



Quarterly News & Updates

August 2023 | Issue 13

Greetings Friends and Neighbors!

The Isanti SWCD is publishing this Quarterly e-Newsletter to:

- Help keep you informed of what is happening locally that affects the health of natural resources in Isanti County;
- Increase your understanding of what the SWCD does and how you can get involved in conservation; and
- Keep you informed on how Clean Water Fund tax amendment dollars are being spent locally.

If you have any questions, please give us a call!

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Gary and Sue Reflect on their Blue Lake Raingarden

Gary and Sue are committed to keeping Blue Lake healthy. In their eyes, “if everyone can do a little bit, it will help the big picture”. That’s why in 2020, they partnered with the Isanti SWCD to put a rain garden on their property to capture runoff and provide wildlife habitat.

Before installing the rain garden, Gary and Sue had water flowing across their property, and into the lake anytime it rained. In this runoff water, pollutants like sediment and phosphorus get picked up and carried into the lake. Gary recalled, “We had water coming off the road, coming down the driveway and into the lake. Now that water is going into the rain garden.” In fact, the raingarden’s runoff reduction keeps 752 pounds of sediment out of Blue Lake every year! It also prevents half a pound of phosphorus from entering the lake and therefore prevents 250 pounds of algae from growing (1 pound of phosphorus can grow 500 pounds of algae!)



Gary and Sue's work to protect Blue Lake doesn't stop there. When they built their home on Blue Lake, they added berms to slow down runoff. They also worked with Todd Kulaf, Isanti SWCD Conservation Technician, to redirect their rain gutters so the downspouts drain into their established raingarden. Gary and Sue were grateful to have his help and went out of their way to say, "Todd is super nice to work with, and he is a great guy to have on your team." Now, they are using his expertise to learn what else they can do for Blue Lake. It takes a small effort by many people to protect a lake, but when people like Gary and Sue make large strides and continue to learn, great progress is made on a lake.

The raingarden on their property is one of the multiple projects the Isanti SWCD completed around Blue Lake to reduce the amount of phosphorus entering Blue Lake. It was an essential step in the building blocks that led to the alum treatment recently completed on Blue Lake. Since its completion, residents around the lake have commented on the new clarity. Gary added, "The water looks a lot clearer now". The alum treatment could never have happened without landowners like Gary and Sue helping to lower the external phosphorus inputs into Blue Lake. Their project and the alum treatment are not the end of the Isanti SWCD's work on the lake. The Isanti SWCD and the Blue Lake Improvement District plan to complete even more shoreline projects around the lake in the coming years to reduce pollutants entering the lake. After all, Gary said it best "if everyone can do a little bit, it will help the big picture."



Funding for Projects on Blue and Skogman Lakes



Do you live on Skogman or Blue Lake and want to protect the wonderful lake you live on? We can help! Through the Rum River Watershed Partnership, we have funding for shoreline projects on Both Blue and Skogman Lakes. With this opportunity, 75% of the project cost will be covered by the available funding.

Please contact Todd Kulaf at 763-689-3271 if you are interested in this opportunity in playing a role in protecting the health of your lake.

Nature Photo Contest Winners

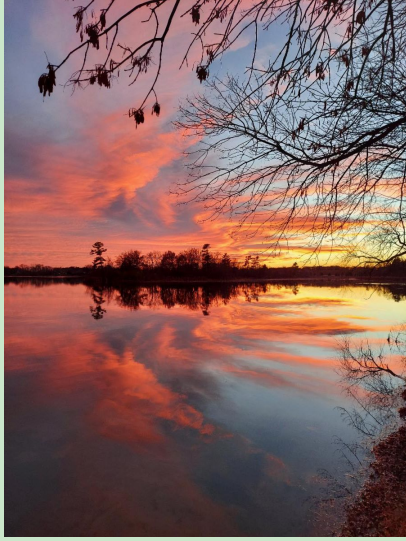
In July, we hosted our annual Nature Photo Contest. Participants were encouraged to submit photos of nature in Isanti County, such as wildlife, landscapes, plants, or other natural resources.

We were delighted to receive a remarkable 71 photo entries from across Isanti County, marking the highest level of participation we've ever experienced. Thank you to all who entered.

Three winners were selected to win a prize. Here they are! Some of our other favorites were posted on [our website](#).

First Place: Swans landing on Hurley Lake in Oxford Township by Connie Thorp





Second Place:
Sunset on Florence Lake
by Jack Beckman



Third Place:
Great Dane Looking out on Spectacle Lake
by Rosanna Ouellette-Pesicka

A Win for SWCD's Across Minnesota

We have exciting news about SWCD State Aid! As you may remember, SWCD's have historically not had stable, reliable funding. SWCD's statewide have lobbied to receive an ongoing statutory appropriation of general funds from the Department of Revenue to provide consistent funding and allow SWCD's to better achieve goals and retain staff. Now, all SWCD's across Minnesota will receive some reliable funding through State Aid!

In the past legislative session, the 2023 Omnibus Tax Bill was passed, providing consistent funding for SWCDs. Over the next two years, \$15 million annually will be split across the 88 Minnesota SWCDs. Looking forward, there's a steady \$12 million annually set for aids payable from 2025 and beyond.



These funds will be put to work in a variety of exciting ways! They will play a vital role in:

- Manage MN's natural resources on private lands (~80% of MN): SWCDs were formed by local petition in response to the 1930's Dust Bowl and the realization that natural resource management on private lands was necessary. SWCDs cover 99% of MN. State agencies only manage public land (~11%); private lands are where most problems are.
- Carry out voluntary conservation programs at the local level: SWCDs are responsive to local natural resource needs, and our programs are voluntary—that's one of the reasons we are so effective. SWCDs offer help—we don't impose regulations. Counties and state agencies were developed to regulate.
- Provide landowners technical expertise and financial resources to maintain and improve the quality, quantity, distribution, and sustainability of natural resources, including surface water, groundwater, soil, and ecological resources. It's hard to find people who aren't in favor of cheap, clean drinking water, safe plentiful food, abundant fish and wildlife, forest products, outdoor recreation opportunities, and fishable and swimmable lakes and rivers.

While we had hoped for an even higher amount of \$22 million per year, this is a remarkable stride toward securing more stable funding. The statewide investment in SWCD State Aid is a step toward building greater ability of our state's SWCDs to continue advancing our shared clean water and soil health goals through locally-led conservation projects on private lands.

Upcoming Events

For Farmers:

Soil Health Field Day

Join the Isanti SWCD at their free annual Soil Health Field Day on September 14th. Hear talks from soil health experts and get your questions answered. You will get to see cover crops in action and compare the growth of different cover crop mixes through the field's demonstration plots. There will also be a demonstration of a drone seeding cover crops you won't want to miss!

The event is September 14th starting at 9am. It is just east of Jumpin' Jacks on 279th Ave NE in North Branch. The field day will take place outdoors rain or shine and lunch will be provided. RSVP by calling 763-689-3271 or emailing Lgodfrey@isantiswcd.org.

Drone Seeding Watch Party

If you miss our field day, we have another opportunity to see a drone seeding! A local farmer will be seeding cover crops using a drone, and we will host a watch party for it. Come see the drone, speak to other farmers, and enjoy some light snacks and refreshments.

Due to the nature of the event, the date and time cannot be set far in advance. If you would like to be notified when the watch party will occur, call our office at 763-689-3271 or email Lgodfrey@isantiswcd.org.

For Elected and Appointed Leaders:

Isanti SWCD Conservation Tour

On September 7th, we will have our Conservation Tour. We will take leaders of Isanti County on a tour of key projects we have recently completed. Join us to hear about our conservation goals and accomplishments! The tour will take place during the day, and lunch will be provided. Please contact us if you have questions or would like to RSVP. Space is limited!



Isanti SWCD Makes Strides to Connect with Farmers

The Isanti SWCD is forming a farmer-led group to meet regularly and provide insights on our local agriculture programs. This small group of representative farmers will share their experiences with each other and the Isanti SWCD so we can improve our agricultural programming. We also will utilize their connections with other farmers to improve our outreach!

The farmer-led group will meet regularly throughout the year with Isanti SWCD staff to discuss a variety of topics such as barriers to conservation, improving incentives, engaging topics for workshops, and more. We are excited about the increased communication and insight we will get from our farmers!

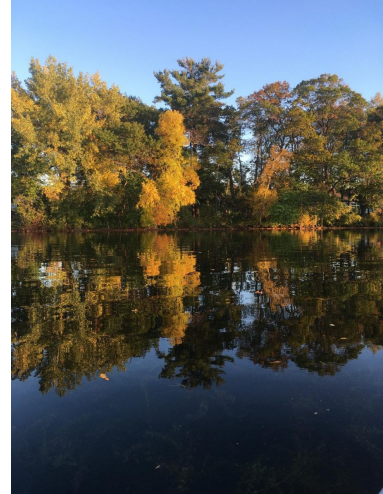


Pilot Program Aims to Reforest the Rum River Watershed

The Rum River Watershed, which contains most of Isanti County, is one of three watersheds selected for a pilot program to reforest Minnesota's private, permanently protected lands. This initiative serves a dual purpose: improving water quality and promoting carbon sequestration. The program is a beginning step to the goal

of reforesting one million acres in Minnesota! Since pre-European settlement, our state has lost 15 million acres of forests. Of that loss, over 95% happened on private lands. It will take considerable effort by landowners and local entities to reverse the trend and achieve the reforestation goal.

Efforts will be led by soil and water conservation districts (SWCDs), the Mille Lacs Band of Ojibwe, Minnesota DNR, and the Board of Soil and Water Resources (BWSR). The additional funding from this program will allow these entities to build capacity and help landowners implement forest stewardship plans on their land through cost-share and technical guidance. Forest stewardship plans outline a land's potential, establish a landowner's desired goals, and outline specific actions to be taken within a designated timeframe. Notably, a forest stewardship plan not only helps a landowner achieve their goals but also qualifies them for local and state tax relief and incentive programs. This opportunity is currently available to landowners with private, permanently protected land such as a conservation easement or land enrolled in Sustainable Forest Incentive Act (SFIA).



Funding for this project was provided by the Minnesota Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund as recommended by the Legislative-Citizen Commission on Minnesota Resources (LCCMR). The Trust Fund is a permanent fund constitutionally established by the citizens of Minnesota to assist in the protection, conservation, preservation, and enhancement of the state's air, water, land, fish, wildlife, and other natural resources. Currently, 40% of net Minnesota State Lottery proceeds are dedicated to growing the Trust Fund and ensuring future benefits for Minnesota's environment and natural resources.

If you have private, permanently protected land (i.e., land enrolled in conservation easements or Sustainable Forest Incentive Act) and want to reforest your land to help create a greener Minnesota, call us!

Wake Boats and Lake Health: Balancing Fun with Environmental Responsibility

We all love being out on the lake and want to do what is best for our lakes. However, newer, more powerful boating technologies can deeply impact our lakes' health. Wake boats are popular for their ability to create large waves for water sports, but their unique design can also cause shoreline erosion, vegetation loss and impair water quality. It is important to be informed and vigilant while using these powerful watercraft to protect our lakes and enjoy their beauty for a long time.



A study by the University of Minnesota at the St. Anthony Falls Laboratory showed that wake boats produce bigger, longer-lasting waves than other boats. Wake boats require distances greater than 500 feet from the shoreline to decrease their waves to levels like non-wake surf boats. That's more than a one-and-a-half football fields! The study also found that wake surf boats produced the largest waves in height, energy, and power under both slow and fast speed conditions.

Due to the design of wake boats, their propwash can disturb the lake bottom as well. A study done at Carroll University in Wisconsin found that prop wash points down at an angle that agitates lake bottoms up to a depth of 16 feet or more. Stirring up the lake bottom can disturb beneficial plants, suspend sediment into the water, and reintroduce phosphorus buried in the sediment. Additionally, disturbing the lake bottom on lakes that have received alum treatments, such as Blue Lake, can make the treatment less effective. If we're not careful, the wakes from wake boats can increase algae blooms and reduce water quality.

If you own a wake boat, enjoy it responsibly and protect the lake you love. Here are some tips to follow:

- Stay farther away from the shore. The U of M study suggests that wake boats need at least 500 feet from the shore to reduce their impact on the shoreline.
- Keep a distance from paddle boards, kayaks, canoes, and swimmers to be courteous to those also enjoying the lake.
- Avoid creating large wakes on smaller lakes and go slow in shallow parts.
- Consider taking your wake boat to a larger and deeper lake where you can use it more freely, such as Mille Lacs Lake.

It's all about balancing our love for water sports and our responsibility as caretakers of our environment. By being mindful of our wakes, we can ensure that future generations enjoy the wonders of our lakes too.



Video: How to Identify Zebra Mussels

Watch this short video to learn how to find zebra mussels. These small creatures are very damaging to a lake's ecosystem and recreation. Unfortunately, once they are in a lake, zebra mussels are impossible to eradicate, making prevention the best method. You can help by learning how to identify these creatures and remembering to clean, drain, and dry your watercraft.

[Watch the Video](#)



Need to revitalize your woods after drought?

If any of your seedlings died over the last few years due to drought, you might be eligible for financial help to replace them through a new DNR Forestry program! To learn about this new program or apply, visit the **[cost-share for woodland owners](#)** webpage or contact your local **[DNR stewardship forester](#)** for questions about this opportunity.

Contact Details

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