



Education Updates

Fall 2010

EMWREP Rural Outreach Moves Forward with Research Assistance

EMWREP partners administered a survey to 60 rural property owners during this year's Washington County Fair. While our survey sample was small, the results can give partners some direction as we move forward in developing outreach strategies. For example, survey results indicate that we may see the most success if we target our initial outreach efforts to people with 5-10 acres, since they were the most interested in conservation topics and the types of services we offer. Of all of the groups, these landowners also expressed the most interest in creating wildlife habitat, which suggests that a "Bird Habitat for Clean Water" message could work for this audience. Another finding, that a large number of survey respondents expressed interest in controlling weeds and invasive species on their land, indicates that we could use this as a hook to engage people in larger conservation projects, such as woodland restoration, that also have a water quality benefit.

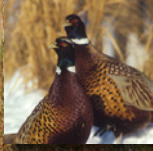
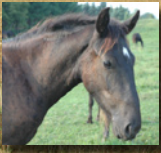
This fall, the CURA Program (Center for Urban and Regional Affairs) at the University of Minnesota will be funding a part-time student researcher to assist in conducting 2-3 focus group sessions with rural landowners to get more in depth feedback on topics introduced in the county fair survey. Alex Liebman is a biology student at Macalester College who spent the past year working on a large farm in California. He can be reached at 413-320-7018 or aliebman@macalester.edu. In addition to the focus groups, he will be reviewing research from outreach programs in other states and conducting interviews with resource professionals in Washington County.

For the focus group sessions, we will be using the watershed priority map developed during last year's Water Consortium meetings to select people owning rural properties draining to priority water bodies. Our tentative plan is to interview people owning:

- 1) Woodlands near the St. Croix in Afton and Denmark (where the Top 50 P project grant will be funding BMP's in 2011 and 2012)
- 2) 5-20 acres with pasture in the Hugo/May/Grant area (near the headwaters of Brown's Creek); and,
- 3) 5-10 acre "large lots" in the Lake Elmo / West Lakeland area.

Also during the fall, Cindy Ratzlaff, a University of Minnesota student whose family has been farming in southern Washington County for several decades, will be conducting phone interviews with rural landowners who have participated in BMP projects with EMWREP partners in the past. The goal of the interviews and focus groups will be to determine what kinds of conservation practices people are most interested in doing on their land, what barriers exist that prevent them from doing these projects, and what incentives or assistance could help to encourage more rural landowners to do projects. We will also be using the focus groups to get feedback on our concept ideas for Blue Birds for Clean Water: A Program for Woodlands, Farmlands and Big Backyards.

Love Living on the Land?



You are invited to attend a free breakfast to talk about Whole Farm Planning. Get the information and tools needed to strategically manage one of your most valuable assets – today and in the future.

Other Rural Lands Outreach

Washington Conservation District and Carnelian-Marine-St. Croix WD are collaborating on a breakfast for farmers on Oct. 7. The WCD also received a grant to identify the Top 50 Sources of Phosphorus to the St. Croix in lower Washington County and to work with property owners to mitigate these sources. The project will begin in 2011.

Smooth sailing on the St. Croix River

It was another beautiful evening on the St. Croix River, July 21, as more than 100 local elected officials and decision makers from both sides of the river set sail for a NEMO workshop on the water. Sponsored by EMWREP, the MN DNR and the St. Croix River Association, the event was designed to build on concepts introduced during the first St. Croix River workshop last summer.

The event included a keynote speech by Jim Almendinger, Senior Scientist with the St. Croix Watershed Research Station, followed by three interactive learning activities.

Workshop facilitators conducted a guided view from the river, showcasing stories of success from rural, developing and fully developed communities along the river. They also shared water samples, aquatic invertebrates and monitoring technology. A final activity was designed to help communities select appropriate policies and practices to protect water quality and achieve other community goals.

During the next two years, Conservation St. Croix, a collaborative of nine Minnesota Soil and Water Conservation Districts in the St. Croix Basin, plans to provide targeted assistance to help communities update policies, ordinances and zoning and subdivision codes to better protect the river, thanks to a 319 Clean Water Grant. Post workshop efforts will also help communities to take part in the new “Blue Star” Recognition Program (www.bluestarmn.org), which was developed to reward Minnesota communities for reducing stormwater runoff into lakes and rivers and for good water management policies.

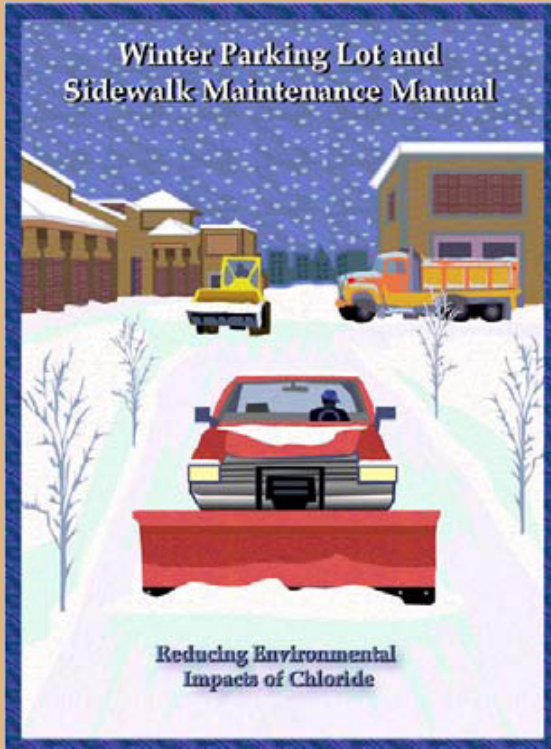


Melissa Lewis, BWSR, introduced workshop attendees to aquatic invertebrates found in the St. Croix.



VBWD manager Dave Buechek and SWWD manager Jack Lavold converse on the deck of the Grand Duchess.

October 26: Stormwater U Workshop for Winter Parking Lot Maintenance



EMWREP partners are invited to a winter snow and ice management workshop on October 26, 8am-1pm in North St. Paul. The workshop is only \$10 (free for those that register before Oct. 19) and includes breakfast and lunch.

Workshop topics will include:
Application Rates of Materials
How to Calibrate Equipment
Weather Conditions
Storing Materials
Environmental Effects
New Maintenance Methods
De-Icing
Anti-Icing

The workshop is designed for city and county staff and contractors that are responsible for winter maintenance of parking lots and sidewalks. If you use an independent contractor for your municipal parking lots, please encourage them to attend as well.

Register with Louise Watson at 651-792-7956 or louise@rwmwd.org.

October Focus: Community Clean-ups for Water Quality

This year, the Freshwater Society has launched an initiative called Community Clean-ups for Water Quality, which encourages citizens to help keep lakes and rivers clean by removing leaves and other debris from city streets during the fall and spring when this debris poses the biggest threat to our waterways. Between 2003 and 2009, Community Clean-up volunteers in the Minnesota River Valley collected enough debris to prevent 8,400 pounds of phosphorus from running off into the Minnesota River.

Now Freshwater Society is hoping to take Community Clean-ups statewide. They are asking cities, counties and watershed agencies to consider organizing or supporting neighborhood cleanups in their communities during the month of October. A comprehensive Community Clean-ups Toolkit includes everything a group might need to get started, from sign-up sheets, to promotional flyers and even door hangers. They have also created a web page to track participating groups and the number of bags of debris that each group collects (www.freshwater.org/index.php/projects/community-cleanups-for-water-quality).

If you are interested in organizing a clean-up in your communities, contact project coordinator Jenna Caywood (jcaywood@freshwater.org, 651-487-8648) for more information and assistance.

Congratulations to Stillwater for a Blue Star Award!

NEMO programs are available to help EMWREP cities



THE
BLUE STAR AWARD
PROGRAM
Recognizing Excellence in Community Stormwater Management

In July, Minnesota debuted the new Blue Star Award program to recognize communities that are going above and beyond regulatory requirements to keep runoff pollution from degrading lakes, streams, rivers and wetlands. To achieve a Blue Star Award, cities must complete a rigorous assessment of their policies and practices in three core areas: 1) Water Friendly Planning and Preservation; 2) Stormwater Management Standards and Practices; and 3) Stormwater Pollution Prevention. Communities that score higher than 60% on their assessment earn a Blue Star, and those that are among the top ten highest achievers in Minnesota are listed on the Leader Board at www.bluestarmn.org. The award program is sponsored by a partnership between state agencies and watershed districts, along with the engineering firm Emmons & Olivier Resources and the non-profit group Friends of the Mississippi River.

This September, Stillwater took the Blue Star assessment and scored high enough to earn the Blue Star Award. The city attained high points for natural resources preservation and management, stormwater management policies, and inspections and enforcement. They also received bonus points for their involvement in the East Metro Water Resource Education Program, through which they have helped to coordinate workshops and trainings for homeowners, city staff, contractors and elected officials. In Washington County, Woodbury is the only other city to attain a Blue Star Award thus far.

Other EMWREP cities are encouraged to take the online assessment as well. Participating cities and their results are only posted if a community scores high enough to get the award. If, through the assessment, you identify areas in which your city could improve, however, there are many program modules and presentations available through Northland NEMO (an EMWREP program activity) to help. Contact Angie Hong (651-275-1136 x.35 or angie.hong@mnwcd.org) to request a presentation on Linking Land Use to Water Quality, Raingardens and Bioretention, TMDL's or any of the other NEMO programs and presentations.

Upcoming EMWREP Activities

Blue Thumb Partners Meeting: Fri., October 15, 9-11am at Capitol Region Watershed District

Newport Community Buckthorn Pull: Sat., October 30, 9am-12pm at Bailey School Forest

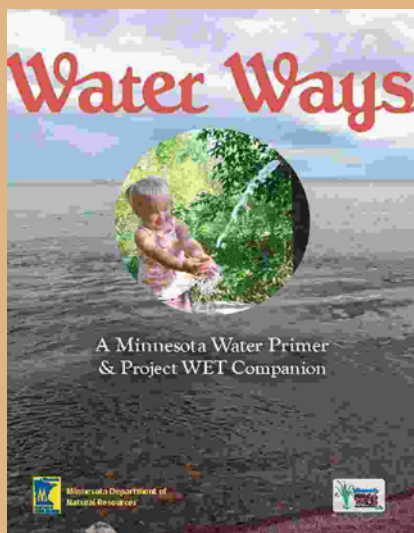
Blue Thumb Social Media Training: Fri., Nov. 5, 9-10:30am at Capitol Region WD

Blue Thumb Workshop: Thu., November 18, 6:30-8pm at Birchwood Village Hall

November 3: Watershed Education Roundtable

On Wed., November 3 from 8:30-11:30am, Metro WaterShed Partners will be hosting a watershed education roundtable discussion at Hamline University's Kay Fredricks Room in the Klas Center (1535 Taylor Ave., St. Paul). This event will feature a panel of speakers addressing two important questions: 1) Does watershed education make a difference? and 2) How do we define success in our education programs? Come to hear their surprising answers and to share your thoughts on the topic.

New Minnesota Supplement to Project WET



Minnesota Project WET is offering a new book for educators, Water Ways: A Minnesota Water Primer and Project WET Companion. Water Ways is a 150 page book with content on water science basics, Minnesota's rivers, lakes, groundwater, wetlands, life in water, human use of water, challenges to water resources, and water policy. Each chapter includes a list of suggested Project WET Activities, career profiles, classroom activities, field-trip suggestions and additional resources.

The primer is available for free download to all and in print form to educators. To receive your free print copy of the book, contact Minnesota DNR Information Center 888-646-6367 or info.dnr@state.mn.us. Water Ways is also available online at <http://mndnr.gov/projectwet/waterways> along with additional teacher resources being developed to support its use in the classroom.

If EMWREP partners are interested in hosting a Project WET teacher training workshop or in organizing a workshop for EMWREP staff and board members, please let me know and I can work with April Rust to do so.

Remember - EMWREP Resources are now On-Line!

Access EMWREP resources such as reports, news articles and more at www.mnwcd.org/emwrep.php. You can also go directly to 2010 newspaper articles at www.mnwcd.org/2010waterarticles.php or download pdf's of brochures and materials at www.mnwcd.org/emwrepresources.php. Refer citizens to www.mnwcd.org/cleanwater.php to find watershed maps, BMP program information and upcoming EMWREP workshops.

Members of the East Metro Water Resource Education Program:

Brown's Creek Watershed • Carnelian Marine - St. Croix Watershed
Comfort Lake - Forest Lake Watershed • Cottage Grove • Dellwood
Forest Lake • Lake Elmo • Middle St. Croix Watershed
Ramsey - Washington Metro Watershed • Rice Creek Watershed • Stillwater
South Washington Watershed • Valley Branch Watershed • Willernie
West Lakeland • Washington Conservation District • Washington County

