The Shell Rock River Watershed District (SRRWD) was established in 2003 and covers 246-square miles in Freeborn County, Minnesota. The Watershed is home to 11 lakes, including Albert Lea Lake, which is located partially within the city of Albert Lea and is vital for tourism and economy.

The existing outlet structure and access bridge for Albert Lea Lake was installed in 1922 and was in need of repair. The District saw the opportunity to not only build a new dam but manage rough fish populations and aquatic vegetation by creating a 3-in-1 project. Groundbreaking for the construction of the new Albert Lea Lake Dam and Fish Barrier Project began in August of 2014, and consists of a dam, fish barrier, and draw down structure. The $2 million dollar project was funded by the Lessard-Sams Outdoor Heritage Fund.

1. Rock-Arch Dam

The previous fixed crest dam was replaced with a series of rock arches to provide a naturalized outlet to Albert Lea Lake. The uppermost arch will control the normal water level.

2. Electric Fish Barrier

An electric fish barrier will be used to stop the movement of fish, such as Common Carp, into Albert Lea Lake. It will also prevent the introduction of Silver Carp and Bighead into the SRRWD chain of lakes. The SRRWD has a proven track record of success with fish barriers. The fish barriers upstream of Albert Lea Lake include White Lake, Mud Lake, Goose Lake, and Wedge Creek have improved habitat and water clarity in the upstream areas.

3. Lake-Level Draw Down Structure

Installation of a structure to facilitate lake-level management gives the SRRWD flexibility to take action, as necessary, to benefit the health of the lake. Periodic lowering of lake elevations allows management of invasive plants and fish, improvement of water clarity due to reduction in wind generated turbidity, and time for plant colonization of shoreline and shallow water areas. The entire lake systems benefits from improving aquatic plant health.