



# Washington Conservation District Conservation Connections

SPRING 2011

## Planting for Wildlife & Clean Water

Washington County residents love wildlife, and improving habitat is a primary reason landowners plant trees, shrubs and grasses. Happily, the native vegetation most beneficial for wildlife also tends to promote clean water, decrease the need for pesticides, create windbreaks and stabilize soil.

Some landowners are interested in birds, others want to see deer and small mammals. Different plants bring different wildlife, but Washington Conservation District (WCD) generally advises recreating a full ecosystem, focusing on deep-rooted native species and a diversity of vegetation that can support a diversity of animals.

“Each tree or shrub selected can provide a host of habitat benefits,” said WCD’s Tara Kline. American highbush cranberry shrubs, for example, provide berries that last through the winter and attract early migrant robins. The nectar of the blossoms feeds butterflies and pollinators in early summer. The dense leaf clusters shelter mosquitoes, providing food for phoebes and other flycatchers. When the berries fall to the ground, beetles can eat the flesh and the seeds can be eaten by mice, who might become food for barred owl.

Shelter is also an important consideration. Many songbirds prefer to nest in shrubs, while catbirds like tangled bramble bushes for protection from predators. The wood thrush sings from the upper branches of trees, nests in shrubs and forages for food in the leaf litter on the ground.

Starting this spring, the WCD and partners in the East Metro Water Resource Education Program are reaching out to people with woodlands, farmlands and big backyards. Their goal is to improve native habitat for wildlife, especially on shorelines and streambanks, steep hillsides and bluffs, and along natural drainage ways. Watch for more information on the WCD website.



Trees provide numerous water quality benefits — and offer habitat for birds including the barred owl and blue jay.

## TREE & RAIN BARREL SALE NEWS

Tree seedling distribution is scheduled for Friday, April 29 from 8am-8pm and Saturday, April 30 from 8am-noon at the Washington County fairgrounds. If you pre-ordered tree seedlings, you will receive a reminder card in mid-April. If you haven’t ordered yet, check our website for supply still remaining. Surplus trees will be sold on a first-come basis starting Friday morning.

Rainbarrels will be ready for pick-up after 8am on Friday April 29. Pre orders are required — visit our website to check on supply.



## WELCOME NEW SUPERVISORS



John Rheinberger



Jim Levitt

New people bring fresh ideas for conserving our natural resources. WCD welcomes two new supervisors: John Rheinberger of Stillwater, representing District 3, and Jim Levitt representing District 5. You can find contact information for the Supervisor representing your area of Washington County by visiting: [http://www.mnwcd.org/district\\_staff.php](http://www.mnwcd.org/district_staff.php).

## FOCUS ON POLLINATORS

What do butterflies, moths, bats, bees, beetles, flies and hummingbirds have in common? They are all pollinators, vital to agriculture as well as trees, shrubs and flowers. Honeybees alone pollinate an estimated \$10 billion in U.S. food crops each year. Unfortunately, both native and domesticated bee populations are plummeting and many species of butterflies and bats are in danger as well.

We can all do our part to support pollinators — and achieve numerous other benefits — by planting the trees and grasses that provide habitat. The Pollinator Partnership has developed Ecoregional Planting Guides to help people across the U.S. select trees and native plants for their yards that will provide food and habitat for pollinators. (Visit [www.pollinator.org/guides.htm](http://www.pollinator.org/guides.htm) and enter your zip code for suggestions specific to our area.) For more information and tailored assistance, including a free site visit, contact WCD.



WCD

## GYPSY MOTH INFESTATION DISCOVERED

A form of wildlife that is not beneficial, the Gypsy Moth, has arrived in Washington County. An isolated infestation has been identified by the Minnesota Department of Agriculture (MDA) near the Indian Hills Golf Course in the City of Grant. In high numbers this prolific, nonnative insect can defoliate trees. Oaks are most commonly infested but most trees other than ash are also suitable food for larvae. Fortunately, MDA biocontrols to eliminate this tree pest have a 95-99% success rate and are currently underway.



MDA

## Washington Conservation District (WCD) Board of Supervisors

- Gary Baumann, District 1
- Sarah Hietpas, District 2
- John Rheinberger, District 3
- Louise Smallidge, District 4
- Jim Levitt, District 5

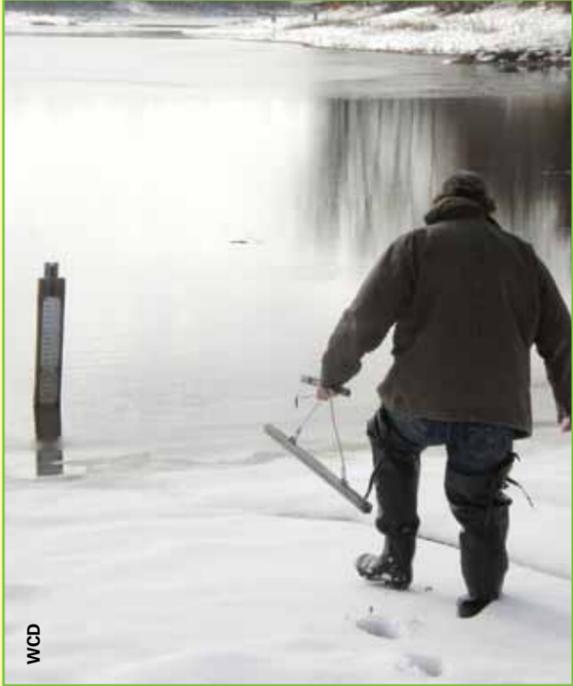
### Office Staff

Call us at 651-275-1136 or visit the staff page of our website — [www.mnwcd.org](http://www.mnwcd.org) — for e-mail addresses.

- Jay Riggs, District Manager, ext. 20
- Shari Larkin, Administrative Assistant, ext. 27
- Erik Anderson, Water Resource Specialist, ext. 32
- Amy Carolan, Natural Resource Specialist/ MSCWMO Administrator, ext. 22
- Matt Downing, Water Resource Technician, ext. 29
- Wendy Griffin, Natural Resource Specialist, ext. 24
- Angie Hong, Water Resource Education Specialist, ext. 35
- Karen Kill, Brown’s Creek Watershed District Administrator, ext. 26
- Adam King, Water Resource Technician, ext. 23
- Tara Kline, Seasonal Natural Resource BMP Technician, ext. 28
- Rusty Schmidt, Natural Resource Specialist, ext. 36
- Jyneen Thatcher, Natural Resource Specialist, ext. 37
- Jessica Thiel, Senior Water Resource/GIS Technician, ext. 30
- Todd Udvig, Wetland Specialist, ext. 25
- Peter Young, Engineering Specialist, ext. 21

PROVIDING QUALITY TECHNICAL AND EDUCATIONAL SERVICES FOR THE  
CONSERVATION OF NATURAL RESOURCES IN WASHINGTON COUNTY SINCE 1942.

1380 West Frontage Road / Highway 36 / Stillwater, MN 55082 / 651-275-1136 / [www.mnwcd.org](http://www.mnwcd.org)



WCD

This winter's abundant snowfall will help replenish water levels in our lakes and wetlands. Watch for possible flooding during snowmelt or if it rains before the ground is completely thawed. If you planted on the mudflat when water was low last summer, expect to see it poking out of the water this year, providing habitat for fish and amphibians and stabilizing the shoreline against wave action.



Washington Conservation District  
1380 West Frontage Road, Hwy 36  
Stillwater, Minnesota 55082

NON-PROFIT ORGANIZATION  
U.S. POSTAGE PAID  
STILLWATER, MN  
PERMIT NO. 255

**PARTNERS IN CONSERVATION**

**City of Lake St. Croix Beach**

Situated along the St. Croix River just south of Interstate-94, Lake St. Croix Beach is a tight-knit community of 1,000 people accustomed to working together to solve local problems. The St. Croix River — which is central to local quality of life and economic health — is often a focal point for city efforts.

Like many small Washington County communities, Lake St. Croix Beach has only limited stormwater treatment infrastructure. As a result, stormwater runoff from city streets sometimes reaches the St. Croix River before it is cleaned or filtered.

To remedy this problem, the City of Lake St. Croix Beach has started to promote the use of raingardens to capture and filter runoff. They have offered workshops for residents and helped connect interested landowners to resources available through the Middle St. Croix Watershed Management Organization (WMO). In an effort to truly “walk the talk” and demonstrate the water quality benefits of raingardens, the city recently took on two projects of its own.

One project, on City Hall property, includes two raingardens that capture and treat rain and snowmelt flowing from a nearby parking lot and adjacent roadway. The other project is located at the intersection of Upper Fifteenth Street South and Quentin Avenue South and includes three raingardens. A group of well-organized, motivated residents and local elected officials installed the gardens, which combine to prevent approximately four pounds of the pollutant phosphorous (which promotes algae growth) from reaching the St. Croix River each year.

The City of Lake St. Croix Beach will continue to promote the use of raingardens and hopes that the two demonstration projects will further motivate residents to do their part to protect the St. Croix River.

The WCD and the Middle St. Croix WMO contributed either cost-share funding or technical assistance to the projects. Thank you to the City of Lake St. Croix Beach for your voluntary conservation efforts!



Lake St. Croix Beach volunteers installed several new raingarden demonstration sites in the community

**Spring Workshops**

- **Blue Thumb Workshop**, Tuesday March 8, 6-8pm, Woodbury City Hall. Learn about cost share grants available and how you can help clean our lakes and rivers on your own property.
- **Blue Birds for Clean Water**, Tuesday March 22, 6-8pm, Gander Mountain, Woodbury. Find out how to improve habitat for all types of birds while also reducing runoff pollution.

Contact WCD's Tara Kline (651-275-1136 ext. 28 or tara.kline@mnwcd.org) to confirm and register for these free workshops.

**Washington County Environmental Center Open House**

Saturday April 2, 12:30-2pm (tour at 1pm), 4039 Cottage Grove Drive, Woodbury. Stop by to drop off your household hazardous waste, electronics and recyclables. While you are there, provide feedback on the county's Storm Water Pollution Prevention Plan, pick up a soil test kit and learn about local clean water projects and resources for raingardens and native habitat planting.



Sharon Stiteler, will be leading the bird habitat workshop. Learn more about her at [www.birdchick.com](http://www.birdchick.com).

**? Conservation Quiz ?**



**What is this?**

- A. Mini bicycle ramp
- B. Curb cut
- C. More tools for the “tool-box”

B & C. Curb cuts allow stormwater to run off roads or parking lots into grassed swales or raingardens. This strategy reduces the amount of stormwater flowing into our lakes and rivers, and naturally filters the water as it seeps into the ground.

**ATTENTION LANDOWNERS**

If you plan to enroll your land in the Rural Preserves Property Tax Program this spring, please contact the WCD soon to schedule your Conservation Assessment Plan meeting and site review.

If you are fighting buckthorn along the St. Croix River or a designated trout stream, WCD has grant funding that could help. Applications for grants to manage invasive species along these waters are due by March 25, 2011. See [www.mnwcd.org](http://www.mnwcd.org) for more information, or contact Jyneen at 651-275-1136 ext. 37.