

Progress takes time. Sometimes, even when you know what the problem is, getting everyone needed to solve it to the table is a Herculean task in and of itself. High bare soil cliffs have been eroding into Fridley's Oak Glen Creek since 1970, discharging several hundred tons of sediment into the Mississippi River annually just north of drinking water intakes for Minneapolis and St. Paul.

Over the last four decades, multiple planning processes were attempted to solve the problem, but lack of consensus between landowners, the City Council, and soil and water conservation district staff stymied attempts to move forward. While projects stalled, the erosion along the cliffs continued to negatively impact both property along the creek and the creek's water quality.



Top: Steep slopes caused heavy erosion along the creek.

Bottom: Attendees listen to City of Fridley Engineer Jim Kosluchar talk about the project on the BWSR Board Tour in August 2014.

In 2008 Anoka Conservation District (ACD) responded to a landowner whose 30-foot-tall bank had just collapsed into the creek. By the end of the season, ACD staff had installed a cedar tree revetment, aware that this was only a temporary measure to buy time until a permanent solution could be implemented. This event, along with two more bank failures along the creek that threatened homes in the following two years, galvanized and sustained interest and momentum to implement a long-term solution.

The City of Fridley contracted the ACD in 2011 to complete a Stormwater Retrofit Analysis for the Oak Glen Creek subwatershed, which identified corridor stabilization as a high priority and highly cost-effective water quality project. This analysis, along with engineered designs and cost estimates made possible through the Non-Point Engineering and Assistance Program, helped the ACD, in partnership with the City of Fridley, to receive a \$339,700 2012 Clean Water Fund grant to reduce erosion along the creek.

The CWF grant served as a catalyst for forward momentum on the project. Once funding was available, city and conservation district staff went into overtime to get landowner sign-off. Fridley Mayor Scott Lund became directly engaged in the process, reaching out personally to get buy-in from the last landowner holdouts.

"City and ACD staff spent countless hours meeting with landowners and listening to their concerns and coordinating the planning process that eventually produced a solution acceptable to all parties," said Chris Lord, ACD district manager. BWSR's Board toured the site in August 2014 as part of their annual tour. Board member Kathryn Kelly praised the project as an example of how partnerships can drive change for the benefit of natural resources.

The project itself required aggressive corrective measures to stabilize the creek's 20-30 foot high bare soil cliffs. Rock boulders were installed to

anchor slopes, and other practices were put in place to reduce in-stream erosion and direct flow to the center of the creek and away from the severely eroded banks.

Completed in 2014, the Oak Glen Creek Corridor Stabilization project is already producing positive results. Sediment reduction to the creek has been reduced by 317 tons annually, an 81% reduction in sediment discharging into the Mississippi River. Structures along the cliffs have been protected, as well, thanks to the slope stabilization. While the change didn't happen overnight, the persistence of local conservation professionals combined with support of city staff and landowners has resulted in a win for the City of Fridley and the area's water quality.