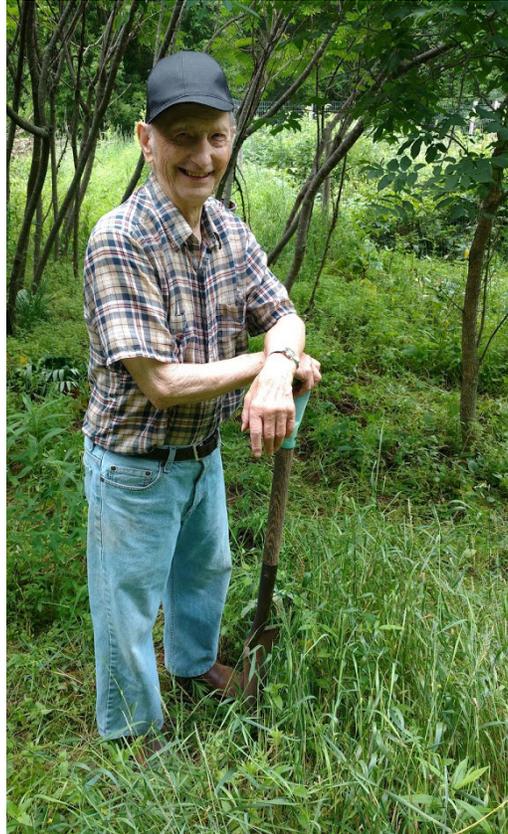


Weed-whacker: BWSR grant fuels Anoka County partnership



Clockwise from top left: The Fridley Middle School Builders Club volunteered to pull garlic mustard at Springbrook Nature Center in Fridley in April 2018. The ACWMA relies on volunteers to map, monitor, and manage invasive weeds. Anoka County resident Melvin Pfaffendorf has worked with the ACWMA, which has resulted in a drastic reduction of golden creeper on his property over the past two years. An ACWMA weed control project involved goat grazing to control buckthorn. **Photo Credits:** Anoka Conservation District



With a new partner and a second round of Minnesota Board of Water and Soil Resources (BWSR) grant funding, the Anoka Cooperative Weed Management Area (ACWMA) this season will continue to combat invasive buckthorn, wild parsnip and other non-native species that threaten to choke out native plants and degrade wildlife habitat.

BWSR in 2018 awarded the Anoka Conservation District (ACD) a \$20,000 cooperative weed management grant, spurring the creation of the ACWMA partnership, which brings together local stakeholders to control invasive species throughout Anoka County. Partners include the ACD, Anoka County, Coon Creek and Rice Creek watershed districts, the Minnesota Department of Agriculture (MDA),

local residents and volunteers.

Matching funds supporting seven projects undertaken by an initial BWSR grant exceeded the grant amount.

A Cooperative Weed Management Area (CWMA) is a local organization established to share invasive species management resources to achieve widespread prevention and control. BWSR's CWMA grant program strives to establish strong and sustainable CWMA's across Minnesota. CWMA's are present in 43 of Minnesota's 87 counties.



The state's Erosion Control and Water Management Program funds the grants. Although geared toward soil and water conservation districts, other organizations may join an SWCD's application to help develop and run a CWMA.

"CWMA's are needed to provide effective weed mapping, education, outreach and management that leads to the control of emerging and established invasive species," said Dan Shaw, BWSR senior ecologist and vegetation specialist. "The goal is to help prevent significant ecological and economic losses caused by invasive species."

The ACWMA partnership has three components. A cost-share program helps landowners control invasive weeds and re-establish native



Invasive species targeted by ACWMA efforts include **Left:** golden creeper (*Thladiantha dubia*) **Photo Credit:** Peter Dziuk, Minnesota Wildflowers **Center:** common buckthorn (*Rhamnus cathartica L.*), **Photo Credit:** Peter Dziuk, Minnesota Wildflowers; **Right:** wild parsnip (*Pastinaca sativa*), **Photo Credit:** DNR

vegetation. An outreach effort provides weed identification and control resources, including workshops. A monitoring and mapping effort gauges the location and types of invasive species present.

Invasive species cost-share

The ACWMA’s invasive species cost-share program offers financial incentives, education and technical assistance to private landowners looking to control invasive species. Landowners can apply for up to \$2,000 per property and must provide a 50% match. An ACWMA subcommittee selects projects based on proximity to public lands, high quality habitat and waterways, the presence of targeted invasive species, and proposed management activities.

Since 2018, the seven cost-share projects implemented have generated \$22,000 in local match funds — exceeding the original BWSR grant amount. One such project used grazing goats to control buckthorn. Another removed invasive species along the Rice Creek Chain of Lakes.

The cost-share program also leveraged funds between a

local resident and the Coon Creek Watershed District to treat a patch of invasive European common reed (*Phragmites australis subsp. australis*) on Ham Lake. The treatment was a success, and the following year the ACWMA leveraged funds from an MDA grant for noxious weed control and the Anoka County Aquatic Invasive Species Prevention Aid Program to treat 14 populations of non-native common reeds.

Outreach and education

In 2018, the ACWMA launched its outreach and education effort with a buckthorn workshop for residents. To date, the effort has educated approximately 140 local residents through five buckthorn removal workshops, trained 50 volunteers on noxious weed identification, trained 70 volunteers at work party events, and provided training for public works staff from the cities of Ramsey, Blaine and Fridley.

Through workshops and technical assistance, the partnership continues to help landowners manage invasive weeds. In one instance, Melvin Pfaffendorf, who lives near

Gordie Mikkelson Wildlife Management Area, brought ACD staff a sample of golden creeper (*Thladiantha dubia*), a biennial herb. Pfaffendorf didn’t know what it was but had been struggling to control it for years. Minnesota’s first recorded ID was in Stillwater in 2013, where it smothered the forest floor and climbed into trees. ACD staff identified the plant, mapped the affected area, and secured additional MDA grant funds to treat the infestation on the private property. The ACWMA and Pfaffendorf have been working together to control the population for the past two growing seasons and have seen a drastic reduction in its cover.

Monitoring and mapping

The BWSR grant makes it possible for ACD staff to coordinate volunteers who help survey and map invasive species. At invasive species work parties, volunteers pull garlic mustard in the spring. They cut and treat buckthorn in the fall and winter.

One volunteer group, the Fridley Middle School Builders Club, has pulled several garbage bags of garlic mustard and cut and hauled buckthorn at Springbrook

Nature Center in Fridley.

“The formation of the Anoka Cooperative Weed Management Area created the time and space for making connections,” said Carrie Taylor, ACD restoration ecologist and project manager. “There seems to be a ripple effect of ideas and projects when we come together.”

In 2020, the ACWMA received a second BWSR Cooperative Weed Management grant for \$15,000. Plans for this additional funding include follow-up treatment of wild parsnip, golden creeper and non-native common reeds.

The Anoka County Highway Department, a new ACWMA partner, will be trained to treat wild parsnip found along Anoka County rights of way.

Leafy spurge and purple loosestrife biocontrols will be monitored, and spotted knapweed biocontrols will be spread to two new sites. To allow the group to prioritize future activities, the ACWMA plans to initiate new cost-share programs for residents who wish to control invasive species and survey for invasive species in priority locations.