

Le Sueur County Environmental Services

NEWSLETTER

April 1, 2021

This Issue:

- 2| Le Sueur County Shoreline Residents-Help Protect Our Lakes
- 3| 2021 Watercraft Inspection Season
- 4| Grants and Programs Currently Available
- 5| Water Resource Spotlight
- 6| Featured Minnesota Native Plant
- 7| Featured Non Native Plant
- 8| Floodplain Management
- 9| Contact Information

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Le Sueur County Shoreline Residents – Help Protect Our Lakes

Le Sueur County was recently awarded a grant from the Minnesota DNR. Le Sueur County will be partnering with Lake Associations to communicate with residents to dry their used docks, rafts, lifts, and associated equipment for 21 days before moving anything to a different lake.

Did you know? Drying your equipment for 21 days is required by law before you move it to or from a different lake (MN State Statute 84D.10 Subd. 4).

What can you do to help out?

We are looking for participants with this program!

- Are you interested in being more involved with your community when it comes to preventing and limiting the spread of AIS?
- Would you like to attend trainings and/or demonstrations to learn how to properly clean and dry your docks, rafts, lifts, and other associated equipment?
- Are you planning on moving and bringing your water related equipment to a different lake?
- Do you plan on selling your water related equipment to other lakeshore owners?
- Have you just moved to a lakeshore home and want to purchase water related equipment?

If you answered yes to any of the questions, then this program is for you! In order to participate with the program, please fill out the commitment and participation form. You may either contact your Lake Association, contact Holly Kalbus (507-357-8540, email address located below), or visit the Le Sueur County AIS page ([Le Sueur County Aquatic Invasive Species Education and Outreach Page](#)) to access the form. Once you have filled out the form it can either be emailed to hkalbus@co.le-sueur.mn.us or mailed to Le Sueur County Environmental Services, Holly Kalbus, 88 South Park Ave, Le Center, MN 56057.



2021 Watercraft Inspection Season



Program Summary

As many of you know, Le Sueur County expanded their watercraft inspection program in 2020. The County plans to expand their program again in 2021. The timing could not be better to increase efforts with watercraft inspections in 2020 and 2021; the pandemic has limited in person activities, and the desire to participate in outdoor activities has drastically increased.

In addition to the ten lakes that currently have inspectors at accesses, six more lakes will be included in 2021. The County has utilized a tool, created by the University of Minnesota Aquatic Invasive Species Research Center (MAISRC), to help guide where it would be beneficial to place watercraft inspectors to reduce the risk of introducing and spreading aquatic invasive species. This tool used watercraft inspection data that has been collected over the years in Minnesota. Many of the accesses where the County has placed inspectors in past years, is also where the tool is suggesting to add inspectors. One other new component with the 2021 watercraft inspection season is Le Sueur County will have inspectors at a few lakes during waterfowl hunting season. The goal is to perform inspections for waterfowl hunters. This particular group of individuals tends to be forgotten when mentioning aquatic invasive species. It is important that we address all potential risks of introduction and spreading of aquatic invasive species.



Grants and Programs Currently Available



Well Sealing

This grant expired on December 31, 2020. Le Sueur County was able to seal 21 unused/abandoned wells with this program. Unfortunately, grant funds are no longer available. Le Sueur Soil and Water Conservation District may have limited funds available for landowners to seal their wells. Their contact information is located on the last page of this newsletter. Other programs that offer financial assistance for well sealings include: Ag BMP Loan and EQIP.

SSTS Low Income

This program assists landowners with the financial costs to design, install, repair, and replace a septic system on residential property that has been deemed an imminent threat to public health or is failing to protect groundwater. Cost-share is limited to 75% of the total cost not to exceed \$10,000 maximum for the design and installation of a conforming septic system. We received an extension for this grant, and funds are available until the grant expires on December 31, 2021.

Water Monitoring

Currently, Le Sueur County is able to test your drinking water for Nitrates and Phosphorus. The cost is \$15/test. If you are interested in testing your water for any other pollutants/contaminants, it will need to be completed at a certified lab. The best time to test your water is in the spring. During this time, the amount of nutrients and sediments present in water are typically higher due to the snow melt and large rain events.

Ag BMP Loans-Low interest loans to help prevent pollution and improve water quality.
Offered by the Le Sueur County SWCD.

Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP)- voluntary conservation efforts that will benefit the environmental by addressing conservation issues. Typically, both technical and financial assistance are provided.



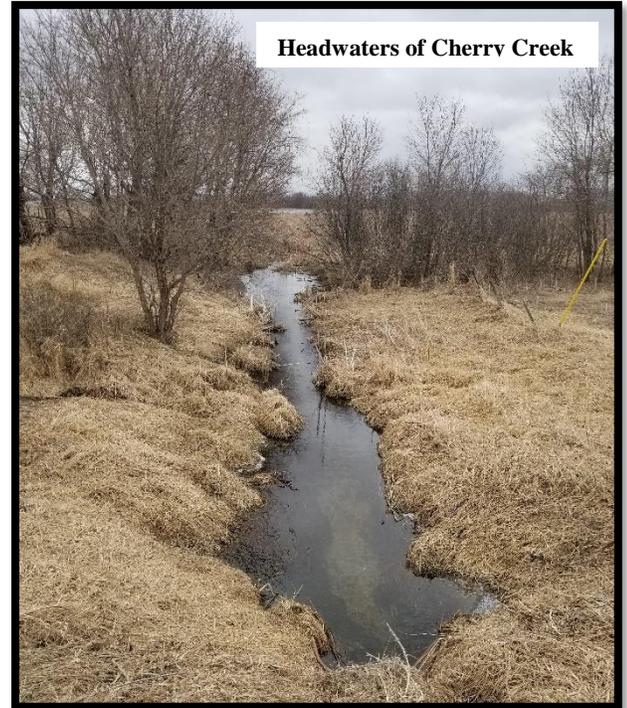
Water Resource Spotlight



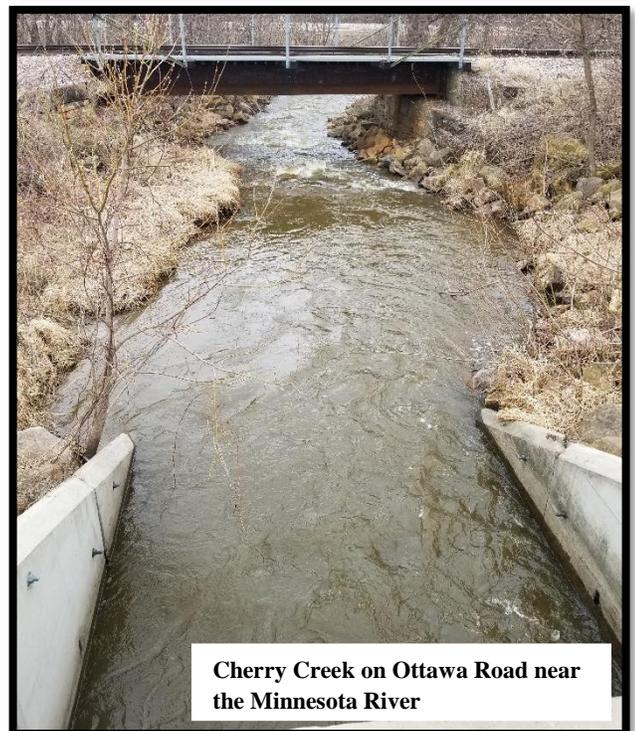
This week we are spotlighting Cherry Creek!

Cherry Creek is roughly 15.4 miles long. The headwaters start at Huoy Lake. The creek then flows west through the City of Cleveland, through Rice Lake, and it eventually outlets into the Minnesota River; just north of the City of Saint Peter. The landscape along the creek is predominately agriculture and forested areas. The stretch of Cherry Creek that is closer to Minnesota River provides a more diverse landscape such as bluffs, wetlands, and forests. There is some development around Cherry Creek, specifically the City of Cleveland and COVIA mining activities.

Cherry Creek provides recreational opportunities such as fishing and bird watching. Unfortunately, the creek has numerous stressors or impairments such as degraded habitat, altered hydrology, connectivity, phosphorus, and dissolved oxygen. Many of the stressors and impairments are due to nonpoint source pollution sources. Also, there is not a sufficient amount of data available in all reaches of Cherry Creek. The less data that is available the more difficult it is to determine what efforts are needed to improve water quality for Cherry Creek. Based off of the data that is available, the headwaters of Cherry Creek are impaired or have stressors for numerous pollutants. Conservation efforts should be focused here first because a greater water quality benefit can be gained throughout Cherry Creek, especially downstream.



Headwaters of Cherry Creek



Cherry Creek on Ottawa Road near the Minnesota River

Minnesota Native Plant

Big Bluestem (*Andropogon gerardii*)

Big Bluestem is a perennial that is a part of the Poaceae (Grass) family. It grows 2- 8 feet tall in clumps. The leaves are long, and tend to grow more clumped at the base of the plant. A mature plant's roots contain rhizomes and that can extend roughly up to 10 feet deep! The inflorescence (flower head) typically comprises 3 racemes (flower spike) which resembles a turkey foot, and blooms from July through August. Big Bluestem establishes in a variety of conditions, but prefers moderately to well drained soils and part to full sun. You'll find this grass thriving in prairies, meadows, open woodlands, near riverbanks, and even along roadsides. These plants are great for pollinators and other wildlife in providing a food source and habitat. Additionally, you will find Big Bluestem in many restoration sites due to their ability to adapt to diversity of site conditions and ability to help stabilize soils that are prone to erosion.



Non Native Plant

Canada Thistle (*Cirsium arvense*)

Canada Thistle is a perennial that is a part of the Asteraceae (Aster) family. It originates from Europe and was originally introduced during the European Settlement era. It is now considered invasive, a noxious weed, and should be eradicated. The plants grow roughly 2-5 feet tall in dense colonies. The leaves are alternate on the stem, have toothed margins (leave edges), and are most recognized due to their prickliness. A mature plant has an extensive root system which includes a taproot and rhizomes. The flowers can be pink, purple, or white in color which bloom from June through October. Canada Thistle prefers moist soils, but can establish almost in any condition. These plants are very resilient and aggressive; therefore, they can easily outcompete native plant species.



Floodplain Management

Floodplains always tend to get a bad reputation. They serve their ecological purpose, and may be more important now than ever before. With the climate changing, specifically larger and more extreme rain events, we need these areas in order to reduce the amount of flood damage that occurs.

Limiting the amount of development around, near, or within floodplains is best in order to reduce the risk to human safety, and structural damage. Not to mention, expenses related to flood damage is extremely costly to repair.



Did you know? Floodplains have numerous benefits to not only the environment, but also to humans!

- Provides room for water to flow in natural areas, and can hold large quantities of water. This reduces the need for manmade flood structures, and also reduces the impact on human development.
- Improves water quality by slowing the flow of water and allowing time for pollutants to filter out.
- Promotes the biodiversity of species, both wildlife and vegetation, that depend on these ecosystems to nest, spawn, forage, and survive.
- Recharges groundwater by allowing water to infiltrate into the ground and move to the water table.
- Provides a wide diversity of recreational opportunities such as fishing, hunting, camping, hiking, bird watching, canoeing, kayaking, and boating.



Contact Information

Environmental Services Department

Planning & Zoning, Feedlots, Solid Waste, & Septics

Phone: 507-357-8538, Email: environmentalservices@co.le-sueur.mn.us

Environmental Resources Specialist/Water Planner-Holly Kalbus

Phone: 507-357-8540, Email: hkalbus@co.le-sueur.mn.us

Le Sueur County Soil & Water Conservation District (SWCD)

Phone: 507-419-0365

Mike Schultz-District Manager

mschultz@co.le-sueur.mn.us

Sue Prchal-Program Specialist

sprchal@co.le-sueur.mn.us

Joe Jirik-District Technician

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Nik Kadel-Ditch Inspector

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Karl Schmidtke-Resource Technician

kschmidtke@co.le-sueur.mn.us

Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS)

Steve Breaker-District Conservationist

steve.breaker@mn.usda.gov

Minnesota Department of Natural Resources (DNR)

Garry Bennett-Area Hydrologist

garry.bennett@state.mn.us

Todd Piepho-Area Hydrologist

todd.piepho@state.mn.us

Carli Wagner-Aquatic Invasive Species Specialist

Carli.Wagner@state.mn.us

To see which DNR staff is the Area Hydrologist for your region, please click on the following

link:

https://files.dnr.state.mn.us/waters/area_hydros.pdf