

As a member of the Sauk River Watershed District (SRWD) board of managers, I would like to acknowledge Stearns County Commissioner Leigh Lenzmeier's assistance in helping to set our organization on a proper path.

Many people know that the SRWD has been plagued with various organizational problems over the past few years and seeing such an organization becoming an aimless, dysfunctional entity was of great concern to the Stearns County Board.

During the SRWD's annual report to the County Board earlier this year, Commissioner Lenzmeier put his finger on part of the watershed's ongoing problems: We had lost focus on what the district does well and were fixating primarily on rule making and enforcement rather than education, environmental monitoring and providing assistance to the public. He called on the watershed district to promote its mission of protecting and improving surface water quality by being a partner with the public that helps educate and assist people rather than an environmental police officer writing out tickets and issuing fines.

Mr. Lenzmeier's comments made a huge impact on the watershed board members present at the time and I'm pleased to say that echoes of those original comments continue to reverberate through the watershed's organization to this day. The SRWD board recently passed a preliminary budget which puts significantly more emphasis on education and public outreach; and we taking deliberate steps to create a set of rules that are realistic and achievable rather than being burdensome and bureaucratic.

Commissioner Leigh Lenzmeier deserves a lot of credit for helping to guide the Sauk River Watershed District back towards serving the residents throughout the 1,000 square mile Sauk River Watershed area. His understanding of local government operations has helped to bring about positive change to the SRWD which in turn will have a lasting, positive impact on the value area taxpayers get from the watershed organization.

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