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For release: November 1, 2013

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Five year anniversary of Clean Water, Land and Legacy Amendment passage marks investments, environmental improvements in Minnesota

St. Paul, Minn.— Communities across Minnesota are marking the 5 year anniversary of the Clean Water, Land and Legacy Amendment, approved by Minnesota voters in 2008, by taking note of improvements to the state's water and soil resources that have been achieved through state investments and local actions.

Through the Minnesota Board of Water and Soil Resources' (BWSR) Clean Water Fund grant program, more than \$78 million has been invested in "on-the-ground" projects, where citizens and local governments are installing conservation practices to improve the quality in our lakes, rivers, wetlands and groundwater. In addition, BWSR has received over \$70 million from the Outdoor Heritage Fund (OHF) as recommended by the Lessard-Sams Outdoor Heritage Council to secure permanent easements and restore wildlife habitat through the Reinvest In Minnesota (RIM) Reserve.

John Jaschke, BWSR Executive Director, highlighted the program's value. "RIM is an important program that has clear synergy with Legacy goals. With Outdoor Heritage funds, the program is able to leverage federal resources and provides a voluntary approach to permanent protection for habitat and other benefits."

Local units of government in Minnesota are also delivering Clean Water funded conservation based on priorities included in water and wildlife habitat plans, focusing on the most pressing environmental needs. "Watershed districts, soil and water conservation districts and other organizations are working hard to target lakes and rivers that need to be cleaned up or protected and are installing projects to address those needs," Jaschke said. "Though it takes a long time to clean up a polluted water body, we are already seeing positive results."

Some projects that have produced water quality and wildlife habitat improvements in the five years since the Amendment passed include:

- **Cleaning up Stubbs Bay on Lake Minnetonka** - \$164,000 was invested to stabilize a 500-foot ravine that was polluting Lake Minnetonka with sediment and phosphorus, making recreation less enjoyable. The City of Orono tackled the problem by fixing the ravine through control structures and native plantings. Water quality has since improved, as the completed project allows fewer pollutants to enter the lake.
- **Targeting projects around the Buffalo River** – A \$135,000 Clean Water Fund grant gave the Buffalo-Red River Watershed District the ability to use targeting tools to identify existing and potential areas of high sediment contributions to the river, and to complete projects that addressed those areas. Nine water and sediment control basins and 17 side inlet sediment controls were installed, reducing pollutants to the South branch of the Buffalo River.

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- **Cleaning up the Rock River** - \$46,000 was invested stabilize three sections of stream bank on the Rock River, restoring approximately 1,389 feet of shoreline. Three rain gardens were also installed in the City of Luverne, reducing pollutants from entering the river.
- **Restoring habitat on Nine Mile Creek** – Stormwater runoff in southern Hennepin County has decreased Nine Mile Creek’s fish population and other aquatic habitat. Local governments teamed up to address issues with a \$136,000 Clean Water Fund grant. The Nine Mile Creek Watershed District, Hennepin County, Three Rivers Park District and cities of Minnetonka and Hopkins used natural engineering techniques to stabilize stream banks and create pools resulting in better in-stream habitat.
- **Cleaning up the Knife River** – Through an \$18,000 Clean Water Fund grant, the Lake County SWCD used natural channel design to stabilize a section of eroding stream bank on the Knife River. The project used all natural materials – tree trunks, root wads, brush, clay, fine soil and sod mats of willow, dogwood and alder. Less than one year after installation, the project was tested during the 2012 flood and successfully protected the streambank with no slumping or major erosion.
- **Reinvest In Minnesota – Wetlands Reserve Program Partnership (RIM-WRP)** - \$56 million of Outdoor Heritage funds have been allocated to this effort that focuses on perpetually protecting and restoring wetlands and associated native prairies. The RIM funds have leveraged over \$89 million of federal WRP funds, making this the largest wetland and prairie protection and restoration effort in the world. When completed over 40,000 acres of habitat will be protected and restored with nearly 400 private landowners.
- **Wild Rice Shoreland Protection Program** – Over 10 miles of critical wild rice lake shoreland has been protected with nearly \$3 million of Outdoor Heritage funding. Protecting these shorelands helps to maintain and restore critical wild rice identified lakes in in the Central part of the state. These lakes provide food and habitat for a variety of wildlife species. In addition, the permanent easements provide a multitude of other environmental benefits.

BWSR’s Executive Director, John Jaschke, said investments made through these programs are noticeably improving Minnesota’s lakes and rivers and protecting and restoring wildlife habitat.

“Through these targeted conservation efforts, natural resources are being restored and protected, citizens are taking an active role in their communities and jobs are being created,” Jaschke said. “Only five years into a 25-year commitment, Amendment funding has already been a win-win for Minnesota.”

Interested in learning about more Legacy Funded projects? Visit the BWSR website at: www.bwsr.state.mn.us.

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Note to the editor: Specific project information and photos may be available upon request.