

## District Finances

Watershed Districts are authorized to obtain general operating funds from an annual tax on properties lying within its boundaries. This taxable amount is based upon the property's value and is limited to 2.4 mills up to a maximum dollar amount (which has changed over the years, but currently stands at \$250,000). Actual District general fund levies have usually been in the range of 55 to 80% of the maximum allowed, and currently stands at 1.9 mills, about 75% of that allowed by state law.

The District may assess landowners for the extent to which they benefit from projects. This option has been used to underwrite many of the costs of the harvesting projects. Landowners benefiting from the harvest projects have usually paid in the range of \$50 to \$100 per year for harvesting in their lakes.

Managers also may receive funds from grants; over the years, grant funds have been used to support harvesting activities as well as data collection and diagnostic work. For example, in 1974 the District's share of a \$75,000 project was \$3906. However, most of the cost-share arrangements for state and federal grants have required a 50% match from local funds.

Because of year-to-year variability in funding and expenses as well as accounting practice changes, it is difficult to make direct comparisons over time. However, anecdotal reports indicate that in the late 1960's, the managers levied (and spent) in the range of \$10,000 to \$12,000 annually for general administration, with total annual revenues and expenditures around 15,000 (these amounts did not include federal grant funds or donations by the City of Detroit Lakes in support of the harvesting projects).

District revenues and expenditures grew slowly, but steadily; by the early 1980's, the Managers were levying in the range of \$30,000 for general operations, with total revenues and expenses about twice that amount. In 1990-91, the operations fund levy was just under \$60,000 with total expenses of \$195,000, including almost \$100,000 for harvesting equipment.

Since the mid-1990's, Managers have adopted an elaborate monitoring program, constructed stormwater treatment, and a permit system, among other expensive activities. Funds in the range of about \$25,000 per year have been obtained from a special general levy category to pay for survey and monitoring work. Since 1998, a small district-wide fee, ranging from \$8 to \$40, is charged to property-owners proportional to the amount of nutrients discharged in the form of runoff from their properties. Stormwater fees are used to pay for stormwater treatment efforts.

Currently, the ad valorem levy for the general fund is just under \$200,000 with a total revenue and disbursement stream from other levies and grant funds of approximately \$400,000.