

## **EMWREP & Lower St. Croix Watershed Partnership: 2024 Education Work Plan**

Our collaborative education and engagement programming supports the following long-term goals:

1. Healthy lakes, rivers, streams and wetlands;
2. Clean, useable, and plentiful groundwater resources;
3. Connected habitat corridors;
4. Environmentally sustainable local food production; and
5. An informed, environmentally conscious, and engaged populace that takes individual and collective action to protect and restore natural resources.

Secondary goals include:

1. Building social capacity for environmental change and strengthening community connections through partnerships, volunteer engagement, and education programs that encourage both individual and systemic change;
2. Building climate resiliency; and
3. Ensuring that all people in our communities benefit equally from the protection and restoration of natural resources and are equally engaged in the projects and programs that we implement.

### **Guiding philosophies and education approach:**

The EMWREP and LSC education program acts as a connector and a catalyst to propel new initiatives, support the work of internal and external partners, and amplify the impact of locally led initiatives. Our education programs are action-oriented, encourage both individual and systemic change, and utilize social science research to guide development of effective outreach and engagement strategies.

### **Priority objectives for 2024:**

1. [Engage public and private landowners to plant native landscapes and raingardens, especially in priority locations.](#)
2. [Maintain and restore natural shorelines.](#)
3. [Promote conservation development.](#)
4. [Minimize stormwater runoff pollution.](#)
5. [Engage farm owners and operators in projects and practices that reduce erosion, promote soil health, reduce surface and groundwater contamination, and restore habitat.](#)
6. [Build social capacity for environmental change and strengthen community connections.](#)

## Objective 1: Engage public and private landowners to plant native landscapes and raingardens, especially in priority locations.

Components of this work include:

1. Educating and engaging urban, rural, and commercial landowners
2. Collaborating with schools and religious institutions
3. Developing targeted outreach campaigns
4. Identifying and making “big picture” connections
5. Training landscape contractors and professionals
6. Utilizing and supporting regional programs such as Blue thumb – Planting for Clean Water
7. Utilizing and supporting local, partner-led programs such as cost-share grants and site visits.

### Programs and activities in 2024

- Continue to participate in and support the Blue Thumb - Planting for Clean Water partnership (\$500)
- Support for partner outreach & cost-share programs for landowner BMP projects.
- Workshops and events
  - Jan 30, 31, Feb. 1: [Meet your pollinators webinar series by UMN Extension](#)
  - Sat., March 9: What’s the Buzz about Native Plants? (Chisago County Master Gardener Expo)
  - Tue., March 12: [Bringing Life to Your Landscape: Planting for Pollinators and Wildlife](#) (Oakdale Library)
  - Tue., March 19: [Gardening with Native Plants](#) (Securian webinar)
  - Spring TBD: Invasives to Table Wild Edibles workshop (Oakdale Discovery Center?)
  - Spring TBD: Woodland workshop at Belwin (Afton)
  - Spring TBD: Burn training for landowners with prairie on their land (Washington County)
  - Sat., May 18: [Belwin Bison Release](#) (10am-2pm) (Afton)
  - May 18: Master Gardener Plant Sale (Washington County Fairground)
  - May TBD: Raingarden maintenance clean-up event (Stillwater)
  - Summer TBD: Prairie restoration open house event and tour (Lake Elmo Park Reserve)
  - Summer TBD: Evening in the Prairie walks (Bayport)
  - July 20: [Master Gardener Garden Tour](#) (9am-4pm)
- Priority locations - **(ask for partner input on this)**
  - Chisago SWCD
    - Support for school or 4H planting projects and curriculum
  - CMSCWD
    - Big Marine and Big Carnelian shoreline owners – goal is 100 shoreline planting projects in the next 10 years
  - CLFLWD
    - Bone, Comfort and Forest Lake shoreline owners – goal is 150 shoreline plantings in the next 10 years
    - Bone Lake De-Listing Celebration!

- Isanti
  - Focus on protecting existing natural areas in Oxford Twp.
  - Plan ahead for new home buyers. Create a welcome packet modeled after CMSCWD.
- Middle St. Croix WMO
  - Promote cost-share grants in Lakeland, St Mary's Point, and Baytown Township
- Rice Creek Watershed District
  - More RCWD cost-share projects in Washington County
- RWMWD
  - Develop interpretive signage for new pollinator plantings at Landfall
  - More RWMWD cost-share projects in Washington County
- **Email outreach to Lawns to Legumes applicants**
- **Education materials and resources:**
  - Order new print materials for outreach events, including:
    - Update raingarden flyer - 200
    - Bee Lawns – 200
    - Low-Mow lawns – 200
    - Native Plant Nurseries – 250
    - Climate Resilient Landscapes – 100
    - Native Gardens for Pollinators – 250
    - Native Gardens for Birds – 250
  - Continue to maintain online resources at [www.mnwcd.org/planting-for-clean-water](http://www.mnwcd.org/planting-for-clean-water)

## Objective 2: Maintain and restore natural shorelines.

Components of this work include:

1. Educating and engaging shoreline landowners
2. Collaborating with lake associations
3. Training landscape contractors and professionals
4. Training realtors selling shoreline properties
5. Educating and engaging local leaders from cities, townships and counties to adopt enhanced shoreline ordinances
6. Utilizing and supporting local, partner-led programs such as cost-share grants and site visits.
7. Collaborating with external partners such as Minnesota DNR and MLRA

### Programs and activities in 2024

- **Priority locations: (ask for partner input on this)**
  - Lakes with new biotic impairments or lakes at-risk of biotic impairments:
    - Jane, Big Carnelian, Big Marine, Bone, Chisago Chain of Lakes, Rush Lake
- **Workshops and events**
  - **Tue. Feb 27 or Fri March 1:** Shoreline contractor training (WashCo North Shop)
    - 2hrs, in-person
    - Focus on contractors working in northern Washington and southern Chisago Counties (planning partners = Chisago SWCD, CLFLWD, CMSCWD, MNLA)
    - Value of natural shorelines; State and local rules; How-tos for ecological approach to shorelines; Resources for contractors and their clients
  - Realtor Workshop
    - Work with SPAAR to create Shoreline Realtor on-demand course (Barbara)
      - Available for any realtor in Minnesota. Includes CEUs. In-progress.
    - Isanti SWCD and Chisago SWCD would also like an in-person workshop.
      - Scenarios: Three imaginary clients and properties for sale. Who would you match with which property? Use real lakes in the watershed as the options.
    - Washington County will offer a realtor workshop focused on wells and septic
  - **March/April 2024:** Mill Stream Restoration Open House #2
  - **April 26:** Minnesota Lakes & Rivers Annual Conference in Stillwater
  - **Spring TBD:** Protecting and restoring natural shorelines webinar
  - **June/July TBD:** Big Marine open house
  - **July/August 2024:** Shoreline Showcase events
    - Chisago County
    - Big Marine, Big Carnelian
  - Wetland restoration workshop in Chisago with USFWS
  - Small lakes in person outreach event/presentation in Isanti County

- **Lake Association Meetings** - provide short presentation on vanishing shorelines
  - Comfort Lake
  - Rush Lake
  - Goose Lake
  - Center and Green Lakes
  - Friends of Anderson Park
  - Navigate to a Cleaner Lake in Chisago LID
- **MN Lakes and Rivers Advocates coordination and annual meeting**
- **Media and Communications:**
  - Deliver monthly emails to lake associations via the East Metro Lakes e-newsletter
  - Big Marine Lake Special Edition Newsletter
  - Support partners in developing welcome packets for new shoreline landowners
    - Chisago Chain of Lakes, Goose and Rush Lakes, CLFLWD?
    - Lots of property turnover happening and people are clear-cutting the shoreline.
    - Buyers need a better understanding of jurisdiction and enforcement
  - Adapt shoreline survey for use in other locations
    - Chisago Goose Lake? LID?
      - Print and online survey options
    - Isanti
      - Total number of shoreline owners is less than 100. Are they planning to sell in the near future? Would they be interested in establishing a conservation easement?
  - CMSCWD Shoreline Showcase Awards (categories, marketing materials, award and shoreline sign) August 2024
  - Print materials
    - What to ask your lakeshore landscape contractor - print 100
    - Update shoreline plantings flyer – print 100
    - Develop flyer illustrating connections of shoreline use to habitat degradation
  - Article and video topics
    - Chisago County
      - Video for what to expect at the boat launch
      - AIS Detector article
      - Features on Chisago LID non- shoreline residents
      - Channel/weir projects in Chisago LID
      - Water Watchers program launch - Josiah Cole
    - Anoka County - Document Martin Lake shoreline restoration efforts
    - Isanti Co - Rare aquatic plant surveys on the lakes in Oxford Twp.
  - Resort public launch outreach? Can we provide signage or outreach?

## Objective 3: Promote conservation development.

Components of this work include:

1. Educating and engaging local leaders from cities, townships and counties to adopt MIDS.
2. Supporting local communities in natural resources planning to preserve open space, protect high quality and sensitive natural resources, and create/maintain habitat corridors.
3. Developing strategies for engaging builders and developers.
4. Developing educational materials for new homebuyers, especially those buying property to build or remodel on their own.

### Programs and activities in 2024

- **Workshops and presentations**
  - St. Croix River Workshops on the Water (Angie and Barbara)
    - One on land in Chisago
    - One on the water in Stillwater
  - Continue MIDS outreach with interested communities/gathering impact stories (Barbara)
    - Tour of conservation developments – Jackson Meadows, Wildflower of Lake Elmo, Eco-Village in River Falls (Angie help to plan)
    - Success stories?
      - South Twin Lake de-listing
    - Don't need to apply everywhere but definitely need to apply on shoreline properties
  - Isanti Co is updating their shoreline ordinances this coming year (Barbara will track progress on this)
  - Collaborate with RCWD on presentations to Chambers of Commerce
- **Education materials:**
  - Share "When Development Comes to Town" video with local communities
    - Send individual emails to all cities/townships in the watershed (copy watershed staff person) to share the video and offer an in-person presentation + support for ordinance review and update
    - Would be nice to also include data on how much they collected from enhanced street sweeping and what financial incentives they've received
  - Develop MIDS presentation and education materials
    - Need continuous training for council members every time there is turnover
- **Schedule meeting with MN Builders Association and partners to talk about opportunities with new development**
- **Priority locations: (ask for partner input on this)**
  - Example = Lake Elmo, Marine, Scandia, Chisago County, Oxford Township
  - Pushing for conservation development:
    - Developer looking at re-developing Willie's Hidden Harbor
    - Any possibilities for influence at Mississippi Dunes?

## Objective 4: Minimize stormwater runoff pollution.

Components of this work include:

1. Creating and disseminating stormwater education materials to the general public
2. Training municipal staff and contractors
3. Supporting partners in meeting MS4 permit requirements
4. Engaging community residents through the Adopt-a-Drain program
5. Utilizing and supporting regional programs such as Watershed Partners

### Programs and activities in 2024

- **Priority topics** (ask for partner input on this)
  - Example = Chlorides, yard waste, lawn chemicals, micro-plastics, IDDE
- **Workshops and events**
  - Work with EMWREP and LSC partners to identify priority audiences and training needs for Stormwater U workshops
  - SMART Salting
    - Create mailing package with Low Salt education materials. Send to private contractors, schools and churches. Send, on request, to problem properties.
    - Workshops x2 (northern and southern locations)
    - Ask Woodbury to host a de-icing workshop with tour plus show & tell of new equipment. They have a new salter for trails and walk-behind brine sprayer. How they are tracking the impact and chloride reductions.
    - Chisago Co bought scales and communities are planning a training event on how to calibrate equipment. Will invite Isanti Co and Cambridge to training as well.
    - Collaborate with RCWD on outreach/training near White Bear Lake
  - HOA mini conference
  - IDDE presentations for city staff, on request
- **Public engagement:**
  - Continue to promote and recruit volunteers for Adopt-a-Drain
    - Organize storm drain stenciling events with scout groups, youth groups, and other organizations
    - Outreach to Adopt-a-Highway volunteers?
    - Isanti will join the Adopt a Drain program through the Rum River Watershed.
    - “Adopt me” signs to place near drains at community events.
- **Additional activities:**
  - Develop an annual calendar of topics for MS4 stormwater education and deliver monthly emails with print materials, videos, and social media graphics, and other content for partners to use in their communications. Share MS4 education content on social media platforms.
  - Develop new materials as needed.
  - Continue to share MS4 municipal training resources with partners on a regular basis

- Develop new educational materials for HOAs to support better maintenance of stormwater and green infrastructure
- Try to recruit North Branch and Wyoming to join EMWREP.



## **Objective 5: Engage farm owners and operators in projects and practices that reduce erosion, promote soil health, reduce surface and groundwater contamination, and restore habitat.**

Components of this work include:

1. Educating and engaging conventional row crop farmers to adopt practices such as cover crops, reduced tillage, and nutrient management, especially in priority locations.
2. Engaging farm owners to convert annual crops to perennial crops, grazing, or native habitat.
3. Engaging large landowners in high priority locations to establish wetland banks and conservation easements.
4. Developing targeted outreach campaigns
5. Identifying and making “big picture” connections
6. Utilizing and supporting regional and partner-led programs such as cost-share grants, soil health grants, and site visits.
7. Helping small-scale farmers, especially those from BIPOC and immigrant communities, to access resources and programs that support sustainable farming.

### **Programs and activities in 2024**

- **Priority locations: (ask for partner input on this)**
  - Southern Washington county
    - Radke farm
    - Lots of momentum after last year’s SoWash field days
  - Isanti
    - Katie Hagen from UMN Extension doing education in Isanti, including Conservation Conversations
    - Isanti Outstanding Conservationist is in LSC portion of Isanti Co
    - Farmer-led group starting in January. Seven farmers in the group.
    - Kristi LaRowe family has been doing cover crops.
  - RCWD
    - SWA along Hardwood Creek near Oneka Lake. WCD has \$20k for project implementation that needs to be spent in 2024. Washington County has \$20k also. So \$40k total. Could be used for structural or nonstructural practices.
    - Goal to do outreach by April 2024.
- **Workshops, field days:**
  - Field days in different parts of the basin
  - Partnering with UMN Extension to host/organize webinars
  - Land protection programming with Wild Rivers Conservancy, Minnesota Land Trust, and others
  - Topics: nutrient management, prescribed grazing
- **Additional activities:**
  - Support WCD and Washington County in securing funding and staff support for a small-scale, organic farming pilot effort at Washington County Parks

- Targeted outreach campaign for soil testing in the spring. \$1000 available pre-paid. Community gardens? Immigrant farm groups? (Work with Master Gardeners)

## **Objective 6: Build social capacity for environmental change and strengthen community connections.**

Components of this work include:

1. Building and nurturing partnerships with state and local government, non-profit organizations, sportsman groups, and community groups.
2. Engaging volunteers through programs such as Minnesota Water Stewards, Master Gardeners, AIS Detectors, Adopt-a-Drain, and Adopt-a-Raingarden.
3. Maintaining a robust community presence that utilizes multiple media platforms and communication strategies, including blog and newspaper articles, paper and e-newsletters, social media, websites, and community events.
4. Conducting audience research to understand knowledge, behaviors, barriers, and opportunities and guide development of effective outreach and engagement programs.

### **Activities in 2024:**

- **Partnerships:**
  - Continue to participate in and support Watershed Partners (\$500)
  - Continue to participate in and support SWEEP
  - Continue to build partnerships with non-profit organizations and community groups
  - Establish new relationships with sportsman groups. Are there rural habitat restoration efforts that these partnerships could help to support?
    - Sportsman group in Chisago County. Engage them for We Are Water
    - Lori will reach out to Pheasants Forever in Hugo / Forest Lake area
  - Youth engagement (Lori)
    - Support for Campus Greening programming
    - Develop a prairie curriculum for Lake Middle and other schools
    - Work with Sage to re-engage schools in RWMWD
- **Stakeholder engagement**
  - Support for SWWD, BCWD, and MSCWMO plan updates
- **Volunteer programs:**
  - Continue to mentor and support Minnesota Water Stewards
    - Two new water stewards in Forest Lake (RCWD)
    - Engage the stewards to complete a grant project at Forest Lake High School
  - Outreach to schools and community organizations to develop volunteer activities
  - Recruit and support AIS Detectors in Chisago and Washington Counties
- **Media and communications:**
  - Weekly articles for East Metro Water blog and local newspapers (Angie)
  - 1-2 article per month for Knickpoints blog (Barbara)
  - Short-form videos, graphics, and formatted content
  - 2-4 posts per week for TikTok, Facebook, Instagram and YouTube
  - Articles for partner newsletters

- Ensure that content developed by the education team (blog posts, videos, graphics) is consistently shared on WCD, LSC, and EMWREP partner websites and through social media channels
- **Community events and presentations**
  - **Jan 25:** Youth event at Anderson Elementary (Bayport)
  - **June 1:** RWMWD WaterFest at Lake Phalen
  - **Summer TBD:** Forest Lake Arts in the Park (pick a Tuesday in summer)
  - **Summer:** Isanti Children's Water Festival
  - **June 20 - Aug. 4:** Chisago County hosting the We Are Water
    - Indoor exhibit at North Branch Library
    - Satellite exhibit at History Center in downtown Lindstrom
    - 11 community events happening during the exhibit
  - **July 31 – Aug. 4:** Washington County Fair
  - **Aug. 22 – Sept 2:** Minnesota State Fair
  - **Fall:** Chisago Children's Water Festival
  - **Sept 25:** [Metro Children's Water Festival](#)
  - Well testing clinic in Chisago and Washington Counties
  - Landfall, Oakdale, Cottage Grove, Woodbury - Latino fishing events?
- **Continue to work toward goals outlined in the WCD Equity Plan**
- **Topics for articles and videos:**
  - Surface and groundwater interactions
  - Pollinators
  - Street sweeping program & new salting equipment in SWWD
    - Woodbury doing enhanced street sweeping. Cottage Grove will start next year.
  - Pool 2 just got a fish consumption advisory for PFAS. This will likely expand to other water bodies as well - Ravine Lake, Colby Lake, St. Croix River
  - AIS Detectors in Chisago County
  - What to expect at the boat launch – video
  - Chisago SWCD overview

## **Opportunities for growth if additional funding and staff capacity becomes available:**

### **1. Campus Greening & Youth Programming:**

- a. Expand the SWWD Campus Greening program to a larger geographical area. Core components of this initiative include:
  - i. Campus greening projects that replace non-active use turf with native habitat.
  - ii. Hands-on, experiential education that engages students in learning about watersheds and utilizing and caring for the created habitat on their school properties. This is a sequential, multi-lesson curriculum, currently led by Carpenter Nature Center at the 6<sup>th</sup> grade level. It could also be adapted for 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> grades.

### **2. Art for Water:**

- a. Recruit, train, and mentor artist water stewards, in partnership with Freshwater's Art for Water program.
- b. This initiative could also incorporate artist residencies, community art projects, and art installations.
- c. Collaborate with White Bear Center for the Arts and ArtReach St. Croix