

Watershed Districts In Action

Minnehaha Creek Watershed District is DNR 2013 Watershed District of the Year

District points to partnerships with cities, organizations as key to success

The Minnehaha Creek Watershed District (MCWD) has been named the 2013 "Watershed District of the Year" by the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources (DNR). Jason Moeckel, DNR Inventory, Monitoring and Analysis Section Manager, presented the award to the MCWD at the Minnesota Association of Watershed Districts' Annual Meeting in Alexandria.

Each year the DNR honors a watershed district in the state for its accomplishments toward water management. The MCWD was selected for the 2013 award for its long-standing and robust partnership with the DNR, its collaboration with private and public sector organizations and its timely and effective programs.

"MCWD actively solicits input and feedback from their many and varied stakeholders and regularly consults with the DNR Area Hydrologist on their projects and programs," said Moeckel. "The District successfully coordinates and integrates its various programs to systematically improve the watershed and its water resources." Among examples cited for 2013:

- Restored a 3,000 foot ditched section of Minnehaha Creek to its original meander along Reach 20 in St. Louis Park;
- Worked with homeowners along Minnehaha Creek who volunteered to let the District remove invasive plants from 2,000 feet of their creek banks and replant with native species;
- Began restoration on two former farm properties totaling over 200 acres of rolling topography with steep slopes draining into Six Mile Marsh to help improve the water quality of Halsted's Bay;
- Developed a comprehensive, long-term AIS Management Plan;
- Conducted its third year of a Zebra mussel monitoring program;
- Held the 7th annual Minnehaha Creek cleanup which drew 1,200 citizens who collected over two tons of trash.



Jason Moeckel, DNR Inventory, Monitoring and Analysis Section Manager, presents the Watershed District of the Year print to Minnehaha Creek Administrator Eric Evenson-Marden and managers Pam Blixt, Sherry Davis White, and Bill Olson

"The MCWD is very honored to be the 2013 recipient of the MN DNR's Watershed District of the Year award," said Jim Calkins, MCWD Board President. "We look forward to continued partnerships in our work to improve, protect, and preserve our natural resources."

The MCWD is responsible for "managing and protecting the water resources" as it pertains to the Minnehaha Creek Watershed in parts of Minneapolis and the western suburbs.

The MCWD was praised for its restoration work throughout the year, its comprehensive, long-term Aquatic invasive species management plan, its work with organizations and area cities, among other things.

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Celebrating Outstanding Contributions in Conservation

2013 Outstanding Watershed District Employee of the Year

December 2013

The Minnesota Board of Water and Soil Resources (BWSR) is pleased to announce **Cliff Aichinger, Ramsey-Washington Metro Watershed District Administrator**, as the 2013 Outstanding Watershed District Employee of the Year.

Cliff was selected for the award because of his exceptional performance as administrator for the Ramsey-Washington Metro Watershed District. His leadership has gained the district national recognition and has enabled the organization to be identified as Minnesota's Watershed District Program of the Year multiple times. Cliff has directed many successful, multi-million dollar projects, and two of them were honored as project of the year (2005 and 2009).

Cliff effectively coordinates and provides leadership in the development of district goals, plans, policies, and budgets, and he excels at administering the district budget and processes. Cliff represents the district by serving on several local and statewide committees where he leads and creates a visible presence to promote the district's interests.

An example of one of the outstanding projects Cliff has worked on in recent years is the Maplewood Mall Stormwater Volume Reduction Retrofit Project. Cliff prepared grant and loan applications which culminated in the District receiving a combined \$3.2 million in grants and loans from the Clean Water Fund, Section 319 Funds, SRF Green Project Reserve Program, and the TMDL grant program. In addition to providing overall leadership for the project, Cliff promoted the project's innovative education signage and worked with the district's artist in residence to incorporate public art into the project.

BWSR presented Cliff Aichinger with the award at the Minnesota Association of Watershed Districts annual convention in December 2013. John Jaschke, BWSR Executive Director, commented, "Cliff continues the tradition of honoring exceptional employees working to protect and improve Minnesota's natural resources. His accomplishments represent important contributions to the watershed and the state." Congratulations Cliff!



Cliff Aichinger, Ramsey-Washington WD (left) and John Jaschke, BWSR Executive Director



2013 MAWD PROGRAM OF THE YEAR

Capitol Region Watershed District Neighborhood Stabilization Program Selected Program of the Year

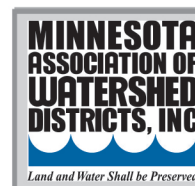
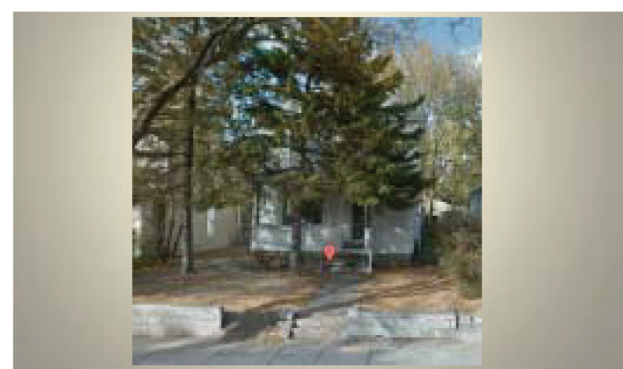
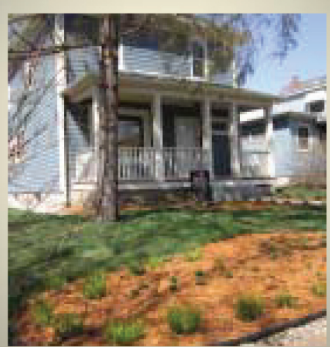
In summer 2011, the City of Saint Paul's Department of Planning and Economic Development and Capitol Region Watershed District (CRWD) began a unique partnership to enhance residential landscapes and achieve water quality benefits at foreclosed homes acquired by the City for rehabilitation. Through the City's Neighborhood Stabilization Program (NSP), the City and Ramsey County and CRWD are designing and constructing environmentally friendly landscapes in Saint Paul that treat nearly all residential runoff on-site via downspout direction to rain gardens, rain barrels and other green areas. The partnership builds on synergy between two local government entities: CRWD provides expert advice and design to create an environmentally conscientious landscape plan, NSP provides the resources to install the plan, and the two entities work together to provide educational support for the occupants at the site.



Front row: Britta Suppes, Gwen Willems, Anna Eleria, Roxanne Young, City of St. Paul, Joe Collins, Mark Doneux, Jerome Deal, MAWD Board
Second Row: Ruth Schaefer, MAWD Awards Committee, Elizabeth Beckman, Stephanie Herbst, Corey Poland, Michelle Sylvander, Bob Fossum

The City of Saint Paul's Forestry Department also provides crucial input on the condition of the existing residential trees and makes recommendations on how to improve the residential tree canopy in the targeted area, which are incorporated into each design. To date, over 90 residential landscape plans have been prepared by CRWD and RCD at no cost to the City. Besides design assistance, CRWD provides a \$1,000 reimbursement to the City for the construction of stormwater BMPs on each NSP property. CRWD and RCD also provide consultation to the developers during construction to ensure the designs are carried out according to the plan. The City provides each homebuyer a guidebook that includes information about the maintenance of the rain gardens.

Capitol Region Watershed District
Neighborhood Stabilization Program



2013 MAWD PROJECT OF THE YEAR

Heron Lake Watershed District Wins Project of the Year Award for Grassroots Effort to Bring Back Fulda Lakes

The Heron Lake Watershed District was awarded the Minnesota Association of Watershed District's (MAWD) Project of the Year Award for the Grassroots Effort to Bring Back Fulda Lakes. The award was given during the MAWD Annual Meeting held at the Arrowwood Conference Center in Alexandria.

MAWD annually honors innovative programs and projects that have achieved project partnerships, public benefit, use of creative solutions, innovative project financing and management, project success at meeting goals, and address a clearly defined project.

This grassroots endeavor started on behalf of Fulda townpeople noticing the degradation of First and Second Fulda Lakes, located within city limits.

Through strong partnerships, the grassroots ideas turned to reality. The HLWD was able to apply for funds based on the needs described by local landowners. Partnerships were essential in utilizing the best resources available and maximizing the cost effectiveness of any project or education event.

Partners included the Department of Natural Resources, Murray County, US Fish and Wildlife Service, Fulda Game and Fish Club, State of Minnesota, Landowners, Murray Soil and Water Conservation District, and the HLWD. Fulda Lakes are seeing improvement as a result of collaboration that made the drawdown, reclamation, and restoration projects possible.

MAWD Awards Program

To encourage more nominations year, the Awards Committee asks for a simple, one page Preliminary Nomination Form to be completed in August. Based on the preliminary nominations, three finalists, in each category, will be asked to complete a more detailed project or program description.

Finalists are notified in August and have until October to submit the full project/program description. The Preliminary Nomination form requires a project/program description up to 250 words.



MAWD Awards Committee member Ruth Schaefer (left) and MAWD president Jerome Deal (right) present the Project of the Year Award to Heron Lake administrator Jan Voit and manager Gary Ewert.

Heron Lake:
A Grassroots Effort to Bring Back
the Fulda Lakes



Heron Lake:
A Grassroots Effort to Bring Back
the Fulda Lakes

