



Courtesy Of Stearns County SWCD & NRCS

STEARNS COUNTY LOCAL WATER MANAGEMENT PLAN 2007 ANNUAL REPORT

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This report summarizes the activities carried out in 2007 under the auspices of the *Stearns County Water Plan 2002 Update*.

The Stearns County Comprehensive Local Water Management Plan is administered by the Environmental Services Department. Many natural resource partners are essential to efforts to preserve and protect the natural resources of the County. The Environmental Services Department works closely with the Stearns County Soil and Water Conservation District, Watershed Districts, state agencies, municipalities, townships and citizens regarding natural resources management.

The Stearns County Board of Commissioners has consistently shown its concern for the quality of the County’s natural resources by supporting the Local Water Management program initiatives.

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Cover Photo: The Stearns County Water Management Advisory Committee viewing shoreland Best Management Practices on Clearwater Lake.

FUNDING

In 2007 the Stearns County Board of Commissioners allocated \$50,000 from general levy funds to the Water Management project fund. This fund is used for projects that carry out the goals of the Water Management Plan. The Stearns County Water Management Advisory Committee reviews the proposed projects and makes recommendations on approval or denial to the County Board.

The Environmental Services Department also receives an annual Natural Resources Block Grant of \$10,657 from the State of Minnesota to administer the Water Management program. The County is required to match this grant.

The following table illustrates the expenditures for projects funded by Stearns County Water Management in 2007. The projects will be described in more detail in this report.

2007 Water Management Plan Project Expenditures

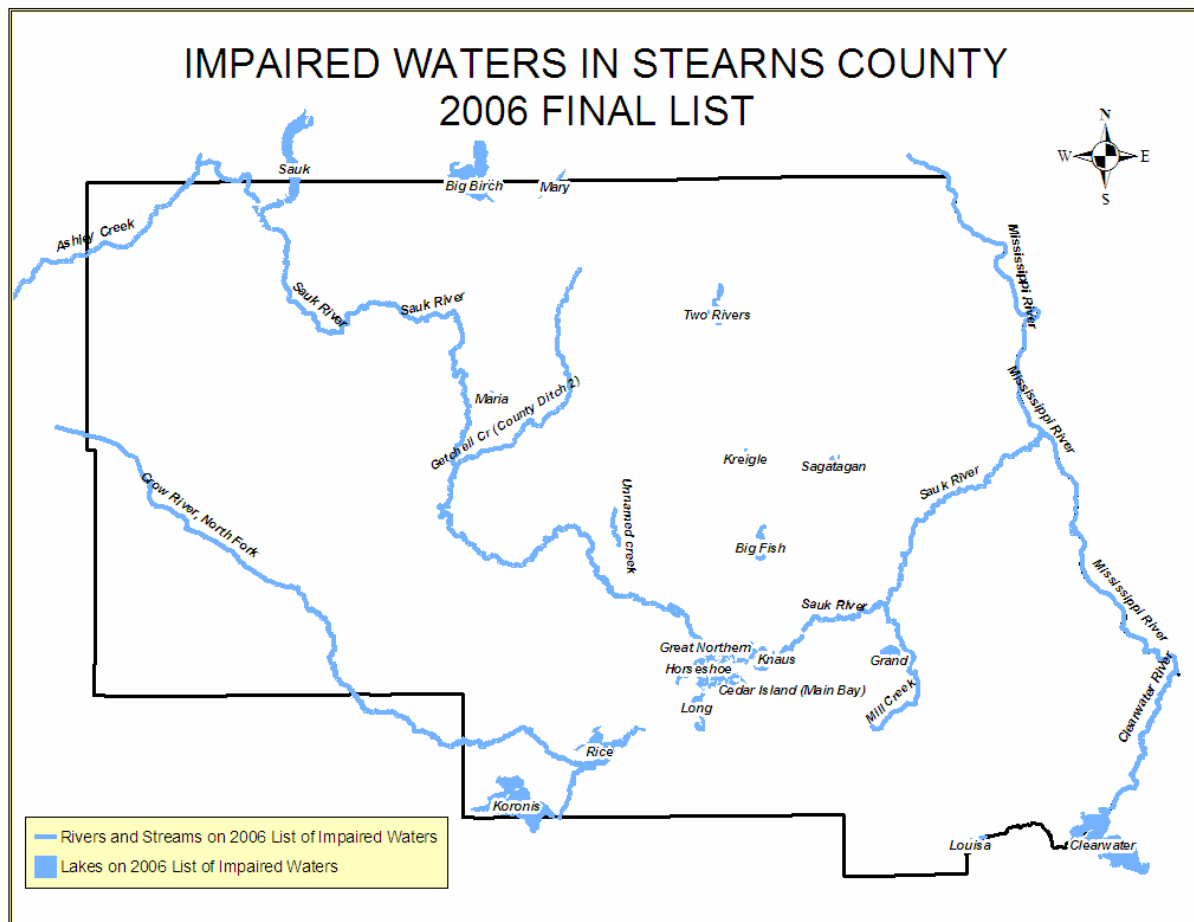
2007 Water Management Plan Projects	2007 Expenditures
Lake and Stream Monitoring	\$ 28,596.10
Central Minnesota Water Education Alliance	\$ 6,391.00
Monitoring of Sauk Lake Tributaries by Big Sauk Lake Association	\$ 3,215.30
Conservation Design Presentation by Randall Arendt	\$ 2,500.00
ROCORI 4th Grade Festival	\$ 2,000.00
New Munich Well Sealing	\$ 1,925.00
Wetland Restoration in Grove Township	\$ 1,480.30
Lower Sauk Fest	\$ 1,000.00
4th Annual Middle Sauk River Water Fest	\$ 1,000.00
Paynesville Water Fest	\$ 851.67
Albany School Fee to Attend Middle Sauk Fest	\$ 740.00
Snow and Ice Removal Workshop	\$ 300.63
Total	\$50,000.00

MONITORING AND DATA COLLECTION

Lake and Stream Monitoring Fund

The activities discussed in the report were done under the auspices of the *Stearns County Water Plan 2002 Update*, which was in effect until the end of 2007. A new Plan, developed during 2007, identifies impaired waters as an issue of priority concern. The Clean Water Act requires States to assess all waters of the state and publish bi-annually a List of Impaired

Waters. The following map shows the lakes, rivers and streams in Stearns County that are on the 2006 Final List of Impaired Waters. For a much more thorough discussion of impaired waters, please see the website of the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency (MPCA) <http://www.pca.state.mn.us/water/tmdl/index.html>.



Like much of Minnesota, many of the lakes, rivers and streams within Stearns County have not been monitored to MPCA standards to determine whether or not they are impaired. Due to limited funding, monitoring of all the lakes, rivers and streams within the County is not feasible. A monitoring priority list will be developed as a joint effort among Stearns County Soil and Water Conservation District, Stearns County Environmental Services, the Watershed Districts, and the MPCA. Screening and prioritization for monitoring was started in 2007.

In anticipation of defining and carrying out the monitoring program, a monitoring fund was established from the 2007 Water Management Project Fund. It is expected that this monitoring initiative will take several years to complete. The goal is to assess as many of the lakes, rivers and streams as possible throughout the County to determine whether or not an impairment exists.

Monitoring of Sauk Lake Tributaries by Big Sauk Lake Association

The Sauk Lake Association received funding from the Water Management project fund to monitor tributaries to Big Sauk Lake. Results from the monitoring are available from the Sauk Lake Association or from the Sauk River Watershed District. In 2007 the Sauk Lake Association continued its monitoring of sites on Hoboken, Silver and Ashley Creeks. Samples were analyzed for ammonia, total suspended solids, total phosphorus and E-coli. The purpose was to target sites in the minor

watersheds which could be contributing excess nutrients and sediment flowing into Sauk Lake and to promote Best Management Practices on those sites. The Water Management fund covered the lab costs and the volunteers contributed their time and mileage. The Sauk River Watershed District gave guidance to the volunteers on designing and carrying out the sampling program.

EDUCATION

Education is one of the primary focus areas of Water Management. Education leads to better understanding of the environment, land stewardship and a greater sense of ownership of natural resources. Many in-kind hours and resources were allocated to educational activities by the Environmental Services Department, Soil and Water Conservation District, Watershed Districts, the Department of Natural Resources and the Cities. Many other organizations and people allocated in-kind time and resources as well and are too numerous to list individually.

Central Minnesota Water Education Alliance

Central Minnesota Water Education Alliance (CMWEA) is a coalition that provides educational outreach to promote water quality stewardship. The mission of CMWEA is to develop and implement educational programs that encourage individuals to protect water resources by increasing their knowledge and making simple behavior changes. A second purpose of CMWEA is to fulfill the stormwater education requirements of National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) permits. Funding of CMWEA comes from the Water Management fund, a 319 Clean Water Partnership Grant and membership dues.

The initial members of CMWEA were Cities with NPDES Permits and Stearns County. The Sauk River Watershed District, Stearns Soil & Water Conservation District and the Minnesota Rural Water Association are also active participants. In 2007 a number of communities joined CMWEA for the purpose of receiving assistance in the implementation of the educational goals of their Wellhead Protection Plans. The CMWEA message was, therefore, expanded to include groundwater protection. In 2007 CMWEA was also joined by Townships with NPDES Permits and Lake Associations.



The CMWEA initiatives include outdoor marketing. This billboard was installed in early February, 2007 on County Road 75 between Waite Park and St. Joseph. This billboard potentially reaches 15,360 drivers per day. The primary purpose of the billboard is to influence the public to visit the CMWEA website.

A list of “Top Ten” Water Quality Tips are featured on the CMWEA website www.mnwaterconnection.com. In 2007 there were 5692 unique hits on the website.

Radio and newspaper ads were developed based on the “Top Ten”. The following quarter-page ads were placed in the St. Cloud Times (circulation of 28,000 daily) six times each; ads were placed in 6 of the other newspapers in the County; and 298 radio ads were aired.

DON'T CLUTTER THE GUTTER

Ever think of that storm drain in front of your home as waterfront property? Sure, the view isn't the same, but it does connect your property directly to nearby waterways, without any treatment detours. That's why it's so important to keep grass clippings, compost, detergents, fertilizers and chemicals out of the storm drain. The water — not to mention the ducks, fish and everyone else — will be healthier without it.

MAKE THE WATER CONNECTION
Clean water. It starts with you.

For ten simple ways you can help protect the water, visit mnwaterconnection.com

Thanks to our sponsors: Make the Water Connection is a program of **CMWEA — Central Minnesota Water Education Alliance** With support from Stearns County, the cities of St. Cloud, White Park, St. Joseph and Saratol, and the Upper Mississippi River Source Water Protection Project.

HELP PREVENT H₂O UCH

Wherever you live, you can help protect our lakes, streams and groundwater. From keeping grass clippings out of the storm sewer or leaves out of the lake, to picking up after your pet or changing how you wash your car, it's the simple things we do every day that add up to cleaner water. It's important for wildlife and for us, and everyone can make a difference. So thanks for doing your part — the water's feeling better already.

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DON'T FORGET YOUR DOGGY BAG

Picking up after your pooch is more than just a courtesy to your neighbors — it's also being a good neighbor to area lakes and streams. That's because pet waste can contain harmful bacteria as well as phosphorus that causes excess algae and weed growth in lakes and rivers. So every time you reach for the leash, remember to grab a small plastic bag for the road. It's one more simple thing you can do to help keep the water clean.

MAKE THE WATER CONNECTION
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DON'T RAKE INTO THE LAKE

Feeding a lake or river too many leaves or other yard waste creates a bumper crop of algae, turning lakes into pools of pea-green sludge with too little oxygen for the fish. To keep our lakes fishable, swimmable, clear and clean, compost your leaves at least 100 feet from the shoreline, or take advantage of the nearest public composting facility. Happy lakes, happy fish, happy people.

MAKE THE WATER CONNECTION
Clean water. It starts with you.

For ten simple ways you can help protect the water, visit mnwaterconnection.com

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CONGRATS!

WATER CONNECTION TV AD CONTEST WINNERS

See the winning videos at mnwaterconnection.com

 <p>GET A RAIN BARREL— SAVE \$\$\$ Apollo High School <i>Students:</i> Megan Potter, Michelle Meyer, Naima Toure <i>Teacher:</i> Joe Shulte, Technology Education</p>	 <p>DON'T FORGET YOUR DOGSY DIG Rocori High School <i>Students:</i> Elyn Kinzer, Kelsey Lintgen, Autumn Struffert, Elisa Traut <i>Teacher:</i> Linda Liebl, Multimedia</p>	 <p>DON'T TAKE INTO THE LAKE Rocori High School <i>Students:</i> Nick Loxtercamp, Andy Guggenberger, Cory Wenz, Kyle Ratke <i>Teacher:</i> Linda Liebl, Multimedia</p>
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Thanks to all Stearns County high school students and teachers who entered the *Make the Water Connection* TV Ad Contest. Our three winning entries receive \$1000 paid to their school's sponsoring department, and a \$400 Gander Mountain Gift Card.

Watch the winning and honorable mention videos at mnwaterconnection.com

Thanks to our sponsors:




www.times.com

Make the Water Connection is a program of
CMWEA — Central Minnesota Water Education Alliance
With support from Stearns County; the cities of St. Cloud, Wate Park, St. Joseph and Saria; and the Upper Mississippi River Source Water Protection Project.

A major part of the CMWEA campaign is an ad contest aimed at high school students. The contest requires the students to develop a video ad that illustrates one of the “Top Ten” Water Quality Tips shown on the CMWEA website. Gander Mountain agreed to sponsor the contest and contributed three \$400 gift cards. The contest engaged the students and teachers and, hopefully, the students brought home the water quality message. In 2007 sixty students entered the video contest. The videos are shown on the websites of CMWEA and the City of St. Cloud.

By working in concert, the members of CMWEA are able to provide a consistent water quality educational message in a cost-effective manner. A similar campaign will be conducted in 2008 to further establish CMWEA as an effective education outlet for the protection of surface and ground water in Central Minnesota.

Water Festivals

Water festivals were conducted in several communities throughout the County in 2007 for the purpose of educating grade school students about the environment and how to be good environmental stewards. The water festivals are primarily sponsored by the Sauk River Watershed District and by communities with Sourcewater Protection Plans. Many state agencies, local agencies and community groups also assist with these festivals. Funding from the Water Management project fund was provided to the ROCORI 4th Grade Festival, the Lower Sauk Fest, the 4th Annual Middle Sauk Fest and the Paynesville Water Fest. Albany School is located outside the Sauk River Watershed District but is allowed to attend the Middle Sauk Fest with a monetary contribution. The Water Management Project fund paid the contribution.

The Water Management Advisory Committee researched means of providing the opportunity to attend an educational environmental fest to every student in Stearns County at some point during grade school. The plan to accomplish this will require that the current festivals expand their attendance areas

and a new festival will be started in Sartell. The Water Management Advisory Committee and County Board agreed to provide funding of \$10 per attending student to the fest organizers. This funding will provide a stable base for the fest organizers and also provide funding for the students who are not residents of the Sauk River Watershed District or a community conducting a Waterfest. In 2007 approximately 1373 students attended a Waterfest. It is anticipated that as many as 1905 will be invited to attend a Waterfest in 2008.



The fourth graders shown are at the 2007 Lower Sauk Fest searching for macroinvertebrates in the South Fork of Watab Creek.

Photo courtesy of Sauk River Watershed District

Snow and Ice Removal Workshop

The Avon Area Lakes Association and Sauk River Watershed District organized a Snow and Ice Removal and Salt Application Workshop. The focus of the workshop was the effect of salt on ground water, lakes, streams, animal and plant life. Techniques were presented that show care for the environment while at the same time keeping the roads in safe driving condition.

Water Management Advisory Committee Meetings

The Water Management Advisory Committee guides the water management planning efforts in Stearns County. This Committee is comprised of 12 individuals representing various sectors – township government, watershed districts, lake associations, municipalities, Municipal League, farming, Planning Commission, County Board of Commissioners, interested citizenry, post-secondary education/local legislation, education, and the Stearns Soil and Water Conservation District. The Committee meets approximately monthly to share information on the activities and perspectives of the group which they represent as they relate to natural resource issues in Stearns County. Individuals or groups seeking funding from the Water Management project fund present their project request to the Committee which then votes to approve or deny.

The cover of this report includes a picture of the Water Management Advisory Committee on a pontoon tour of the Clearwater Chain of Lakes. The Stearns Soil and Water Conservation District, the Clearwater River Watershed District and Clearwater Chain of Lakes assisted to organize the tour of the lake with shoreland projects and issues highlighted.

LAND AND WATER TREATMENT

Wetland Restoration Project

Stearns County Water Management, Pheasants Forever, Stearns Soil and Water Conservation District, Area 5 Joint Powers, and the Sauk River Watershed District partnered to restore a wetland in Grove Township. A Type 2 wetland was expanded by about eight acres through the construction of an earthen berm. This wetland is adjacent to the Sauk River and should enhance the collection and filtration of sediment before entering the Sauk River. The wetland will also have increased benefit for wildlife and flood control. This project was named one of the 25 Outstanding Pheasants Forever Habitat Projects in 2007.

New Munich Well Sealing



Photo courtesy of Stearns SWCD and NRCS

The City of New Munich, a community of 352 residents, adopted a Wellhead Protection Plan in 2003. The City's municipal water comes from wells that are approximately 50 feet deep. The aquifer supplying water to the city wells does not have an effective confining layer between the aquifer and the land surface and is, therefore, considered to have a high sensitivity to contamination. An abandoned hand-dug cistern well, shown to the left, approximately 12 feet

in diameter and 18 feet deep, was less than 300 feet upstream from the municipal well. This abandoned well was a significant potential source of contamination of the municipal drinking water. Stearns Soil and Water Conservation District Cost Share Funds and City of New Munich funds were used to partially pay for the expense of sealing the well and Water Management funds were used to cover the remaining cost.

Septic Inspections in Shoreland of Sauk River Chain of Lakes

The Sauk River Chain of Lakes Association approached the County to request septic system inspections around the Chain. All the lakes within the Chain are on the 2008 Draft List of Impaired Waters due to excess nutrients. The County applied for and was awarded funding of \$130,000 for this project from a Clean Water Legacy grant, coordinated by Minnesota Board of Water and Soil Resources and the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency. With a \$10,000 contribution from the Sauk River Chain of Lakes Association and \$10,000 from the Water Management project fund, there should be sufficient funds to do onsite inspections of all the septic systems in the shoreland of the Chain. The Lake Association is pursuing this initiative partly because of the negative impact of failing systems in shoreland on the water quality of the lakes and partly due to demonstrate that it is willing to "clean up

its own backyard”. There are approximately 1200 septic systems in the shoreland area and the project is expected to take three years to complete. Property owners of failing systems will be required to upgrade to meet current septic system regulations.

Soil and Water Conservation District and Natural Resources Conservation Service Projects

The Soil and Water Conservation District, along with the Watershed Districts, is the implementation arm of the Water Management Plan. During 2007 a number of conservation structures and practices were implemented by the Soil and Water Conservation District. The Soil and Water Conservation District and Watershed Districts will continue to be important partners to ensure that environmental projects, Best Management Practices and conservation structures are implemented to sustain the various ecosystems of the County.

Conservation Structures and Practices Implemented by Stearns Soil and Water Conservation District and Natural Resources Conservation

	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007
Nutrient Management Planning (# of acres)	9,000	20,000	22,000	28,732	33,279
Waste Management Systems	7	15	24	19	19
Lakescaping Projects (# of projects)	9	2	8	11	3
Unpermitted Manure Basin Investigations	37	15	14	24	30
Environmental Quality Assurance Assessments	22	2	19	22	25
Continuous Conservation Reserve Program (CCRP) (# of contracts)	53	90	76	46	70
CCRP (# of acres)	409	412	730	401	902
Total Active Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) & CCRP Contracts (# of contracts)		1,374	1,446	1,536	1,532
Total Active Contracts (CRP & CCRP) (# of acres)		31,683	32,379	34,236	32,996
Environmental Quality Incentives Program Contracts (EQIP) (# of contracts)	48	54	53	52	28
Total Active EQIP Contracts (# of contracts)		251	304	197	186
Conservation Security Program (# of contracts)				110	110
Conservation Security Program (# of acres)				30,600	30,600

Note: This table represents a small portion of the projects completed during 2007 by the SWCD and NRCS. This also does not include Watershed District projects or other initiatives implemented by other local, state, or federal agencies.

REGULATION AND PLANNING

Conservation Design Presentation by Randall Arendt

Mr. Randall Arendt came to St. John's University to speak to the decision makers within Stearns County. Mr. Arendt is one of the national authorities on conservation design. His message is that residential subdivision designs can be "twice green" because they succeed both environmentally and economically. He presented a technique that enables developers and local officials to work together to accomplish their different objectives, namely the construction of full-density residential subdivisions in such a way that helps to build a community-wide network of permanent conservation land.

Development of *Stearns County Local Water Management Plan 2008-2017*

One of the major water planning initiatives accomplished in 2007 was the development and writing of a new Plan, the, *Stearns County Local Water Management Plan 2008-2017*. This Plan was developed with the guidance of the Water Management Advisory Committee by a number of agencies, in particular the Stearns Soil and Water Conservation District, the Stearns Environmental Services Department, the MN Board of Water and Soil Resources, the City of St. Cloud, the Sauk River Watershed District, the Minnesota Rural Water Association, and the Sauk River Chain of Lakes Association. This Plan is intended to serve as a guide for resource protection and preservation in Stearns County for the next ten years. The Plan can be accessed on the Stearns County website <http://www.co.stearns.mn.us/1344.htm> or by contacting the Stearns County Environmental Services Department.