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BWSR launches Targeted Watershed Demonstration Program, announces \$5.7 million in new grants

St. Paul, Minn. – Whether used as a source of hydration, recreation, or an economic driver, clean water is an important resource for the people of Minnesota. The Minnesota Board of Water and Soil Resources (BWSR) announced today \$5.7 million in Clean Water Fund grants to help improve Minnesota’s waters through its Targeted Watershed Demonstration Program, a new funding approach for addressing water pollution. The program focuses on watersheds where the amount of change necessary to improve water quality is known, the actions needed to achieve results are identified, and those actions implemented within a four-year time period.

BWSR received twenty-five proposals, totaling more than \$46 million in funding requests. Chosen for the program’s first year: the Cedar River Watershed District (Dobbins Creek); the Rice Creek Watershed District (Long Lake); and the Crow Wing Soil and Water Conservation District (Serpent Lake).

John Jaschke, BWSR’s Executive Director, explained, “The Targeted Watershed Demonstration Program is piloting a more holistic approach toward the State’s ongoing work to reduce water pollution. Focusing on the watershed level, the goal of the program is to demonstrate, using local priorities, that concentrated conservation practices can have a positive impact on water quality.”

Project Overviews:

- **Dobbins Creek, Cedar River Watershed District (WD), \$1.5 million award.**

An important resource in southern Minnesota, the creek is impaired, the cloudiness of the water affecting plant and animal life. This project will install conservation practices in a systematic way to reduce sediment and nutrients, efforts which are estimated to contribute 15% of the pollutant reduction necessary to achieve Dobbins Creek’s water quality goal. "This is a historic project for our watershed, and we are very grateful for this funding which will help us make significant strides in our efforts to revive Dobbins Creek," said Bev Nordby, Cedar River WD Administrator.

- **Long Lake, Rice Creek Watershed District, \$3 million award.**

Work within this metro-area watershed will target Long Lake, a key destination in the most visited regional park in Ramsey County. Long Lake is an important regional resource, enjoyed by nearly half a million people annually. It's on the State's list of Impaired Waters due to excess nutrients, and the work on this project is estimated to achieve more than 40% of the pollutant reductions necessary to meet the Long Lake water quality goals. "The Rice Creek Watershed District has been studying Long Lake for nearly a decade to identify the most cost-effective projects to improve water quality. With support from the Clean Water Fund, the District and its partners look forward to making these projects and cleaner water in Long Lake a reality for our residents," Phil Belfiori, Rice Creek WD Administrator, said.

- **Serpent Lake Subwatershed, Crow Wing Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD), \$1.2 million award.**

North-central Minnesota's Serpent Lake, a regionally significant body of water in Crow Wing County, is at a critical turning point as water clarity continues to decline. If polluted runoff problems are not addressed, the resulting costs of water quality impacts will increase greatly, negatively affecting the quality of life and economic vitality of the region. The SWCD estimates that the conservation practices implemented through this program will prevent 139 pounds of phosphorus from entering the lake. That represents the majority of the phosphorus pollutant reductions necessary to meet the lake's water quality goal and reverse the declining water quality trend. "This program will have a lasting impact, increasing water clarity and reducing algal blooms on Serpent Lake, and helping keep the lake clean and healthy for all to enjoy," said Melissa Barrick, Crow Wing SWCD District Manager.