Hawk Creek Watershed Project Mission Statement

“Improving the water quality/quantity issues in the watershed, while also promoting a healthy agricultural, industrial, and recreational based economy for the region.”

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Hawk Creek Watershed Project News and Updates

The Hawk Creek Watershed Project (HCWP) has had another busy year with more best management practices (BMPs) in place and more water quality data collected. Some highlights from the past year were the annual meeting, a newly developed cover crop cost-share assistance program with help from the local Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) and Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD) offices, aquatic invasive species awareness and outreach, working on the Hawk Creek Watershed Restoration and Protection Strategies (WRAPS) process, intensive water quality monitoring, and of course, the many BMP projects that were completed. More in depth information on these topics can be found throughout this newsletter.

Since the inception of the HCWP in 1999, over 900 landowners have received financial assistance for either BMPs or septic system upgrade loans that have improved water quality and reduced erosion. The HCWP also holds regular public meetings in Clara City and an annual meeting in Willmar, where we strive to have multiple speakers with different backgrounds present relevant topics to our area. At the annual meeting on February 25, 2015, the HCWP had presentations by Ryan Jones (South Central Technical Service Area Engineer), George Rehm (Discovery Farms-Minnesota Coordinator), and Mark Seeley (University of MN Climatologist). The next HCWP annual meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, February 24, 2016. If you would like to get involved or attend any of our upcoming meetings, please contact the HCWP office to receive meeting notices and agendas.

The HCWP has cost-share funds available to landowners in parts of Chippewa, Kandiyohi, and Renville Counties within the Hawk Creek Watershed boundaries and the Renville County portion of the Middle-MN Watershed to help with water quality and erosion problems. Morton, Franklin, and Fairfax are all located within the Middle-MN Watershed. Maps of HCWP’s cost-share funding areas in the Hawk Creek Watershed and the Middle-MN Watershed can be found on our website www.hawkcreekwatershed.org. Feel free to contact us for more information and possible cost-share assistance!
Aquatic Invasive Species (AIS)

Invasive species are species that are not native to Minnesota and cause human, environmental, or economic harm. Aquatic invasive species (AIS) are a significant threat to Minnesota's waters. It is illegal to transport prohibited invasive species or to launch watercraft with these species attached. Of Minnesota's 11,000+ lakes, about 5% have been infested by some type of aquatic invasive species and are on the infested waters list. To see if a waterbody near you is infested, visit our website at www.hawkcreekwatershed.org or the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources website at www.dnr.state.mn.us/invasives. If a waterbody you use is infested with AIS, special protocols are in place for transporting fishing gear, docks, and watercraft (such as boats, jet skies, and canoes) to help prevent the spread of these invasives to neighboring waterbodies.

Each county in Minnesota receives an annual allotment through the Local Aquatic Invasive Species Prevention Aid to combat AIS. For more information on county AIS plans, contact:

- Chippewa County Land and Resource Management (320) 269-6231
- Kandiyohi County AIS Coordinator (320) 231-7800 ext. 2116
- Renville County Environment and Community Development (320) 523-3768

Cost-Share Money Available for Best Management Practices

Do you have gullies, washouts, runoff issues, or erosion issues on your property? Are you interested in finding out what you can do to increase conservation practices on your property? The HCWP has funding available for the design and installation of BMPs to fix erosion and water quality issues on your property and to help reduce the amount of pollutants entering our streams and lakes. Cost-share funds are available up to 75% of BMP project costs, depending on funding availability. Since 1999, HCWP has worked with over 900 landowners on over 1,300 projects aimed to reduce erosion and improve water quality. Let HCWP help find a solution to your erosion and water quality issues.

Some of the practices that may qualify for funding include, but are not limited to:

- Ag Waste Upgrades
- Alternative Intakes
- Bank/Grade Stabilizations
- Buffer Strips
- Controlled Drainage
- Farmable Terraces
- Feedlot and Water Diversions
- Grassed Waterways
- Lakeshore Restorations
- Rain Gardens
- Side/Drop Inlets
- Streambank Erosion Control
- Water and Sediment Control Structures
- Water Retention and Runoff Reduction
- Wetland Restorations and Protection

Call HCWP at 320-523-3666 for assistance with your erosion or runoff problem.

The following offices are also available for information on potential projects:

- Chippewa County SWCD/NRCS 320-269-2139 ext. 3
- Kandiyohi County SWCD/NRCS 320-235-3906
- Renville County SWCD/NRCS 320-523-1553 ext. 3
- Chippewa County Ag Inspector 320-269-7447
- Kandiyohi County Drainage 320-235-3266
- Renville County Ag Inspector 320-523-3712

Septic System Upgrade Loan Funds Available

Low interest (3%) loan funds to upgrade non-compliant septic systems are available to residents within the Hawk Creek Watershed and the Renville County portion of the Middle Minnesota Watershed. These funds are not available for new home construction or upgrades that are required due to home additions. There is no collateral required as loan payments are collected through a special assessment on your property tax statement for a term length of 10 years. Loans can be transferred to new owners if a property is sold or transferred. These funds are limited and are distributed on a first come, first serve basis. Call your local county environmental services office for more information:

- Chippewa County Land and Resources Management 320-269-6231
- Kandiyohi County Environmental Services 320-231-6229
- Renville County Water and Household Hazardous Waste Management 320-523-3760

For more information on septic maintenance, please visit the MPCA’s website at www.pca.state.mn.us or our website at www.hawkcreekwatershed.org
Total suspended solids (TSS) is the measurement of the amount of materials (organic and inorganic) in a water sample in milligrams per liter (mg/L). The Eco-region standard recommendation set by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) for our area is 58 mg/L. The graph to the left shows TSS has increased in the last three years after the major spike in 2009 for the three main sites monitored within the Hawk Creek Watershed. We will see if this trend continues for 2014 and 2015. That data is still in the review process.

Total phosphorus is the measurement of both insoluble and dissolved phosphorus. When phosphorus levels surpass the preferred standard of 0.26 mg/L, it starts to cause problems for plants and animals. An increase in phosphorus can result in eutrophication. Eutrophication is when there are too many nutrients in a water system, usually resulting in an increase of large algae blooms. These algae blooms then begin to die and decompose, depleting oxygen in the water, causing death to aquatic animals and plants.

Nitrites and nitrates are two forms of nitrogen found in our environment that are transported by water movement through the soil or overland. The graph to the left is a combination of both nitrite and nitrate surface water results. All three sites have never reached the surface water Eco-region standard recommendation of 2.6 mg/L for nitrite/nitrate since monitoring began in 1999.
**The Watershed Approach in the Hawk Creek Watershed**

Mandated by the Minnesota State Legislature (Statute 114D.26) and administered by the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency (MPCA), the Hawk Creek Watershed is currently going through its first Watershed Approach cycle, which requires each major watershed to go through a 10 year cycle to collect and assess data on the health of the watershed and develop strategies to restore impaired waterbodies and protect those that are healthy, and then carry out those strategies, referred to as WRAPS (Watershed Restoration and Protection Strategies). The Watershed Approach focuses on all pollutants in the entire watershed at one time, rather than specific waterbodies and pollutants individually. Several Total Maximum Daily Loads (TMDLs) can now be determined in one watershed for different pollutants at the same time. The 10 year cycle is continuous, so data will continue to be collected to determine if water quality has improved or if new impairments have developed and the strategies will be reassessed and redefined as needed. Although the WRAPS is mandated by the State and is the responsibility of MPCA to carry out, HCWP, watershed citizens, and landowners have been involved to help bring a local voice to the process.

The Hawk Creek Watershed began its 10 year cycle in 2010. The biological impairment assessment report and the stressor identification report are finished for the Hawk Creek Watershed and both reports are available on the MPCA and HCWP websites (pca.state.mn.us and hawkcreekwatershed.org), along with more information on the Watershed Approach. The WRAPS report is expected in 2016.

**HCWP Cover Crop Program**

In 2015, the HCWP, with assistance from the Chippewa, Kandiyohi, and Renville NRCS/SWCD offices, was able to offer a cost-share assistance program for the implementation of cover crops. The program required at least two species be in the seed mix and then left over winter. Several land owners/occupiers planted combinations of oats, radishes, turnips, vetch, rye, and triticale. Through this program, over 1,000 acres of cover crops were planted in 2015. Below are two separate fields that were planted with cover crops this fall. HCWP plans to offer this cost-share program again in 2016 on a first come, first serve basis, depending on funding availability.
Now is the Time To Become a Citizen Monitor!

Why should you become a Citizen Monitor?
Becoming a member of the HCWP Citizen Monitoring Network is fun and exciting! It’s an opportunity to be outdoors, learn more about your environment, and contribute valuable information to the Minnesota Climatological Network. Plus, you get to use some great equipment.

What does a Citizen Monitor do?
A Citizen Monitor can monitor either rainfall, stream transparency with a Secchi tube, and/or lake transparency with a Secchi disc. Transparency measures the amount of sediment or particles in the water (the more particles in the water, the less transparent the water).

How do I become a Citizen Monitor?
Call the HCWP at (320) 523-3666 and tell us you would like to monitor rainfall and/or transparency. We will send you the monitoring equipment, more information, and help get you set up.

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* = Used Secchi tube for transparency measurements, years without * used a transparency tube
>60 or >100 = Readings greater than 60 cm (transparency tube) or 100 cm (Secchi tube)
Project Partners:
Chippewa County
Chippewa County SWCD/NRCS
City of Willmar
City of Olivia
Ducks Unlimited
Eagle Lake Association
Kandiyohi County
Kandiyohi County SWCD/NRCS
Long Lake Association
MN Department of Natural Resources
MN Pollution Control Agency
Pheasants Forever
Renville County
Renville County SWCD/NRCS
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
Watershed Citizens and Landowners

HCWP Annual Meeting
February 24, 2016
MinnWest Technologies Campus, Willmar, MN

Please RSVP to attend
More information on the HCWP website

Check us out on the web!
www.hawkcreekwatershed.org