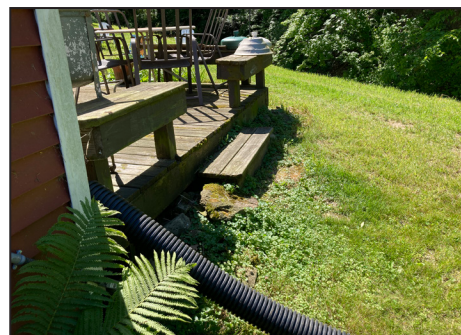


Direct connection: Root River SWCD streambank stabilization



YOUR Clean Water
Fund AT WORK

Clean Water
Funds are the
sole source of
Watershed-Based
Implementation
Funding.

BROWNSVILLE — From her cabin overlooking the Mississippi River, Marie Smith can see the very resource she's helping to protect.

The 150-foot streambank stabilization in her backyard helps to keep sediment and the pollutants it carries out of the Mississippi, which, in turn, helps to improve water quality and wildlife habitat. The unnamed tributary curves around the property and then flows under the highway before it empties into the river.

Nearly 20 years ago, a flood turned the narrow creek into a raging torrent that took down trees and sliced through the yard — coming within a foot of the cabin. The subsequent repairs excavated the creek, brought in fill and leveled out the site.

"It was starting to erode again," Smith said. "I was afraid everything was going to fall into the creek again."

She worked with Root River Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD) staff and Houston, Minnesota-

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— Dave Walter,
Root River SWCD manager

”

based Van Gundy Excavation on the [Watershed-Based Implementation Funding](#) (WBIF) supported project completed in summer 2023. A Technical Service Area 7 engineer designed the project; the SWCD oversaw installation.

Root River SWCD technician Jean Meiners said the challenges included removing trees and maneuvering in such a tight space, which required completing work a bit at a time.

Clean Water Funds are the sole source of the non-competitive WBIF grants the Minnesota Board of Water and Soil Resources (BWSR) awards to

From left: Watershed-Based Implementation Funds from BWSR supported a streambank stabilization on this unnamed tributary that flows to the Mississippi River. Marie Smith worked with Root River SWCD technician Jean Meiners and SWCD Manager Dave Walter, seen in summer 2024, on the project, which helps to keep sediment out of the Mississippi. The stream, seen in back, had cut through the property in a 2007 flash flood. The water sliced through the yard and came within a foot of the cabin. The property was repaired, but the streambank had started to erode again.

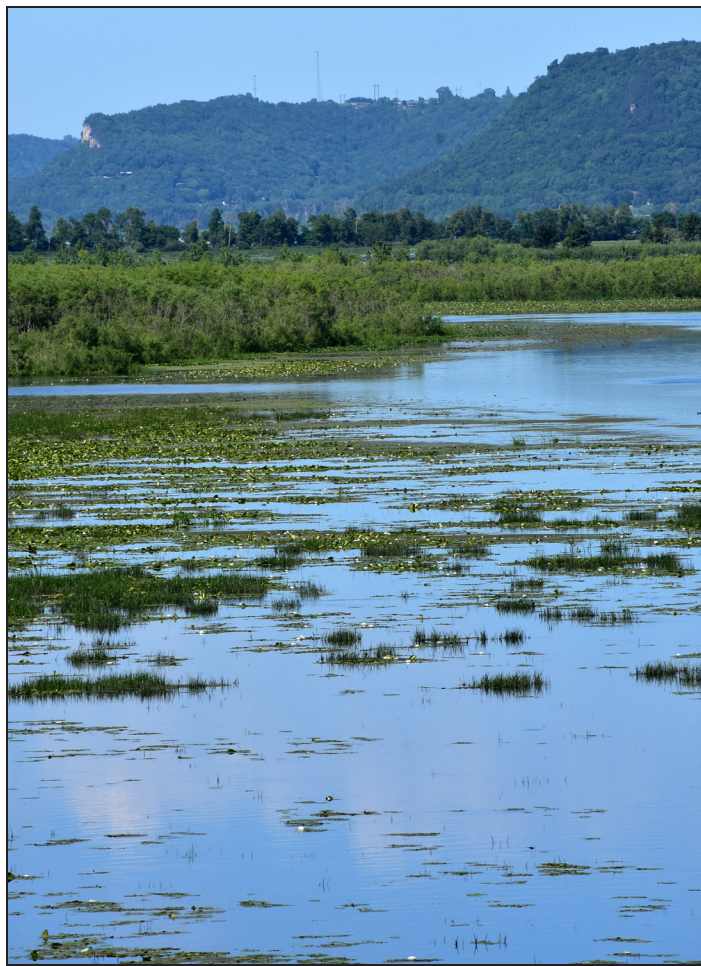
Photo Credits: Ann Wessel, BWSR

watershed partnerships, which determine local priorities. WBIF covered 90% of this \$35,870 project. The landowner covered the remaining 10%.

Among its components: 500 cubic yards of excavated material, 175 cubic yards of fill, 107 yards of rock of various sizes, 140 square yards of erosion-control fabric, and 4,260 square feet of seeding and mulch.

“This was a big priority for us in the watershed,” said Dave Walter, Root River SWCD manager. “It addressed sedimentation, erosion control and water quality.”

This part of Houston County is where the six-county, 1.3-million-acre Root River watershed drains into the Mississippi River. The watershed encompasses Fillmore County, most of Houston County, and parts of Mower, Dodge, Olmsted and Winona counties. The Root River itself enters the Mississippi near Hokah, about 9 miles north of the Smiths’ cabin.



The Mississippi River is seen from an overlook near the site of the stabilization in Houston County.

Smith’s father-in-law bought the land and built the cabin in the 1950s. Smith said she comes to

the cabin from La Crosse for peace and quiet, and spends most of her time tending to the cabin, the

lawn and the flowers.

One year after work finished, moss-covered boulders lined the narrow, shaded stream that flowed in the seam between sloped lawn and trees.

“I’m very pleased with the results. Very, very happy with what they did,” Smith said. “Jean and Dave were just super to work with.”

The project will protect the property, which was being eroded away. It will keep an estimated 53 tons of sediment out of the Mississippi River each year. And the improved habitat will benefit wildlife.

“The wildlife benefits here are the ones that you can see — with the frogs and the deer and the turtles and turkeys and birds,” Walter said. “But also the stream life — the invertebrates and the bugs.”

BWSR staff members write and produce Snapshots, a monthly newsletter highlighting the work of the agency and its partners.