

**COUNTY OF MILWAUKEE  
INTER-OFFICE COMMUNICATION**

**DATE:** June 29, 2015

**TO:** Gerry Broderick, Chairman, Parks, Energy & Environment Committee

**COPY:** Marina Dimitrijevic, Chairwoman, Milwaukee County Board of Supervisors  
Jessica Janz-McKnight, Parks, Energy & Environment Committee Analyst

**FROM:** Greg High, Director, AE&ES Section, DAS-FM

**SUBJECT:** **Supplemental Report - Adoption of a Watershed Restoration Plan for the Root River (File No. 15-373)**  
**Action Item**

This report is provided as a supplement to the report dated May 18, 2015. It is intended to provide additional information specific to the Watershed Restoration Plan (WRP) recommendation for regulatory oversight of private-property wastewater treatment systems (page 6 of the Executive Summary).

The Root River is over 43 miles in length, extending from eastern Waukesha County, through Milwaukee County, and into Racine County. The WRP addresses the entirety of the watershed, although only one-third of the watershed is located within Milwaukee County. The report is advisory in nature.

The Root River frontage and corridor located within Milwaukee County is primarily publicly-owned land, surrounded by urban development. By contrast, more than half of lands abutting the Root River in Racine County are privately owned and traverse through more rural areas.

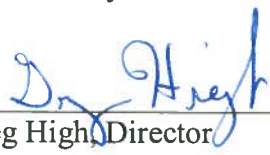
Because nonpoint sources of pollution are known to be a significant contributor to pollutants entering the river (eg., bacteria and phosphorous), the WRP includes recommendations intended to reduce rural nonpoint sources of pollution. Private-property wastewater treatment systems include septic systems and other systems that are not connected to publicly-owned treatment systems. They are currently regulated by state code SPS 383, and the permitting and inspection is administered by local governmental authorities. If the systems are not properly designed or not properly maintained, they could overflow or leak into streams or directly into the Root River. The WRP recommendation to have regulatory oversight of privately-owned treatment systems is intended to support the existing mechanisms for regulatory oversight, and does not recommend additional regulation of private property wastewater treatment systems.

The WRP does include other recommendations related to privately-owned agricultural and pastureland operations, such as preparation of nutrient management plans for agricultural operations that currently don't have one, and expansion of riparian buffers along the river. These recommendations are consistent with recognized best

management practices, are supported by state-funded incentives, and already performed by many farmers. Ultimately, the decision to pursue any of these recommendations remains with the property owner. As noted above, the majority of the privately-owned river frontage along the Root River is located within Racine County, which has adopted this WRP.

Prepared by: Stevan Keith, P.E., Sustainability & Environmental Engineer and  
Milwaukee County Land Conservationist

Approved by:



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Greg High, Director  
AE&ES Section, DAS-FM

cc: Supervisor Khalif Rainey  
Supervisor Jason Haas  
Supervisor Deanna Alexander  
Supervisor Steve F. Taylor  
Supervisor Anthony Staskunas  
Supervisor Eddie Cullen  
Chris Abele, County Executive  
Raisa Koltun, Chief of Staff, County Executive  
Scott Manske, Comptroller  
Pam Bryant, Comptroller Office  
Steve Kreklow, Fiscal & Budget Director, DAS  
Paul Bargren, Corporation Counsel