



Restoring Reitz Lake

June 2014 Snapshots

People take fishing seriously in Carver County, and Laketown Township's Reitz Lake is a local favorite. Water quality studies over the course of two decades indicated a rising problem, though: excessive nutrients. Phosphorus levels were identified as a specific concern. Too much in the water can cause algal blooms, which in turn impact the health and habitat of fish and other aquatic wildlife. In 2002, the lake was listed as impaired, and local government and private landowners recognized the need for action.



In 2010, the Carver County Water Management Organization (WMO) released a water plan that included as a key goal the reduction of the number of impaired waters listed locally. In 2011, the CCWMO received a \$127,550 BWSR Clean Water Fund grant for restoration projects to help reduce the amount of pollutants entering Reitz Lake using conservation practices and water quality improvement plans they had previously identified. In Carver County, the WMO has a very close working relationship with the Carver County Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD), and the two organizations combined forces to make this project a success.



The project had three major components: a filtration pond, shoreline treatment, and a floating wetland restoration area.

"We have been very lucky to have really committed landowners as part of this project," SWCD Manager Mike Wanous said. "From the beginning they've been very active in efforts to improve water quality on Reitz Lake, and the idea for the filtration pond actually originated from the local lake association."



Constructed along the north side of Reitz Lake, the filtration pond catches stormwater and other runoff from surrounding areas, and then outlets that water through a filter that catches pollutants before they have a chance to enter the lake. Another piece of the project is a floating wetland treatment area, which pulls in nutrients from the water and uses them to provide nourishment to native vegetation, resulting in a win-win. The water is cleaner, and the wetland provides additional habitat to attract wildlife and waterfowl.

Top: Filtration pond one year after installation; Middle: wetland restoration; Bottom: Shoreline restoration. Photos courtesy Carver SWCD.

Landowner involvement was a key component of the final piece of the project as well. The SWCD worked closely with lakefront

property owners to help identify ways in which they could implement conservation practices on their own land. Raingardens and shoreline restoration projects have been put in place to help keep sediment and pollutants out of the lake, not only benefiting water quality but also raising public awareness and engagement in conservation work.

The combined efforts are making a difference for Reitz Lake. Added together, these three elements are keeping more than 200 pounds of phosphorus a year and over eight tons of sediment from lake waters. The restoration work is an ongoing process, but the outlook is optimistic for this local gem.