



Quarterly News & Updates

May 2023 | Issue 12

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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Local Farmer Vows to Protect Clean Water

Holly Pearson and Rocky DeVries are one of the dedicated farmers in Minnesota who can proudly display the MAWQCP sign on their property. MAWQCP stands for Minnesota Agricultural Water Quality Certification Program, a voluntary initiative recognizing farmers who implement and maintain best practices to protect water quality. To become certified, farmers have to undergo an assessment of their land and water resources and adopt a conservation plan that meets or exceeds state standards. Holly and Rocky have done that on their small livestock farm outside Isanti, where they raise goats, sheep, and horses. Holly stated it was important for their farm to get certified because they "are into conservation. We are in favor of putting carbon back in the ground and protecting clean water."



They use many tactics on their farm to capture carbon and protect water quality. Their farm practices prescribed grazing, which means they rotate their animals among different pastures to improve and diversify its biology. They also no-till their fields to prevent erosion and protect water quality. Holly keeps a beautiful pollinator garden of native species and keeps honey bees to pollinate her crops and flowers. Their farm is dedicated to conservation because, as Holly sees it, conservation means "leaving your farm or property better than you found it".

Holly Pearson is not only a certified water steward, but also a leader in the local sustainable farming community. She serves on the local Sustainable Farming Association board, sharing her knowledge and experience with other farmers who want to improve their environmental performance. Holly and Rocky are examples of how farming can be both profitable and eco-friendly and how MAWQCP can help farmers achieve both goals.

Funding Secured for Projects in Isanti County that benefit the Rum River Watershed



We are dedicated to protecting and restoring the water quality of the Rum River Watershed, which covers about 80% of the county. Isanti SWCD is one of the 13 partners that adopted the Rum River Comprehensive Watershed Management Plan in 2022, which was approved by the Board of Water and Soil Resources (BWSR). The plan identifies priority areas and issues in the watershed. It receives funding from the Clean Water Land and Legacy Amendment that is dedicated to the partnership. In the most recent round of funding, Isanti SWCD received about \$260,000 for projects to improve water quality in Isanti County and the Rum River Watershed!



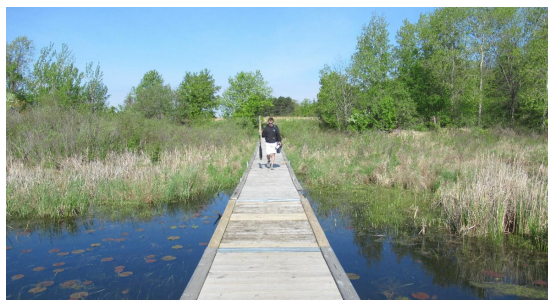
With this funding, we will accomplish:

- A wetland restoration in the Green Lake Watershed that will help reduce nutrient and sediment loading to the lake. Our design is nearly finished and should be constructed this summer, weather permitting.
- An update of the Subwatershed Assessment for Skogman Lake, which will help locate project sites for future water quality improvement efforts. After we identify key projects, we will use this information to apply for a grant to complete the most cost-effective projects.
- Shoreline restorations on Skogman and Blue Lake, which will enhance habitat and stabilize eroding banks. We hope to have some installed this summer, so stay tuned!
- Funding for agricultural non-structural projects such as cover crops, no-till, and buffer strips that will improve soil health and reduce runoff.
- Education and outreach activities both in Isanti County and watershed-wide, such as workshops, written stories, and new handout materials. This will bring awareness to the Rum Watershed's work, improve watershed-wide communications and reduce the repetition of work.

These projects are just the beginning of what we plan to accomplish! Every two years, the Rum River Watershed expects to receive about \$1 million to accomplish goals and improve water quality. Long-term, we will be able to make even more of a difference.

Rare Species Monitoring on Oxford Township Lakes

In Oxford Township, we have been working with the DNR to survey the small biodiverse lakes in the township as part of our annual lake monitoring. At the end of the summer, we will go out with a DNR Aquatic Botanist to conduct a rare species mapping inventory. The DNR Aquatic Botanist will help us identify any rare or endangered plant species living in or around the natural environment lakes. These species are important indicators of the health and diversity of the



lakes, and they may have unique adaptations or ecological roles.

This survey will give us more information about the remarkable biodiversity in these small natural environment lakes. Then we can better protect these rare species and learn how to manage the lakes long-term! We also want to raise awareness and appreciation for these unique lakes we are lucky to have in Isanti County.

Second-Grade Poster Contest Winners



We are thrilled to announce the ten winners of our soil health poster contest! These talented second-graders from different schools in Isanti County impressed us with their creative and colorful posters. Their drawings showcased the importance of healthy soil for life in and above ground. They also learned about the fun and easy experiment of "Soiling Your Undies" to test the microbial activity in the soil.



Congratulations to all the winners, and thank you for participating in this educational and artistic challenge! You can see their posters on our website and Facebook page. We hope you enjoy your prizes from GTI Theaters and the Cambridge Dairy Queen!



Tree Sale Success

This year, we sold nearly 20,000 trees as part of our annual tree sale! The pick-up was on May 6th and we had a smooth and efficient process thanks to our amazing staff and organized customers.

The trees will benefit the environment in many ways, such as providing habitat for wildlife, reducing soil erosion, enhancing water quality, and sequestering carbon. Thank you for making a difference with us!

Funding for Agriculture Projects in the Lower St. Croix Watershed



Are you a farmer in the Lower St. Croix Watershed located in the south and eastern part of the county? Thinking about trying a new practice on your operation? The Lower St. Croix Watershed Partnership has a new program to provide technical and financial assistance for agriculture practices! A variety of practices are available with built-in flexibility to allow the opportunity to try them on your land. You can choose to implement one or more practices to suit your needs, such as cover crops, prescribed grazing, no-till, and conservation cover.

Conservation staff will work one-on-one with you to create an individualized plan to integrate with your system. To get started contact Matthew Remer at 763-689-3271. By participating in this program, you can help protect and improve water quality in the Lower St. Croix River watershed area while also improving your own farm operations!



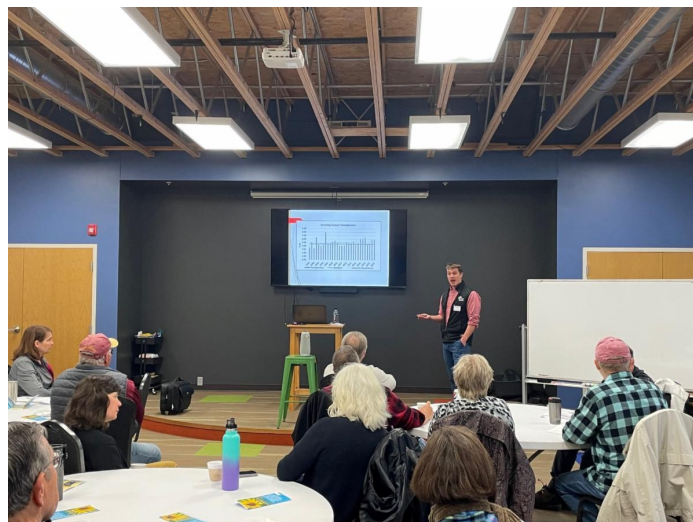
Story Map Shows Progress on Green Lake

We have made meaningful progress in improving the health of Green Lake! 2022 was the second of a 16-year federal grant to improve the health of Green Lake. The first phase of the grant is finding projects that directly impact the lake and building relationships with landowners.

We have made a short storyboard to take you through the progress made on Green Lake!

[View Green Lake's Story](#)

Skogman Lake Residents Learn About Shoreline Restorations



On April 15th, we hosted a Lakeshore Restorations on Skogman Lake workshop. The workshop aimed to educate and inspire people to protect and improve their lakefront properties. The workshop covered topics such as the current water quality trends of Skogman Lake, the benefits of shoreline restorations, and the steps and resources used to complete a shoreline restoration.



Our conservation technician Todd Kulaf presented using his lakeshore expertise. He explained how shoreline restorations can enhance water quality, wildlife habitat, erosion control, and aesthetic appeal. We also heard from Mark Funfar, a Skogman Lake homeowner who installed his shoreline buffer all by himself for the lake's health! Mark shared his experience transforming his shoreline into a beautiful, functional buffer zone with native plants. He emphasized that shoreline restorations can be simple and anyone can do it with guidance and support. They can also be made to suit your needs and include flowers you find beautiful.

Fifteen enthusiastic Skogman Lake residents came to the workshop. They became more knowledgeable about the steps to protect their beloved lake. We hope this workshop inspired lake owners to take action to protect their lake, and through recent funding from the Rum River Watershed Partnership, we will be able to help install some projects!

Upcoming Events

For Families:

Climb Theatre

Climb Theatre has four performance opportunities this summer! These interactive performances are great for kids K-6 and will be an opportunity to learn about aquatic invasive species. There are three performances already planned for this summer and open to the public:

July 25 at 5 p.m. at the Isanti Family Event in the Bluebird Amphitheater

July 26 at 10:45 a.m. at the Cambridge Public Library

July 27 at 12:45 p.m. at Cambridge City Park



For Elected and Appointed Leaders:

There are two events this summer for local elected and appointed officials. These events are specially planned for township supervisors, county commissioners, planning commission board members, lake board members, and other local leaders. If you would like to learn more about either, please contact Lgodfrey@isantiswcd.org.

Workshop on the Water

The Lower St. Croix Watershed will host two Workshops on the Water aboard the Taylor's Falls Princess and Stillwater River Boat. These workshops will take place on June 27 in Taylor's Falls and July 25 in Stillwater, both starting at 5:00 pm and ending at 9:00 pm. Topics include the economic value of clean lakes and rivers, the importance of shoreland rules and protecting vanishing shorelines, and success stories from recently "de-listed" lakes.

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. More details to come soon!

STOP AQUATIC HITCHHIKERS



CLEAN all visible aquatic plants, zebra mussels, and other prohibited invasive species from watercraft, trailers, and water-related equipment before leaving any water access or shoreland.



DRAIN water-related equipment (boat, ballast tanks, portable bait containers, motor) *and* drain bilge, livewell and baitwell by removing drain plugs before leaving a water access or shoreline property. Keep drain plugs out and water-draining devices open while transporting watercraft.



DISPOSE of unwanted bait, including minnows, leeches, and worms, in the trash. It is illegal to release bait into a waterbody or release aquatic animals from one waterbody to another. If you want to keep your bait, you must refill the bait container with bottled or tap water.

Dry, spray or rinse boats and recreational equipment before transporting to another waterbody. Dry for at least 5 days or spray/rinse with a high pressure water or hot tap water (above 120F).

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