

Completed flood study includes three key proposals

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Policymakers have worked for two years on plans to prevent a repeat of the flooding that made a mess of Prior Lake in summer 2014. The completion of a flood mitigation study last month has yielded three main initiatives to manage storm water and protect the city from future floods.

Out of an initial list of 20 alternatives, leaders of the effort selected three to implement:

- Actively manage the Prior Lake outlet (a short-term goal and the responsibility of the Prior Lake-Spring Lake Watershed District);

- Enhanced protection measures to be coordinated by the city during flood events (also a short-term goal; city will develop a written policy to be reviewed and adopted by the Prior Lake City Council); and

- Secure upper watershed storage (the watershed district will create a process to analyze weather forecasts, storage capacity of existing wetlands and lakes and flooding potential as part of updating its procedure to open the outlet structure's low-flow gate.

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The district is authorized by the Department of Natural Resources to open the low-flow gate in response to snow melt in the spring only).

The Stormwater Management and Flood Mitigation Study was accepted by both the Prior Lake City Council and the Prior Lake-Spring

Lake Watershed District Board of Managers in December. The process also included public meetings throughout the past year.

Acceptance of the study "represents the final step in the study development process but the first step toward improved and coordinated community flood protection," Public Works Director Katy Gehler told council members in a December report.

In response to record flooding in 2014, the city and the watershed district called for the study, led by consulting firm Barr Engineering. The city and watershed district sponsored the study in collaboration with Spring Lake Township. Policymakers representing the three entities agreed upon four goals: protect public safety and maintain emergency access; protect public utility in-

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frastructure; maintain traffic flow through the County Road 21 corridor; and maintain access to private properties.

Securing the upper watershed storage is a long-term goal that will identify potential storage areas that could provide flood damage reduction as well as provide water quality improvement benefits. The storage areas will be carefully considered with a key factor which includes the

willingness of landowners to participate in a program to create storage areas, according to a news release from the watershed district.

The city staff will work with other governmental entities on a long-term management program, with five-year checkpoints and flood modeling updates as projects are completed. "The first purpose is to model the predicted 100-year floodplain more ac-

curately than previous models," Gehler reported.

Any funding associated with future projects under the study's recommendations would go to the council and watershed for consideration.

A copy of the complete Stormwater Management and Flood Mitigation Study is available at www.plslwd.org/flood-study. The website also has information about the entire project.

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