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**Santa Doles out Dollars for Clean Water Projects in Washington County**

The Minnesota Board of Water and Soil Resources (BWSR) recently announced the recipients of more than \$10 million in grant funding from the Minnesota Clean Water Fund. Of 159 grant proposals from around the state, four projects in Washington County made the cut and will receive grants totaling nearly \$340,000.

“This is great news for people living in Washington County,” said Washington Conservation District Supervisor Sarah Hietpas. Added BWSR Executive Director John Jaschke, “Because these projects will use local contractors and materials, they will benefit the local economy as well as water resources.”

The largest grant, \$210,000, will go to the Brown’s Creek Watershed District, which plans to partner with Oak Glen Golf Course in Stillwater to repair 1300 feet of eroding stream bank and plant 2.25 acres of native habitat along Brown’s Creek. Warm water and excess sediment in Brown’s Creek keep trout in the stream from reproducing and also kill off the insect larva the fish depend on for food. The habitat and buffer plantings will provide shade to cool the stream and will also keep dirt from washing into the water.

Another Stillwater area project, led by the Middle St. Croix Watershed Management Organization, will help clean up Lily Lake. The Middle St. Croix WMO will work with the City of Stillwater and local homeowners to install more than 20 raingardens in priority neighborhoods in order to prevent phosphorus, which causes algae blooms, and sediment from polluting the lake. Grant funds will also be used for a similar project at Powers Lake in Woodbury, where the Washington Conservation District will work with local homeowners to install twenty raingardens within priority neighborhoods draining to the lake.

The fourth grant awarded will allow Washington County to retrofit the parking lot at the Oakdale Library with several small raingardens and a large bioretention area (which is essentially a large, engineered raingarden) to help improve Armstrong and Wilmes Lakes. The amount of phosphorus running off into Armstrong Lake needs to be cut by 100 pounds per year to clean up the lake and this project alone will cut 10 pounds per year. It will also soak 1,221,900 gallons of rainwater per year into the ground, which will help to recharge groundwater supplies in a key part of the county where aquifer levels have been declining. Washington Conservation District will work with the county to design and install the raingardens and South Washington Watershed District will provide additional funding.

The Minnesota Clean Water Fund is one of four funds created by the Legacy Amendment, which was passed by Minnesota voters in 2008. The projects in Washington County will be completed during 2011 and 2012.

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