

# LIMBO CREEK:

## A PUBLIC WATER IN LIMBO



Agricultural drainage practices have transformed the landscape, rivers, and streams across much of Minnesota. Drain tile quickly moves water off the land, drainage ditches quickly move that water to rivers, and quick-rising rivers erode their banks. **In Renville County, 90% of the rain that falls is in the Minnesota River within 48 hours.** The elimination of wetlands that store water and slow its movement have dramatically changed the landscape.

Limbo Creek is one of the last free-flowing, unditched streams in Renville County. It meanders across the landscape, compared to the straightened ditches whose primary purpose is to move water as quickly as possible. It's also appropriately named - Limbo Creek's legal status is literally in limbo. **Despite meeting the definition of a "public water," Limbo Creek has been omitted from the Public Waters Inventory, the list of streams and rivers kept by the State of Minnesota.** This means Limbo Creek is vulnerable to becoming a ditch, without the need for a public waters work permit.

Limbo Creek has been proposed for ditch projects several times, going back to the 1970's. But a new proposal to ditch Limbo Creek and expand its capacity to sluice water quickly to the Minnesota River has emerged. MCEA has worked with farmers, adjacent landowners, and local conservation groups to push for listing Limbo Creek as a public water, and to prevent another addition to the erosion problem in the Minnesota River valley. This erosion is damaging and expensive. In just one example, the City of Mankato is incurring over \$10 million in expenses to prevent a major city well from being swallowed by an eroding riverbank.

### TIMELINE OF EVENTS

- **1980** – Limbo Creek was wrongly listed as a “public ditch” in the DNR Public Waters Inventory (PWI).
- **September 2016** – Landowners in Renville County petition to extend County Ditch 77 (CD 77) through a portion of Limbo Creek.
- **April 2017** – DNR removed over 200 miles of waterways from the PWI, including Limbo Creek.
- **March 2019** – MCEA asks DNR to correct their error and add Limbo Creek back to the PWI.
- **August 2020** – DNR starts the process of adding Limbo Creek back to the PWI.
- **November 2020** – Despite DNR stating that Limbo Creek is a public water and the CD 77 project requires environmental review, Renville County denies MCEA's petition for environmental review and approves the CD 77 project.

### Where are we now?

DNR is accepting public comments on adding Limbo Creek back to the PWI. Comments are due by November 30, 2020.



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Contact: Elise Larson, Senior Staff Attorney  
el Larson@mncenter.org, (651) 287-4880