Hawk Creek Watershed 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.”

Hawk Creek Watershed Offering Financial Assistance

The Hawk Creek Watershed Project has funding available for implementation of Best Management Practices (BMPs) to help reduce the amount of pollutants entering the watershed streams. Cost sharing and technical assistance funds are available. Apply early as funding is distributed for qualified practices on a first come, first serve basis.

Don’t hesitate to call...if you don’t, then someone else will!

Some of the practices that qualify for funding include:
- Buffer Strips
- Ag-Waste Systems
- Side Inlet Pipes
- Terraces
- Sediment Basins
- Alternative Intakes
- Wetland Restorations
- Livestock Exclusions
- Stream Bank Erosion Control
- Grassed Waterways
- Nutrient Mgmt. Plans

To see if your land qualifies, or for more information contact:
- Hawk Creek Watershed Project
  320-523-3666
- Chippewa NRCS/SWCD
  320-269-2139 ext. 3
- Chippewa Co. Ag Inspector
  320-269-7447
- Kandiyohi NRCS/SWCD
  320-235-3906 ext. 3
- Kandiyohi Co. Ag Inspector
  320-235-3266
- Renville NRCS/SWCD
  320-523-1550 ext. 3
- Renville Co. Ag Inspector
  320-523-3712

Septic Loan Funds Available

An estimated 57% of the septic systems throughout the watershed do not meet current state code. Many of these systems pose a serious health and water quality threat.

Low interest (3%) loan funds to upgrade non-compliant septic systems are available to residents of the Hawk Creek Watershed work area. 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:
- Renville County   320-523-3768
- Kandiyohi County 320-231-6229
- Chippewa County   320-269-6231

Inside this issue:

Hawk Creek Offers Financial Assistance 1
Septic Loan Funds Available 1
Water Quality-Ten Years in the Making 2
From Dean’s Desk 3
Parks Profile: Skallbekken Park 3
River Safety: What You Should Know 4
Hawk Creek Needs You to Monitor 4
Kid’s Corner-Water Trivia and Crossword 5
Contributing Partners/Website 6
Water Quality ~ Ten Years in the Making!

Hawk Creek Watershed Project has been monitoring water quality for 10 years. At the conclusion of each monitoring season, all of the sampling results and flow measurements from the year are entered into a computer program, FLUX, which calculates the resulting flow-weighted mean concentration (FWMC) of each respective pollutant. “Flow weighted mean concentration” is an estimated pollutant concentration of all of the water passing through a site over the course of the monitoring season. In other words, if all the water passing a monitoring site over the course of the year were routed to a big pool, stirred well, and one sample were collected and analyzed for a given pollutant, that sample would represent the annual FWMC for that site.

Hawk Creek and Beaver Creek have elevated total suspended solids (sediment) loads delivered from a few high intensity runoff events each year. These high TSS results are common in the spring and as stream levels recede low TSS results tend to bring the annual TSS FWMC down. The eco-region standard for the Hawk Creek Watershed is 58 mg/L (represented by the black dotted line in the graphs). While results vary from year to year, a decade of monitoring has revealed a downward trend in the annual FWMC of TSS for both Hawk and Beaver Creeks. Despite this trend, Hawk and Beaver Creek are both officially listed as impaired for turbidity.

Phosphorus FWMC at the Hawk Creek near Priam monitoring site have far exceeded the eco-region standard of 0.25 mg/L (represented by the black dotted line on the bar graph) every year. Meanwhile, the Chetomba Creek Phosphorus FWMC has been near, or even below, the eco-region standard. Why the difference? In a word, wastewater. The Priam site is located just downstream from the City of Willmar Wastewater Treatment Plant (WWTP). However, take notice of the dramatic decrease in Phosphorus FWMC at this site in 2010. The City of Willmar upgraded their WWTP in the summer of 2010, which greatly reduced phosphorus. Expect this reduction to continue in 2011, and beyond.

Unfortunately, the FWMC for nitrate-nitrite nitrogen at all the sites exceeds the 2.6 mg/L eco-region target consistently. Hawk Creek is predominantly an agricultural watershed, and nitrogen applied to cropland does leach through the soil profile. Sediment and phosphorus reducing Best Management Practices (BMPs) are easier to locate and implement than nitrogen reduction BMPs. Nutrient management is still the best approach to address this issue at this point.
From Dean’s Desk…

It’s hard to believe another year has past; it seems as if these annual newsletters are getting closer together!

We thought last year was unusual with the amount of rainfall we received. As of this writing we are almost repeating last year. Unusual? Or the new normal? I guess we will have to wait and see how the next few years play out.

We saw a second spring in a row with a lot of stream and ditch bank erosion resulting in a lot of projects to fix and stabilize bank sloughing and gully washouts.

We also fielded a lot of calls from lake residents in our watershed. It has been a learning experience for us since the majority of our work in the past has been ag land oriented. Some lakes have been reported to be at record levels, which has resulted in a lot of shoreline erosion. With some research and help from some of our partner agencies we have been recommending bio-engineered type fixes, but sometimes rock is necessary.

We have also been busy with our traditional practices of side inlet pipes, alternative intakes, ag-waste (feedlot) upgrades, livestock exclusions, bank stabilizations, grade stabilizations, sediment basins and waterways.

We have continuing resources of cost-share money available for these and other water quality projects. If you have a project that will stop erosion or improve water quality, give us a call to see if we can help.

Two back-to-back seasons with above normal rainfall along with good commodity prices has prompted more tile than normal to be installed. The Hawk Creek Watershed staff understands the importance of drainage to our ag producers and our economy. We hope that producers consider water quality and quantity as they enhance their existing drainage systems or install new ones. One thing that should be considered is having a stable outlet; sometimes we see gully heads or ditch banks wash out because of a new outlet that has not been properly installed. Other things that could be considered are control structures and bio-filters. Consider replacing existing open intakes with rock intakes or a few lines of pattern tile.

For information on any of these options, please call our office at 320-523-3666

---

**Parks Profile: Skalbekken Park**

Looking for a great “stay-cation”! How about one of the many parks in the Hawk Creek Watershed. If you like to ride your horses or camp along the river then Skalbekken Park might be the place for you!

Skalbekken Park is located about 6 miles southwest of Sacred Heart, along the Minnesota River on County Road 10.

The Park encompasses a total of 400 acres with the opportunity to observe scenic river forests, wildlife, and plenty of trails for horseback riding, biking or hiking.

Facilities include:
- Shelters, three restrooms
- Picnic areas with tables
- Marked trails for horseback riding
- Marked trails for hiking and biking
- Fishing & camping opportunities are available

For more information call 320-523-3768!
River Safety...What to know when you’re out on the water

This summer an experienced kayaker drowned while kayaking Hawk Creek. Hawk Creek Watershed Project staff fielded many calls in the wake of this incident. Many people were concerned about whether Hawk Creek was safe to recreate on, and still others wondered how to get information on the current level of the creek. Since everybody has different comfort levels and experience levels when it comes to kayaking and canoeing on rivers, the only advice we can give is; “There is always a risk no matter what the flow is. Know your comfort level on the water and the level of the river before you set out on your adventure. Ultimately, it is a personal decision.”

If you are wondering about river levels; check out this website: [http://www.dnr.state.mn.us/waters/csg/index.html](http://www.dnr.state.mn.us/waters/csg/index.html)

The MN DNR, in cooperation with the MPCA, maintains this website, which contains flow data on many streams throughout the state. There are two ways to search for the site of your choice. You can use either a map view or a table view to locate the river of interest. The next screen brings up the hydrograph, which is a graph that shows the river discharge and/or stage in real-time. You can either choose to see the stage in feet, which is not necessarily the depth of the stream, or the discharge in cubic feet per second (cfs). It can be determined from analysis of the hydrograph whether the stream is rising, stable, or receding. The safest time to kayak is when the stream is stable or receding, not rapidly rising.

Hawk Creek, specifically, can be navigated with a canoe or kayak safely at a stage of 33.8 feet to 35.2 feet. This translates to a discharge of 125 cfs to 522 cfs. Please note that this range is meant to give you a frame of reference and is by no means a guarantee by HCWP that Hawk Creek is “safe” within this range. While we encourage everyone to enjoy scenic lower Hawk Creek, HCWP accepts no liability for your personal decision to recreate on Hawk Creek. Also keep in mind that rivers are constantly in a state of change and there may be tree snags, deep holes or scours from high water, eddies, rapids with rocks, and sandbars that can all be hazards for the inexperience, or even experienced, paddler. If you are in doubt on whether a river is navigable safely, don't hesitate to call your local conservation officer or local watershed project or district.

For more information on rivers in Minnesota, research the book “Paddling Minnesota” by Greg Breining or “Paddling Southern Minnesota” by Lynne and Robert Diebel, or other guide books on paddling in Minnesota.

Safety tips for kayaking/canoeing on a river:

- Always tell someone where you are going, when you expect to return, and where to call if you don’t.
- Wear a properly fitted Personal Floatation Device (PFD) at all times when you are in or near the river.
- Be sure your water skills and experience are equal to the river and the conditions. If one person is not as experienced as others, make sure that they feel comfortable going with. NEVER KAYAK/CANOE ALONE!
- Know your swimming ability and the learn the basics of swimmers rescue and self rescue on the river.
- Be prepared for extremes in weather, know the signs and symptoms of heat exhaustion and dehydration in hot weather.
- Reduce the threat of injury by wearing protective footwear and clothing.
- Carry a first aid kit and know how to use it.
- Learn or review medical aid and CPR.
- Never run a rapid unless you can see a clear path through it. Allow the craft ahead of you to pass through the rapids before you enter it.
- When in doubt, stop and scout, the river looks different while actually on the water than it does from a bridge.
- If the river looks very fast or deep, postpone your trip for a later date. Always remember, SAFETY FIRST!

Hawk Creek Needs You to Become a Citizen Monitor!

Why should you become a Citizen Monitor?
Becoming a member of the Hawk Creek Watershed Project Citizen Monitoring Network is fun and exciting. It allows you to learn more about your environment and have a positive impact on the Hawk Creek water monitoring process. Plus, you get some great equipment.

What does a Citizen Monitor do?
*A citizen monitor can monitor either rainfall, transparency tube readings on streams, or transparency readings with a secchi disk on lakes.
*Transparency measures the amount of sediment or particles in the water. The more particles in the water, the less transparent the water.
*To measure transparency, a citizen monitor is supplied with a transparency tube for streams or a secchi disk for lakes.

How do I become a Citizen Monitor?
Call the Hawk Creek Watershed Project at (320) 523-3666.
Tell us if you prefer monitoring rainfall and/or transparency.
We will send you some more information and help get you set up.
Complete the crossword puzzle to test your knowledge of water.

Across
1. Always _____ your hands before dinner.
2. People go to the beach to______.
3. Add this to water to make it cold.
5. Large body of freshwater.
6. Water travels through these.
7. If you have a leaky faucet, get it _____.
8. When you boil water, ___rises.

Down
1. wash
2. swim
3. ice
4. eel
5. lake
6. pipes
7. fixed
8. steam

Because we need water to live, it is important to conserve as much water as we can.

You can help by:
- turning off the water when you’re not using it,
- telling an adult when you see a leak.

WATER TRIVIA!
Fun Facts About Water…

1. How much water does it take to produce a hamburger?
2. How long can a person live without food?
3. How long can a person live without water?
4. How much water is used to flush a toilet?
5. How much water is used to brush your teeth?
6. How much water does a person use daily?
7. How much of your body is water?
8. How much of a pineapple is water?
9. How much of an elephant is water?
10. How much of an ear of corn is water?

Answers on bottom of page 5
Contributing Partners:

Chippewa County
Chippewa Water Plan
Chippewa NRCS/SWCD
City of Willmar
City of Olivia
Ducks Unlimited
Eagle Lake Association
Kandiyohi County
Kandiyohi Water Plan
Kandiyohi NRCS/SWCD
Long Lake Association
MN Department of Natural Resources
Minnesota Pollution Control Agency
Renville Co. Pheasants Forever
Prairie Country RC&D
Prairie Woods Environmental Learning Center
Renville County
Renville Water Plan
Renville NRCS/SWCD
US Fish and Wildlife Service
And…
Citizens and Landowners of the Watershed

Check it out!
We’re on the web!
www.hawkcreekwatershed.org