



Teaching Water Quality to the Next Generation

December 2014 Snapshots



Second graders learn about water resources at Lonsdale Elementary School's rain garden.

Learning about Minnesota's waters and ways to protect these valuable resources is important at any age. Second grade teacher Adam Larson from Lonsdale Elementary School had a vision for a project to promote hands-on education for his students while also doing something good for the environment. A Clean Water Fund grant, funded through the Board of Water and Soil Resources Community Partners Conservation Program, helped make Larson's vision a reality.

The \$5,000 sub-grant, awarded in 2012 by the Rice County Environmental Services Department, was combined with \$9,750 in funding and support from Tri City United Schools, Lonsdale Elementary, City

Administrator's office, Lions Club, Le Sueur County Pheasants Forever Club, the Montgomery Sportsman's Club and the DNR. Together, the combination of funds provided the resources needed to install a rain garden and bio-infiltration area to treat storm water runoff from the school.

Lonsdale Elementary has developed curricula tailored to the newly installed rain garden and will be teaching students about the importance of water infiltration for groundwater recharge, filtration of pollutants and nutrients to surface waters, and the use of native plants to help reduce soil erosion and provide habitat for wildlife.

"It was fun to work with the folks at Rice County to bring this great project onto our site. They were helpful in planning it and walked us through every step of the process," said Larson. "It became a community event, from fundraising, to volunteers, to planting and organizing the whole thing."

Rice County has provided small grants to other community groups for similar storm water management projects, including the River Bend Nature Center in Faribault, All Saints Episcopal Church and First United Church of Christ in Northfield, and the trail head to the Mills Town Trail in Dundas in conjunction with the Cannon River Watershed Partnership.

Jenny Mocol, Rice County Environmental Planner, worked closely with the project and others in the county. "The Community Partners grants are wonderful examples of community engagement," said Mocol. "It's great to see groups work together for common water quality goals. To see the Lonsdale project develop and materialize and to see Adam's excitement and drive for this project has been phenomenal."

For Larson, the most exciting part was teaching the students about water protection. "The students were able to get their hands dirty, and in the coming years they will be able to see the rewards when everything matures."



The rain garden and bio-infiltration area treats storm water runoff from the school.