

Saint Olaf Lake: Building lasting partnerships

August Snapshots 2017

Water quality improvements come in all sizes, and even small improvements make a difference. That's the thought process that Kelly Hunt, Waseca County's Water Resource Specialist, used when applying for the St. Olaf Lake Grade Stabilization and Shoreline Project.

St Olaf Lake, a treasure of Waseca County, is one of only two lakes in the Le Sueur River Watershed listed as fully supporting aquatic recreation. Waseca County staff know it's much harder to restore an impaired lake than it is to protect one, so they placed a high priority on protecting St. Olaf Lake.



Project site before shoreline restoration.

Four properties along the lake, with 5,890 feet of shoreline, had experienced significant slumping of their shoreline in recent years thought to be caused by steep slopes and easily erodible soil characteristics. The slumping not only affects the property involved, as the soil from the slumping shoreline enters the lake, it carries nutrients and sediment with it, which can impact water quality. The County staff worked with landowners to apply to the Conservation Corps of Minnesota and Iowa (CCMI) for assistance with the project. The landowners were interested in the partnership with Conservation Corp because the Corp had the technical knowledge to implement the project.



Mankato Conservation Corps members all smiles post project implementation

According to landowner Jackie Flor, "We were all very happy with the way the project was handled professionally by local staff and the Conservation Corps workers. For us, this project is all about supporting sustainability and water quality, and we were assured through the whole process by the fact that those leading and working through the project know the local resources."

Project Crew Leader Preston Osland with CCMI noticed the open communication and professionalism from the beginning. "The project plans were easy to interpret and to implement, so it was easy for the crew to understand what was to be done and how to do it efficiently. Project hosts were on hand to answer any questions we may have had so there wasn't any doubt as to what was to be

done. It was a very new experience for the crew, we hadn't had a project like that before and it was very rewarding for we could see our progress and working so close to water and people's homes we knew the project was beneficial in many ways."

According to Hunt, the Conservation Corp staff exceeded her expectations. "We were expecting implementation of the project to take five working days to complete and they had it finished in three. It was obvious that the Conservation Corp were very passionate about their work. All five were hardworking, efficient, and knew when to ask questions."

The project was funded with Clean Water Funds. Initial estimations of the project indicate that it will prevent 0.55 tons of sediment per year from entering into St. Olaf Lake. An additional reduction of phosphorus by 1.15 pounds per year, and total suspended solids by 0.72 tons per year are also anticipated.



Grasses, cover crops and forbs begin to show their worth on St. Olaf Lake.