



# Accelerating water quality improvements in Scott County

## January 2017 Snapshots



In December 2014 BWSR awarded a \$2,200,000 Clean Water Fund grant to the Scott Watershed Management Organization (WMO) as part of its Targeted Watershed Program to address multiple impairments in the Sand Creek watershed and its tributaries. 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 a majority of those actions can be implemented within a four-year time period.

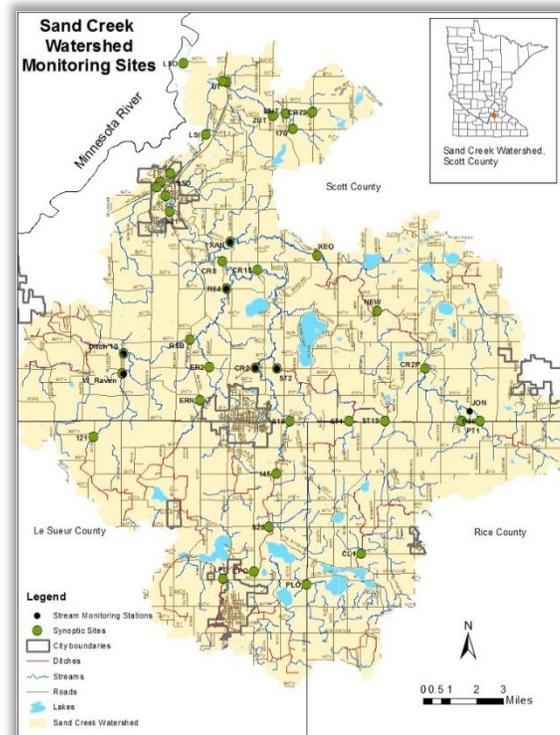
The land in the Sand Creek watershed, which drains an area of 271 square miles along the Minnesota River near Jordan, New Prague and Montgomery, is primarily used for agriculture. Water quality issues in the watershed have impacted aquatic life and recreational use. This project will significantly accelerate the WMO's work to address sediment and phosphorus runoff in four water bodies within the three-county watershed.

Specific projects within the grant funding include 10 targeted riparian improvement projects coordinated by Great River Greening, targeted in-lake phosphorous reduction in McMahon Lake, a cover crops and nutrient management pilot program, curly-leaf pondweed control in Cedar Lake, and targeted capital projects focusing on sediment sources in Middle Sand Creek, Picha, and Porter Creek subwatersheds.

The WMO estimates that implemented practices will keep 1,332 tons of sediment and 1,380 pounds phosphorus out of these lakes annually. That amounts to a 20-30% reduction in sediment in the Sand Creek and Porter Creek. Phosphorus reductions in Cedar Lake and McMahon Lake, currently impaired for recreation, should keep the lakes on track to be de-listed.

The Scott WMO project provides a unique opportunity to measure the results of the grant in terms of social parameters. This is possible thanks to a Cooperator Satisfaction Survey distributed for those who have participated in the Scott WMO TACS program since 2006 to determine their experience satisfaction and how the WMO can improve program delivery.

The WMO is also using a repeat of the 2011 Sand Creek Watershed Land Owner Survey to gauge changes in perspectives and attitudes toward conservation. By working



*Water Resources staff analyze erosion within the Sand Creek Watershed.*

with the University of Minnesota's Dr. Mae Davenport, Scott WMO will be able to assess whether engagement and community capacity building efforts are working and aims for this to be a successful demonstration for other agricultural areas in the Lower Minnesota River Basin. In addition to surveying landowners, the civic engagement aspect of the project is implemented through making some riparian planting projects volunteer events, holding thank-you events for cooperators and partners, and hosting a Farm Lead Co-op.

All of these projects build on existing successful programs, willing landowners, and momentum while also basing the projects on an unprecedented amount of monitoring, pollution source assessment, terrain and subwatershed assessment, and social attitudes research.