate thanks to a searchable resource library.
- **The Take Action page** lets residents learn more about best practices and getting involved.

Water Monitoring

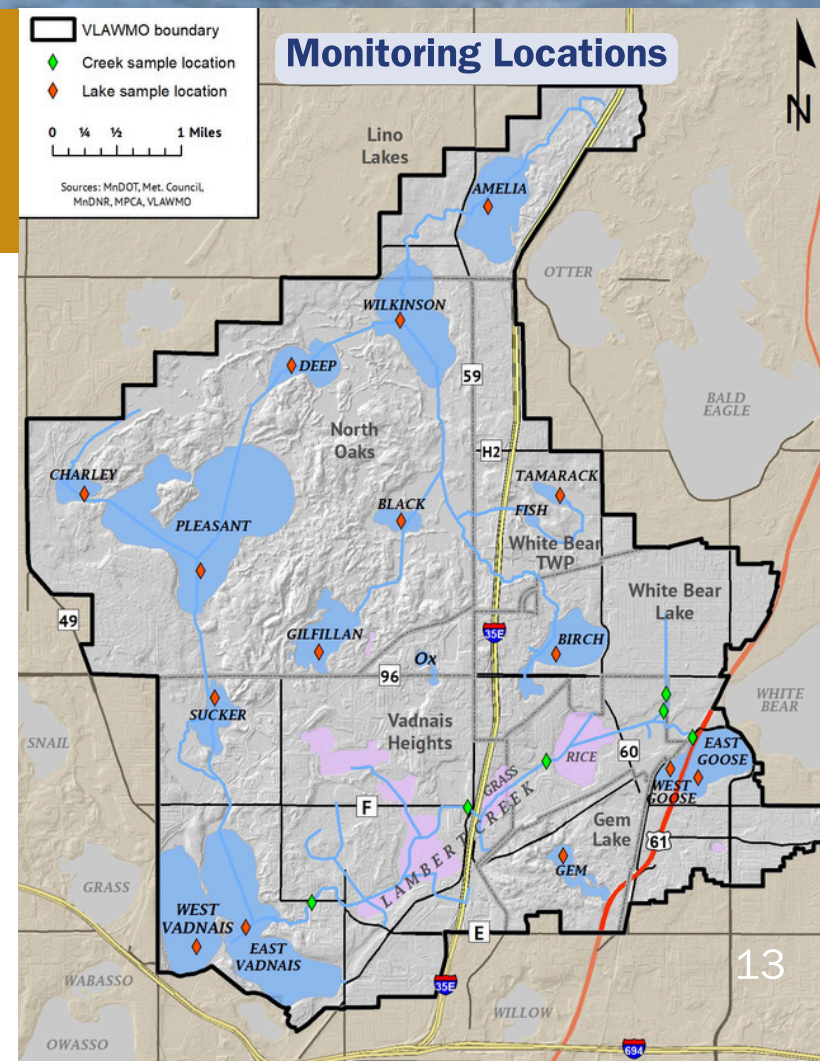
VLAWMO's regular water quality monitoring program includes sampling on 6 Lambert Creek sites and 14 of the watershed's lakes.

VLAWMO staff sample the following nutrients and pollutants for data:

- Total phosphorus
- Chlorophyll-A
- Soluble-reactive phosphorus
- Iron
- Total nitrogen
- Nitrate
- Total suspended solids
- Chloride

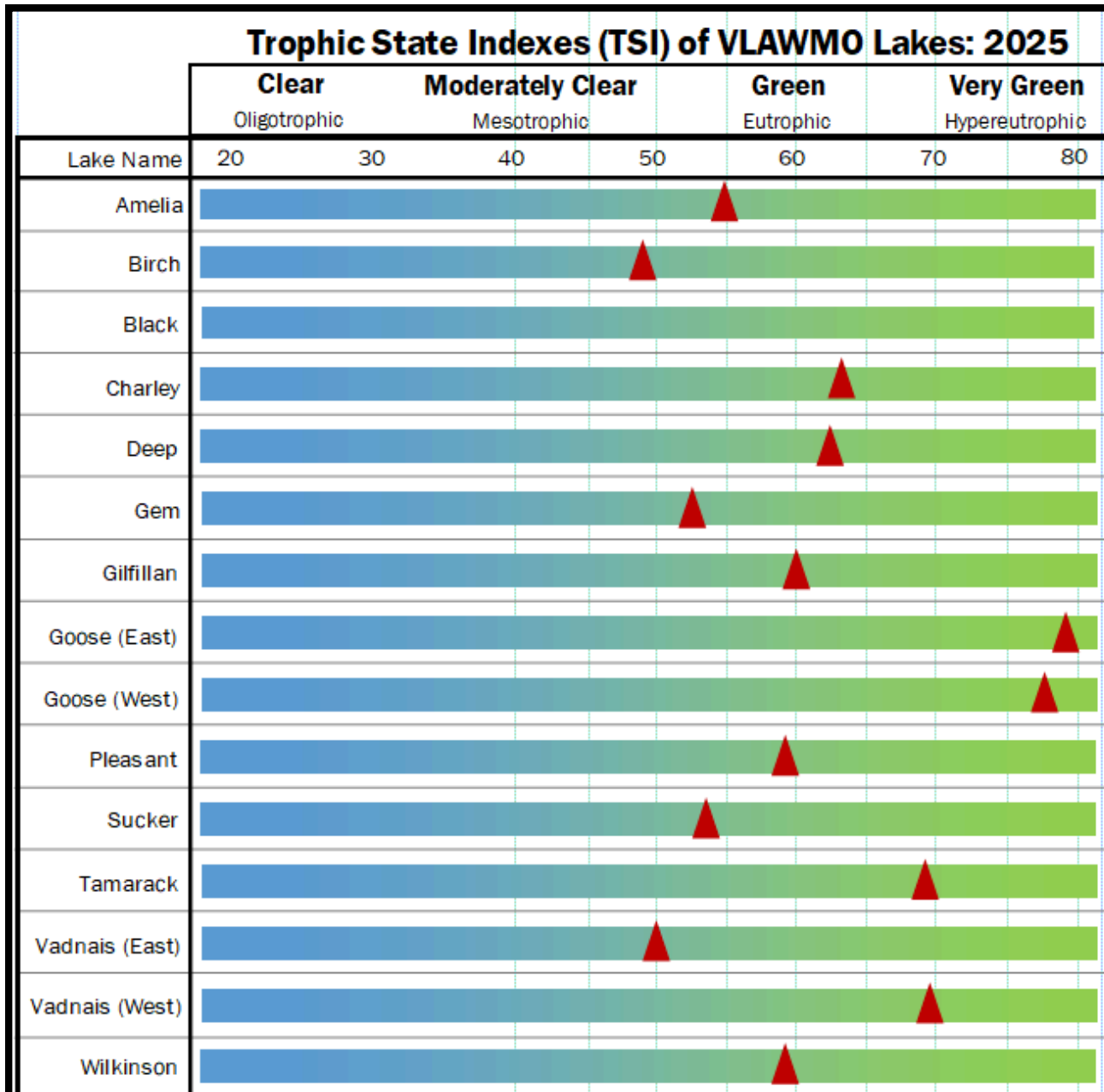
VLAWMO also monitors **rainfall**, as both rainfall quantity and timing influence water quality. More precipitation often leads to more water runoff. This runoff picks up contaminants as it crosses land surfaces on its way to waterbodies, where it harms water quality. VLAWMO has specialty monitoring programs that include **project BMPs** and **storm sampling**.

Water monitoring results guide local water policies and management. Monitoring data shapes water quality projects such as rain gardens, underground retention basins, and shoreline restorations.



Water Monitoring Summary: TSI

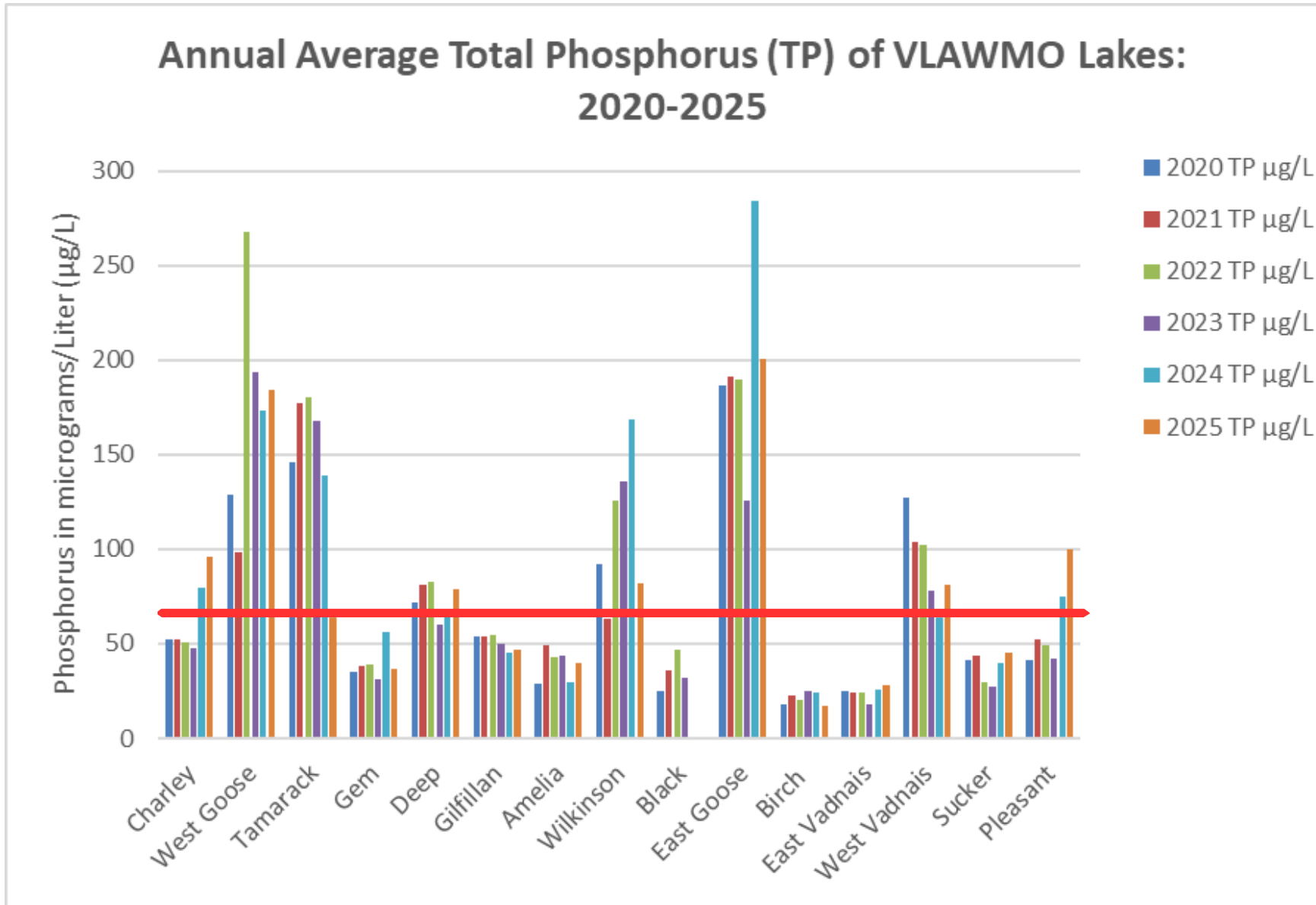
VLAWMO uses the Carlson Trophic Status Indicator (TSI) to summarize lake health. TSI is calculated from annual monitoring data by combining total phosphorus, chlorophyll-a, and transparency (Secchi Disk) readings.



Find this year's complete Monitoring Report at [VLAWMO.org/reports](https://vlawmo.org/reports) or by scanning the QR code.



Water Monitoring Summary: Total Phosphorus

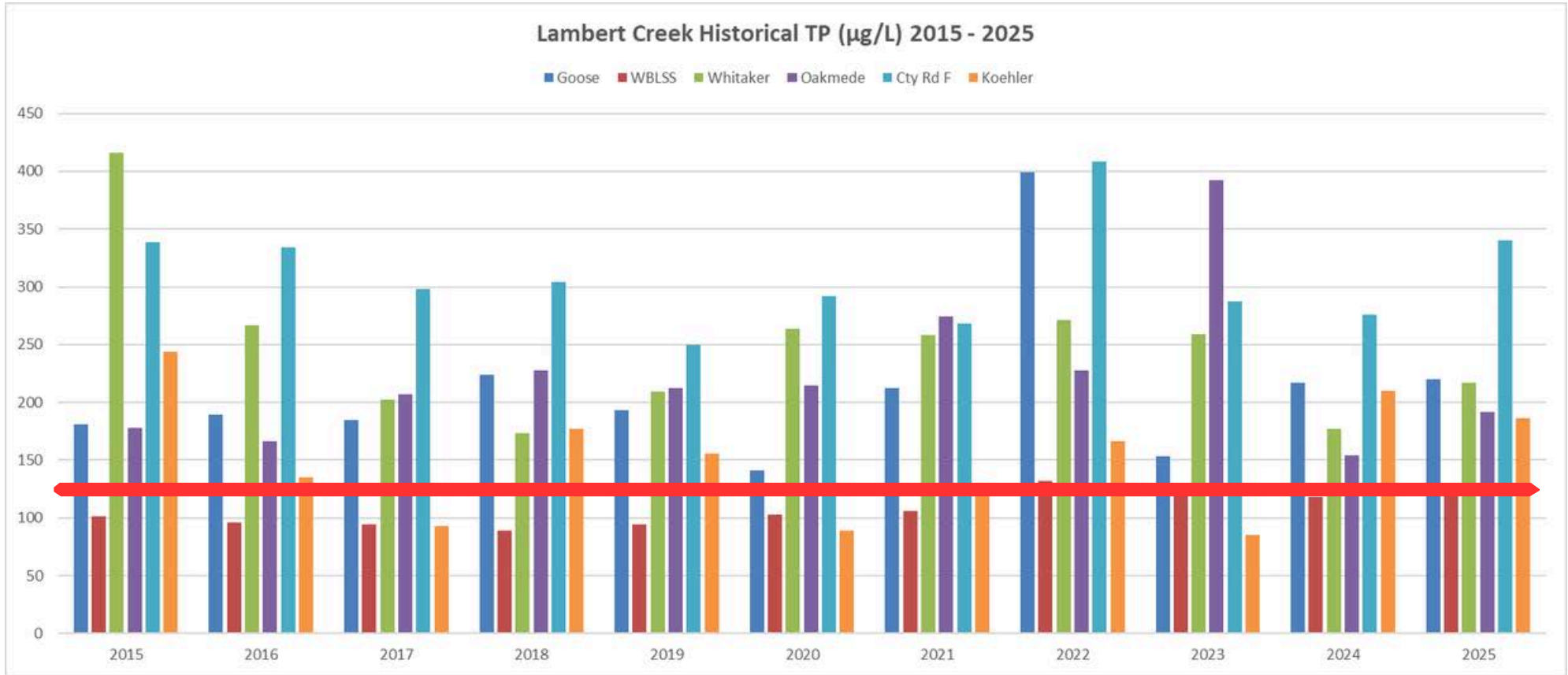


The red line marks the State Standard; when a water body becomes impaired.

Find this year's complete Monitoring Report at VLAWMO.org/reports or by scanning the QR code.



Water Monitoring Summary: Total Phosphorus

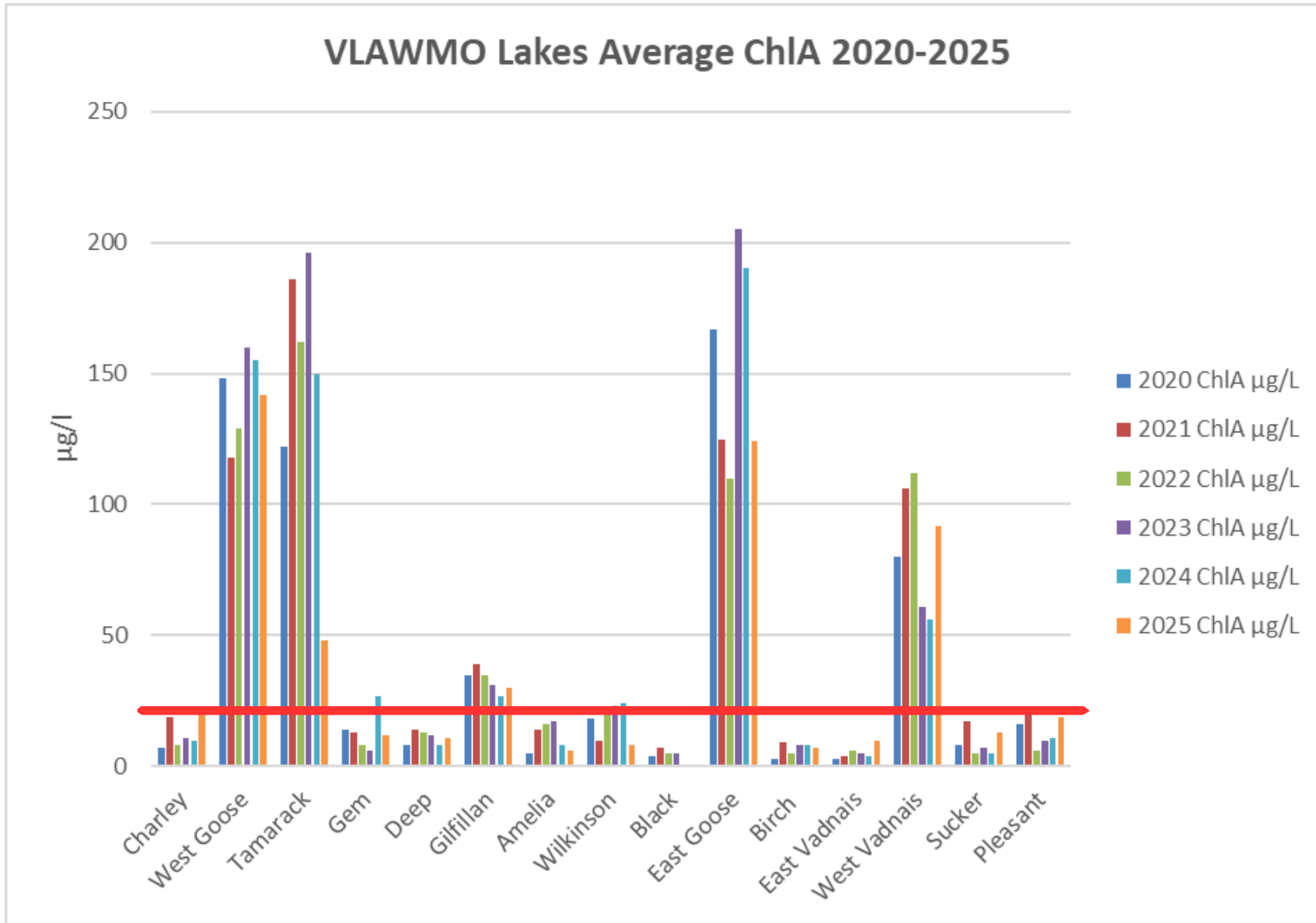


— The red line marks the State Standard; when a water body becomes impaired.

Find this year's complete Monitoring Report at VLAWMO.org/reports or by scanning the QR code.



Water Monitoring Summary: Chlorophyll-A



— The red line marks the State Standard; when a water body becomes impaired.

Find this year's complete Monitoring Report at [VLAWMO.org/reports](https://vlawmo.org/reports) or by scanning the QR code.





Water Monitoring Highlights

- **Pleasant Lake:** Invasive carp removal continued in 2025. Per data received and pit tag information, the carp biomass has been reduced to below the scientifically-determined goal and water quality standard.
- **Remote Monitoring Devices:** 2025 was the sixth full year of automated creek flow monitoring. Live information can be found here for the 4 creek sites that are monitored: <http://monitormywatershed.org>.
- **MCES Study 7A Monitoring:** Staff worked with the Metropolitan Council to do in-depth monitoring for Charley and Sucker Lakes.
- **Lambert Creek:** Creek flow was consistent all of 2025. Rainfall was 0.60 inches above average for the season.
- **Oak Knoll Spent Lime Study:** A spent lime study was ongoing in 2025 on Oak Knoll Pond in White Bear Lake to investigate the feasibility of spent lime as a potential tool for reducing phosphorus (TP) levels. Monitoring was conducted throughout the 2025 season and will continue in 2026.
- **Chloride (salt):** VLAWMO has been sampling lake chloride levels for 16 years.
- **Birch Lake:** Birch Lake vegetation surveys continued to monitor success of hand pulling invasive aquatic vegetation.



In 2025, VLAWMO's monitoring data informed multiple subwatershed studies and grant applicants that will aid in potential water quality improvement projects for future years.



A Year in the Community

Community engagement is central to VLAWMO's work. In 2025, VLAWMO pursued opportunities to connect with watershed residents, share educational resources about water stewardship, and hear community priorities.

Workshops & Hands-on Learning

In 2025, VLAWMO hosted two workshops locally. Staff regularly share partner-hosted learning opportunities with community members. In addition, neighborhood garden tour events showcase VLAWMO grant recipients who have implemented clean water projects at home.

- Gardening for Monarchs & Clean Water workshop with Monarch Joint Venture (5/15)
- Rain Garden Maintenance Workshop with Blue Thumb (9/11)
- Neighborhood Garden Tours (6/10 and 8/19)

Learning also occurs through three e-newsletters for general interest, volunteers, and grant recipients. Each newsletter outlines relevant opportunities and educational information. A sample from summer 2025 can be found at: <https://us9.admin.mailchimp.com/campaigns/show-email?id=8333374>



Upper photo: attendees at the August Neighborhood Garden Tour
Lower photo: Rain Garden Maintenance Workshop

Public events offer valuable chances to connect with watershed residents out in the community. In 2025, VLAWMO staff engaged with member communities, community groups, and local partners by supporting the following events. Involvement included sharing resources, hosting activities, or speaking.



Above: Gina Ganno Schmidt, volunteer, with staff at the White Bear Lake Environmental Resources Expo

- Adopt a Drain cleanup day with the Vadnais Heights Green Team (May 17)
- Educational field day with Birch Lake Elementary, a partnership with the City of White Bear Lake and Rotary Club of White Bear Lake (May 29)
- Vadnais Heights Ice Cream Social (June 11)
- Ramsey County Master Gardeners Event (June 17)
- North Oaks Garden Club Garden Tour (July 24)
- City of White Bear Lake Environmental Resources Expo (July 31)
- Vadnais Heights Kids Day (August 16)
- Vadnais Heights Senior Picnic (August 14)
- North Oaks Garden Club: Native Plants & Pollinators Panel (September 16)
- White Bear Township Day Celebration (September 20)
- Autumn Water Social, a partnership with the City of Vadnais Heights (October 23)



Left: staff with community members at the North Oaks Garden Club Garden Tour; Center: Vadnais Heights and VLAWMO staff at the Autumn Water Social; Right: residents gather at a Neighborhood Garden Tour stop

VLAWMO also supports clean water education and outreach through partnerships that extend to other areas of the metro and state. In 2025, staff was involved in:

- Blue Thumb Partnership and Blue Thumb Steering Committee, including outreach efforts at the MN State Fair Eco Experience building
- Metro Watershed Partners
- Metro Children's Water Festival



Above: Volunteers gather for the fall 2025 lake cleanup event.

Watershed Action Volunteers

In 2025, the Watershed Action Volunteers met to discuss community priorities and opportunities for making a difference in the watershed. Volunteers supported staff at tabling events out in the community, at grant tour events, and in cleaning up local parks and lakes.



- WAV/CAC planning meetings held on April 14 and October 27
- WAV lake cleanups held on May 10 and November 8



Above: Ceci and Ed Shapland, MN Water Stewards, tabling at Vadnais Heights Kids Day.

Minnesota Water Stewards

The Minnesota Water Stewards program is coordinated by Freshwater. It equips volunteers to be champions of watershed projects and outreach. VLAWMO supports Stewards with resources at the local level. Stewards are an important part of VLAWMO’s regular outreach, regularly joining WAV opportunities, coordinating key outreach events such as the neighborhood garden tour series, and supporting tabling efforts such as Vadnais Heights Kids Day.





Grant Programs

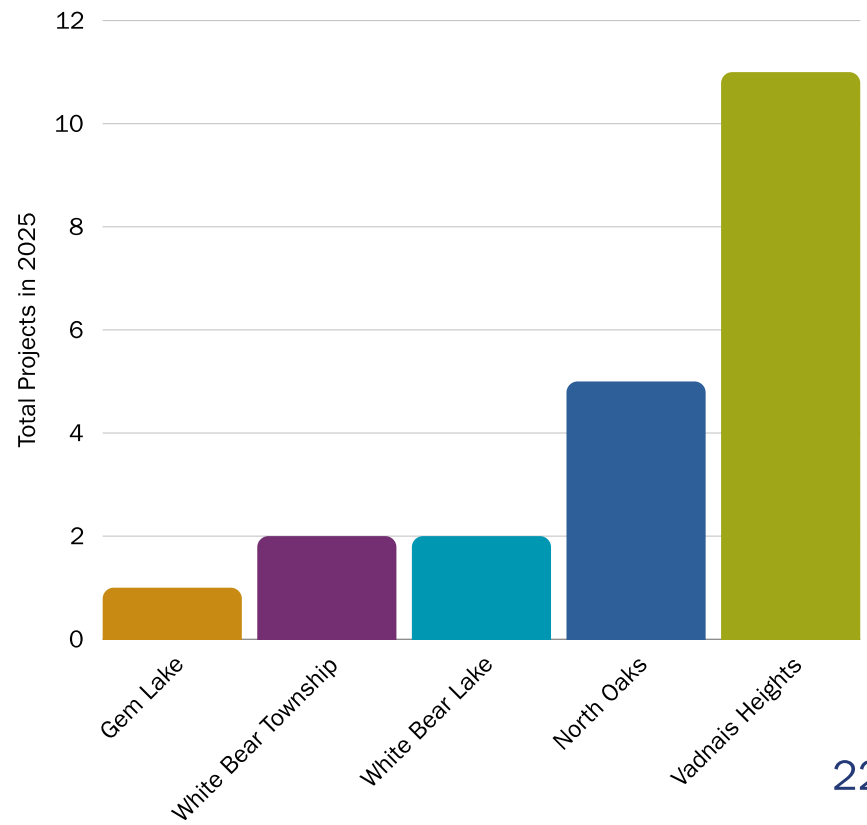
In 2025, 19 grants were awarded throughout the VLAWMO watershed for a total amount of \$131,298.18. Projects completed through these projects support:

- Water quality improvement
- Nutrient load reduction
- Stormwater rate and volume reduction
- Preservation, protection, and restoration of native plant communities, especially along lakes, streams, and wetlands
- Protection and preservation of groundwater quality and quantity

VLAWMO's grant programs assist public and private landowners in installing projects that reduce stormwater runoff and improve water quality. These programs include Rain Barrel, Soil Health, Landscape Level 1, and Landscape Level 2.



2025 Grants Awarded by Member Community
Total Amount Awarded: \$131,298.18



In 2025, VLAWMO grants were awarded through three programs.



Rain Barrel

This grant program reimburses residents for 50% of the purchase cost of up to 2 rain barrels.

2025 Totals:

Grants awarded: 4

Total amount: \$315.33



Soil Health

This grant program reimburses small-scale projects that protect and improve water quality and native plant communities. VLAWMO reimburses 75% of the cost of these projects up to \$1000 or \$1250 if in a priority area.

2025 Totals:

Grants awarded: 12

Total amount: \$12,886.20

Soil Health Grant funds were utilized for:

- 9 native plant restorations/pollinator gardens
- 2 downspout rain gardens
- 2 bee lawns
- 1 alternative turf/low-mow turf replacement



Landscape Level 2

Under this grant program, large-scale or highly beneficial projects that significantly improve water quality, increase flood storage, conserve groundwater, or provide regional benefits may receive reimbursement.

In 2025, these grant funds were utilized for:

- 2 smart irrigation controller projects
- 1 bioswale

2025 Totals:

Grants awarded: 3

Total amount: \$118,096.55



VLAWMO's grant programs support projects that make a tangible impact on the health of local water resources.



Collectively, 2025 grant projects will make a difference by:

- Reducing total phosphorus by 7.3 pounds per year
- Reducing total suspended solids by 2,100 pounds per year
- Capturing 750,412 gallons of stormwater
- Converting 27.23 acres of land from conventional to smart irrigation systems
- Adding 91,834 square feet of native plants and bee lawn

Section 3: *PLANNING*



Long- and short-term plans are important tools for mapping out projects, programs, and community priorities.



Watershed Management Plan

2025 saw significant development of VLAWMO's 2027-2036 Watershed Management Plan (Plan). Developed through an extensive review process, this Plan will guide VLAWMO's programs and projects for a ten-year span.



Work Plan

The following pages summarize activities conducted in 2025 through VLAWMO's various program areas. An initial work plan for 2026 is also shared beginning on page 33. These work plan tables allow for setting measurable goals and reporting on progress along the way.

LOOKING BACK: 2025 WORK PLAN**Capital Improvement and Maintenance Projects**

Project Name	Description	Goals	Result
Wilkinson Deep-Water Wetland BMP	This deep-water wetland restoration helps improve water quality in impaired Wilkinson Lake. Project partners include the North Oaks Company (NOC), RCSWCD, and SPRWS. Easement approval/project support by Minnesota Land Trust and engineering by Houston Engineering, Inc. Funded by EPA 319 and administered by the MPCA with shared match between VLAWMO and NOC.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conduct enhancement with NST in partnership with NOC. • Complete aquatic plant survey to assess 2024 work results and trial additional transplant sessions with RCSWCD. • Close out project with the MPCA. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enhancement completed • Transplants and associated monitoring completed • Project closeout completed • Maintenance ongoing
Vadnais-Sucker Regional Park Habitat Restoration	28 acres of restoration consisting of removal and treatment of invasive buckthorn and reseeding/planting with natives with ongoing maintenance. Project partners include Great River Greening, Ramsey County Parks, and Saint Paul Regional Water Services. Funds provided by the Outdoor Heritage grant program administered by the MN DNR.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Complete project and begin maintenance phase. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Invasive removal and native plant seeding completed
Oak Knoll Pond Spent Lime Study	Financial and social feasibility study with Barr Engineering to determine potential for scaling up small pond treatments to a large pond.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conduct monitoring (VLAWMO staff) and analysis/reporting (Barr Engineering). Continue monitoring into 2026. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ongoing
Groundwater Conservation Pilot Project	Pilot program in partnership with communities to install smart irrigation controllers and other groundwater conservation projects on properties with high groundwater usage. Evaluate effectiveness for providing groundwater conservation benefits.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Complete 4 projects. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2 projects completed

LOOKING BACK: 2025 WORK PLAN

Capital Improvement and Maintenance Projects

Project Name	Description	Goals	Result
Tamarack Lake Alum Treatment	Alum treatment project in Tamarack Lake seeking to lower phosphorus levels.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conduct phase 2 in spring 2025. • Implement additional phases, depending on monitoring results and pH levels. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Phases 1-3 completed • Phase 4 anticipated spring 2026
Birch Lake AIS Removal	Eurasian watermilfoil (EWM) and curly-leaf pondweed (CLP) hand pulling in Birch Lake. Partnership with Birch Lake Improvement District (BLID).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conduct pre/post survey in partnership with RCSWCD. BLID will be funding removal work with Dive Guys. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Completed
East Vadnais Lake Subwatershed Resiliency BMPs	Partner on planning and installing BMPs to improve stormwater resiliency including projects focused on flood mitigation, upgrading or replacing infrastructure, water quality improvement, and drinking water source protection.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Partner on initiation of design work for a recommended BMP in the study area. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ongoing
Pleasant Lake Carp Removal	Removal of invasive common carp from the Pleasant Lake system. Partnership with Carp Solutions to target spring removals during migration.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Remove carp at current barrier • Conduct additional trap netting • Place additional antenna at Charley • Complete biomass estimate after 2025 removals 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Goals have been met • Program is transitioning to maintenance in 2026

LOOKING BACK: 2025 WORK PLAN

Capital Improvement and Maintenance Projects

Project Name	Description	Goals	Result
Rotary Park Wetland Restoration	A partnership with the City of White Bear Lake, working with NST to restore native vegetation. Funded by the MN DNR's CPL grant program.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Begin treatment of invasive plants in key areas. • Evaluate progress for possible retreatment. • Consider seeding and plants as recommended by contractor. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Completed first season of invasive plant species treatment
White Bear Lake Sports Center Stormwater BMP Retrofit	Partner with the City of White Bear Lake to construct a BMP that will reduce the volume of stormwater runoff from surrounding streets, parking lot, and landscape for the White Bear Lake Sports Center to improve the water quality of Birch Lake.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Partner on completing 1 BMP project at the White Bear Lake Sports Center complex. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Completed
Green Streets Feasibility Study and Design Work Partnership	Partner with the City of Vadnais Heights to complete feasibility and design work for a potential Green Streets project along Greenhaven Drive in tandem with a City street improvement project.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Partner on data collection, public engagement, and potential BMP option discussions. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ongoing

LOOKING BACK: 2025 WORK PLAN**Grant Programs**

Project Name	Description	Goals	Result
Rain Barrel Grant	Reimburse 50% of a rain barrel purchase (up to \$200) with proof of purchase.	Fund rain barrel purchases.	4 purchases funded
Soil Health Grant	Reimburse landowners for installing small-scale practices that improve water quality and soil health with a focus on native plant restorations.	Fund SHG projects.	12 grants awarded
Landscape Level 1 (LL1)	Establish relationships and provide grants to property owners within the watershed to install water quality enhancement projects.	Fund LL1 infiltration projects.	Ongoing; no infiltration projects completed in 2025
Landscape Level 2 (LL2)	Assist landowners with implementing larger BMP projects focused on stormwater capture and treatment within the watershed.	Fund LL2 projects.	3 grants awarded
Community Blue Grant	A communication and outreach grant program for projects that relate to water quality. Available to MN Water Stewards, volunteers, and community partners.	Support 1 public education initiative. Support 1 rain garden renovation or service project.	Completed Completed

LOOKING BACK: 2025 WORK PLAN

Communication & Outreach

Project Name	Description	Goals	Result
Watershed Action Volunteers (WAV)	The WAV consists of Minnesota Water Stewards, Citizen Advisory Commission members (CAC), and volunteers who help as they are able.	Hold spring and fall WAV meetings. Facilitate public booths.	Completed Volunteers present at 4 public booths
Workshops	Educate residents on watershed processes, rain garden and native plant function, smart salting, and VLAWMO grant programs.	Hold residential workshops (rain gardens, etc.) Hold municipal staff workshop	Held 2 workshops
Community Events	Staff a VLAWMO booth, develop watershed brochures and resources for community events.	Attend community events. Organize 1 watershed/BMP tour.	Attended 11 events Hosted 2 grant project tours
Communications	Create and update materials and publications for social media, website, seasonal e-news, and local publications. Create and maintain communications on VLAWMO projects and promotion of responsible use of water resources.	Distribute e-newsletters Complete website renovation. Provide communications items to member communities.	Completed
K-12	Provide watershed activities and resources for schools. Assist schools in establishing and maintaining stormwater best management practices (BMPs).	At least 1 school collaboration.	Completed

LOOKING BACK: 2025 WORK PLAN

Monitoring Program

Project Name	Description	Goals	Result
Lambert Creek monitoring program	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Monitor basic phosphorus, nitrogen, Chlorophyll-A, chloride, and sediment levels at 6 sites along with pH, conductivity and DO at the 3 flumes. Four remote sensors installed along creek, live updated volume and water levels displayed online 	Document and evaluate creek water quality.	Monitored May through September
Lake level program	Calibrate Gilfillan, Birch, and Goose Lake gauges in the spring and read up to 11 times during the summer.	Monitor lake level on 3 lakes.	Monitored May through September
Chloride measurements	Sample lakes and Lambert Creek during spring snow melt and ice out.	Monitor 14 lakes and 6 creek sites.	<p>Monitored lakes after iceout.</p> <p>Monitored creek sites during spring runoff.</p>
Lake monitoring program	Monitor chemistry of 14 of VLAWMO's lakes for nutrients, turbidity, pH, conductivity, and dissolved oxygen (DO).	<p>Keep water quality data of watershed's lakes.</p> <p>Utilize water quality data for future projects and CIPs.</p>	Monitored May through September

LOOKING BACK: 2025 WORK PLAN

Administration & Regulation

Project Name	Description	Goals	Result
Budget & Storm Sewer Utility	VLAWMO Storm Sewer Utility rates are based on the adopted budget and certified to counties for collection.	Continued county participation and budgeting for future years.	2025 Storm Sewer Utility fees collected based on adopted budget
Wetland Conservation Act (WCA)	Complete boundary and type and other determinations in consultation with the TEP. Respond to WCA questions.	Continue administration of WCA.	Ongoing
Lake reviews throughout the watershed	Maintain lake reviews with updates as new data and information becomes available.	Update lake reviews, convey on website.	Ongoing



Left: Hoary vervain in bloom at the Rotary Nature Preserve wetland in White Bear Lake; photo by VLAWMO staff
 Right: A view of Whitaker Pond from creek monitoring; photo by VLAWMO staff

LOOKING AHEAD: 2026 WORK PLAN

Capital Improvement and Maintenance Projects

Project Name	Description	Goals	Timeline
Wilkinson Deep-Water Wetland	This deep-water wetland restoration helps improve water quality in impaired Wilkinson Lake. Project partners include the North Oaks Company (NOC), RCSWCD, and SPRWS. Easement approval/project support by Minnesota Land Trust and engineering by Houston Engineering, Inc. Funded by EPA 319 and administered by the MPCA with shared match between VLAWMO and NOC.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue maintenance and enhancement with NST in partnership with NOC. • Conduct aquatic plant surveys with RCSWCD in early and late season to provide more detail on established native plant diversity. 	Ongoing
Wilkinson Phase 2 Project	This second round grant project helps improve water quality in impaired Wilkinson Lake as part of the Small, Priority Watershed grant program funded by EPA 319 and administered by the MPCA. Project partners include the North Oaks Company (NOC) and RCSWCD. Easement approval/project support by Minnesota Land Trust and engineering by Houston Engineering, Inc.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Project design and permitting • If ready, seek construction quote/bid and build project • Oversight and inspection by engineering • VLAWMO reporting to MPCA 	Ongoing
Vadnais-Sucker Regional Park Habitat Restoration	28 acres of restoration consisting of removal and treatment of invasive buckthorn and reseeding/planting with natives with ongoing maintenance. Project partners include Great River Greening, Ramsey County Parks, and St. Paul Regional Water Services. Funds provided by the Outdoor Heritage grant program administered by the MN DNR.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Partner with Ramsey County Parks and SPRWS on coordinating maintenance phase including native plant community enhancement 	2026-2029

LOOKING AHEAD: 2026 WORK PLAN

Capital Improvement and Maintenance Projects

Project Name	Description	Goals	Timeline
Tamarack Lake Alum Treatment	Alum treatment project in Tamarack Lake.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Phase 4 (final phase) planned for spring 2026. Monitoring will be ongoing following project completion. 	Ongoing
Oak Knoll Pond Spent Lime Study	Financial and social feasibility study with Barr Engineering to determine potential for scaling up small pond treatments to a large pond.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Monitoring by VLAWMO staff and analysis/reporting by Barr. Monitoring will continue into 2026. 	2026 results will determine 2027 steps.
East Vadnais Lake Subwatershed Resiliency BMPs	Partner on planning and installing BMPs to improve stormwater resiliency including projects focused on flood mitigation, upgrading or replacing infrastructure, water quality improvement, and drinking water source protection.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue partnership on potential implementation of recommended BMP in the study area. 	Ongoing
Pleasant Lake Carp Removal	Removal of invasive common carp from the Pleasant Lake system. Partnership with Carp Solutions to target spring removals during mitigation.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Removal at current barrier Antenna monitoring at Deep Lake Project transitioning to maintenance during 2026 	Ongoing

LOOKING AHEAD: 2026 WORK PLAN

Capital Improvement and Maintenance Projects

Project Name	Description	Goals	Timeline
Rotary Park Wetland Restoration	A partnership with the City of White Bear Lake, working with NST to restore native vegetation. Funded by the MN DNR's CPL grant program.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Seeding and plant establishment • Ongoing invasive species treatment • Focal efforts in high-quality plant areas and near boardwalk for observation and education 	Ongoing
Vadnais Heights Whole-City Resiliency Study BMPs	Build on the East Vadnais Lake Resiliency Study and partner on planning BMPs in additional areas of Vadnais Heights to improve stormwater including, but not limited to, projects focused on flood mitigation, infrastructure improvements, water quality improvements, and drinking water protection.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Partner on completion of resiliency study and planning for potential implementation of recommended BMPs 	Ongoing

LOOKING AHEAD: 2026 WORK PLAN

Grant Programs

Project Name	Description	Goals	Timeline
Rain Barrel Grant	Reimburse 50% of a rain barrel purchase (up to \$200) with proof of purchase.	Fund rain barrel purchases.	December 2026
Soil Health Grant	Reimburse landowners for installing small-scale practices that improve water quality and soil health with a focus on native plant restorations.	Fund SHG projects.	December 2026
Landscape Level 1 (LL1)	Establish relationships and provide grants to property owners within the watershed to install water quality enhancement projects.	Fund LL1 projects.	December 2026
Landscape Level 2 (LL2)	Assist landowners with implementing larger BMP projects focused on stormwater capture and treatment within the watershed.	Fund LL2 projects.	December 2026
Community Blue Grant	A communication and outreach grant program for projects that relate to water quality. Available to MN Water Stewards, volunteers, and community partners.	Support projects as possible.	December 2026

LOOKING AHEAD: 2026 WORK PLAN

Communication & Outreach

Project Name	Description	Goals	Timeline
Watershed Action Volunteers (WAV)	The WAV consists of Minnesota Water Stewards, Citizen Advisory Commission members (CAC), and volunteers who help as they are able.	Hold at least two meetings. Facilitate public booths.	Spring and fall Primarily in summer months
Workshops	Educate residents on watershed processes, rain garden and native plant function, smart salting, and VLAWMO grant programs.	Hold residential workshops (rain gardens, etc.) Support municipal staff workshop as communities request	Spring-fall End of year
Community Events	Staff a VLAWMO booth, develop watershed brochures and resources for community events.	Attend community events. Organize 1 watershed/BMP tour.	End of year Summer
Communications	Create and update materials and publications for social media, website, seasonal e-news, and local publications. Create and maintain communications on VLAWMO projects and promote responsible use of water resources.	Distribute e-newsletters Provide communications items to member communities.	Quarterly Throughout the year
K-12	Provide watershed activities and resources for schools.	At least 1 school collaboration.	Throughout the year

LOOKING AHEAD: 2026 WORK PLAN

Monitoring Program

Project Name	Description	Goals	Timeline
Lambert Creek monitoring program	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Monitor basic phosphorus, nitrogen, Chlorophyll-A, chloride, and sediment levels at 6 sites along with pH, conductivity and DO at the 3 flumes. Four remote sensors installed along creek, live updated volume and water levels displayed online 	Document and evaluate creek water quality.	Monitoring May through September
Lake level program	Calibrate Gilfillan, Birch, and Goose Lake gauges in the spring and read up to 11 times during the summer.	Monitor lake level on 3 lakes.	Monitoring May through September
Chloride measurements	Sample lakes and Lambert Creek during spring snow melt and ice out.	Monitor 14 lakes and 6 creek sites.	Monitor lakes after iceout. Monitor creek sites during spring runoff.
Lake monitoring program	Monitor chemistry of 14 of VLAWMO's lakes for nutrients, turbidity, pH, conductivity, and dissolved oxygen (DO).	<p>Keep water quality data of watershed's lakes.</p> <p>Utilize water quality data for future projects and CIPs.</p>	Monitoring May through September

LOOKING AHEAD: 2026 WORK PLAN

Administration & Regulation

Project Name	Description	Goals	Timeline
Budget & Storm Sewer Utility	Storm sewer utility rates are based on the adopted budget and certified to counties for collection	Continued county participation and budgeting for future years.	Ongoing
Wetland Conservation Act (WCA)	Complete boundary and type and other determinations in consultation with the TEP. Respond to WCA questions.	Continued administration of WCA.	Ongoing
Lake reviews throughout the watershed	Maintain lake reviews with updates as new data and information becomes available.	Update lake reviews, convey on website.	Ongoing

Section 4

ADMINISTRATION + LOGISTICS



Wetland Conservation Act (WCA)

VLAWMO administers the Wetland Conservation Act as the LGU for its member communities. In 2025, there were 15 landowner contacts in which wetland-related technical assistance was provided. There were 7 potential WCA violation sites investigated, with 7 of 7 resolved.

WCA SUMMARY

Type of Application	Approved	Denied	Withdrawn
Boundary and Type	8	0	0
No-Loss	4	0	0
Exemption	1	0	0
Sequencing	0	0	0
Replacement Plan	3	0	0

Local Water Plan Adoption

Local Water Plans for Gem Lake, Lino Lakes, North Oaks, White Bear Lake, White Bear Township and Vadnais Heights are all complete and have been adopted.

LOCAL WATER PLAN SUMMARY

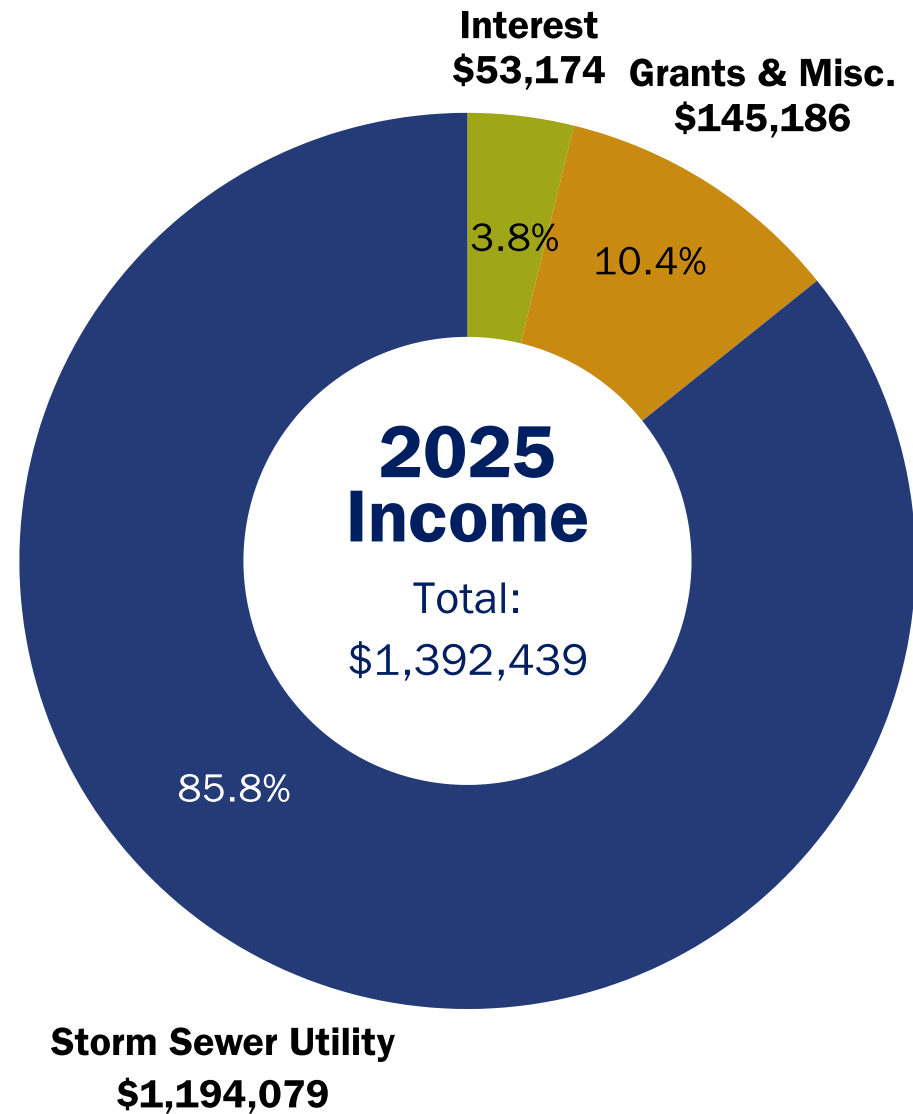
Member Community	Water Plan Last Updated
Gem Lake	2018
Lino Lakes	2018
North Oaks	2008
Vadnais Heights	2018
White Bear Lake	2021
White Bear Township	2019

Finance and Budget

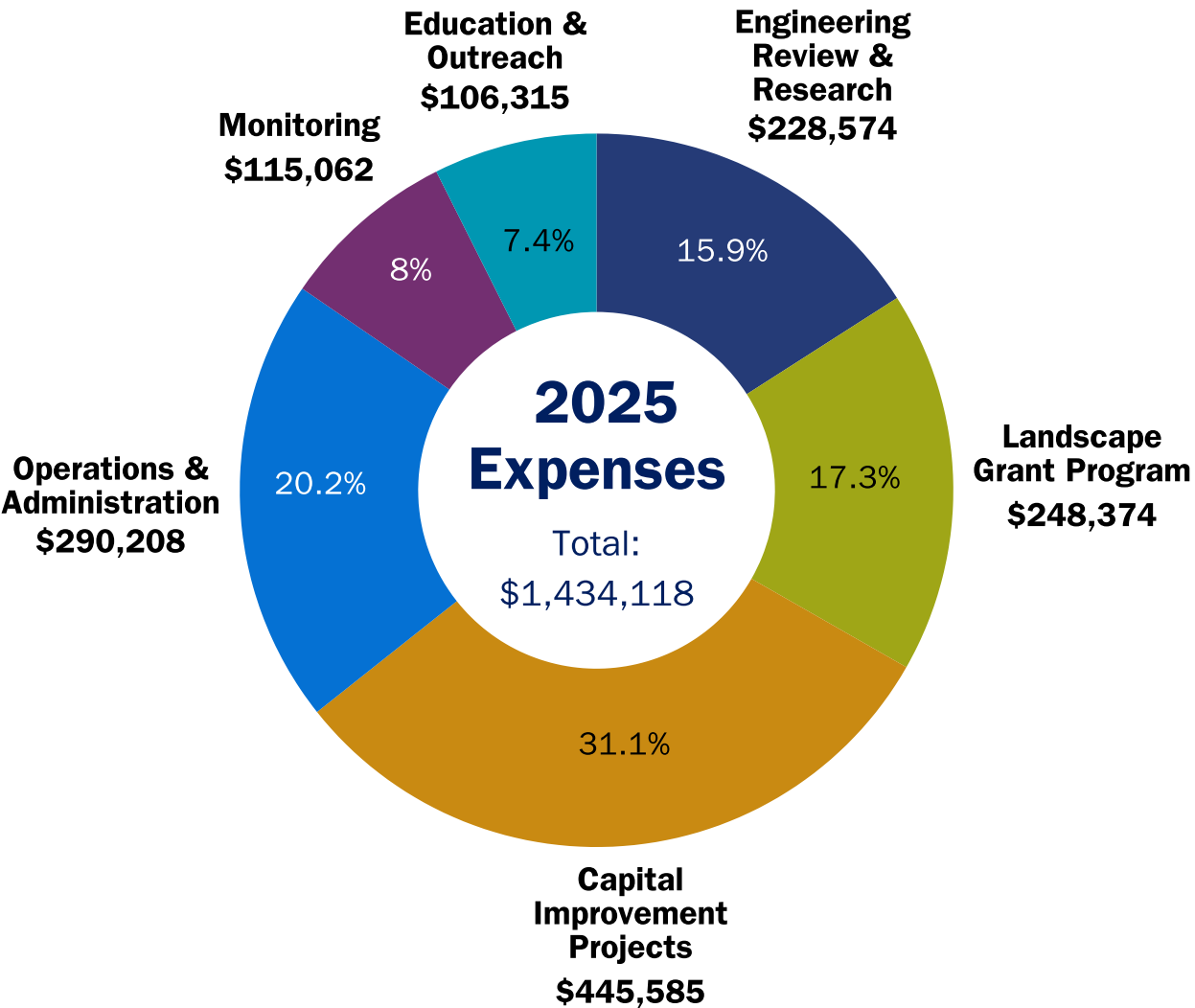
The 2025 budget was established by the Board of Directors in June 2024 with designated project and program funds carried over in December 2024. The Finance and Policy Subcommittee, with a representative from the Technical Commission and Board, reviewed and made recommendations on the 2025 budget to the Board in June 2024.

The Board-approved budget included funds to address multiple capital improvement projects, including the Tamarack Lake TMDL implementation alum project, implementation of a resiliency study in the East Vadnais Lake subwatershed, development of the VLAWMO 10-year watershed management plan, and implementation of the White Bear Lake Sports Center Project. These projects focused on addressing water quality protection for high priority waterbodies in the watershed.

Other programmatic focuses for 2025 included VLAWMO’s grant programs, communication and outreach programs, and water quality monitoring programs.



Budget at a Glance	Approved budget for 2025:	Actual income from 2025:	Money spent in 2025:
	\$2,598,207	\$1,392,439	\$1,434,118



Expenses

The total cash expenses for 2025 was \$1,434,118. Some of the engineering and planning efforts initiated in 2025 including but not limited to development of the 10-year Watershed Management Plan will be carried over into 2026 for implementation.

Grants and Partnerships

Grant funds and related miscellaneous and partnership income received in 2025 totaled \$136,620. This included US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) 319 funds administered by the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency (MPCA) and funding from the Board of Water and Soil Resources Watershed Based Implementation Funding Program through the Clean Water, Land and Legacy Amendment.



Income

The mainstay of support for VLAWMO’s work comes from its Storm Sewer Utility (SSU) fees. These fees are based on an estimate of impervious surface for each parcel of land with reference to land use classification. \$1,194,079 in SSU was collected in Ramsey and Anoka Counties in 2025 for approximately 11,832 parcels. The average single-family homeowner paid \$67.56 per year, approximately \$5.63 per month to support projects and programs conducted by the watershed. The 5% increase in SSU fees supported sustainable coverage of key priority programs and projects outlined in the VLAWMO Watershed Management Plan. Some grant/loan income was utilized to cover project implementation costs.

Section 5

WHO WE ARE:

The People and Partnerships Behind VLAWMO

2025 Board of Directors

The VLAWMO Board of Directors consists of one elected official from each of the six municipalities within the watershed. Each Board member is appointed for a three-year term.

Jim Lindner, Chair

City of Gem Lake
651-492-5083

Andrea West, Vice Chair

City of White Bear Lake
612-245-3133

Katherine Doll Kanne, Secretary-Treasurer

City of Vadnais Heights
320-905-3606

Sara Shah

City of North Oaks
612-440-7388

Ed Prudhon

White Bear Township
651-426-2311

Rob Rafferty

City of Lino Lakes
651-429-6772

2025 Technical Commission

The VLAWMO Technical Commission consists of one citizen representative from each of the six communities. The Technical Commission meets to review and consider watershed business as well as make recommendations to the Board for wider scope decisions.

Nick Ousky, Chair

Vadnais Heights

Gloria Tessier, Vice Chair

Gem Lake

Terry Huntrods

White Bear Lake

Jami Philip

White Bear Township

Susan Miller

North Oaks

Tom Hoffman

Lino Lakes

Staff

VLAWMO employs five full-time staff for everyday operations.

Phil Belfiori

Administrator
phil.belfiori@vlawmo.org
651-204-6073

Dawn Tanner, PhD

Program Development Coordinator
dawn.tanner@vlawmo.org
651-204-6074

Brian Corcoran

Water Resources Manager
brian.corcoran@vlawmo.org
651-204-6075

Lauren Sampedro

Watershed Technician and Program Coordinator
lauren.sampedro@vlawmo.org
651-204-6071

Angela Hugunin

Communication and Outreach Coordinator
angela.hugunin@vlawmo.org
651-204-6070

2025 Partners

Partnership is essential to watershed work. VLAWMO's partners provide leadership, guidance, and resources to support shared goals. While a full list of VLAWMO's partners would extend beyond this page, VLAWMO recognizes the following groups in particular for their continued support in 2025, as well as those not listed for their collaboration.

- Communities of Gem Lake, Lino Lakes, North Oaks, Vadnais Heights, White Bear Lake, and White Bear Township
- North Oaks Home Owners' Association (NOHOA)
- North Oaks Company
- Ramsey County, Ramsey County Soil and Water Conservation Division, Ramsey County Parks and Recreation, Ramsey County Public Works
- Saint Paul Regional Water Services (SPRWS)
- Birch Lake Improvement District (BLID)
- Tamarack Nature Center

Consultants

VLAWMO appreciates consultant support with auditing, engineering, and technical assistance. The following are Board-approved VLAWMO consultants for engineering, legal, and audit services as selected through the required biennial solicitation. VLAWMO also extends its gratitude to consultants beyond this list.

Engineer on Retainer

Short Elliott Hendrickson Inc.
3535 Vadnais Center Dr.
Vadnais Heights, MN 55110

Legal

Town Law Center PLLP
1250 Wayzata Blvd. E
Unit #1065 E
Wayzata, MN 55391

Financial Audit

Clifton, Larson, Allen
220 S. 6th St.
Suite 300
Minneapolis, MN 55402

Biennial Solicitation for Proposals

Auditing was solicited in 2025 for fiscal years 2025 and 2026. Legal and engineering were solicited in 2024 for fiscal years 2025 and 2026.