Isanti Soil and Water Conservation District

Quarterly News & Updates

August 2024 | Issue 17

Greetings Friends and Neighbors!

The Isanti SWCD is publishing this Quarterly e-Newsletter to:

- **Help keep you informed of what is happening locally that affects the health of natural resources in Isanti County;**
- **Increase your understanding of what the SWCD does and how you can get involved in conservation;**
- **Keep you informed on how Clean Water Fund tax amendment dollars are being spent locally.**

If you have any questions, please give us a call: 763-689-3271

If you are not interested in receiving future publications, simply click unsubscribe at the bottom of this email. Alternatively, if you want to share this with a friend, please do- they can subscribe by visiting our website at **www.isantiswcd.org**

Follow us on Facebook for more updates!

Blue Lake to Receive Alum Treatment this September

Blue Lake will receive its second and final alum treatment this September. The Isanti Soil and Water Conservation District and the Blue Lake Improvement District have been working in partnership to protect the health of Blue Lake. Their work has culminated in an alum treatment to greatly reduce phosphorus in the lake and improve clarity. The treatment was applied to the lake in two doses, the first applied in 2022 and the second to be applied this fall.

The alum treatment will take place from September 11th to the 14th. The Stanford and Stanchfield Blue Lake Public Boat Launches will be

shut down during the treatment on the 12th and 13th to ensure the application will work as effectively as possible. Residents are also advised to avoid boating on Blue Lake during these dates. Parking will be limited at the Blue Lake public boat launches on the 11th and the 14th due to the alum equipment set up. If you are planning to use the boat access on these days, please consider making other plans. As soon as the application is over, people may resume using the lake as normal!

Diagnostics taken on Blue Lake indicate it is at risk of becoming an impaired water body due to an excess of phosphorus in the lake, which fuels algae blooms. The Isanti SWCD is taking steps to reduce the amount of phosphorus in Blue Lake and assure it does not become impaired. Multiple conservation projects in the area surrounding the lake have already been completed by the Isanti SWCD however, these projects are not enough. Studies on Blue Lake indicated an alum treatment is the best next step to protect the lake. It was decided to spilt the alum treatment into two half doses to improve effectiveness and longevity. The first dose, applied in the fall of 2022, was greatly successful and significantly improved the lake's water clarity.

Alum is a safe and widely studied option for lake treatments to reduce the amount of phosphorus present in the water. It works by forming a fluffy aluminum hydroxide solid called a floc when applied to water. As the floc settles, it removes phosphorus and particulates (including algae) from the water column. Therefore, after the treatment, the water gets noticeably clearer! The floc settles on the sediment where it forms a layer that acts as a blanket for phosphorus, so phosphorus released from the sediments cannot enter the water. The alum treatment will achieve 164% of the phosphorus reduction goal the Isanti SWCD set to keep Blue Lake Healthy!

The Isanti SWCD secured a Clean Water Fund Grant to pay for the alum treatment. The treatment also would not be possible without the Blue Lake Improvement District, which is providing a necessary 25% grant match and has been working with the Isanti SWCD to make this a reality. Regular updates are available on **www.isantiswcd.org** as well as answers to frequently asked questions.

Thomas Yentsch Recognized for Outstanding Work in Conservation

The Isanti Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD) is proud to announce Thomas Yentsch as the 2024 Outstanding Conservationist, an award given annually in partnership with the Minnesota Association of SWCDs to individuals or organizations that have made significant contributions to conservation and the improvement of Minnesota's natural resources. This year, the Isanti SWCD Board of Supervisors unanimously selected Tom for his remarkable commitment to safeguarding the lakes of Isanti County. Tom, who resides on Florence and Elins Lake, has demonstrated exceptional dedication to protecting water quality through a combination of personal stewardship, volunteer work, and educational outreach.

Tom's journey as a conservationist begins on his own property. He has embraced lake stewardship by installing and diligently maintaining a shoreline buffer, a vital component in protecting the lake from runoff and erosion. This spring, he further enhanced his property by planting dozens of trees along his shore and continues to seek ways to enhance his land to improve water quality and habitat availability. Tom's commitment to land protection is so strong that he now pursues more permanent protection measures, including a conservation easement. His efforts have not only been recognized by the Isanti SWCD but also by Minnesota Lakes and Rivers, which awarded him the title of Lake Steward for maintaining a property that protects the lake.

Tom's commitment to conservation goes beyond his own property. He generously volunteers his time and expertise, currently serving as president of both the Paul's and Elins Lake Association and the Isanti County Coalition of Lake Associations (ICCOLA). Throughout the summer, Tom has worked closely with the Isanti SWCD, collecting water quality samples from seven lakes and conducting early detection efforts for aquatic invasive species. His leadership extends to the Minnesota Lakes and Rivers' lake stewardship program, where he serves as the lead volunteer for his lake. As the lead volunteer, he is the main point of contact and offers site visits to his lake residents to show how they can improve their property. He has also extended this offer to residents

of other lakes, providing advice on buffers, invasive species identification, and strategies to get their lake residents involved.
Tom's passion for conservation is matched by his thirst for knowledge and his willingness to share it. He is a regular participant in workshops hosted by the Isanti SWCD and often introduces new ideas and resources to his lake association, ICCOLA, and other lake residents. Most recently, Tom has been organizing a workshop focused on the potential benefits of invasive cattail removal, inviting lake residents from across the county to learn and engage in this important discussion.
The Isanti SWCD is proud to recognize Tom's extensive efforts to protect our surface waters. His leadership in conservation is an inspiration, and we are honored to name him the 2024 Outstanding Conservationist. Tom will be formally recognized at the Outstanding Conservationist luncheon on December 4th, held in conjunction with the Minnesota Association of Soil and Water Conservation Districts (MASWCD) 2024 Annual Convention.

Isanti SWCD Reconnects with Landowners at first Clean Water Club BBQ

This year, the Isanti SWCD is launching a brand-new initiative called the Clean Water Club to unite everyone we've collaborated with over the years and highlight our collective efforts to protect our water resources. We kicked off the Clean Water Club with a barbecue this summer to recognize landowners who have installed conservation projects and celebrate the progress made! At the barbeque, we enjoyed pulled pork sandwiches, lawn games, the gorgeous Iriving and John Andrson Park, and great company.

New No-Till Drill for Rent

We are excited to announce that a new no-till drill is now available for rent! This new drill is significantly more reliable and is also equipped to plant cover crops and prairie seedings. We received a grant from the Minnesota Department of Agriculture that provided us with funding to purchase the new drill. (The same grant is currently open for new applicants until the end of August and is open to both organizations and individual producers! You can **apply online.**) The no-till drill is available to anyone seeding a parcel of land within a 20-mile radius of the city of Isanti, or within 30 road miles.

The rates to rent the drill are:
Inside Isanti County: $15 per acre with a $175 minimum.
Outside Isanti County: $20 per acre with a $275 minimum.

In addition, a $161.81 damage deposit is due at the time of rental. If the machine is returned in unsatisfactory condition such that the seed boxes require cleaning, a $100.00 cleaning fee will be added to the rental fee.

If you are interested in renting the no-till drill, call Matthew at 763-689-3271.

Cost-Share Available to Seal Abandoned Wells

The Isanti SWCD will reimburse landowners up to 60% of the total cost to seal an abandoned well. Unsealed, abandoned wells act as a direct conduit for pollutants to contaminate groundwater. Due to this risk, well sealing is a priority throughout the Rum River Watershed to protect valuable drinking water.

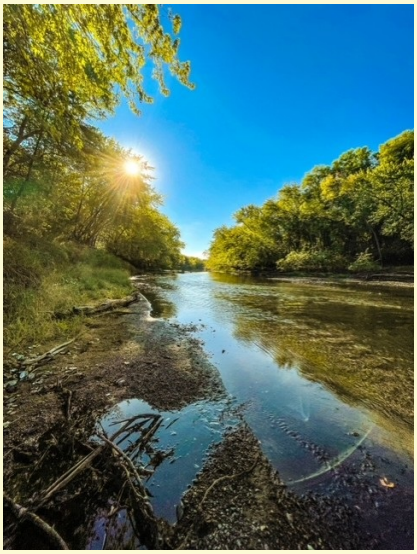
The well sealing must be done by a state-licensed contractor, and a contract with the Isanti SWCD must be signed before work begins. The program is first-come, first-served until funds run out. Funding for this program comes from the Rum River Watershed Partnership.

To seal an abandoned well on your property, contact Lydia Godfrey with the Isanti SWCD by emailing **Lgodfrey@isantiSWCD.org** or calling our office at 763-689-3271.

Nature Photo Contest Winners

This July, we hosted our annual Nature Photo Contest to highlight the beautiful nature in Isanti County. We had 52 photos entered into the contest, and there were many great images. It was difficult to narrow down the entries to a few favorites, but here are the three our staff and board chose as winners!

1st Place
The Heart of the Rum River
Taken by Korey Lindberg.



1st Place
The Heart of the Rum River
Taken by Korey Lindberg.

2nd Place
Pine trees taken off Grandy Pines Rd
Taken by Jennifer Lapoint.
3rd Place
Fawn Quadruplets taken near 313th Ave NE
Taken by Brett McDonnell.

EQIP Deadline Approaching

The deadline to apply for the next round of the Environmental Quality Incentive Program (EQIP) funding is September 6th. The Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) is NRCS' flagship conservation program that helps farmers, ranchers and forest landowners integrate conservation into working lands. Through EQIP, NRCS provides agricultural producers with one-on-one help and financial assistance to plan and implement improvements, or what NRCS calls conservation practices.

Together, NRCS and producers invest in solutions that conserve natural resources for the future while improving agricultural operations. To get started call our office at 763-689-3271 before the deadline on September 6th.

Rain Garden Installed to Protect Green Lake

We installed a rain garden on the west side of Green Lake to protect and improve its water quality. The garden was strategically placed at the bottom of a long, steep driveway to collect runoff before it enters the lake. As an added bonus, the garden will be filled with beautiful blooming native plants, including butterfly milkweed and black-eyed Susans, to provide pollinator habitat.

This project was installed as part of our 16-year grant program with the goal of getting Green Lake off the impaired waterbodies list. If you live near Green Lake and want to add a conservation practice that protects the lake, call us! We can provide a 75% cost-share and work with you to design a project that fits your needs.

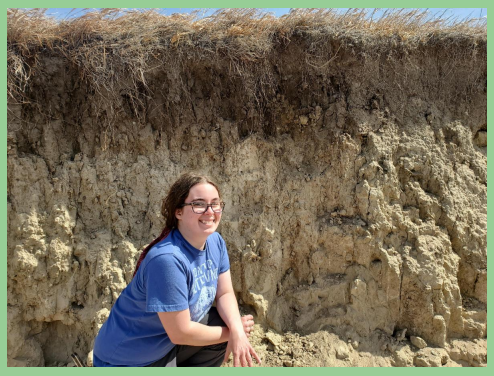
Get to Know Our New Hires

We have two new faces in the office to help us deliver more conservation work. Douglas Page was brought on as a Land Protection Specialist and will help enroll land in conservation easements and implement forestry practices. Willow Dean is our new Conservation Agronomist working throughout Lower St Croix Watershed in Isanti, Chisago, and Washington counties, to help with soil health practices and implementation.

Meet Doug

What is your background? As a kid, I could usually be found collecting critters in the creeks and ponds throughout my neighborhood. That desire to be close to nature eventually drove me to a seek career in wildlife biology where I worked on various research and invasive species management projects around Minnesota as well as the Gulf Coast, Utah, California, and the Northern Mariana Islands. After more than a decade in that field, I decided I wanted to shift my focus to landscape-level conservation that would have a broader range of benefits to both people and wildlife. That was when I started working for a land trust in northern

Meet Willow



What is your background? My family farms near the Princeton area, growing row crops and recently branching out into more diverse rotations. I graduated from South Dakota State University in May of 2022 with a double major in animal sciences (with a focus on industrial livestock production) and agronomy with a minor in soil sciences. I've always been fascinated by the way these systems interact, which I feel often gets overlooked in commercial systems that focus only on crop or livestock production and miss opportunities to benefit from each other. I previously worked at the Mille Lacs SWCD. I've also worked as a

California that focused on conservation easements on working ranches and timber properties. Now I am bringing those skills back to my home state to help ensure that kids will always have plenty of critters and clean water like I did.

What do you like to do? Most of my hobbies have one common thread: food. I enjoy cooking, fishing, hunting, foraging, gardening, canning, and keeping small livestock. Once I get settled somewhere with enough space, I plan to get back into gardening and raising ducks and goats. For now, most of my time outside of work is spent with my wife and son on mini adventures around the area to find the best parks or visiting with family.

crop scout at a local co-op, at a seed testing lab in South Dakota, and I did livestock genetics research in college as well! I'm also working towards my crop advisor certification and professional soil scientist license.

What do you like to do? Outside of work, I enjoy reading, playing video games, beading, quillwork, cooking, and various crafts like woodworking and leatherworking. I took up baking during the pandemic and enjoy taking on new challenges there as well. Last fall, I bought a house that was originally a township schoolhouse built in 1900, so that keeps me busy when all else fails!

SWCD Supervisors Up for Election this November

Depending on where you live in Isanti County, you will see Isanti SWCD Supervisors on your ballet when you vote in November. SWCD Board candidates will appear on the ballot for the general election taking place on November 5th. The Isanti SWCD is overseen by a five-member board, with each member representing their district. This year, the Isanti SWCD has three district Supervisor positions up for election:

District 1
(Maple Ridge, Stanchfield, Springvale, Dalbo Townships)

- Valerie Anderson

District 3
(Spencer Brook, Wyanett, Stanford Townships)

- Franklin Curtis
- Mitchell McElrath

District 4
(Cambridge Township)

- Al Koczur

The primary responsibilities of Supervisors are to set the district's vision and priorities while supporting the staff's work to achieve goals. "Supervisors play an important role in how our community deals with a wide variety of resource management issues, including water quality, soil erosion, stormwater management, agricultural conservation, and land protection," noted Tiffany Determan, District Manager with the Isanti SWCD. Supervisors serve four-year terms. Pictured is Isanti SWCD Board Member Dave Medvecky getting sworn in. To learn more about the candidates for District 3, watch our website.

Contact Details

Call Us
763-689-3271

Office
110 Buchanan Street North Cambridge, MN 55008

Email Us
Send Email

Website: www.isantiswcd.org

Visit our website

Constant Contact

Try email marketing for free today!