

PLSLWD
Education &
Outreach Plan

2018

“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.”

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Executive Summary

The purpose of the Prior Lake-Spring Lake Watershed District's (PLSLWD) education and outreach program is to improve understanding of local water resources and practices among all stakeholders in the District. The education and outreach program also fulfills the requirements of the MS4 permit for the Prior Lake Outlet Channel (PLOC).

In 2018, the education and outreach program will include coordinated efforts with the City of Prior Lake, Scott County Clean Water Education Program (SCWEP—managed by the Scott County Soil and Water Conservation District) and the Scott County Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD) to continue a community-wide approach to develop an understanding of local water resource issues and outcomes, with special emphasis on flooding, runoff, phosphorus reduction, water conservation and illicit discharge.

Background and Overview

The District will partner with the Scott Soil and Water Conservation District, SCWEP and the City of Prior Lake to educate the public and help meet its education and outreach responsibilities as an MS4 permit holder. The District's Citizen Advisory Committee, a group of 11 dedicated volunteers who meet monthly, will help implement the District's citizen engagement activities.

The District holds an MS4 (Municipal Separate Storm Sewer System) general permit for the PLOC which carries stormwater to the Minnesota River. MS4 permits give owners or operators of publicly managed stormwater infrastructure approval to discharge stormwater to lakes, rivers and wetlands in Minnesota. The permits are mandated by federal regulations under the Clean Water Act and are locally enforced by the MN Pollution Control Agency.

PLOC Outreach and Education

In June 2014, PLSLWD experienced nearly \$1 million of damage to the Prior Lake Outlet Channel. Citizens in Prior Lake experienced flooding of their homes and lack of access to arterial streets and businesses. Local funds and those from the Federal Emergency Management Administration (FEMA) have paid for the removal of downed trees and the repair of damaged culverts. Work on the remaining two FEMA projects, the sediment delta removal and major bank erosion repair, will continue in 2018. PLSLWD will provide education and outreach to landowners living along the channel, including letters advising them of the repair work. The extensive cost of the bank erosion work is assisted through a temporary grant/loan from the Department of Natural Resources.

The PLOC Cooperators are considering major changes to the structure of the Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) which governs the management of the PLOC. If the Cooperators decide to change the MOA, PLSLWD will solicit public comment and send letters, factsheets, etc. to landowners along the channel, as necessary.

General Outreach and Education

Scott Clean Water Education Program (SCWEP)

The District will continue to partner with the Scott Clean Water Education Program (SCWEP) to extend its education and outreach efforts. This program includes the following partners: Scott Watershed Management Organization, Vermillion River Watershed Joint Powers Board, Scott Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD), Spring Lake Township, Credit River Township, Jackson Township, Louisville Township, Vermillion River Watershed Joint Powers Board and Scott County.

SCWEP's vision is that making clean water choices becomes "second nature" for people who live and work in Scott County. The key message SCWEP is promoting is, "Clean Water Starts with Me!" and will focus upon illicit discharge, natural borders and stormwater runoff.

Audiences include: agriculture/rural landowners; urban and lakeshore residents; and community groups, schools and government.

SCWEP will conduct prairie and shoreline restoration workshops; promote cost-share programs; participate in events; and develop targeted outreach activities. SCWEP will be represented at community events; publish rack cards, fact sheets, brochures and newsletters; submit news articles and press releases; rotate the new Clean Water Display the Scott County Conservation Center and utilize social media to get its messages out.

The District will also participate in SCWEP's Scott County Outdoor Education Days. Staff will help run stations highlighting water and other important natural resources for 1,500 students from local schools.

Stormwater Outreach and Education

Due to the 2014 flood, the District and the City of Prior Lake funded a Stormwater Management and Flood Mitigation Study, which began in February 2015 and was completed in December 2016. Besides updating the District's Hydraulic and Hydrologic model, the Study reviewed historical studies, created an outreach process that included key decision makers and the public in recommending flood mitigation strategies, analyzed those strategies using the new model and selected preferred alternatives. Two out of the three final recommendations have been implemented: the District revised its Outlet Control Structure Management Policy and Operating Procedures to make it easier for the District to open the low flow gate and the City completed its Flood Response Policy.

In 2018, the District will continue to implement the third recommendation identified in the Flood Study: acquiring upstream storage. Upstream storage holds water in the upper watershed on the land longer, delaying when the water reaches the lakes. The District will work with landowners to achieve this goal. Outreach will be targeted to landowners living near potential upstream storage areas. If an agreement with landowners for an upstream storage site is reached, the District may also write articles for the District website and press releases for the Prior Lake American and Scott County SCENE newspapers.

Clean Water Clean-Ups

The District will continue to partner with the City of Prior Lake to host a spring and fall Clean Water Clean-Up. The clean-ups are a great way to engage volunteers, who help rake up leaves and remove buckthorn from City parks. Volunteers will be recruited through emails to past volunteers and notices on the District's and City's websites, Facebook and Twitter pages. The events will be publicized in the Prior Lake American and the Scott County SCENE.

PLSLWD Boundary Signs

The District will research, design and install PLSLWD boundary signs along roadways to mark district boundaries, similar to a "City Limits" sign. Riley Purgatory Bluff Creek and Minnehaha Creek Watershed District have similar signs along roadways marking their district boundaries.

PLSLWD Management Plan Updates

In 2018, the District will begin the process of updating its Water Resources Management Plan, which must be completed by 2020. It is the District's ten-year plan. Public input will be solicited throughout the process through a combination of public meetings and public comment periods. The District's Citizens Advisory Committee (CAC) will also provide feedback and recommendations on management plan updates.

In addition, the District will prepare an amendment to its existing Water Resources Management Plan so that it may be eligible for a 2019 Clean Water grant for Upper Prior alum treatment.

Citizens Advisory Committee (CAC)

The District will to engage its Citizens Advisory Committee to obtain feedback and recommendations for District programs and the District's Water Resources Management Plan updates. The CAC will also help implement the District's citizen engagement activities. Members from the CAC will continue to run the Water Quality Improvement Award to recognize the positive contributions of local citizens improving water quality.

Water Quality Improvement Award

The CAC began sponsoring an annual Water Quality Improvement Award in 2016 to recognize residents who have implemented projects which improve water quality, such as rain gardens and shoreline buffers. In 2018, the CAC will again be awarding \$500 awards to four applicants. The CAC, assisted by District staff, will continue to conduct outreach to encourage people to apply for the award. The 2017 award winners were highlighted in a series of articles to showcase success stories and encourage people to apply for this year's award.

Residential and Agricultural Cost Share

In addition to SCWEP, the District will continue to contract with the SWCD to meet with landowners to promote rural and urban incentive and cost share programs and encourage their participation. The District will review and update the urban cost share program to make it consistent with the cost share docket. The District currently offers up to \$250 for rain gardens, shoreline restorations and buffers and \$50 for rain barrels. It offers up to 50% of the cost (up to \$150) for water pump installation to use lake water to irrigate shoreline properties. A factsheet will be compiled highlighting the District's urban cost share program.

For residential incentive programs, PLSLWD will promote citizen participation in the SCWEP raingarden and shoreline restoration workshops as well as District cost share programs. The District will encourage public official and community leaders, including the PLSLWD Board of Managers, City Council members, Mayors and lake association board members to install water quality projects and become ambassadors and spokespersons. Community contacts could work to recruit a group of neighbors to get together and each install water quality projects on their own properties. Outreach could target certain neighborhoods to encourage a group of neighbors to install projects.

In rural areas, the District will provide construction incentive payments for filter strips, wetland restoration, well decommissioning, water and sediment control basins (WASCOB) and other stormwater management best management practices (BMP). The District will review and approve Conservation Practice Payment Dockets each year, which define practices, payments and evaluation tools.

The District will also partner with the SWCD to continue its staff support of the Farmer-led Council (FLC). Agricultural lands make up a majority of the landscape in the Spring Lake and Upper Prior Lake watersheds. 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 engaging with and assisting farmers to implement practices
- Establish a schedule with reasonable milestones and timelines for progress
- Identify potential barriers to implementation, along with tools and resources needed to overcome them

Projects

Spring Lake Parcel

In March 2013, the District acquired a piece of land along the north side of Spring Lake that was previously owned by Spring Lake Township. The property is roughly 0.25 acres, includes about 350 feet of shoreline and was purchased for use as a shoreline demonstration site. Restoration

was completed in 2016 through a grant with Great River Greening and two interpretive signs were installed in 2017. Small signs identifying native plants may be installed in 2018.

Raymond Park

In 2016, the District received a Conservation Legacy Partners grant from the MN DNR. In 2017, the restoration of the four acres of shoreline and upland area of the City of Prior Lake's Raymond Park was substantially completed and will serve as a demonstration site for shoreline restoration. The project partners are the City of Prior Lake, Spring Lake Township and Great River Greening. The restoration includes: a beach restoration; converting grass to low-maintenance turf; an oak savanna restoration and a shoreline restoration. In 2018, any remaining work will wrap up and Great River Greening will conduct maintenance activities. Educational interpretive signs will be designed and installed at the Park.

Sand Point Beach Park

As its final Lower Prior Lake Protection Implementation Project, the District and the City will excavate and expand two pre-treatment basins. During peak rain events, stormwater will be diverted from these basins to a large iron-enhanced sand filter which will remove additional phosphorus before being sent to Lower Prior Lake. In addition, the District plans on applying for a CWP grant to prepare and seed nearby upland slopes with prairie grasses. Mailings to nearby residents and education interpretive signs will be designed and installed at the Park.

Project Interpretative Signs

Interpretative signs will be designed and installed at several recently completed projects, including Indian Ridge Park and Fairlawn Shores as well as for the new project, Sand Point Beach Park. Additionally, small native plant identification signs, designed by an intern last summer, will be ordered and installed at the 12/17 wetland restoration site. In addition, the large project sign on the 12/17 wetland will be moved to make it easier to be seen by motorists driving on highways 12 and 17.

Project Outreach

Staff will conduct literature drops to residents residing near PLSLWD construction projects. If necessary, letters may also be sent to the residents. The District will provide information on these projects through social media, the District website, meetings/articles for lake associations and press releases to the Prior Lake American and the Scott County SCENE.

District Tours

District staff will organize 1-2 District tours in 2018. Possible focuses of District tours include highlighting district projects or examples of residential water quality projects.

Conservation Easements

The District has nearly 40 conservation easements with over 150 landowners which are inspected annually. In the spring, landowners receive an annual newsletter and reminder letters to remedy any issues if violations were present. Landowners also receive a pre-inspection letter prior to the annual site visit and a post-inspection letter noting the inspection findings, including any violations. Landowners are encouraged to join staff on site visits if they are interested. In 2018, staff will continue to follow-up and work with landowners to fix the violations.

Marketing

The District's education and outreach program anticipates a variety of passive and active marketing techniques to reach out to various stakeholders in the watershed. Some potential activities include:

- Participation at Lakefront Days, potentially including a rain barrel giveaway or other events, such as highly visible local farmers' markets
- Speaking at the Prior Lake and Spring Lake Associations' annual meetings
- Targeted mailings, especially regarding project updates and cost share programs
- Publishing fact sheets/rack cards, banners, newsletters and articles
- Placing fact sheets and rack cards at kiosks, such as at McColl Park in Savage
- Submitting news articles and press releases to the Prior Lake American newspaper and the Scott County SCENE, as well as a regular guest column in the Prior Lake American
- Posting articles and information on the District's website and social media
- Soliciting input from the public, CAC members, PLOC Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) and PLOC Cooperators

The District will work to maintain partnerships with other jurisdictions and interest groups that share the District's goals, including:

- Prior Lake Association
- Spring Lake Association
- City of Prior Lake
- City of Savage
- City of Shakopee
- Minnesota Association of Watershed Districts
- Shakopee Mdewakanton Sioux Community
- Spring Lake Township
- Sand Creek Township
- Scott Soil and Water Conservation District
- Scott County
- Scott County Watershed Management Organization

Website and Social Media

The District will continue to share a variety of information including District news, project updates, news; articles covering water and conservation related topics; and related conservation news on its website and social media. Article topics could include highlighting success stories,

project updates, District events & workshops. Trivia Tuesday, a weekly trivia question posted on social media was started in 2017 and will be continued this year. Staff will work obtain website traffic information to better tailor outreach information.

The District will also work to create an “Am I in the Watershed?” map on the District website which citizens can put in their address and find out if their property is located within the District. This will also help residents know if they are qualified for the Water Quality Improvement Award.

Budget

In 2018, the budget for MS4 activities is \$12,000; \$3,600 for the CAC; and \$9,500 for project educational signs and a location map. In addition, the District budgeted \$58,000 for residential and agricultural cost share incentives and \$50,000 for the Farmer-led Council, which includes money for FLC sponsored cost share. Note: Budget numbers do not include staff time.

Outcomes & Evaluation

The desired outcome for 2018 education and outreach is to improve understanding of local water resources and practices among all stakeholders in the District; this strategic goal will be evaluated mostly by compliance with the MS4 permit. A large part of the Storm Water Pollution Prevention Program (SWPPP), a component of the MS4 permit, requires identification and documentation of BMPs undertaken to reduce the discharge of pollutants from the MS4 to the maximum extent practicable. Metrics used to measure the impact of marketing strategies include:

- Number of participants at a specific District hosted event or workshop
- Number of direct mailings, brochures, and newsletters distributed
- Number of submitted press releases and published articles

To maintain compliance with the MS4 permit, District staff will continue to record and quantify the above metrics which help illustrate the success or benefit of each BMP.