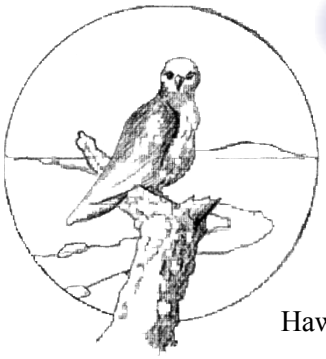


Hawk Creek Headlines

Hawk Creek Watershed Project • 500 East DePue Avenue • Olivia MN • 56277 • (320) 523-3666

Winter 2004

Special Points of Interest

- Upcoming Annual Meeting
- Funding Available for Conservation
- Funding Available for Septic Upgrades
- Water Testing Results
- Phosphorus Free Detergents
- Foam in our lakes/streams
- Kid's Corner
- CSP Alert

"You could not step twice into the same rivers; for other waters are ever flowing on to you." Heraclitus of Ephesus

Hawk Creek Clean Water Partnership-"*Staying One Step Ahead of Regula-*

The Hawk Creek Watershed Project work area covers 623,424 acres (974 square miles) of land and is located in parts of Renville, Chippewa, and Kandiyohi Counties. It is unique among other major watershed of the Minnesota River in that it is comprised of a main tributary (Hawk Creek) and several other streams that flow directly into the Minnesota River. The Hawk Creek Watershed Project also includes Beaver, Chetomba, and Sacred Heart Creeks just to name a few. Hawk Creek originates at Eagle Lake north of Willmar, MN and flows approximately 65 miles to its mouth at the Minnesota River near Granite Falls, MN.

From 1999 to 2001 a diagnostic study was conducted to determine the pollution levels and to see if there was a need for attention to the Hawk Creek. The study showed excessive sediment, phosphorus and nitrates in the rivers. Fecal coliform bacteria was also a concern in some areas of the watershed. These pollutants come from a wide variety of sources ranging from stormwater run-off, failing septic systems to industrial and agricultural land use. "Everyone" who lives, works, plays in or visits the watershed has an impact. We are all a part of the problem and we are all part of the solution!

The Hawk Creek Watershed Project is totally dependent upon state and federal grant money to operate each year. The Hawk Creek Watershed Project works closely with the SWCD and NRCS offices in the three counties to enhance current State and Federal Programs. The mission is to provide financial incentives to landowners to correct and prevent pollution problems before "big brother" forces us. That is done through cost-share programs to make these projects cost-effective and reasonable. Projects may be cost-shared from 50-75% of the total project.

Hawk Creek Annual Meeting-January 26th, 2005

The Hawk Creek Watershed Project is having its 3rd Annual Meeting on January 26th, 2005, at the Kandi Entertainment Center in Willmar, MN, from 8:30 to 12:30, a lunch will be provided.

Following a presentation from the Hawk Creek Staff, Leonard Binstock of Ellingson Drainage and Charlie Schafer from Agri-Drainage of Iowa will discuss Conservation Drainage-Managing the water table with your tile system. Kasey Reed, Area Conservationist from the NRCS will discuss the Conservation Security Program, and a Nitrogen Management presentation by representatives of the Seven Mile Creek and Lower Maple River Watershed Projects. Information on Conservation Drainage can be found at http://www.extension.edu and information on the St. Peter Nitrogen study can be found at http://mrbdc.mnsu.edu/org/bnc, and information on CSP can be found on page 5 of this issue.

Please remember to RSVP if you plan on attending this meeting. Call 320-523-3666!

Inside this issue:

Hawk Creek Offers Financial Incentives

The Hawk Creek Watershed Project has received a number of grants to promote conservation practices in the watershed. According to water quality monitoring results, there are elevated levels of nitrogen, phosphorus, and sediment in the watershed. The nutrients come from a variety of sources. They include industrial discharges, municipal wastewater, septic systems, farmland, parking lots and lawns. The cost-share funds are available to land operators who need assistance in correcting and preventing pollution challenges. The Hawk Creek Watershed Project work area also includes the Chetomba and Beaver Creek watersheds. Some of the most common conservation projects are:

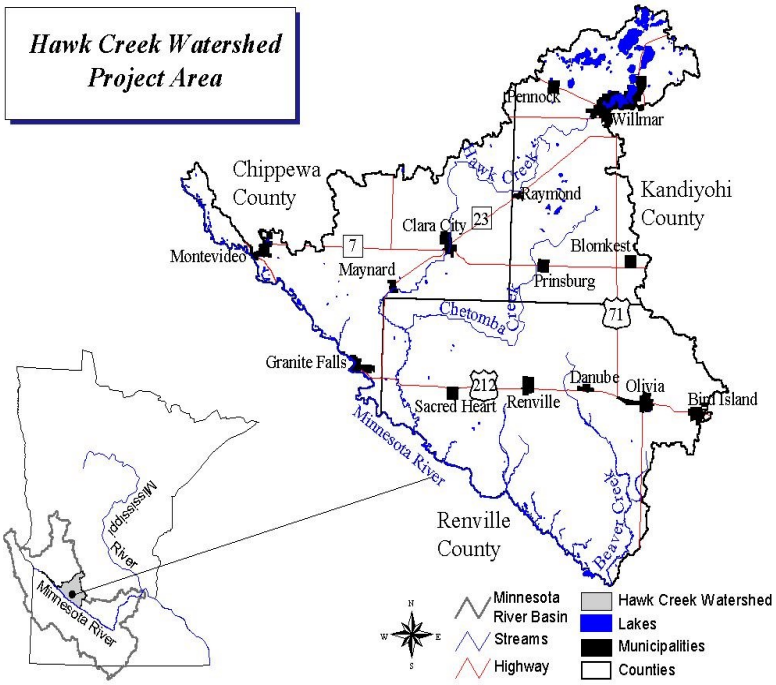
- **Terraces, waterways, and retention basins**, which control sheet and gully erosion.

- **Livestock waste storage facilities** which range from clean-water diversions to animal waste storage facilities.

- **Alternative surface drainage systems** reduce the amount of sediment that is delivered to a ditch system or watercourse.
Rock inlets or pattern tile can be used to replace open tile inlets.

- **Livestock exclusions** are anything that addresses over-use of the stream by livestock. Exclusions can include fencing and stream crossings.

- **Buffer strip initiative** is found to be critical. A one-time $80 per acre bonus payment will be provided to landowners who enroll buffer strips in to the Conservation Reserve Program.



Septic Loan Program: Funds Available!

It's estimated that nearly 60% of the rural septic systems do not meet current state code. Many of these systems pose a serious health and water quality threat.

The Hawk Creek Watershed Project Septic System Loan Programs have received more funds for upgrade septic systems for this year. These funds are not available for new home construction.
A low interest loan funds are available to rural residents of Hawk Creek Watershed work area (see map above). If approved, you can borrow funds at 3% APR for up to 10 years. Payments are made twice a year and will be a part of your property tax statement. Loans can be transferred to new owners if a property sells.
These funds are limited and are on a first-come first-serve basis.

Call your local County Environmental Services office for more information:

Renville County 320-523-3768
Kandiyohi County 320-231-6229
Chippewa County 320-269-6231

Special Thanks to the Citizen Monitors!

Hawk Creek Watershed Project would like to thank the citizen monitors for their hard work and dedication during the 2004 monitoring season, and wish them good luck in 2005.

The citizen monitoring program began in 2001 for the Hawk Creek Watershed Project, there is currently 29 citizen monitors within the Hawk Creek Watershed. They measure rainfall and take transparency readings for the project. The data that is collected is used by the MPCA and the watershed to get a picture of the health of the streams within the area.

Below are the citizen monitors for 2004;
Royal Ashburn, Jackie Ast, Lowell Bratsch, Tom & Roxanne Breitkreutz, Mark Erickson, Randy Feifarek, Ron Hanson, Chris & Steve Hettig, Virginia Homme, Donald Knott, Joyce & Gerry Lewison, Harriet Link, Kim Malmquist, Randy Nelson, John Nyquist, John Sietsema, and Steve Smith.

If you would like to become a citizen monitor, please call the office at 320-523-3666.

Water Testing

The Hawk Creek Watershed Project has monitored six sites throughout the watershed since 1999. The monitoring season typically goes from April 1st to September 30th.

Hawk Creek staff monitors these sites once a week and after storm events during the season. Samples are collected at each site and sent to a lab for analysis. The samples are tested for the following pollutants: phosphorus, nitrates, total suspended solids, and fecal coliform bacteria. The staff also collects information in the field. Field measurements are taken on temperature, conductivity, pH, dissolved oxygen, and transparency.

Each site has a computer that measures rainfall amounts and stage, which is the water level of the stream. The information that the computer collects is downloaded every monitoring week. At the end of the season, the computer information and the results from the laboratory are complied and calculated through a computer program called FLUX. The program factors in the flow of the river at the time of sample collection to generate seasonal loads of the pollutants. The results are then entered into an database both at the Hawk Creek Watershed Project and Minnesota Pollution Control Agency.

The water testing results show the following trends from 1999 to the year 2003: (2004 seasonal data has not been calculated at this time)

- Although there are minor fluctuations, the general trend is that total suspended solids has decreased from 1999 to 2003. Total suspended solids is sediment that is carried by the water. It is also a pollutant because other chemicals can bind to the sediment particle. It gives a muddy appearance to water.

- The general trend on Chetomba and Beaver Creek is that phosphorus is slightly declining since 1999 with a few minor variations. Phosphorus on Hawk Creek has risen and decreased thoughout the years too many times to determine a general trend. Excess phosphorus is a pollutant because it can lead to algae growth.

- The good news with nitrates at the six sites is that the general trend shows that it is decreasing. The bad news is that in 2003 there seemed to be an increase in all of the sites. Despite this, we are optomistic that nitrate will gradually and consistantly decline in the future. Nitrates in a water supply are a sign that septics, excess fertilizers, and animal waste can be entering the waterbody. Too much nitrate can be toxic to humans and aquatic organisms.

Remember: Too much of a good thing can be bad!!

For more information and details on these results, call the Hawk Creek Watershed Project at (320) 523-3666.

Don't "P" on Your Dishes!

Phosphorus, known in the table of elements as just "P", was widely used in laundry and automatic dishwashing detergents along with dishwashing liquid. Phosphorus was used in these items because it softened water and prevented particulate matter from redepositing on items being washed. However, excess phosphorus can be very harmful to the environment.

When phosphorus detergents leave your sink, dishwasher, or laundry machine, it enters the wastewater treatment plant or your septic system. From these places phosphorus can enter our local lakes and rivers. Phosphorus in our surface water creates algae growth. **One pound of phosphorus is enough to create 500 pounds of algae.**

In 1960, it was estimated that approximately 50% of phosphorus leaving wastewater treatment plants came from laundry detergents. To solve this problem, Minnesota passed legislation limiting phosphorus to less than 0.5% by weight in all laundry detergents and dishwashing liquids. However, the legislation did not include automatic dishwashing detergents. *It was assumed that there wasn't another option to decrease water spots in dishwashers.*

Today it is estimated that 8-15% of phosphorus leaving wastewater treatment plants is from automatic dishwashing detergents. There is a bill for legislation that sets limits or removes phosphorus from automatic dishwashing detergents. You can help today by purchasing automatic dishwashing detergent with no or the lowest amount of phosphorus. If your local store doesn't carry it, then ask them to.

Another way to decrease algae in our lakes and streams is by using phosphorus free fertilizer on your lawn. Soil tests show that established lawns "rarely" need phosphorus. If your lawn does not need it, it can't use it, and it runs off only to pollute the lakes an rivers you recreate on!

Source: Robinson, Joey. The truth about phosphorus. *Watershed Watcher*. May 2003.

As of January 1, 2005, it is illegal to use lawn fertilizer with phosphorus in Minnesota unless a soil test proves it is needed. However, Golf Courses are exempt. Hmmmm! Do you think the lawmaker is a golfer?!

Contact Us!

We love to hear from the public! Please contact us at (320) 523-3666 to have questions answered or for more information on the Hawk Creek Watershed Project. Our address is: Hawk Creek Watershed Project
Renville County Courthouse, Lower Level
500 East DePue Avenue
Olivia, MN 56277

Foam on our water!

"There is foam on my lake (or stream), is someone pumping their washing machine suds into the water?"

There is a concern among citizens and shoreland property owners, most commonly during late spring or early summer. In most instances the "foam" we see on the surface of our lakes and streams is created by a combination of natural organic compounds (such as humic acids which give the "tea coloring" to many of our northern lakes and streams) in the water and mixing air with these compounds. The mixing or agitation in lakes is commonly caused by wind and wave action and in streams, it may result from the water flowing through a stretch of rapids or over a dam. As with other things that float on the surface (like some algae blooms) the foam will often collect on a downwind or downstream shore and is, many times, not too aesthetically pleasing.

So in general, the "foam on the shore" is the result of a natural process. However if you are in doubt and suspect a pollution problem, feel free to call us at (320) 523-3666. One way that you might try if you are unsure whether it is natural or pollution, is to "smell" the foam. Natural "foam" will have a fishy odor, where detergent foam would have a more perfumey smell.

Kids Corner-Water –Every drop counts!

Water is a precious resource in our environment, even with the Earth being 70% water, only 1% of the this water is fresh water. Our water resources are being threatened by growing populations and pollution. We have no choice but to pay more attention to how we are using water, and how we may be wasting it.!

You're In Control!

- Try to do one thing each day to save water.
  Every drop counts, and every person can make a difference.
- Be aware of and follow all water conservation and water shortage rules and restrictions that may be in effect in your area.
- Make sure your families are aware of the need to conserve water. Watch for water wasters in the kitchen, bathroom along with other water wasters in your home, and outdoors.
- Examples of water wasters are leaking faucets, toilets, excess watering of lawns, running water when brushing teeth, and long showers.

How much water do we use in a day?

Taking a bath or shower	15-30 gallons
Watering the lawn	180 gallons
Washing the dishes	15-60 gallons
Washing clothes	30 gallons
Flushing the toilet	4-7 gallons
Brushing teeth	1 gallon

Try this word scramble on water conservation!

All living things need _____(tawer) to live.

When water evaporates, it travels into the air and becomes part of a _____(dlocu).

Less than 1% of all the water on earth is _____(sefrh) water.

We _____(ikrdn) water in the liquid form.

Check for leaks and save hundreds of _____(glloans) of water a day.

You'll save water by taking a quick _____(howser).

Wash bikes and cars with a _____(kecbut) and a sponge instead of a running hose.

Ask your _____(mfaiyl) to look for ways to save water.

-Special thanks to the US EPA for the information

From Dean's Desk

Notification Alert on CSP !

Do you know what you need to know about the **Conservation Security Program** that was passed as a part of the last Farm Bill?

The Conservation Security Program (CSP) is a voluntary program that supports ongoing stewardship of private agricultural lands by providing payments for maintaining and enhancing natural resources. CSP rewards farmers who are meeting the highest standards of conservation management on their operations.

CSP provides financial and technical assistance to promote the conservation of soil, water, air, energy, plant and animal life, and other conservation purposes on private agricultural working lands.

Do to limitations on funding, CSP will be offered to selected watersheds on a priority basis. Rumor has it that, once your watershed is selected it might be 7 or 8 years before you will have a chance to apply again. So it is very important to know what you need to do to qualify if you are interested in this program.

The payments are based on three levels or tiers. As of now the payments are $15, $25, and $40 per acre respectively. So we are talking about a significant amount of money at stake!

To qualify for Tier I, the producer must have addressed water quality and soil erosion to the NRCS Field Office Technical Guide (FOTG) standards on **part** of the agricultural operation prior to acceptance.

For Tier II, the producer must have addressed water quality and soil erosion to FOTG standards on the **entire** operation before being accepted into the program and agree to address one additional resource by the end of the contract period.

For Tier III, the producer must have addressed all resource concerns to a resource management system level that meets the FOTG standards on the entire operation before acceptance and agree to additional enhancement activities outlined in the sign-up announcement.

Tier I contracts are for 5 years; maximum payment is $20,000 annually.

Tier II contracts are for 5 to 10 years; maximum payment is $35,000 annually

Tier III contracts are for 5 to 10 years; maximum payment is $45,000 annually

The Blue Earth River Basin was the only Minnesota watershed selected for the first round of funding in 2004. Only 30% of the applicants who applied qualified. Reasons varied from applying fertilizer and chemicals above recommended rates to not having enough residue and some because they did not have the 2 years of required records.

We do not know when the Hawk Creek Watershed will be selected. It is our goal to find out as much as we can about the program and make aware and prepare the producers in our watershed so they are ready when the time comes. Watch for our annual meeting notice, the meeting will be in late January and CSP will be one of the topics presented

Hope to see you there !

Dean

Information for Every Individual!

If you **Farm** in the watershed, then there is information on *financial incentives* for conservation programs and the conservation security program (CSP).

If you are a **Resident** in the watershed, then there is information on low-interest loans for septic, upcoming meetings, and water quality results.

You may wonder **what is a watershed** and do **I really live in one**? A watershed is an area of land where rainfall and snowmelt drain into a particular stream, river, ditch, wetland or lake. Many people don't think that they live in the Hawk Creek Watershed. After all, they don't live on Hawk Creek or even close to it. The Watershed is unique in that it doesn't have just one lake or river draining the entire watershed. Instead, the Hawk Creek Watershed Project Area has 2 major creeks– Beaver and Hawk. It also has approximately twenty different streams that drain right into the Minnesota River. The watershed also has about a dozen lakes in the northern reaches. To find your location in the watershed….

Open up the newsletter to Page 2 to see a map of the Hawk Creek Watershed Project Area!

Grant funded by:

Minnesota Pollution Control Agency

HAWK CREEK WATERSHED PROJECT

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Willmar, MN 56201

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