

PLSLWD
Education &
Outreach Plan

2019

“Our mission is to manage and preserve the water resources of the Prior Lake-Spring Lake Watershed District to the best of our ability using input from our communities, sound engineering practices, and our ability to efficiently fund beneficial projects which transcend political jurisdictions.”

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Executive Summary

The purpose of the Prior Lake-Spring Lake Watershed District's (PLSLWD) education and outreach program is to improve understanding of local water resources and practices among all stakeholders in the District. The education and outreach program also fulfills the requirements of the MS4 permit for the Prior Lake Outlet Channel (PLOC).

In 2019, the education and outreach program will include coordinated efforts with the Scott County Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD), the Scott County Clean Water Education Program (SCWEP—managed by the Scott SWCD), Prior Lake, Shakopee, Savage, Spring Lake Township and Sand Creek Township to continue a community-wide approach to develop an understanding of local water resource issues and outcomes, with special emphasis on flooding, runoff, phosphorus reduction, water conservation, water quality and illicit discharge.

Background and Overview

The District will partner with the Scott Soil and Water Conservation District, SCWEP, local cities and townships to educate the public and help meet its education and outreach responsibilities as an MS4 permit holder. The District's Citizen Advisory Committee, a group of 13 volunteers who meet monthly, will help implement the District's citizen engagement activities.

The District holds an MS4 (Municipal Separate Storm Sewer System) general permit for the PLOC which carries stormwater to the Minnesota River. MS4 permits give owners or operators of publicly managed stormwater infrastructure approval to discharge stormwater to lakes, rivers and wetlands in Minnesota. The permits are mandated by federal regulations under the Clean Water Act and are locally enforced by the MN Pollution Control Agency.

PLOC Outreach and Education

In June 2014, PLSLWD experienced nearly \$1 million of damage to the Prior Lake Outlet Channel. Citizens in Prior Lake experienced flooding of their homes and lack of access to arterial streets and businesses. Local funds and those from the Federal Emergency Management Administration (FEMA) paid for the repair of damaged culverts and the removal of downed trees and a sediment delta. Work on the remaining FEMA project, repair of major channel bank erosion, is planned for 2019. PLSLWD will provide education and outreach to landowners living along the channel, including letters advising them of the repair work.

General Outreach and Education

Scott Clean Water Education Program (SCWEP)

The District will continue to partner with the Scott Clean Water Education Program (SCWEP) to extend its education and outreach efforts. This program includes the following partners: Scott Watershed Management Organization, Vermillion River Watershed Joint Powers Board, Scott Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD), Spring Lake Township, Credit River Township,

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Jackson Township, Louisville Township, Vermillion River Watershed Joint Powers Board and Scott County.

SCWEP's vision is that making clean water choices becomes "second nature" for people who live and work in Scott County. The key message SCWEP is promoting is, "Clean Water Starts with Me!" and will focus upon illicit discharge, natural borders and stormwater runoff.

Audiences include: agriculture/rural landowners; urban and lakeshore residents; and community groups, schools and government.

SCWEP will conduct prairie and shoreline restoration workshops; promote cost-share programs; participate in events; and develop targeted outreach activities. SCWEP will be represented at community events; publish rack cards, fact sheets, brochures and newsletters; submit news articles and press releases; rotate the new Clean Water Display the Scott County Conservation Center and utilize social media to get its messages out.

The District will also participate in SCWEP's Scott County Outdoor Education Days. Staff will help run stations highlighting water and other important natural resources for 1,500 students from local schools.

Local Schools Partnership

The District will seek to revitalize its collaboration with local area schools. District staff will work with staff from local schools, including the Prior Lake-Savage (PLS) schools' District Naturalist to identify opportunities for the District to provide programming and support for teachers. This may include giving classroom presentations or providing teachers with lesson plan ideas relating to water resources, etc.

Clean Water Clean-Ups

The District will continue to partner with the City of Prior Lake and the City of Savage to host a spring and fall Clean Water Clean-Up. The clean-ups are a great way to engage volunteers, who help rake up leaves and remove buckthorn from City parks. Volunteers will be recruited through emails to past volunteers and notices on the District's and City's websites, Facebook and Twitter pages. The events will be publicized in the Prior Lake American, Savage Pacer and the Scott County SCENE.

PLSLWD Boundary Signs

The District is in the process of designing a new District logo. The District will research, design and install PLSLWD boundary signs using the updated logo. The boundary signs will be placed along roadways to mark district boundaries, similar to a "City Limits" sign. Riley Purgatory Bluff Creek and Minnehaha Creek Watershed District have similar signs along roadways marking their district boundaries.

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PLSLWD Management Plan Updates

The District began the process of updating its Water Resources Management Plan, the District's ten-year plan, in 2018. Work will continue in 2019 on the plan which must be completed by 2020. Public input will be solicited throughout the process through a combination of public meetings and public comment periods. The District's Citizens Advisory Committee (CAC) will also provide feedback and recommendations on management plan updates.

Citizens Advisory Committee (CAC)

The District will to engage its Citizens Advisory Committee to obtain feedback and recommendations for District programs and the District's Water Resources Management Plan updates. The CAC will also help implement the District's citizen engagement activities and explore ways to become more involved.

The CAC will review the Water Quality Improvement Award and decide whether to continue the award program. The CAC began sponsoring the annual Water Quality Improvement Award in 2016 to recognize the positive contributions of local citizens improving water quality who implemented projects, such as rain gardens and shoreline buffers.

Residential and Agricultural Cost Share

In addition to SCWEP, the District will continue to contract with the SWCD to meet with landowners to promote rural and urban incentive and cost share programs and encourage their participation. The District currently offers up to \$250 for rain gardens, shoreline restorations and buffers; \$50 for rain barrels; and 50% of the cost (up to \$150) for installing a water pump to use lake water to irrigate shoreline properties.

For residential incentive programs, PLSLWD will promote citizen participation in the SCWEP raingarden and shoreline restoration workshops as well as District cost share programs. In 2018, the District greatly increased its promotion of the urban cost share programs; as a result, over 40 residents applied for urban cost share in 2018. The District seeks to continue this momentum in 2019.

Part of the goal of the District's cost-share program is to create a "culture of conservation" which inspires residents and results in residents pursuing conservation projects beyond the cost-share program and as a nature extension of their everyday activities.

The District will encourage public official and community leaders, including the PLSLWD Board of Managers, City Council members, Mayors and lake association board members to install water quality projects and become ambassadors and spokespersons. Community contacts could work to recruit a group of neighbors to get together and each install water quality projects on their own properties. Outreach could target certain neighborhoods to encourage a group of neighbors to install projects.

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In rural areas, the District will provide construction incentive payments for filter strips, wetland restoration, well decommissioning, water and sediment control basins (WASCOB) and other stormwater management best management practices (BMP). The District will review and approve Conservation Practice Payment Dockets, which define practices, payments and evaluation tools.

Farmer-Led Council (FLC)

The District will partner with the SWCD to continue its staff support of the Farmer-Led Council. Agricultural lands make up a majority of the landscape in the Spring Lake and Upper Prior Lake watersheds. The role of the FLC is to develop and guide the implementation of strategies that the District will use to accomplish agriculture's share of nutrient reduction goals.

It will:

- Inform decision-makers and the public about soil and water conservation opportunities
- Identify base level and site-tailored practices that are available and needed
- Define the best approach for engaging with and assisting farmers to implement practices
- Identify potential barriers to implementation, along with tools and resources needed to overcome them

In addition, the FLC is sponsoring the **Lake-Friendly Farm Program** which was created to recognize the farmers that are doing an outstanding job of managing their farms in a way that protects the water resources in the District. The program both identifies and publicly recognizes existing best management practices in the watershed and assists farmers in identifying areas for improvement to help protect our water resources.

Projects

Spring Lake Parcel

The District acquired a piece of land in 2013 along the north side of Spring Lake that is used as a shoreline demonstration site. The property is roughly 0.25 acres, includes about 350 feet of shoreline. Restoration was completed in 2016 through a grant with Great River Greening and two interpretive signs were installed in 2017. We will continue to use this site as a demonstration for shoreline restorations.

Raymond Park

In 2017, four acres of upland and shoreline were restored at the City of Prior Lake's Raymond Park; the project serves as a demonstration site for shoreline & upland restoration area for the public. The restoration was supported by a Conservation Legacy Partners grant from the MN DNR and the District's project partners were the City of Prior Lake, Spring Lake Township and Great River Greening. The restoration included: a beach restoration; lawn area was converted to low-maintenance turf; an oak savanna restoration and a shoreline restoration. Maintenance on the site will continue in 2019. Educational interpretive signs will be designed and installed at the park.

Sand Point Beach Park

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As the final part of the Lower Prior Lake Protection Implementation Project, the District and the City expanded two pre-treatment basins at Sand Point Beach Park, installed a large iron-enhanced sand filter and seeded the surrounding upland area with native prairie. During peak rain events, stormwater will be diverted from these basins to the iron-enhanced sand filter which will remove additional phosphorus before being sent to Lower Prior Lake. An interpretative sign explaining the project's iron-enhanced sand filter was installed in 2018, in addition to a sign identifying the prairie restoration area and small plant identification signs highlighting individual plant species in the native prairie restoration area.

Stormwater & Storage Projects

The District continues to work to acquire upstream storage for stormwater, as identified in the 2016 Stormwater Management and Flood Mitigation Study. In 2019, the District will begin work on a storage project on Sutton Lake. Upstream storage holds water in the upper watershed on the land longer, delaying when the water reaches the lakes. The District will partner with landowners to achieve this goal. Outreach will be targeted to landowners living near potential upstream storage areas. If an agreement with landowners for an upstream storage site is reached, the District may also write articles for the District website and press releases for the Prior Lake American, Savage Pacer and Scott County SCENE newspapers.

Project Interpretative Signs

Interpretative signs will be designed and installed at recently completed projects, such as Indian Ridge Park. Additionally, small native plant identification signs, designed by one of our summer interns, will be ordered and installed at the 12/17 wetland restoration site.

Project Outreach

Staff will conduct literature drops to residents residing near PLSLWD construction projects. If necessary, letters may also be sent to the residents. The District will provide information on these projects through social media, the District website, meetings/articles for lake associations and press releases to the Prior Lake American, Savage Pacer and the Scott County SCENE.

District Tours

District staff will organize 1-2 District tours in 2019. Possible focuses of District tours include highlighting district projects or examples of residential water quality projects.

Conservation Easements

The District has nearly 40 conservation easements with over 170 landowners which are inspected annually. In the spring, landowners receive an annual newsletter and reminder letters to remedy any issues if violations were present. Landowners also receive a pre-inspection letter prior to the annual site visit and a post-inspection letter noting the inspection findings, including any violations. Landowners are encouraged to join staff on site visits if they are interested. In 2019, staff will continue to follow-up and work with landowners to fix the violations.

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Marketing

The District's education and outreach program anticipates a variety of passive and active marketing techniques to reach out to various stakeholders in the watershed. Some potential activities include:

- Participation at Lakefront Days, potentially including a rain barrel giveaway
- Speaking at the Prior Lake and Spring Lake Associations' annual meetings
- Annual update presentations to Prior Lake, Shakopee, Savage, Sand Creek and Spring Lake Townships, Scott County and others, as requested
- Targeted mailings, especially regarding project updates and cost share programs
- Publishing fact sheets/rack cards, banners, newsletters and articles
- Placing fact sheets and rack cards at kiosks, such as at McColl Park in Savage
- Submitting news articles and press releases to the Prior Lake American newspaper, Savage Pacer and the Scott County SCENE, as well as pitching story ideas to local reporters as applicable
- Posting articles and information on the District's website and social media
- Soliciting input from the public, CAC members, PLOC Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) and PLOC Cooperators

The District will work to maintain partnerships with other jurisdictions and interest groups that share the District's goals, including:

- | | |
|--|--|
| ➤ Prior Lake Association | ➤ Spring Lake Township |
| ➤ Spring Lake Association | ➤ Sand Creek Township |
| ➤ City of Prior Lake | ➤ Scott Soil and Water Conservation District |
| ➤ City of Savage | ➤ Scott County |
| ➤ City of Shakopee | ➤ Scott County Watershed Management Organization |
| ➤ Minnesota Association of Watershed Districts | ➤ Prior Lake-Savage School District |
| ➤ Shakopee Mdewakanton Sioux Community | |

Website and Social Media

The District will continue to share a variety of information including District news, project updates, news; articles covering water and conservation related topics; and related conservation news on its website and social media. Article topics could include highlighting success stories, project updates, District events & workshops. Trivia Tuesday is a weekly trivia question posted on social media each week with answers posted on Wednesday. Staff will work obtain website traffic information to better tailor outreach information.

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PLSLWD 50th Year Anniversary Planning

The District will be celebrating its 50th anniversary in 2020; in order to mark the occasion, the District seeks to plan events and marketing surrounding the 50th anniversary to honor the District's 50 years and engage the public. This would provide a great opportunity for the CAC to be more involved; the CAC could help District staff brainstorm and plan events as well as involve the public.

Budget

In 2019, the budget for MS4 activities is \$15,000; \$4,000 for the CAC; \$250 for the Prior Lake-Savage schools partnership and \$2,000 for project educational signs. In addition, the District budgeted \$58,000 for residential and agricultural cost share incentives, \$5000 for SCWEP and \$51,000 for the Farmer-led Council, which includes money for FLC sponsored cost share. Note: Budget numbers do not include staff time.

Outcomes & Evaluation

The desired outcome for 2019 education and outreach is to improve understanding of local water resources and practices among all stakeholders in the District; this strategic goal will be evaluated mostly by compliance with the MS4 permit. A large part of the Storm Water Pollution Prevention Program (SWPPP), a component of the MS4 permit, requires identification and documentation of BMPs undertaken to reduce the discharge of pollutants from the MS4 to the maximum extent practicable. Metrics used to measure the impact of marketing strategies include:

- Number of participants at a specific District hosted event or workshop
- Number of direct mailings, brochures, and newsletters distributed
- Number of submitted press releases and published articles

To maintain compliance with the MS4 permit, District staff will continue to record and quantify the above metrics which help illustrate the success or benefit of each BMP.