



BWSR Board Tour 2015: On the ground in SE Minnesota

October 2015 Snapshots



Powerful pictures and descriptive narratives go a long way toward telling a conservation story, but little can make up for the opportunity to get up close and personal with projects on the ground. So every August, the Minnesota Board of Water and Soil Resources (BWSR) Board take the opportunity to get out in the field and see the local conservation delivery system in action. The annual board tour visits a different part of Minnesota every year so that board members get a chance to learn about the challenges and opportunities facing Minnesota's natural resources from the professionals in the field.

This year's tour was in the southeast part of the state, in and around the Cannon River and Mississippi River/Lake Pepin watersheds in Goodhue and Rice Counties. BWSR Board, staff, and guests toured both large and small-scale projects, all of which relied on a network of support and shared commitment that extended from private landowners to state and sometimes federal agencies. Streambank stabilizations, water retention basins, feedlot projects: every stop on the tour cumulatively adds up to thousands of pounds of phosphorus and tons of sediment kept out of Minnesota's waters. Along the way, landowners joined tour attendees to talk about the importance of the conservation practices implemented on their land.

One of the highlights of this year's tour was a stop at the Schaefer Farm in Goodhue County. Goodhue Soil and Water Conservation District received a \$317,000 FY 2015 Clean Water Fund grant to install conservation practices designed to reduce sediment and phosphorus loading to streams that outlet to the Mississippi River and Lake Pepin. The Schaefer Farm project was their first to use these grant funds, and was prioritized using data from the Pollution Control Agency's Watershed Restoration and Protection Strategy (WRAPS) for the region. Three basins were constructed on the farm and the SWCD estimates they will prevent 26 pounds of phosphorus and 26 tons of sediment from leaving the watershed each year.

"Our local partners put a lot of hard work and effort to make conservation happen," BWSR Board Conservationist Tom Gile, who works in the region, said. "The tour is an important opportunity for our Board to see what grant funding is doing on the ground. It's state-local-landowners partnerships that make these projects possible, and the tour is a great chance to highlight the positive impacts they have on our natural resources."



*Top: Tour attendees learn about bank stabilization along the Cannon River near the town of Welch.
Bottom: Visiting the Schaefer Farm.*