SUBMITTED PHOTO

A new sand trap for phosphorus is seen in a Prior Lake-Spring Lake Watershed District photo.

Fish Point Park gets sand filter to collect phosphorus

Fish Point Park recently got some water quality improvements, including a sand filter for phosphorus.

The Prior Lake-Spring Lake Watershed District wrapped up construction on the project in December. Efforts restored and expanded the storage capacity of the park's existing wetland, retrofitted an existing ditch section with iron-sand filters and in the spring, will restore native prairie to some areas of the park. Iron-enhanced sand filters contain iron filings that bind phosphorus and remove it from the water so it does not stimulate algae growth. Iron sand filters were recently developed by the University of Minnesota, and some of the test sites were in Prior Lake.

The sand filter is just off the public trail in the park and is designed to trap phosphorus on its way into Lower Prior Lake. Under optimal conditions, the addition of only one pound of phosphorus can promote the growth of up to 500 pounds of algae. Too much algae can turn lakes into "pea soup" and make them impaired in water quality.

As a result of the improvements at Fish Point Park, the amount of phosphorus entering Prior Lake from the Fish Point Park watershed could be reduced by approximately 19 pounds per year and prevent the growth of up to 9,500 pounds of algae, according to watershed leaders. Funding came from the watershed district, the city of Prior Lake and a Clean Water Partnership Grant from the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency.

This spring, trees and shrubs will be planted in the project area. The watershed district will host a neighborhood meeting in early spring to discuss the plans.