



# Quarterly News & Updates

June 2021 | Issue 4

## 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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Follow us on Facebook for more updates!



## Your Clean Water Fund Money at Work!



Remember the three-eighths of one percent sales tax increase for clean water that you voted for back in 2008? Not a day goes by that the SWCD doesn't think of it; nearly everything we do relies on money associated with what MN's call The Clean Water Land and Legacy Amendment.

Here's just one of the many cool projects tied to the Clean Water funding that we have going on this summer:

In 2020 we received \$93,532 from the Clean



Water Fund In the interest of protecting Spectacle Lake, also referred to as the “gem of Isanti County”.

Although the lake is currently healthy, there are reasons to be concerned for the health of the lake. Recent data indicates a shift in water clarity trends- from an increasing trend (getting clearer) in 2014 to no trend in 2019. This means water clarity might be declining. Furthermore, development, redevelopment and usage pressures on the lake are increasing. The projects we plan to install with the grant will help to keep this lake in the

“protection mode” for the long run! Here’s a fun fact: protecting lake health is MUCH cheaper than restoring lake health. The SWCD is always looking for ways to use taxpayer money wisely!

The grant will install four of eight of the most cost-effective nutrient reduction projects within the land area that drains to the lake. The projects include three raingardens and multiple lakeshore erosion control projects (buffers). Check out the article included in this newsletter titled “Spectacle Lake Beach Rain Garden” for details on one of the most visible projects to be completed with this grant.

These efforts on Spectacle Lake would not have been possible without the partnership of the Spectacle Lake Association and the Wyannett Township.

## Welcome our Newest Team member!

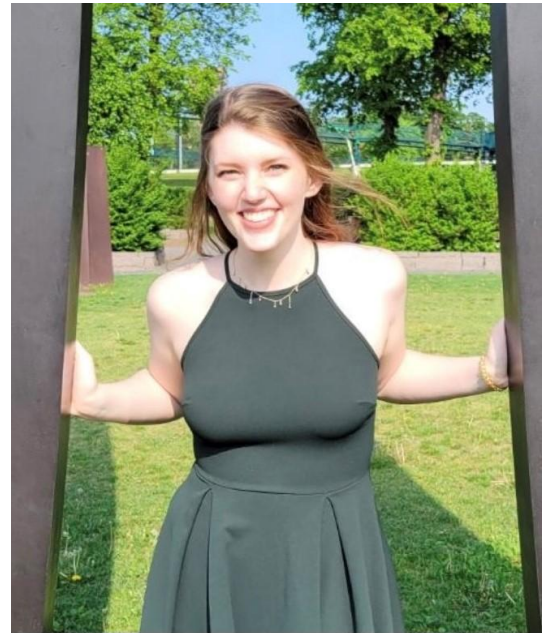
We are thrilled to introduce you to the newest member of our team. Welcome Lydia Godfrey!

Lydia will primarily oversee building an Outreach and Education Program, a much-needed component of the voluntary conservation work that we do! Lydia will also help out with some field tasks including water monitoring and early detection for Aquatic Invasive Species.

Meet Lydia:

### What is your background?

I grew up in the area and I have always loved Minnesota’s natural resources, especially its lakes. Growing up playing outside made me very passionate about environmental protection, so I’ve always been interested in going into the field. I recently graduated with a degree in Environmental Science and a minor in Psychology from the University of St. Thomas. In the past I worked as an AIS Watercraft Inspector with the DNR, had an internship with the Isanti SWCD, and last year worked growing fungi for research at St. Thomas!



### Why did you want to work with the Isanti SWCD?

I’ve always wanted to protect Minnesota’s natural resources and especially its water bodies for environmental, health and recreation reasons! I grew up in Cambridge and it really excites me that I will be able to do environmental protection in the county that raised me. I also had an internship with the Isanti SWCD last summer that I absolutely loved!

## What do you like to do?

Outside of work, I enjoy painting, reading, hiking, and baking. This past year has been very unusual but it has given me an opportunity to try many new things. I'm trying to walk my dogs at the trails and parks in the area, and I have been on a journey to learn how to bake bread well (last week I made bagels!). I welcome advice from any experienced bread makers out there!

## Spectacle Lake Beach Rain Garden

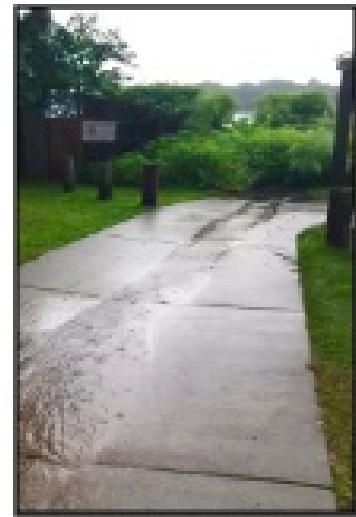


The Isanti SWCD is excited to announce a new addition to the Spectacle Lake beach area! If you love summer at the beach, the new raingarden will protect clean and clear water for years to come.

The purpose of the raingarden is to collect the large amounts of rain water from cobalt circle that currently empties directly in to the lake. This rain water carries nutrients and sediment that can lead to undesirable swimming conditions and algae blooms!

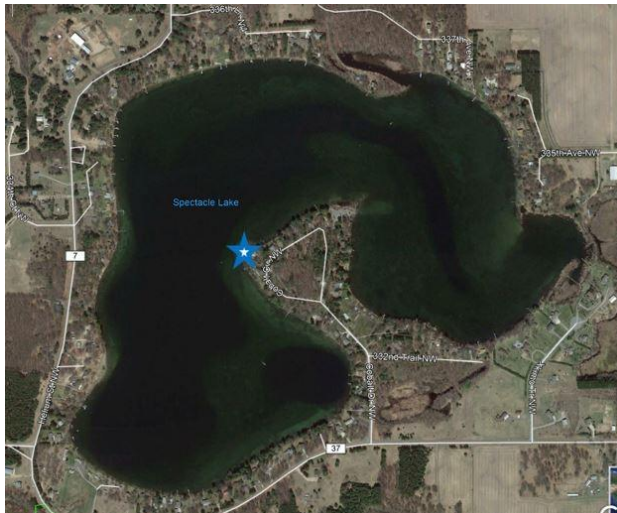
Interesting fact: Every 1 pound of phosphorus can result 500 lbs of wet lake algae! This raingarden will stop an estimated 1.4 pounds of phosphorus per year from reaching the lake!

Protecting water quality is essential to lake health in Isanti County. Wyanett Township and The Spectacle Lake Association is contributing a portion of the funds for this project.



*Current Conditions*

Project construction is set for June 2021.



## Help for Agricultural Producers

Agricultural producers looking to solve natural resource problems on their land should consider contacting the USDA - Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) office to schedule a field visit. Depending on the resource concerns present on the land, a variety of farm bill programs may be available to help correct these problems.



**United States Department of Agriculture**

Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) is a voluntary program that provides financial and technical assistance to agricultural producers. Through EQIP, agricultural producers receive financial and technical assistance to implement structural and management conservation practices that optimize environmental benefits on working agricultural land. The Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP) is a voluntary conservation program that encourages producers to address resource concerns in a comprehensive manner by undertaking additional conservation activities; and improving, maintaining, and managing existing conservation activities.

Applications for these and other programs are accepted throughout the year with specific deadlines set for ranking and funding opportunities.

Please contact the local NRCS at 763-689-3353 office for more information.

USDA is an equal opportunity provider, employer, and lender.

## Online Workshops

As a result of the recently completed Lower St. Croix Comprehensive Watershed Plan, we are now able to take advantage of a long-standing and successful education program that was developed by our partners in the East Metro. The partnership recently hired a Shared Education and Outreach person who will be coordinating outreach focused at the area of land that drains to the St. Croix River (In Isanti County this is North Branch and Oxford Township). Two online workshops have already been held including one on Rain Gardens and one on Native Shoreline Buffers. Lucky for you, if you missed these, they are all available on YouTube! Just click the video below or the URL posted above it.

Mark your calendars for an in-person workshop on "Starry Trek" August 21st! This workshop will teach how to identify aquatic invasive species and will be very hands on. All materials will be provided and it should be a lot of fun! More information will be posted to our website and Facebook as we get closer to the date.

We will also keep you posted on other upcoming workshops! Like us on [Facebook](#) to be first online for the next workshop!

### Rain Garden Workshop:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2qW9Dv80w3Q>



### Native Shoreline Buffer Workshop:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zDNhV-nlhmc&t=1429s>



## All About Buffers!

Buffers are a conservation practice that helps protect water quality. They are vegetated strips of land that help intercept pollutants and sediment and provide habitat! There are many ways buffers can be implemented and the Isanti SWCD works with land owners to create many

## Buffers for Residential Lakeshore Restoration:

**What:** Restoring a lakeshore is converting the current shoreline condition to a more natural setting that protects the land and lake. In some cases, shoreline restorations can be complex and a call to a professional is needed. However, in a lot of cases, lakeshore restoration can be simple! The main objective is to use native plants and environmentally friendly material to create a buffer between the lake and the yard. The buffer captures upland rain water before it reaches the lake. Also, the deep rooted plants used for the buffer armor shoreline soils are better protected against wave action and erosion.

**Who:** Any lakeshore owner! With the right tools, plant list and materials these simple projects can be done in a long weekend. The more people helping the better.

**When:** The best time to restore your lakeshore is now! The sooner you restore the sooner the plants can start developing the deep root systems that protect the lakeshore.

**Why:** There are many benefits to lakeshore restorations such as preventing the lakeshore from eroding into the lake, capturing nutrients that would otherwise wash into the lake and improve natural habitat.

Overall, lakeshore restorations are a great way to help ensure lakes and the land around them are protected so future generations can enjoy them like we do! This is a great opportunity for landowners to act and preserve the resource!



## Buffers on Agricultural Land:

**What:** A buffer is an area of vegetated land adjacent to a stream, river, lake or wetland and they are also known as riparian filter strips. Buffers help to filter out phosphorus, nitrogen, and sediment from the water that travels overland into streams, rivers, lakes or wetlands. Studies show that buffers are critical to protecting and restoring water quality and aquatic life in streams, rivers, lakes and wetlands.

**Who:** These buffers are required on public waters and county ditches. Buffers on private ditches are voluntary but would provide for habitat for wildlife and water quality benefits.

**When:** The Minnesota Buffer Law was signed into law in June 2015 and amended in 2017. It requires perennial vegetative buffers of up to 50 ft along lakes, rivers, and streams and buffers of 16.5 ft along ditches. Private ditches can voluntarily implement buffers now to get the many environmental benefits they provide!

**Why:** Areas that have surface runoff on ditches can be treated by a vegetative buffer to reduce the amount of sediment, organic material, nutrients, and pesticides. Buffers can be planted with a variety of prairie vegetation which have deep roots for infiltration and provide wildlife habitat benefits. Buffers may also be a good opportunity to plant pollinator plants that would be beneficial to pollinators.

Questions or interested in planting a buffer? Here are helpful links to learn more!

Link to learn more about what I can plant:

<https://bwsr.state.mn.us/what-can-i-plant>

Link to learn more about Minnesota Buffer Law:

<https://bwsr.state.mn.us/minnesota-buffer-law>



## Another Tree Sale Success!

Despite this springs unusually warm weather our annual tree sale went off without a hitch! We sold out of trees one month before the sale ended. On May 1<sup>st</sup> we distributed



over 27,000 trees to 304 people!

We always look forward to tree sale distribution day; it's a great opportunity to catch up with our long-time customers and it's satisfying to know that so many trees are getting planted!

From all of us at Isanti Soil and Water Conservation District, **THANK YOU** for supporting our tree sale and helping to create forest habitat across the county. We look

forward to seeing you again next year!

We plan to open the sale late in 2021, keep an eye on our [website](#) and on our [Facebook](#) for details!

## Join a team of "climate forward" tree seed collectors!

Are you interested in learning how to collect climate-forward tree seeds? [The Forest Assisted Migration Project \(FAMP\)](#) is developing a network of farmers and community members in central and southern Minnesota who will collect tree seeds and sell them directly to northern tree growers. Anyone can participate! This is a great opportunity to earn extra income while protecting Minnesota's distinctive forest.

**HOW IT WORKS:** Attend the training, gather your seeds and send them to the Farm and Forest Growers network.

The first tree seed collection training will be on Thursday, July 15th at 7:00pm on Zoom. Scott Rogers, manager of the U.S. Forest Service Oconto River Seed Orchard, will be the trainer. He will cover tree identification and fundamental seed collection techniques. The training is free, open to all, and will be recorded and posted on FAMP's website.

**CONTACT OR JOIN:** To join our team send your name, (farm name), address, email, and species of trees on your land to David Abazs [dwabazs@umn.edu](mailto:dwabazs@umn.edu) or Joel Bransky [bran1351@umn.edu](mailto:bran1351@umn.edu). You can also email to get a seed collection training Zoom link or ask questions about FAMP.

More information can be found on the [FAMP seed collection webpage](#).



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