



SOUTH WASHINGTON WATERSHED DISTRICT

Colby Lake

DNR ID #82-0094 Municipality: Woodbury
 Surface Area: 68 Acres Watershed Area: 2,839 Acres
 Mean Depth: 7 feet Maximum Depth: 11 feet
 SWWD Maximum Allowable Phosphorus Load: 0.34 lbs/ac/yr
 SWWD Trophic State Index (TSI) Goal: 70-73



Map 1: Colby Lake

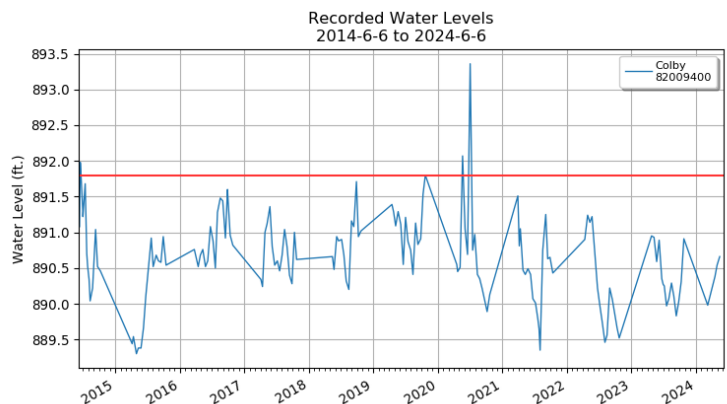
Colby Lake (Map 1) is an approximately 70-acre lake located in the City of Woodbury within southern Washington County. The Colby Lake watershed is situated in the North Central Hardwood Forests ecoregion, though the lake itself is in close proximity to the boundary with the Western Corn Belt Plains ecoregion. Colby Lake is part of a multi-lake system; receiving water from Wilmes Lakes to its north and contributing water downstream to Bailey Lake. The total cumulative drainage area into Colby Lake is 10.6 square miles, 6.3 of which come through Wilmes Lake. The remaining 4.3 square miles of the drainage area contributes water

directly into Colby Lake either through direct runoff or through City of Woodbury stormwater infrastructure. Collectively, these lakes make up the majority of SWWD’s Northern Watershed (NWS) which is dominated by newer suburban development.

The outlet of Colby Lake is controlled by a 10-foot long weir with a crest elevation at 890.30 MSL (NGVD 29) and an ordinary high water level has been established at 891.8 MSL. Since 1980, lake levels have fluctuated by a maximum of 5 feet, averaging to within a foot and a half of the weir elevation (Figure 1).

The fishery within the lake is managed through the DNR’s Fishing in the Neighborhood (FiN) program with the goal of providing shorefishing opportunities in the City of Woodbury. The most recent fisheries report for Colby Lake

Figure 1: Colby Lake Surface Elevation



prepared by the MnDNR in 2015 indicates the vast majority of fish in Colby Lake were black bullhead (*Ameiurus melas*). Additional species present include: black crappie (*Pomoxis nigromaculatus*), bluegill (*Lepomis macrochirus*), pumpkinseed (*Lepomis gibbosus*), hybrid sunfish (*Lepomis sp.*), largemouth bass (*Micropterus salmoides*), northern pike (*Esox lucius*), yellow perch (*Perca flavescens*), and white sucker (*Catostomus commersonii*). Colby Lake has been managed through FiN since 2002 and has most recently been stocked with catfish walleye. SWWD and the City committed to aerating the lake throughout the winter to maintain oxygen levels while the DNR will continue to stock catfish as a means to controlling bullhead in the lake which stir up the lake bottom causing increased nutrient cycling and more frequent algal blooms. Fish consumption guidelines of once per week have been placed on crappie and northern pike due to mercury.

A vegetation survey of Colby Lake was completed in 2021. Curly leaf pondweed and Eurasian watermilfoil are both pervasive. Coontail is also present at nuisance levels. Use of the lake is often very limited due to vegetation. SWWD and the City of Woodbury began efforts to control vegetation in 2022 with lake wide herbicide treatments. Those efforts will continue as needed depending on vegetation.

Colby Lake has been a poor water quality lake since CAMP monitoring began in 1994, exceeding state eutrophication standards and grading at a D or F in nearly every year. However, there are more recent indications that water quality is beginning to improve, reflecting extensive work in the watershed by SWWD and City of Woodbury. The last 20 years of lake grades are included in Table 1. There are no clear or significant trends (figs 2-4), as Colby Lake has relatively high year to year fluctuations in water quality, and at times has met SWWD interim TSI goals including in 2021. As a result of generally poor water quality at Colby Lake, nuisance algal conditions generally occur throughout the growing season and restrict recreational opportunities.

Several factors may be contributing to the high variability in water quality at Colby Lake. First, Colby Lake has a short residence time. Under typical hydrologic conditions, the water in Colby Lake is replaced nearly once per month. Because of this short residence time, the Colby Watershed has a much more acute impact on the Lake than other District lakes. Second, Colby Lake is infested with curly leaf pondweed, an invasive species. Curly leaf pondweed can cause short term variation in water quality when plants die and send a pulse of nutrients into the water column. Finally, the fish community in Colby Lake is dominated by bullheads that may increase internal lake loading by disturbing the lake bottom. Overall, we believe that high variability in water quality observed at Colby Lake is strongly influenced by annual variations in rainfall volume and intensity, snowfall cover (curly-pondweed abundance), and fish community.

Figure 2: In-lake Total Phosphorus Concentration at Colby Lake

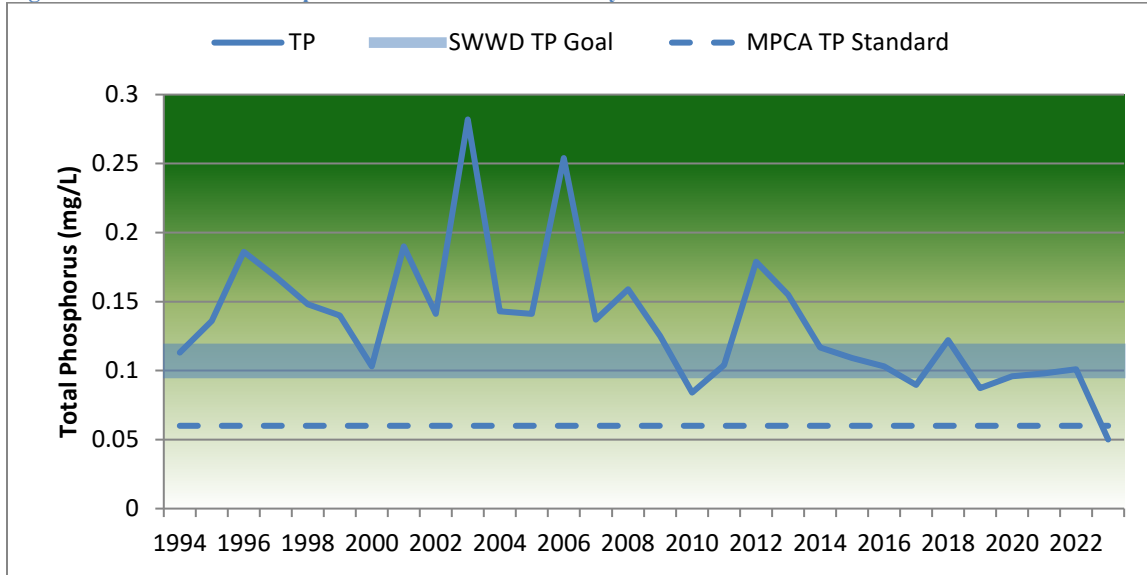


Figure 3: In-lake Chlorophyll a Concentration at Colby Lake

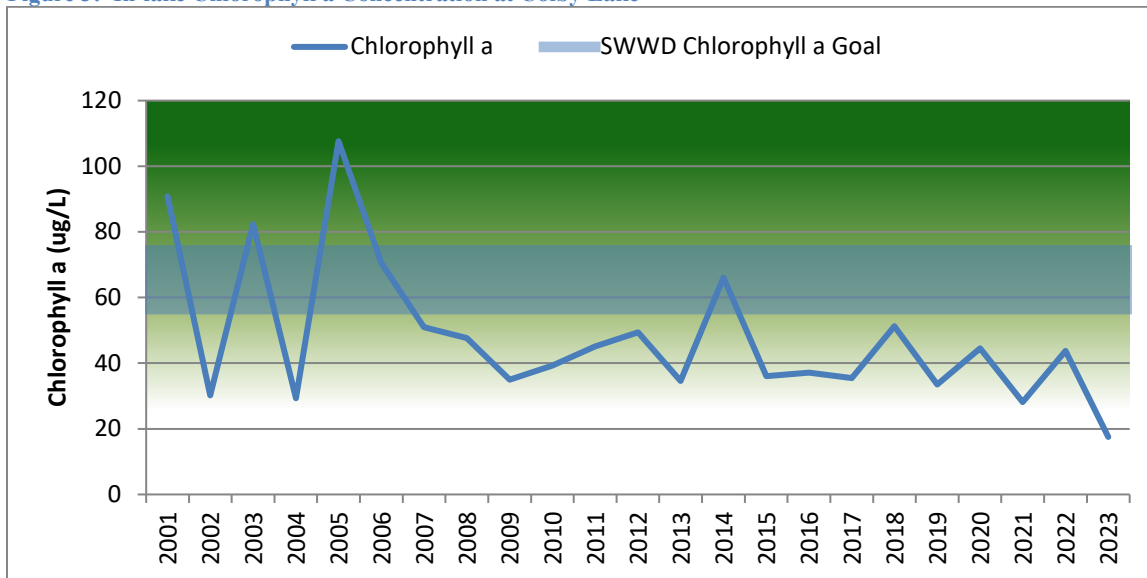


Figure 4: Secchi Transparency for Colby Lake

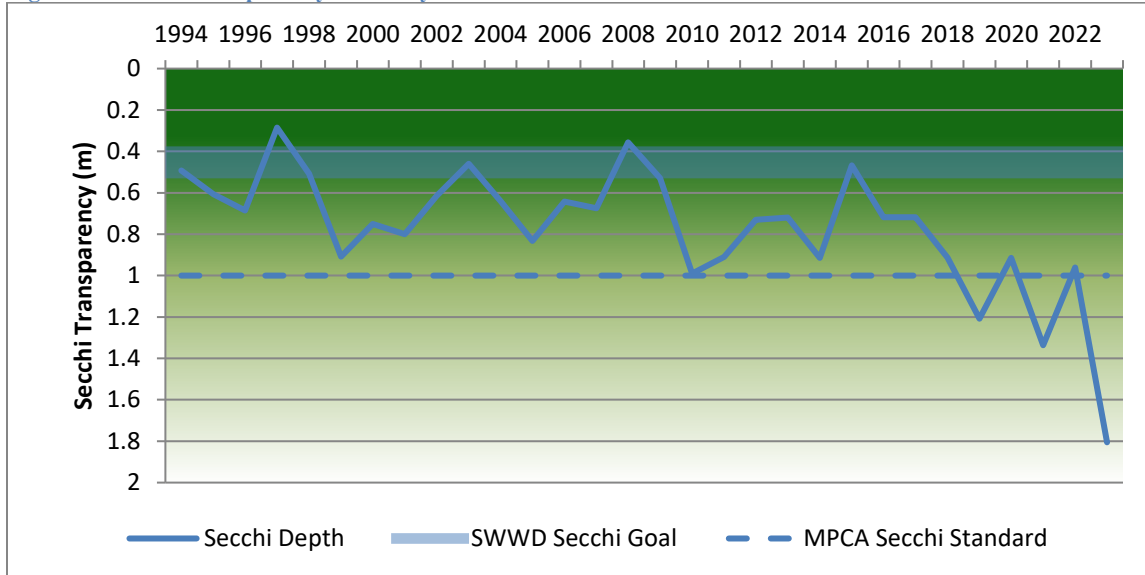


Table 1: Annual Lake Grades for Colby Lake

		Lake Grade																							
Parameter	Trophic Status	01	02	03	04	05	06	07	08	09	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	
Total Phosphorus	61; eutrophic	F	F	F	D	D	F	D	F	D	D	D	F	F	D	D	D	D	D	D	D	D	D	D	C
Chlorophyll	59; eutrophic	F	C	D	C	F	F	D	D	C	C	C	C	C	D	C	C	C	D	C	C	C	C	C	B
Secchi Transparency	51; eutrophic	D	F	F	F	D	F	F	F	F	D	D	D	D	D	F	D	D	D	C	D	C	D	D	C
Overall	Eutrophic	F	D	F	D	D	F	D	F	D	D	D	D	D	D	D	D	D	D	C	D	C	D	D	C

Note: Lake grades are based on comparison with other lakes in the Minneapolis-St. Paul metropolitan area. Criteria for assigning lake grades are established by the Metropolitan Council.

SWWD updated its Colby Lake Management Plan in 2019 which included extensive modeling of the Colby Lake watershed and the lake itself. That modeling showed that substantial phosphorus reductions are necessary in order to routinely meet State water quality standards. SWWD continues work with the City of Woodbury to achieve those reductions. Additional information about the management plans is available at www.swwdmn.org.

In addition to monitoring in-lake water quality of Colby Lake, SWWD periodically monitors loading from various parts of the Colby Lake watershed. Below, are data (Table 2) collected at the Colby West inlet which provides a measure of water quality leaving the Colby 1st residential neighborhood. The Colby 1st neighborhood has been the focus of extensive retrofit implementation. Included in the table are results from 2009-2011 which serves as a baseline of water quality prior to implementation and 2015-2016. There are no significant trends.

Table 2: Loading Summary for Colby West

Year	April-Oct Precipitation (in)	Runoff Yield (cu ft runoff/ in precip)	April- Oct TP (lbs)	TP Yield (lbs/in precip)	April- Oct TSS (lbs)	TSS Yield (lbs/in precip)	April- Oct Chloride (lbs)	Chloride Yield (lbs/in precip)
2009	19.4	113,819	29	1.5	18,285	945	478	25
2010	25.5	117,811	39	1.5	20,431	802	583	23
2011	18.5	168,736	36	2	38,576	2,082	1,766	95
2015	27.8	73,450	26	0.9	13,854	499	255	9
2016	31.5	77,514	32	1.0	11,886	376	307	10
2017	26	130,319	63	2.5	34,375	1,343	704	28

All SWWD monitoring data is available through SWWD's web database at <http://wq.swwdmn.org/>.