



MAY 2024

WRIGHT SWCD NEWS

Spring Newsletter of Wright Soil & Water
Conservation District

AQUATIC INVASIVE SPECIES INSPECTORS FOR 2024

Meet our 2024 AIS Inspectors! AIS inspectors will be staffing public launches throughout the county May through September. Their goal is to inspect water related equipment for plants, animals, mud, and water.

This job helps protect Wright County and other Minnesota Lakes from aquatic invasive species like Eurasian watermilfoil, zebra mussels, and starry stonewort. They are working under Wright SWCD delegated authority to enforce Minnesota state statute.

All boaters are required to comply with their instructions including submitting to a visual and physical inspection of equipment, opening live wells and drain plugs, lowering motors, draining ballasts, checking anchors, and checking fishing gear. Please welcome the inspectors as you see them before you enjoy Wright County lakes.

If you need to decontaminate your equipment before or after you visit a lake, starting May 24, you can go to our courtesy decontamination station at:
1300 Business Blvd Annandale, MN 55302

For all available decontamination sites visit
https://apps.dnr.state.mn.us/ais_decon_sites.

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Ice Heaving

Lake ice is a part of every Minnesota winter. We depend on it for winter fun, and our lakes depend on it for their natural seasonal cycles. Despite the joy we get from frozen lakes in the winter, when conditions are right, the forceful power of ice can unleash havoc on shorelines and any structure man has unwisely put in its path.



Photo credit: Sugar Lake Association - Spring 2024

The SWCD receives many calls in the Spring when folks return to their cabins about the tremendous power of lake ice, and the phenomenon called “ice heaving” or “ice-jacking”. There are some positives and some negatives to this phenomenon, depending on your perspective. It can be extremely damaging to personal property on the lakeshore, but it can also be beneficial to the lake’s health and its ecosystem.

Ice heaving is more severe in years when the temperatures fluctuate greatly and when there is little snow cover to insulate the ice and keep the ice temperature constant like this past winter. There really isn’t much you can do on shore to keep the ice at bay. Rip-rap is of little value unless laid on a properly placed gravel foundation and on an extremely flat slope. The MN Department of Natural Resources recommends leaving ice ridges in place. They are natural berms that have formed around Minnesota’s lakes over thousands of years and they create a barrier to excess nutrients that might wash in. Instead, nutrients collect on the land side of the ridges creating fertile soil for plants and trees. The established root systems of plants and trees protect the shore from erosion while providing shade and habitat. Ice ridges also protect the shoreline from the lake itself. Ice ridges fortify the shoreline by packing rocks, while plant roots bind the soil and rocks together forming a natural shoreline protection.



Photo credit: Sugar Lake Association - Spring 2024

To reduce damage done by ice ridges:

1. make sure your landscaping, buildings, etc. are above the ordinary high-water level
2. plant native vegetation in and around your shoreline instead of rip rap

Ice can move rocks and timbers that constantly require repair, but vegetation will grow back. Vegetation is self-repairing and protects the shoreline from erosion and the lake from pollutants. It’s important to cater native plant species with your site requirements such as lake bounce, soil type, slope, sun/shade, and adjacent plant communities.

Wetland Replacement – What is Sequencing?

The Wright SWCD is the local government unit (LGU) responsible for administering the Minnesota Wetland Conservation Act (WCA) across a large portion of Wright County. The overall goal of WCA is to achieve no net loss of wetlands in Minnesota. With that said, WCA does not prohibit activities that may result in the loss of wetlands. Before allowing such an activity, applicants must demonstrate that WCA sequencing requirements have been met. It is a common misconception that wetland impacts will be permitted as long as the lost wetlands are replaced. When evaluating a proposed wetland impact, the LGU is required to ensure the applicant has exhausted all possibilities to avoid and minimize wetland impacts in accordance with WCA sequencing rules.

Sequencing must be addressed in preferential order:

1. Impact avoidance
2. Impact minimization
3. Impact rectification
4. Reduction or elimination of impacts over time
5. Replacement

In practice this means that although an applicant has the means to replace proposed wetland impacts, the project can still be denied if the LGU determines sequencing requirements haven't been met. For example, an applicant may propose the construction of a driveway through wetlands to access their ideal building location. Upon review of this proposal, the LGU must evaluate alternative routes that could achieve the basic project purpose while also avoiding the need to impact wetlands. If an alternative route exists that doesn't result in any safety issues, deviations from accepted engineering standards, or other unusual problems, the applicant must adopt this alternative or the LGU is required to deny the application.



Given the complexity of this part of WCA rules, all applicants are encouraged to coordinate with the LGU before submitting a final application proposing wetland impacts. The LGU can provide feedback on any anticipated sequencing issues which can expedite the review process. For any wetland related questions contact Andrew Grean, Senior Wetland Resource Conservationist at the Wright SWCD, at 763.614.2918 or andrew.grean@usda.gov.



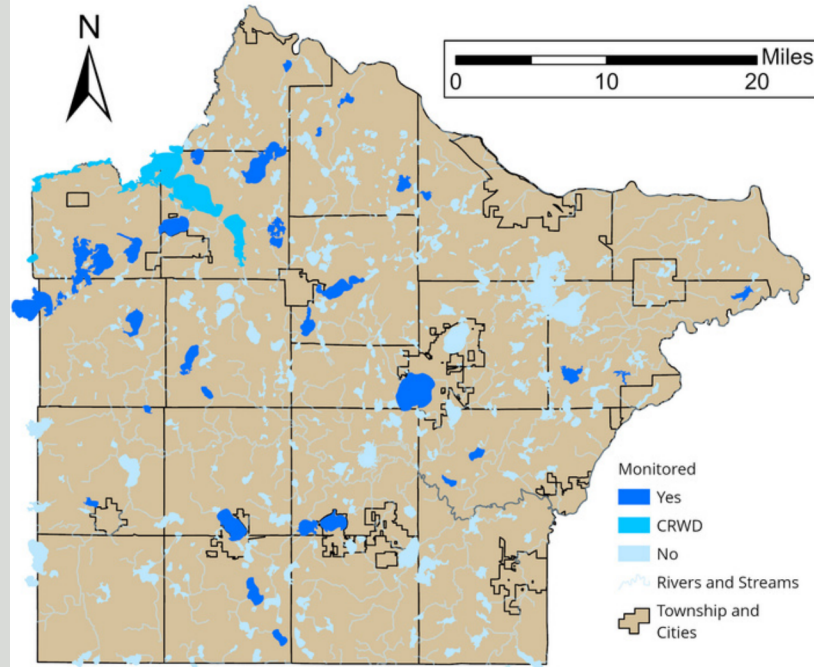
Citizen Monitoring

Thanks to dedicated citizen volunteers, 17 lakes in Wright County have 20 years or more of routine water quality data. Several other lakes have at least 10 years and more lakes are joining the program each year (map on left).

Volunteers collect water samples at the surface of the lake five times throughout the summer. The samples and data are sent to RMB Environmental Laboratory. They analyze for total phosphorus, chlorophyll-a, and secchi disc. Each of these measures is an indication of the overall health of the lake, but it is the long-term trends that really tells the story. It's like when you get check your cholesterol checked. One test is good, but a routine will help know if it is going up, down, or if it is stable.

The data is used by SWCD staff to help prioritize work. If a lake is barely over the impairment standard and trending towards better water quality, we want to give those lakes a little nudge toward being delisted. Same is true if we see a lake trending in the wrong direction, we want to work there to stop it from going over the impairment threshold.

It is never too late to start a monitoring program on your favorite lake. Supplies and training are provided. Sampling can be done from a pontoon, fishing boat, or even a canoe. Sampling takes about one hour per month, then samples need to be delivered to Buffalo on the third Monday of each month, May through September. The cost for the 2024 sampling season is \$300.



Lakes of Wright County that participate in the Citizen Monitoring Program show in dark blue. Some lakes may monitor water quality through other programs or entities such as the Clearwater River Watershed District (CRWD).



2024 Sample Drop-off Days

May 20

June 17

July 15

August 19

September 16

Bareroot Tree Planting and Care Guide



Plant your trees ASAP. After planting, water, weed, and protect your trees from critters.



Do not store more than 5 days. If planting won't happen within 5 days, select a shady area, remove trees from package, and "heel" them into a trench in the soil, covering the roots with soil. Keep soil moist.



Create a hole as deep and wide as the tree root system. Breakup soil clods. Dig as deep as the roots since most roots will grow outward.



If roots are too long or broken, cut them off. You do NOT want roots to be folded or "J-hooked" in the bottom of the hole. The root collar of the tree should be at ground level when planted. This is where the upper most roots protrude from the trunk or main stem of the tree.

Spread out roots so they don't encircle and girdle the tree as it grows.



You do not need to amend the soil. If you choose to, use at least 50% native soil so the roots aren't discouraged from growing outward.



Put wood/bark mulch around trees to help hold moisture and reduce weeds. Keep mulch 3" away from the trunk to prevent disease. Alternatively, biodegradable tree mats made from wood fiber or coir can be used.



Keep packaged trees away from direct sunlight, heat, and wind. Keep the package cool (35-50 degree F), moist and dark. A refrigerator works great. Sprinkle with water every couple of days if not planted immediately.



When planting, carry the trees in a pail with a few inches of water or moist wood shavings. Do not stand trees in water over 2 hours.



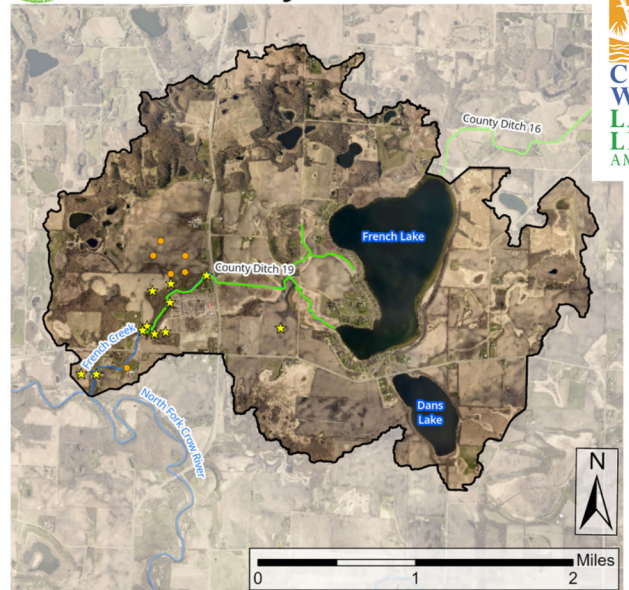
Press the soil with your hands firmly around the roots to avoid air pockets. This can greatly affect survival.



Water trees thoroughly after planting, this helps remove air pockets. Watering trees weekly in dry weather will help survival.

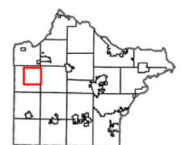


County Ditch 19



- Ditch Systems
- Rivers and Streams
- County Ditch 19 Contributing Area

- Completed Conservation Practices
- Priority Conservation Practices



County Ditch 19 Multipurpose Drainage Management Grant

Wright SWCD has partnered with the Wright County Drainage Authority to apply for and receive a Multipurpose Drainage Management grant for \$215,000 for upland projects adjacent to County Ditch 19 (CD19). The Wright County project was the only application that the Board of Water and Soil Resources awarded in January of 2024. Wright SWCD will partner with private landowners and their local contractors to construct each project. Once completed, the projects installed at the top of active gully heads will prevent significant sediment erosion and provide peak flow reductions in the upland watershed and adjacent to CD19. Projects funded by this grant will improve downstream water quality in the French Creek and the North Fork Crow River, as well as reduce the need for benefitted landowner-funded cleaning of CD19. Construction on these conservation projects is anticipated in the fall of 2024 and 2025.



Missy Kirby
Pheasants Forever - Farm Bill Biologist

As a Farm Bill Biologist for Pheasants Forever in Wright County I work with landowners to make their habitat dreams come true. I grew up in Wright County and started here in April 2024. I obtained a Bachelors in Wildlife and Fisheries Sciences as well as two minors, Rangeland Ecology & Management, and Sustainability from South Dakota State University. What I enjoy most about my job is being able to make a positive impact on the environment. In my free time I like to hunt and fish. I enjoy being in the outdoors and spending time with my family.

John Rebrovich
Field Intern

At Wright SWCD, my main task is to monitor the 12 Mile Creek Watershed and County Ditch 10. I gather data regarding the condition, level, and discharge rate of the streams along with taking water samples in those streams and surrounding lakes. I am currently a student at St. Cloud State University majoring in Environmental Studies. My hobbies include fishing in the summer, hunting in the fall, and working on DIY projects.



**WRIGHT SOIL & WATER
CONSERVATION DISTRICT**

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