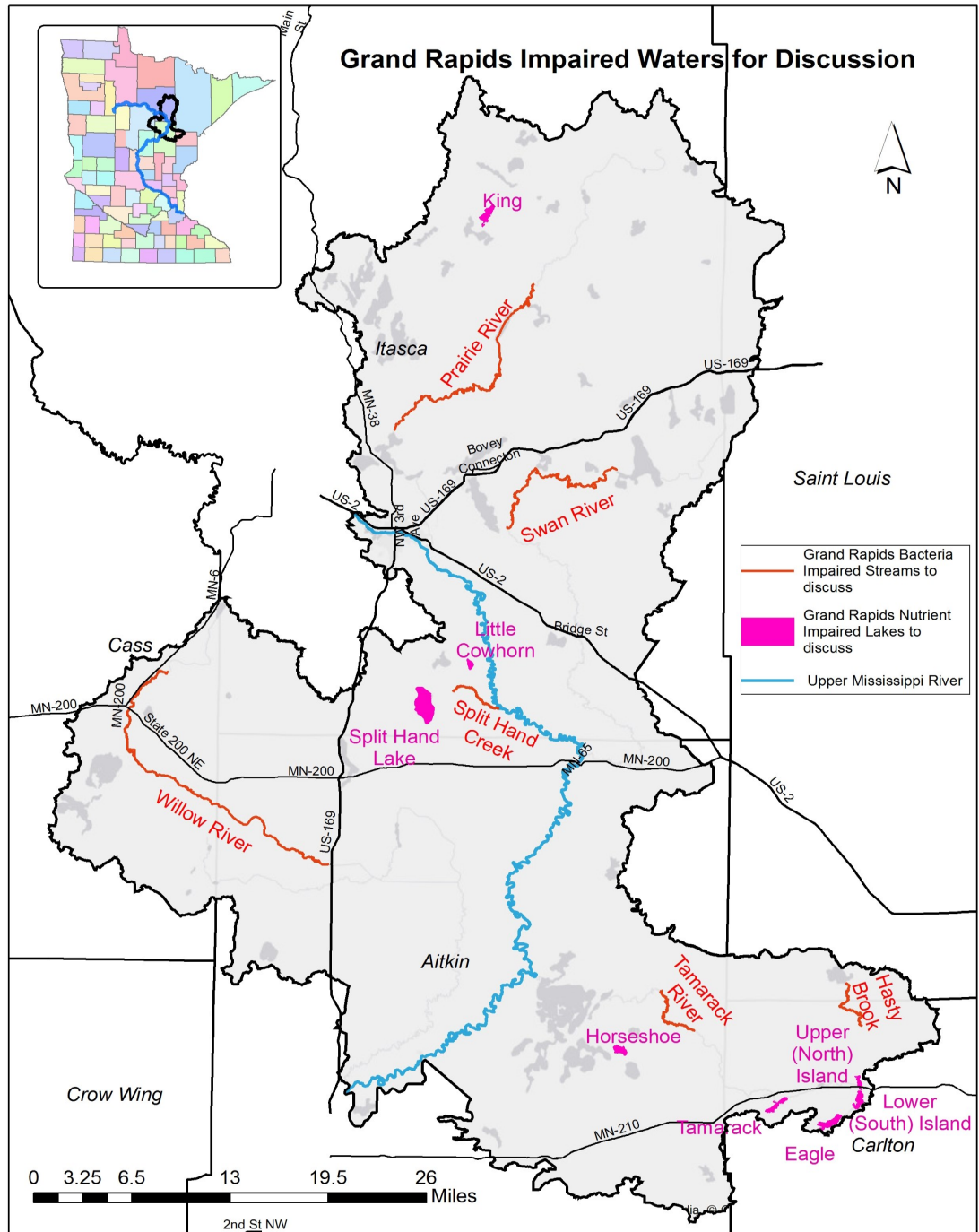


Area Lakes and Rivers Get a Checkup!

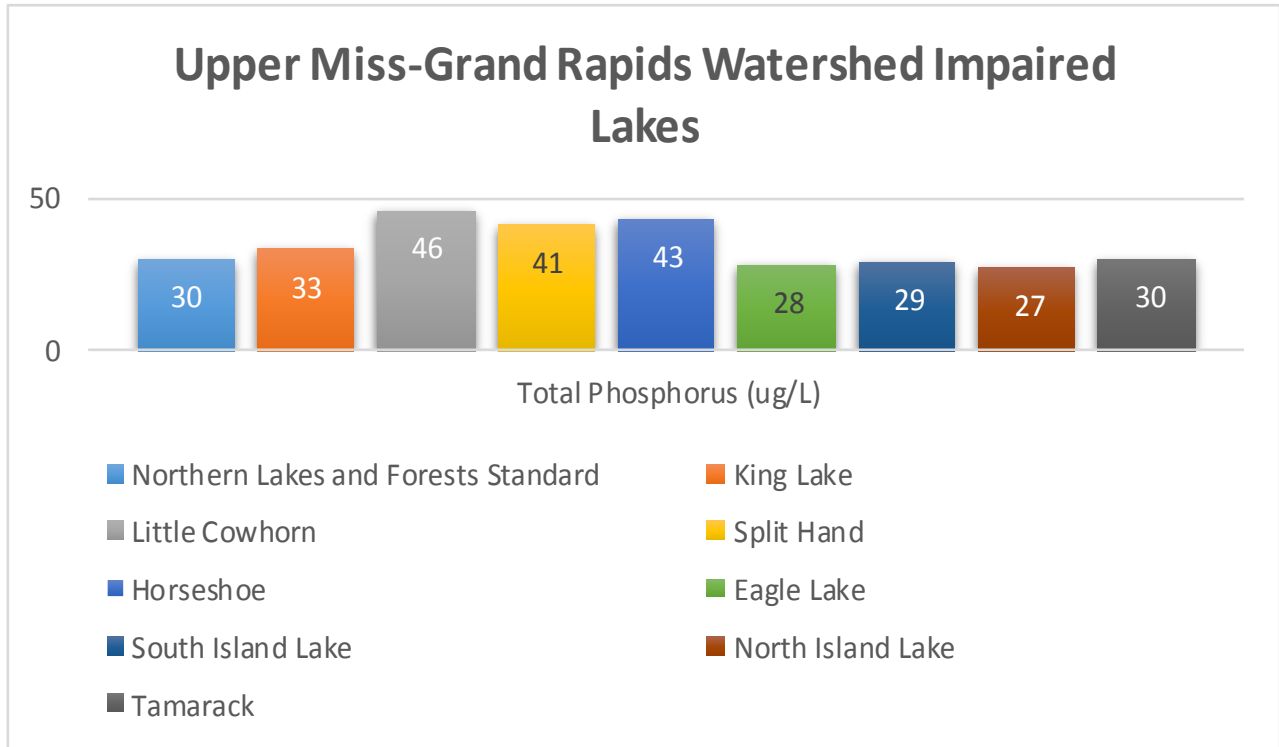
When you go to the doctor for your yearly check-up, your doctor may run some blood-work to make sure there are not any underlying health issues to be concerned about. In a similar way, the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency (MPCA) does a check up on our lakes and rivers. Area waters were “examined” in 2015 and 2016 and thanks to the help of dedicated volunteers, we had some interesting data to look at. The study area included the Upper Mississippi Grand Rapids Watershed which encompasses parts of Aitkin, Cass, Carlton, Itasca, and St. Louis counties.



Join us for a public meeting to discuss the water quality of this area. The Minnesota Pollution Control Agency, Minnesota DNR, and Aitkin, Itasca and Carlton County Soil and Water Conservation Districts would like to share results of the recent sampling and gather input from you regarding these lakes and rivers. **The meetings will be held Thursday, December 6 . There are three possibilities for involvement:**

- **Cromwell Pavilion from 1 pm to 3 pm**
- **Blandin Foundation Conference Room in Grand Rapids from 6 to 8 pm.**
- **Webcast at 6-8 pm for those who can't attend in person.**

We found several area lakes could use some help. In a few lakes, the Total Phosphorus and/or Chlorophyll-a levels were above the standard set by the MPCA. In addition, the water clarity levels were too low which suggests that algae blooms are a problem. As a result, the following lakes have been listed as impaired for aquatic recreation: **Eagle Lake, Upper and Lower Island Lakes, Tamarack Lake** (Carlton County) and **Horseshoe Lake** (Aitkin County) and **King, Little Cowhorn and Split Hand Lakes** (Itasca County). In addition, Lower Island Lake did not have the diversity of fish species that we would expect compared to similar lakes.



Most streams and rivers were doing well, however there were a few stream sites that were stressed. Higher than expected levels of E. coli (bacteria) were found in sections of Hasty Brook, Prairie River, Swan River, Split Hand Creek, Willow River and the Tamarack River.

What is a TMDL? Just like a doctor, the MPCA will try to determine where the phosphorous in the lakes and the bacteria in the streams is coming from and help us find ways we can improve water quality. This process is called a Total Maximum Daily Load Study or TMDL.

A Total Maximum Daily Load is the amount of a pollutant that can be added to a lake or stream before the water body becomes unhealthy. It's like the amount of salt we can eat before we get high blood pressure. By determining the "safe" amount of pollution, we can learn how much of a pollutant we need to reduce in order for a lake or stream to be healthy again.

Please join us to learn more about the health of our lakes and streams. The Cromwell Pavilion is located in Cromwell off of Highway 73 at 5577 Cromwell Park Drive. The Blandin Foundation is near the Grand Rapids Library and KAXE along the Mississippi River at 100 N. Pokegama Ave. Grand Rapids, MN 55744. You can make a difference by getting involved and sharing your insights. Local people who live and recreate on the lakes and streams have a wealth of first-hand knowledge. Sharing your observations and experiences will help restoration and protection efforts be more successful. Together we can improve and protect water quality. We'd love to have you join us! For more information contact Janet Smude at the Aitkin County Soil and Water Conservation District: (218) 927-6565 ext 4, Melanie Bomier at the Carlton Soil and Water Conservation District: (218) 384-3891 or Kim Yankowiak at the Itasca Soil and Water Conservation District: (218) 382-3092.