



PRIOR LAKE-SPRING LAKE
WATERSHED DISTRICT

Prior Lake-Spring Lake Watershed District Education and Outreach Plan

2025

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“Our mission is to manage and preserve the water resources of the Prior Lake-Spring Lake Watershed District to the best of our ability using input from our communities, sound engineering practices, and our ability to efficiently fund beneficial projects which transcend political jurisdictions.”

Executive Summary

The purpose of Prior Lake-Spring Lake’s Education and Outreach program is to improve the general understanding of water resources and the impact each citizen has upon them. The best advocate for water resources is an engaged and informed citizenry; this program seeks to make connections with our stakeholders and to foster an environmentally conscious community. The education and outreach program fulfills the goals laid out in the 2020 to 2030 Water Resources Management Plan (WRMP), requirements of the Municipal Separate Storm Sewer System (MS4) permit for the Prior Lake Outlet Channel (PLOC), and when applicable, requirements of current grants. The 2025 Education and Outreach Plan will lay out plans for activities that will be completed in 2025, staff time and funds allowing.

To the extent feasible, the education and outreach program will coordinate efforts with partners and the Scott County Clean Water Education Program (SCWEP) to promote a community-wide understanding of local water resource issues and the impact each citizen has upon them, including aquatic invasive species (AIS), landowner best conservation practices, chloride pollution, and illicit discharge. Partners that share the District’s goals include:

- Prior Lake Association
- Spring Lake Association
- City of Prior Lake
- City of Savage
- City of Shakopee
- Shakopee Mdewakanton Sioux Community (SMSC)
- Scott County
- Metropolitan Council
- University of Minnesota
- Spring Lake Township
- Sand Creek Township
- Scott Soil and Water Conservation District
- Scott County Watershed Management Organization
- Prior Lake-Savage School District

Audiences of the District’s education and outreach program include agriculture and rural landowners, urban and lakeshore residents, lake-users, District partners, community groups, schools, businesses, and government.

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Communications

Communications are an important part of the District’s education and outreach program. These efforts tend to be passive in nature with a goal of sharing information to create a more informed citizenry. These methods tend to have a wide reach with low effort, but are less likely to have a strong impact on their own. The District communicates with its residents using a variety of formats including social media posts, website updates, presentations, tabling events, articles for a variety of publications, and the creation of other informational materials such as brochures and factsheets. In 2025, the District will investigate additional avenues of event advertisement.

Project Outreach

The District will develop outreach plans for any new projects and programs; these may include informational materials for neighborhood residents, press-releases and newsletter articles, and social media and website updates, and workshops. Outreach on completed and ongoing projects and programs will also be conducted.

In 2025, depending on project progress, project-specific outreach will be developed for the Prior Lake Outlet Pipe Lining, Buck Stream Restoration, the Swamp Iron-Enhancing Sand Filter, and the carp management program on Upper Prior Lake. These will likely include articles, tours, videos, and events (see “Events” section).

Promotional Materials

Utilizing items that residents and lake-users can take home with them from events can be an effective way to share District messaging, increase the visibility of the District and its work, and even serve as an incentive for participation in District events. In 2025, the District plans to work with the CAC and other partners to develop meaningful promotional materials. These will include useful and practical items related to tabling topics like sustainable lawn care and chloride pollution. The District would also like to work with local schools or youth organizations to host a sticker design contest.

Communications Items

Item/Event	Type
2-4 SCENE articles	Article
PLA newsletter article	Article
SLA newsletter article	Article
Annual Newsletter	Article
Event Notices and Articles	Article
Update 4-8 General Info One-Pagers	Informational Material
Update Website as needed	Informational Material
Project Factsheets as needed	Informational Material
52 Social Media Updates	Informational Material

Buck Stream Mini Documentary	Informational Material
New Educational Resources for Tabling	Informational Material
Spring Lake Association Annual Meeting	Presentation
Prior Lake Association Annual Meeting	Presentation
Spring Lake Township Annual Meeting	Presentation
Fall Community Fest	Tabling
Stickers	Promotional Materials
Tabling “giveaways”	Promotional Materials

Events

Hosting volunteer and educational events and activities is critical to creating community connections and providing effective educational opportunities. Compared to communication materials, events require more resources and may reach a smaller audience. However, events often have a lasting impact on individuals and can create opportunities and material for continued outreach. Events are also critical for fostering engaged and informed residents who become advocates and partners in projects. The events outlined in the 2025 Education and Outreach Plan aim to create collaborations and build relationships with a range of partners, fulfill MS4 requirements and WRMP Implementation Actions, and create fun educational experiences for our residents.

In 2025, the District will host its second annual “Watershed Week.” The goal of Watershed Week is to host events that appeal to a wide range of resident interests and abilities to “meet them where they’re at.” Staff will work with partners and the Citizen Advisory Committee to build on and improve upon the successes of last year’s events and continue to reach our residents in engaging ways.

Historically, the District has held an annual “Clean Water Clean-Up” volunteer event, usually raking leaves or removing buckthorn in the fall at a city park. In 2025, District will continue to explore options for volunteer events with high impact or transferable “take home” skills to implement in 2025.

Below is a list of events planned for 2025, the event type, and potential partners. These will be completed as staff time and resources allow.

Event Items

Title	Type	Potential Partners
Board and CAC Project tour	Tour	Project Landowner
Resident and CAC Tour: Focus TBD	Tour	Project Landowners
Watershed Week: Art Event	Education Event	Local Business
Watershed Week: Active Event	Education Event	Local Business/Organization
Watershed Week: Volunteer Event	Volunteer Event	SCWEP
Watershed Week: Misc. Event	TBD	Local Business/Organization
Outdoor Education Days*	Education Event	SCWEP
Reel Cool Fishing School*	Education Event	City of Prior Lake
Starry Trek*	Volunteer Event	University of Minnesota

Aquatic Vegetation Identification Workshop	Workshop	Lake Associations, UMN
Youth-Focused Education Event	Education Event	PLSAS
Carp Management “Open House”	Education Event	WSB, Parks
Celebration of District Progress	Education Event	TBD

* Partner-led event

Volunteer Programs

The District offers recurring volunteer opportunities and has built a strong volunteer base over the years. Volunteering provides residents with an opportunity to connect with and further the Districts work and mission, and to learn more about our water resources. The District offers the following opportunities for volunteers to get involved with District programs and projects:

- Ice-on and ice-off reporters report lake ice conditions to staff.
- Community Assisted Monitoring Program (CAMP) volunteers monitor water quality on several District lakes bi-weekly throughout the monitoring season. This work is completed through a partnership with the Metropolitan Council.
- Volunteers assist with the carp management program by reporting signs and locations of carp activity.

The District will continue to partner with volunteers on other projects as needs arise.

Citizen Advisory Committee (CAC)

The purpose of the Citizen Advisory Committee (CAC) is to advise the Prior Lake-Spring Lake Watershed District Board and staff on issues related to lakes and other water resources within the Prior Lake-Spring Lake Watershed District. The CAC consists of residents who provide input, review, and make recommendations to the Board of Managers on projects, reports, and prioritizations. The CAC acts as the primary interface for the Board to address the current issues of concern of the local citizens. The duties of the CAC are defined by the Minnesota Statutes section 103D.331(1a), the Operating Guidelines created by the PLSLWD CAC, and the PLSLWD Governance Manual.

In 2025, the CAC plans to break out into subcommittees to focus on topics of interest. This will likely provide additional support to the education and outreach program, given the current CAC interest in educating the public.

Community Programs

Farmer-Led Council (FLC)

Agricultural lands make up most of the landscape in the Spring Lake and Upper Prior Lake watersheds. The District will partner with Scott SWCD to continue its staff support of the Farmer-Led Council (FLC). The FLC meets roughly 3 times per year and consists of local farmers within the PLSLWD. The role of the

FLC is to develop and guide the implementation of strategies that the District will use to accomplish agriculture's share of nutrient reduction goals. It will:

- Inform decision-makers and the public about soil and water conservation opportunities.
- Identify base level and site-tailored practices that are available and needed.
- Define the best approach for assisting farmers to implement practices.
- Identify potential barriers to implementation, along with tools and resources needed to overcome them.

In addition to special events and workshops, the FLC sponsors the Lake-Friendly Farm Program, which was created to recognize the farmers that are doing an outstanding job of managing their farms in a way that protects the water resources in the District. Once a farm meets the program criteria, the farm is certified as a Lake-Friendly Farm, and the farmer receives a sign which they can post at their farm. The program both identifies and publicly recognizes existing best management practices in the watershed and assists farmers in identifying areas for improvement to help protect our water resources.

Residential and Agricultural Cost-Share

The District will continue to partner with the SWCD to meet with landowners to promote rural and urban incentive and cost-share programs and encourage their participation.

Part of the goal of the District's cost-share program is to create a "culture of conservation" which inspires residents and results in residents pursuing conservation projects beyond the cost-share program and as a natural extension of their everyday activities.

The District offers incentive payments for lakeshore restoration, filter strips, wetland restoration, well decommissioning, water and sediment control basins and other best management practices. The District annually approves the SWCD Conservation Practice Payment Docket, which defines practices, payments, and evaluation tools. The District prioritizes projects that will have the highest benefit to reducing phosphorus and runoff volume to priority waterbodies.

SCWEP Partnership

The District will continue to partner with the Scott Clean Water Education Program (SCWEP) to extend its education and outreach efforts. This program is run by the Scott Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD) and includes the following partners:

- Scott Watershed Management Organization
- Scott County Government
- Prior Lake-Spring Lake Watershed District
- Vermillion River Watershed Joint Powers Board
- Lower Minnesota River Watershed District
- City of Credit River
- City of Shakopee
- City of Prior Lake
- City of Savage
- Spring Lake Township
- Jackson Township
- Louisville Township

The goal of SCWEP is to make clean water choices second nature for all who live and work in Scott County. SCWEP uses the message "Clean Water Starts with Me!" to empower individuals to think

differently about stormwater runoff and their role in water quality. Audiences include agriculture, rural, urban and lakeshore residents, community groups, schools, and government.

SCWEP will continue to assist in the District’s events and communications mentioned throughout this plan via media amplification and materials creation, planning, and day-of support. SCWEP will also advance messaging on behalf of the partnership through cost-share program education and workshops on conservation topics.

Budget

In 2024, \$38,000 was budgeted for education and outreach activities, with \$29,994.42 of the budget expended. Website updates were completed in 2024, and the line item was removed from the 2025 budget. The line item for the District Newsletter was absorbed into the “Other educational tours, events, & materials,” which accounts for the bulk of the funding and work completed within the Education and Outreach Program. The budget does not include staff time. Volunteer and Community Programs and Conservation Easements are not included in the Education and Outreach Budget. Farmer-Led Council and Resident Cost Share programs are budgeted separately.

Project	2024 Budget (\$)	2025 Budget (\$)
SCWEP (SWCD)	6,500	7,325
Website update	24,500	N/A
CAC	3,500	3,000
District Newsletter	1,000	N/A
Other educational tours, events, & materials	3,000	16,975
TOTAL:	38,500	27,300

Outcomes & Evaluation

The desired outcome for education and outreach in 2024 was to improve the District stakeholders’ understanding of local water resources. Success is evaluated on attendance and reach of materials, and completion of the activities outlined in the 2024 Education and Outreach Plan. Fourteen out of fifteen of the Priority 1 communications items were completed or exceeded. One of the Priority 2 communications items was also completed. All eleven Priority 1 and 2 event items were completed in 2024.

2024 Completed Activities

Activities & Events	Partners	Completed (Date)	Reach
Annual Update & Implement District Education and Outreach Plan	N/A	15-Feb	N/A
Spring Lake Association Annual Spring Newsletter Article	Spring Lake Association	March	1 article
Prior Lake Association Annual Newsletter Article	Prior Lake Association	March	1 article

Spring Lake Association Annual Meeting Presentations	SLA	27-Apr	70
Storm Drain Stenciling	City of Prior Lake	May	2
Board and CAC Project Tour	SWCD and Residents	27-Jun	20
City of Prior Lake Fishing Clinic	City of Prior Lake	28-Jun	50
Hike the Watershed	3 Rivers Park District and Scott County	9-Jul	10
Bike the Watershed	Great Scott Cycling	11-Jul	50
AIS Paint N' Sip	Rhino Wine Bar	13-Jul	25
Stabilize Your Shoreline Workshop	SWCD	18-Jul	10
Starry Trek	University of Minnesota	10-Aug	4
Website Articles	N/A	19-Aug	1 article
Fall Community Fest	SWCD	16-Sep	150
Outdoor Education Days	SWCD	27-Sep	1100
Clean Water Clean-Up event	Scott SWCD, City of Prior Lake	5-Oct	12
Prior Lake Association Annual Meeting Presentations	PLA	24-Oct	60
Buckthorn Wreathmaking	Boathouse Brothers Brewing	26-Oct	20
Coordinate CAMP program volunteers	Met Council	27-Oct	4
Spring Lake Association Annual Fall Newsletter	Spring Lake Association	October	1 article
Coordinate volunteer ice observer reports	Volunteers	December	38
Farmer-Led Council (FLC) Meetings	SWCD	20-Mar, 27-Aug	65*
Mailing to farmers highlighting available cost share & services	SWCD	N/A	N/A
Scott County SCENE	Scott County, SWCD	Ongoing	6 articles/ads
Coordinate carp volunteers	Volunteers	Spring & Summer	20
Citizen Advisory Committee (CAC) meetings	Volunteers	6/year	9
Website Updates	N/A	Year-Round	20,472 page views (new website)
Social Media Updates	N/A	Ongoing	>14,000