



Quarterly News & Updates

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Greetings Friends and Neighbors!

We are so excited to share with you our NEW e-newsletter! If you are not interested in receiving future publications simply click unsubscribe at the bottom of this email. Alternatively, if you want to share this with a friend please do- they can subscribe by visiting our website at:

www.isantiswcd.org

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!

What is a Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD) anyways?

In short, SWCDs are local units of government that encourage and help landowners do things that protect the health of natural resources at the local level. SWCDs fill a crucial niche by providing conservation services to owners of private lands—private lands make up over 75% of Minnesota!



SWCDs originally formed in the 1930's during the Dust Bowl following years of intensive farming compounded by severe drought and high winds. Legislation authorized the establishment of SWCDs by local petition to assist farmers in establishing practices to reduce erosion and conserve soil and water resources. Over the years SWCDs have expanded their focus beyond agriculture to assist in a variety of areas such as lakes, rivers, wetlands, forestry, and even groundwater protection. SWCDs focus on VOLUNTARY conservation.

There is an SWCD (or two) in nearly every county in Minnesota (with the exception of Ramsey and Hennepin Counties). Each SWCD offers programs that meet the local needs of the people, land and water resources as determined by their elected leadership. Yes! Each

SWCD is run by a board of five supervisors who appear on the November ballot as a nonpartisan office. SWCDs are governed under [MN Statute 103C](#).

SWCDs are currently the only local government unit that does not have taxing authority to fund operations; as such, they rely on a hodge-podge of funding obtained from the state, counties, fees for services and grants. The Clean Water Land and Legacy Amendment, voted for by Minnesotans in 2008, has been a crucial funding source for SWCDs. The Clean Water Fund, one of four dedicated pots of money from the amendment, was created to protect, enhance and restore lakes, rivers, streams, groundwater and drinking water sources. Guess what? That's what we do! The Isanti SWCD has used the money to help pay staff to implement programs and projects and to pay for large portions of the projects to locally restore and protect water in the county.

Our State Association produced a great video that explains what an SWCD is. You can watch it [here](#).

Harvesting Sunshine Cover Crop Program

The Isanti SWCD was recently awarded a grant from Cargill, via a partnership with The Nature Conservancy, to establish approximately 650 acres of demonstration cover crops. Cover crops are a practice used by farmers to improve soil health, reduce soil erosion, increase water availability, suppress weeds, control pests, and increase biodiversity. The demonstration cover crops will be used for educational purposes to show the benefits of cover crops and that cover crops can be successfully implemented in a variety of soil types and crop rotations. The funds will be used to pay landowners a flat rate incentive payment based on the seed mix selected, cover SWCD staff time to implement the program and to fund outreach events for soil health practices.



If you are interested in this program give us a call or email [Matthew Remer](#).

Online Education -

Aquatic Invasive Species (AIS)

Do you have a child at home? We have a fun environmental education activity for them!

We recently partnered with CLIMB Theater to develop an online class and quiz targeted at elementary students. The goal of the class is to help explain what AIS are, how they negatively affect our lakes and how to help control them.

The password protected site includes a quiz, teacher and parent survey, teachers guide and the support material for interacting with the video.



Link: <https://climb.org/2020/05/15/ais-isanti>
Password: **AI\$anti2020**

2019 Outstanding Conservationists- Rod and Sara Elmstrand



The Isanti SWCD would like to congratulate Rod and Sara Elmstrand, recipients of the 2019 Isanti Soil and Water Conservation District's Outstanding Conservationist Award. Each year the Isanti SWCD recognizes individuals and/or organizations for outstanding accomplishments in implementing conservation practices and improving Minnesota's natural resources.

The Elmstrands grow and market strawberries, blueberries and pumpkins. In addition, they grow a diverse crop rotation of other crops including corn, soybeans, hay, small grains, and a variety of cover crops.

The Elmstrands are always looking for new ways to improve productivity while also improving soil health, protecting ground water and reducing pollution into nearby lakes and streams. They have practiced reduced tillage, planting multiple species of cover crops and

irrigation management.

Congratulations to the Elmstrands from all of us here at the Isanti SWCD!

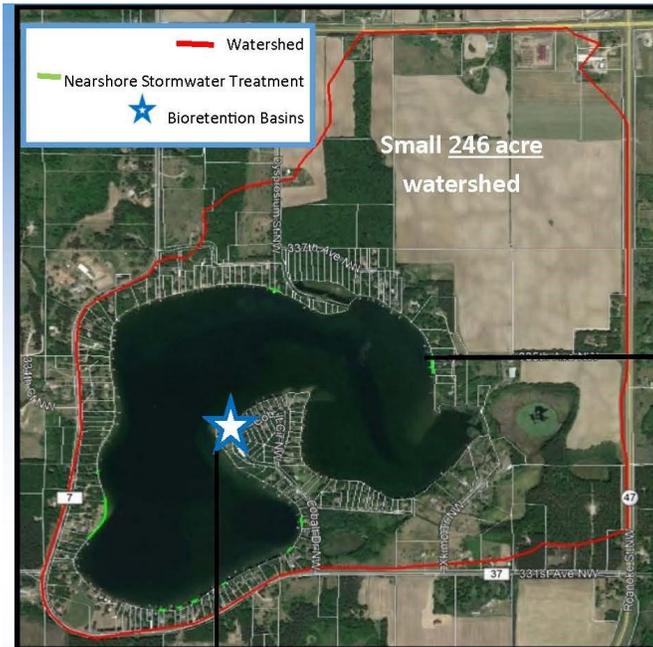
Protecting the health of Spectacle Lake



The SWCD obtained a \$93,532 Clean Water Fund Grant to install lake health improvement projects around Spectacle Lake. This lake is locally known as the "gem" of the county.

The goal of this work is to protect the health of the lake by filtering rainwater runoff, capturing sediment and eliminating shoreline erosion. The projects also create important wildlife habitat.

The projects to be completed include: shoreline restorations and raingardens on private property and a large raingarden located at the public swimming beach owned by Wyanett Township. We hope to install the swimming beach project by the end of 2020!



Wyanett Township and Spectacle Lake Association have dedicated resources toward this project-- it would not be possible without their partnership!

Starry Stonewort Education Event

Starry stonewort is an aquatic invasive algae that, much like other aquatic invasive plants, has a negative effect on aquatic ecosystems and can prevent Minnesotans from enjoying lake activities.

Starry Trek is an event that was developed by staff at the Minnesota Aquatic Invasive Species Research Center (MAISRC) with the goal of using volunteers to better understand the distribution of the algae in MN.

The Isanti SWCD will be coordinating a Starry Trek event on Saturday, August 15th. Volunteers will be trained on identification, monitoring and collection protocols and will then be sent to area lakes to search for starry stonewort and other aquatic invasive species.



Date: August 15th

Time: 8:30am- 1:00pm

Location: Spectacle Lake DNR Public Access

RSVP by August 6th to Tkulaf@isantiswcd.org or 763-689-3271

Tree Sale Success!



We'd like to take this opportunity to thank you for your continued loyalty and support of our annual tree sale. Planting trees is critical to protecting and improving our environment in Minnesota.

We plan to open the 2021 sale late 2020 or very early 2021- keep an eye on our website for details!

Meet our Staff - Matthew Remer, Conservation Technician

1. Background/Why did you want to work at an SWCD/Environmental Conservation Field?

I grew up hunting, fishing, camping, biking, hiking, and spending time outdoors with friends and family. Basically doing anything outdoors. I have always had a love for the environment and getting involved at the SWCD and in the environmental field was a great way to enjoy nature while working to preserve it.

2. Where did you go to college? For what?

I went to college at Saint John's University in St. Joseph, MN. I received a bachelor's degree in Environmental Studies.

3. What programs do you work with at the SWCD?

I will be working with the buffer law, water monitoring, observation well monitoring, RIM easements, woods/forest program, and agriculture program development.



4. What is your favorite part of working at the SWCD/ what do you enjoy most?

I love that I get to work in the field and in an office setting while making a difference on the landscape. Water quality is something that I have always been passionate about and I get to work to improve water quality every day.

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