Isanti Soil and Water Conservation District

Quarterly News & Updates

December 2025 | Issue 22

Visit our Facebook and website for regular updates

Seasons Greetings, Friends and Neighbors!

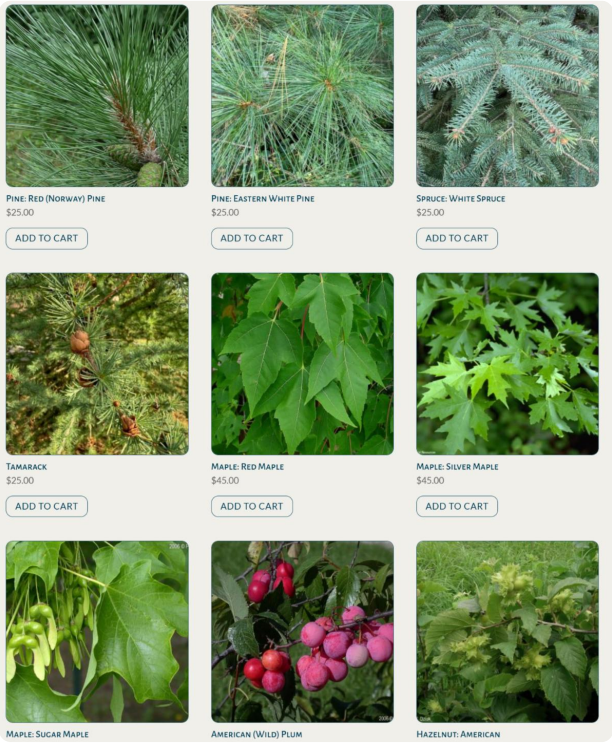
As we reflect on the past year, we are incredibly thankful to play a role in helping our community restore and preserve the wonderful natural resources here in Isanti County. Thank you for your partnership in stewardship. We wish you a safe, peaceful winter and a happy New Year!

Tree Sale is NOW OPEN!

It's the most wonderful time of the year- tree sale season!

Treat yourself and order your favorites this winter. NEW varieties and tree tubes available.

Shop Now



We have an updated website! Same SWCD you know and love, now with a new and improved look! Check it out.

Outstanding Conservationist

We're proud to announce the recipient of the 2025 MASWCD Outstanding Conservationist Award. The annual award honors those who go above and

beyond to protect Minnesota's natural resources—and this year, that leader is local Isantian **Dennis Kresal.**

In partnership with the Isanti Soil and Water Conservation District, Dennis has transformed his personal legacy into a public treasure. Through multiple conservation easements, he has permanently protected over 970 acres of land across Spencer Brook, Bradford, and Springvale Townships. This is not just a number—it's nearly ten times the size of the average easement application. It's a bold, selfless act of stewardship.

His work safeguards more than 14,000 feet of Stanchfield Creek, a vital waterway that flows directly into the Rum River—one of our region's most important sources of drinking water. That protection extends all the way to the confluence with the Rum, ensuring the health of this critical watershed.

As part of the easement and Conservation Reserve Program (CRP), Dennis is also retiring 140 acres of cropland and restoring it to native grassland. By doing so, he is improving soil health, reducing erosion, and protecting water quality for generations to come. Dennis has even personally planted over 15,000 trees in Isanti County, creating habitat, shade, and beauty that will outlive us all.

To learn about how you can protect our local natural resources through easements, contact Douglas Page at Douglas.Page@mn.nacdnet.net. See more: isantiswcd.org/contact-the-right-specialist-for-you Thank you, Dennis!

Picture: Isanti SWCD District Supervisor Board Chair Dave Medvecky (left) and Award recipient Dennis Kresal (right).

Irving and John Anderson Park wins the Natural Shorelines Award!

This year, EMWREP and the Lower St. Croix Watershed Partnership collaborated to

launch an award recognition program. Natural Shoreline Awards recognize beautiful lakeshore, riverfront and streamside properties that incorporate native flowers, shrubs, trees and plants across Chisago, Isanti, Ramsey or Washington Counties.

This is a huge honor that recognizes the park's beautiful, undeveloped shoreline along Horseleg and Hoseshoe Lakes. With over 1.75 miles of natural shoreline, the park serves as a fantastic example of balancing public access with the protection of high-quality wildlife habitat. We're especially proud because Isanti SWCD nominated the park for this award. A big thank you to our partners for this recognition! Award Announcement

See this YouTube Video featuring our District Manager, Tiffany Determan, to learn more about our Natural Environment Lakes in Isanti County and across our wonderful state: What are Natural Environment Lakes in Minnesota?

#IsantiCounty #Conservation #NaturalShorelines #Partnership

Lake Photo: Horseleg Lake
Credit: Rachel Wheeler

Recent Events

Conservation Bus Tour with Elected Officials

Sep 3 - We were honored to highlight a select few in person via bus to our elected officials and county leaders, showcasing our projects on site. Where could it be better?

The projects of our SWCD are preserving the resources and biodiversity of our county-today, and for generations to come. Each project required countless hours of planning, partnering, and implementation by our amazing team of specialists, Douglas Page, Matthew Remer, and Todd Kulaf.

Having our elected officials come out and join us to learn about our conservation projects, from raingardens and easements to wetland restoration and cover crops, reminded us how much support and excitement we have from our community leaders to continue these critical efforts! Watch Recap Video

Soil Health Field Day

Sep 18 - We hosted our Annual Soil Health Field Day! A massive thank you to our speakers and amazing partners at **Centra Sota**!

We were thrilled to deep-dive into strip-till, cover crops, and conservation tillage in the beautiful outdoors, giving these critical practices the attention they deserve as Minnesota farmers look ahead.

Watch Recap Video

Isanti Groundwater Atlas Workshop

Oct 28 - Isanti SWCD & the Minnesota DNR had a full house with over 30 attendees this October, hosting a special public workshop providing training on the new Isanti County Groundwater Atlas.

Attendees received a free copy of the atlas and learned about its applications to infrastructure planning, zoning, drilling of water supply wells, pollution sensitivity, and more. If you're a local technical provider, learn how this tool can benefit you!

Find the atlas at:
mndnr.gov/groundwatermapping

If you missed the workshop, you can get access to the recording by emailing the DNR at: county.groundwater.atlas.dnr@state.mn.us.

Watch Recap Video

Upcoming Events

Get SMART Salt Certified!
December 10

Is your maintenance and public works staff SMART Salt certified? How about contractors that you hire for winter snow and ice management? MPCA Smart Salting Trainings suggest ways for winter maintenance pros to save money and time, while reducing chloride pollution. After attending a similar training, the City of Cottage Grove was able to reduce its winter salt use by 694 tons and save $40,000 dollars, and Joe's Lawn and Snow, a small Twin Cities based company, reduced its salt use by 50% and saved $770.

Attend the workshop this December, **Wednesday, Dec. 10, 9 am-1:30 pm.** This is a SMART Salt training for property managers and commercial property owners. **Online and 100% FREE.** Learn strategies for reducing winter salt use and saving money, without impacting public safety. Register here on Eventbrite!

Isanti County Master Gardener Education Meeting

Are you interested in horticulture including pollinators, trees, climate change, foods, and more? If your answer is yes, please join the Isanti County Master Gardeners for their education meetings. The topics will differ in each meeting for a well-rounded horticultural education.

Thursday, January 8, 2026: 5:30 - 7:30 p.m.
Cambridge Public Library: 111 N Dellwood St, Cambridge, MN 55008

Contact: Katie Hagen, Extension agriculture, horticulture, and natural resources educator
hagen@umn.edu or 763-689-8254

For more information, visit the Isanti County Master Gardeners website, the Isanti County Master Gardener Facebook page, or call Isanti County UMN Extension at 763-689-1810.

Isanti 4-H Information Night

Join UMN Extension of Isanti County to learn more about the Isanti 4H K-13 programs in the county, all are welcome! Free pizza while supplies last. For any parents, guardians, and youth who are interested in joining 4-H or becoming a volunteer.

Thursday, January 22, 2026: 6:30 - 8 p.m.
Isanti Community Center: 208 1/2 1st Ave NW, Isanti, MN 55040

Contact: Cora Rost, Extension Educator, 4-H Youth Development
rostx034@umn.edu or 763-689-1810

Isanti SWCD: Spotted this Fall

Irving and John Anderson Park: 14th Annual Fall Festival - Sept. 13

Kids learn about chlorides, mercury, phosphorus, and how they impact fish in our local lakes while getting to reel in plastic fish in a kiddie pool with a magnetic pole.

As Above, So Below: Fall Equinox Festival at Prairie Star Care Farm - Sept. 27

Attendees compare the root length of many plants and completed Bird Trivia through a Spin the Wheel for prizes!

Prairie Restorations Inc. Fall Fest - Oct. 11

Kids (and parents!) completed a nature-themed word hunt for K-6 Ag Magazines!

Interested in having Isanti SWCD host an education table at your next event? Contact skhan@isantiswcd.org.

AGRICULTURE

RCPP Funding is Still Available

We have received **$180,000 in federal grant funding** through the **Advancing Soil Health in Minnesota Agriculture** program to incentivize the adoption of soil health practices.

This program, which **runs through 2028**, is a fantastic resource for improving the long-term productivity of your land while also benefiting our local environment. By adopting soil health practices, you can increase organic matter, reduce erosion, improve water quality, and increase profitability. This program prioritizes projects that address a resource concern, are located in a priority area, or are situated near a drinking water supply or surface water.

Interested in learning more? Please contact our Ag Specialist, **Matthew Remer** at matthew.remer@mn.nacdnet.net to discuss your options and see how you can benefit from this new funding. We are here to help you get started on a path toward better soil health!

Open Grants & Funding Opportunities

Sustainable Agriculture Demonstration Grant
The AGRI Sustainable Agriculture Demonstration Grant (SustAg) supports innovative on-farm research and demonstrations. SustAg projects explore sustainable agriculture practices and systems that could make farming more profitable or resource-efficient. Applications are due by 4 p.m. Central Time on Wednesday, **December 17, 2025.**

Urban Farm Conservation Mini-Grant
Offers up to $5,000 for commercial urban farmers in Minnesota to implement conservation practices and pay for equipment, materials, and services they may need to manage their farm's soil, water, and plant and animal life sustainably. The application period closes Thursday, **December 18, 2025** at 4 p.m. Central Time.

MN Transition to Organic Cost-Share Program
This program makes it more affordable for farmers to work with an organic certifying agency while they transition to organic. Applications must be postmarked by **February 14, 2026.**

Local Events

The local Sustainable Farming Association:

Statewide

- Minnesota Organic Conference:

East Central chapter has a winter gathering on December 13th in Mora and an annual meeting on February 20th.

Winter Gathering Taco Bar Potluck
Saturday, December 13, 10:30 AM - 2:00 PM
Mora Public Library — 200 W Maple Ave, Mora, MN 55051

Annual Chapter Meeting
Friday, February 20
Northern Lights Banquet Center - 10376 112th Ave, Milaca, MN 56353

sustainable farming association

MMN Dept of Agriculture, January 8-9th in St. Cloud.
- Soil Management Summit: January 14-15th, by U of M and NDSU in Fargo, ND.
- Annual Conference: Sustainable Farming Association, February 7th in St. Joseph.
- Annual meeting: Midwest Cover Crops Council, February 10-11th in Dubuque, IA.
- Midwest Grazing and Soil Health Summit, SFA, March 3-4th in Willmar.

For more information, contact skhan@isantiswcd.org or Ellen.BadgerHanson@mn.nacdnet.net.
*All events require pre-registration

DNR

Science Backed Data - Local and Statewide!

"Minnesota's lakes are now, on average, 3.06 to 3.78°F warmer than they were 50 years ago, with a loss of 10 to 14 days of ice cover each year.

Since the 1960s, there has been a steady rise in extreme rain events, leading to more erosion and flooding, which brings excess nutrients and sediment into the water.

These changes, combined with warmer lake temperatures, accelerate algae growth and lower water quality, harming fish, wildlife, and recreation.

East-Metro Water Resource Education Program

Subtle Signs of a Changing Climate in Our Waters

Signs of a changing climate are surfacing in Minnesota's waters, and Isanti County is not immune.

Scientists are observing increased **blue-green algae blooms** in unexpected places—from the pristine lakes of the Boundary Waters to urban lakes previously deemed "recovered."

Why the shift? Research suggests that warming water temperatures are causing lake bottom sediments to release more nutrients than normal, fueling algae even in lakes with low phosphorus levels. Additionally, rising chloride (road salt) levels disrupt aquatic ecosystems, further encouraging blooms. This challenge connects Isanti SWCD with conservation partners across the state.

The drivers affecting the **Metro and the North Woods**—warming temps and permanent pollutants like salt—are the same ones impacting our local resources, including the **Rum River and Spectacle Lake.**

Isanti SWCD, the Rum River Watershed Partnership, EMWREP partners, and the Lower St. Croix Partnership are actively collaborating with neighboring districts to implement

Maintaining natural shoreline vegetation can stabilize soil and reduce runoff, while planting native species helps restore habitats."

Source - MN DNR: State Climatology Office.

For more information, visit the DNR Climate Trends page.

strategies that reduce salt use and build resilience against these shifting conditions.

Findings from East Metro Water: Tips and tales about keeping water clean by Angie Hong, EMWREP and Water Education Senior Specialist, Washington Conservation District

What can you do?

- Retain and restore natural shorelines > Natural shorelines and how to protect and restore them
- Reduce the amount of lawn and hard surfaces near water
- Encourage your local government to take action > What Local Governments are Doing
- Connect with us, your local county SWCD!
- Join the Clean Water Club or become a Minnesota Water Steward! See below.

Clean Water Club

In 2024, the Isanti SWCD launched 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. The Clean Water Club is our fun way to recognize landowners who have installed conservation projects and celebrate the progress made!

We kicked off the Clean Water Club with a **barbecue last 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. **Learn more**.

Come do a project with us, and be a part of the Club! To join, contact **skhan@isantiswcd.org.**

FREE in 2026 - Become a Minnesota Water Steward!

Freshwater has expanded its Water Steward program statewide, and it's an incredible opportunity for community members to become water champions.

Stewards complete a certification course covering topics like hydrology and water policy, then take action on a local water issue (like chlorides or climate change). The best part is the program is being offered at no cost to participants, but apply soon!
The application deadline is **December 15th!**

Apply here!: https://minnesotawaterstewards.org/application-page/

Keeping Household Chemicals and Pharmaceuticals out of our Water

Other chemicals, including cocaine, antidepressants, and veterinary

In 2012, researchers from the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency made a shocking discovery. Forty-seven out of fifty lakes tested contained at least one chemical derived from **pharmaceuticals or personal care products.**

The most commonly found chemical was the insect repellent DEET (76% of tested lakes), and **Bisphenol A (BPA): a chemical banned from baby bottles** due to health concerns, was found in 43% of the lakes.

antibiotics were detected in lakes as well. Read the **full study here** and learn what you can do to safely dispose of household chemicals and unused medications: Check out this "Garbage Guide"

Below the Surface: Powerboat Impacts on Lakes

RUM RIVER WATERSHED PARTNERSHIP

In recent years, powerboats have become larger and more powerful, raising concerns about their environmental impacts. SAFL researchers have studied how recreational powerboats affect lake ecosystems, aiming to provide science-based recommendations for boater education and lake protection.

Key Recommendations

- **Planing mode depth**: 10 ft or greater
- **Non-wakeboats depth**: 10 ft or greater
- **Wakeboats surfing depth**: 20 ft or greater

10 ft

Recommended depth for planing mode and non-wakeboats.

20 ft

Recommended depth for wakeboats in semi-displacement mode.

PROTECT OUR LAKES FOR FUTURE GENERATIONS.

#WATCHYOURWAKE

CONTACT SKHAN@ISANTISWCD.ORG TO LEARN MORE

Isanti County News

Featured in the Fall 2025 Every Day Environment County Newsletter
For more information, contact the Isanti County Planning & Zoning Office at 763-689-5165.

Dispose of your Meds Safely at the Isanti County Sheriff's Office

Did you know there is a safer way to dispose of your old medications instead of flushing them down the toilet?

*Isanti County has a designated pharmaceutical disposal area at the **Isanti County Sheriff's Office.** This disposal area is a secure disposal site for unwanted or expired pill and capsule prescription drugs. The collection box is open from 8 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. Monday through Friday (closed on holidays).*

Directions: Please make sure the medication is in its original container, remove patient names with a black marker, and keep the name of the drug on the original container. This disposal area also accepts over-the counter, capsules in their original containers, and pouches.

If you have a prescribed liquid medication that you want to dispose of safely, it is recommend that you mix the liquid with an undesirable substance such as coffee grounds, kitty litter, salt, or flour. You can choose to keep it in its original container, but peel the label off or black it out. After that, the medication is safe to dispose of in the drug drop!

Keep it Clean on the Ice!

This winter, thousands of people will be ice fishing in Minnesota. In 2023, a new litter law was passed specifically to address the issue of litter being left on lakes during ice fishing season. The Department of Natural Resources (DNR) enforces this litter-on-ice law.

The law **prohibits** a person who is using a shelter, motor vehicle or any other conveyance on the ice from leaving: **garbage, cigarette filters, firework litter, the body of a dead animal and human or animal sewage.** Such materials must be in a container that is secured to the shelter, motor vehicle, or conveyance. It is unlawful to illegally dispose of wastewater from black or grey water tanks from recreational vehicles on the ice or open water. Dump stations are located throughout the state to drain your tanks! Visit rvdumpsites.net.

Propane tanks are considered a hazardous waste and need to be properly disposed of. The Waste Wizard app can provide options for disposal of such items. Additionally, bring a bright colored or black trash bag as the common white colored bags can easily be lost in the snow.

With careful planning and preparation, we can all responsibly enjoy the outdoors while preserving the health of our lakes for future generations.

Items that **cannot** be disposed of at this area include: Sharps or pointed items such as needles, syringes, epi-pens sets, or lancet sets, and institutional items, liquids, and non-drug products, such as glucose test meters or blood pressure equipment.

What's New in Isanti County Parks

Recent development at **Irving and John Anderson County Park** included a 3 acre off-leash dog park, a one-mile paved trail, four boardwalks, an ADA accessible restroom, drinking fountain, picnic shelter, and park signage. This development was made possible through a **Park Legacy Grant award** from the Greater MN Regional Parks & Trails Commission.

Come and see the new off-leash dog park, paved trail, boardwalks, picnic space and other amenities! Located at **Irving & John Anderson County Park** (*8545 277th Ave NE, North Branch, MN 55056).*

Additional development through a Park Legacy Grant Award has begun at **Springvale County Park!**

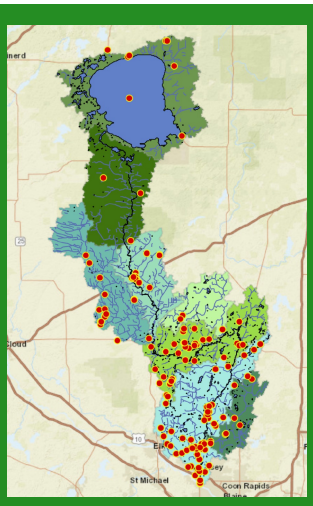
The single-track mountain bike trail has been constructed to 6.5 miles long, followed by a children's nature play area, ADA accessible restroom, expanded parking, and park signage.

Please be patient and follow closures during this development project **(***3361 Hwy 95 NW, Cambridge, MN 55008*).

SCAN ME

Follow “Isanti County Parks” on Facebook and scan the QR code to visit our website to keep up-to-date on upcoming events throughout the year.

Rum River Watershed Partnership Project Map



The Rum River Watershed Partnership created a map to showcase all of the conservation projects installed throughout the watershed. The Rum River Watershed covers nearly 80% of Isanti County, excluding the southeastern portion. Significant project funding in Isanti County comes from the Rum River Watershed Partnership, which is supported by a grant from the Clean Water, Land and Legacy Amendment.

With this funding, we’ve implemented 320 acres of cover crops, completed four shoreline restorations on Blue Lake, restored two wetlands that benefit Green Lake, and hired a full-time shared Land Protection Specialist.

The Isanti SWCD publishes 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.

Contact

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