



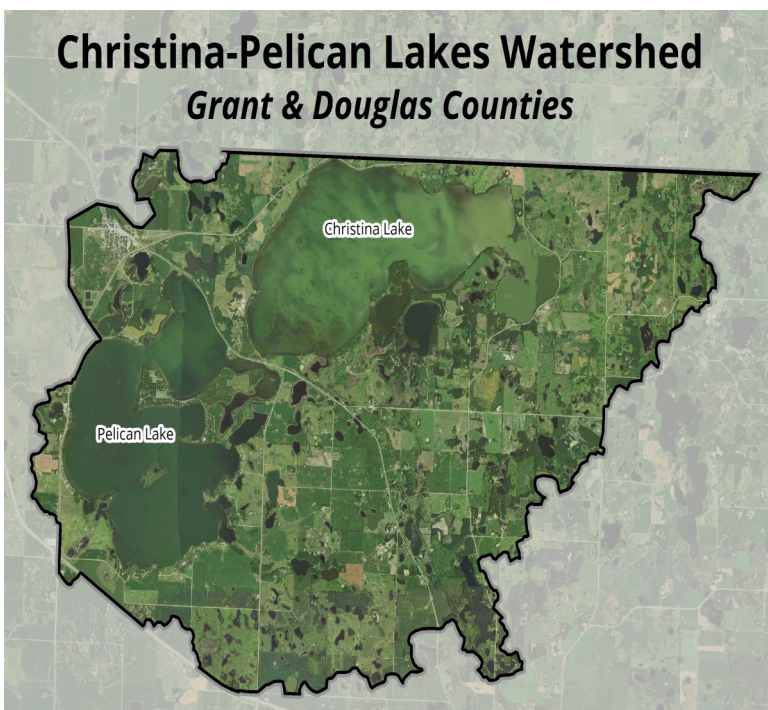
Grant County
Soil & Water Conservation District



Conservation Update

Spring 2021

Greetings from the Grant SWCD and Douglas SWCD offices! Staff are putting their resources together to provide a conservation update for the Pomme de Terre River area. In December 2020, the Pomme de Terre River Watershed Comprehensive Watershed Management Plan was completed and adopted. In this plan, water quality issues are being addressed through the prioritization of water critical areas that are in need of protection or restoration work - according to the states impaired waters list. The Pelican and Christina Lakes area is one of those prioritized areas and it is our hope to work towards improving the water quality of both lakes and ultimately the Pomme de Terre River. In the next few years these targeted projects worked on will be in the upland and shoreline areas within this watershed. Projects completed will include work in agricultural fields as well as a parcel by parcel review of shoreline habitat, stormwater management practices, drinking water assessments on private wells, and outreach events.



In the hopes to better explain our strategy moving forward - we will be holding a virtual meeting on June 24th, 2021 at 6p.m. Meeting information is located on the Grant Soil and Water Conservation District Website (www.grantswcd.org) or on Douglas Soil and Water Conservation District Website (www.douglaswcd.com). Additionally many of the programs or practices that might be available to you have been outlined in the remaining pages of this newsletter.

We wish everyone a safe and enjoyable summer and hope that our paths cross in the months to come.

What is Arsenic?

Arsenic is an element that occurs naturally in rocks and soil across Minnesota and can dissolve into groundwater. Drinking water that contains arsenic can increase your risk of cancer and other serious health effects. Unfortunately, there is no way to know the arsenic level in water before a well is drilled. Arsenic levels can vary between wells, even within a small area. You cannot taste, see, or smell it in your water.

So, what can be done? It's as easy as 1, 2, 3!

1. Obtain a testing kit from either your local Soil and Water office (if available) or reach out to a certified lab - your local Soil and Water office can point you in the right direction.
2. Test your drinking water. Follow the instructions that come with your test kit to obtain a water sample and return your sample to an accredited laboratory.
3. Reduce arsenic levels. If arsenic is detected at any level, consider installing a treatment system or use a different drinking source. The most common treatment system is a reverse osmosis (R/O) system. For a complete list of options, visit the Minnesota Department of Health website www.health.state.mn.us and search "arsenic in well water".

Grant County Arsenic Program

If you reside in a home that uses a private well for drinking water in Grant County you are eligible for a free arsenic test kit. Contact Horizon Public Health or the Grant Soil & Water Conservation District office to obtain the **FREE** arsenic testing kit, while supplies last.

Any level of arsenic can pose a threat, but if results come back at or above 10 micrograms/liter you might be eligible for a free treatment system. Eligibility is determined after lab results are obtained and dependent on ranking through Horizon Public Services.





Grant County

Soil & Water Conservation District

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Septic Systems

A septic system, just like a car, appliance, or tractor must be properly operated and maintained to ensure long-term, cost effective service. Many septic systems are installed and forgotten. After all, they're buried in the yard, "out of sight - out of mind". Septic systems must treat all wastewater from our homes and prepare it for recycling back into nature while protecting human health and valuable water resources. If a septic system is not functioning properly, clean water is not returned to the groundwater. The tips below can help homeowners keep their systems operating properly.

- Install low water use fixtures and appliances (especially toilets and shower heads). Repair all leaky faucets, fixtures and appliances immediately.
- Wash only full loads of clothing and dishes.
- Reduce length of showers and number of toilet flushes.
- Spread water use as evenly as possible throughout the day and week, especially laundry.
- Reduce/eliminate use of harsh cleaners, disinfectants, detergents and bleach, including laundry detergents. Increase elbow grease, decrease cleaners.
- Avoid the use of anti-bacterial soaps. They are not necessary for cleanliness and destroy good bacteria in the tank and soil treatment area.
- Dispose of solvents, paints, and unwanted medications through other means such as hazardous waste disposals and exchanges. Return un-used medications to the pharmacy if possible, or proper disposal drop-off sites.
- Keep grease, lint, food particles, cigarette butts, paper towels, disposable diapers, coffee grounds, plastic and other solid products out of the system.
- The septic tank must be cleaned or pumped regularly to remove all solids. The recommended time is at least every 3 years.
- Keep all vehicle traffic off the tank, pipes, and soil treatment area (drain field or mound). The only exception is the lawn mower.

A good resource for septic system owners is the University of Minnesota website <https://septic.umn.edu/septic-system-owners>.

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AgBMP Loan Program

The AgBMP Loan Program (Agriculture Best Management Practices) is a water quality program that provides low interest loans to rural landowners, farmers, ranchers, and agricultural supply businesses. The goal of this program is to encourage landowners to implement BMP's which can prevent and/or reduce runoff from feedlots, farm fields, and other sources identified by the county's water plan or the watershed's Comprehensive Watershed Management Plan.

There are three different roles of the AgBMP loan program: Borrower, Local Government (SWCD's), and the Lender.

The role of the borrower is to propose projects to the local county. If the borrower is able to meet the state's eligibility requirements and can successfully demonstrate how it addresses local water quality priorities, the county will approve the project and assist in locating a cooperating banker.

Local government (this is where Douglas SWCD and Grant SWCD comes into play): the SWCD's role is to manage the projects and see them through.


The lender is a local banker who evaluates the financial aspects of the project. With approval from the county and local bank, the project is then implemented. Once completed the funds are sent from the Minnesota Department of Agriculture (MDA) to the local bank and the loan is drawn up between the bank and the borrower.

Here are a few example practices that qualify for the AgBMP Loan Program:

- Conservation Tillage
- Erosion Control
- Wetland Restoration
- Chemical Management
- Feedlot Improvements
- Manure Management
- Septic Systems



Give us a call and we can answer questions you might have about what this program has to offer.



Conservation Reserve Program (CRP)

Landowners have several options for enrolling land into CRP depending on their conservation goals and the field(s) features. Continuous CRP has an ongoing signup where farmers and landowners may enroll on a continual basis while acres are available. General CRP is another option that generally has a set application period each year. There is also a application period for CRP Grasslands each year. Both the General and Grasslands signups are competitive and all three programs, including Continuous CRP, provide annual rental payments during a 10-15 year contract for land devoted to conservation practices.

Farmers and ranchers who enroll in CRP receive a yearly rental payment for voluntarily establishing long term, resource-conserving plant species, such as approved grasses or trees to help control soil erosion, improve water quality, and enhance wildlife habitat on cropland. Currently, there are nearly 22 million acres enrolled, but with the passing of the 2018 Farm Bill that cap has now been lifted to 27 million acres. If you are interested in enrolling or have questions give your local SWCD a call.



Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP)

CREP is a program that has been growing in popularity statewide due to the program incentives that were introduced during the summer of 2018.

CREP targets high-priority conservation concerns, in exchange for removing environmentally sensitive land from production and establishing permanent resource conserving plant species. Farmers are paid a one time RIM payment in addition to an annual CRP rental rate for 14-15 years. Participation is voluntary and all contracts are perpetual.

We welcome all questions and enjoy sitting down with our local landowners to discuss their expectations and programs available. The SWCD offices can answer questions you might have about what the program offers.



Aquatic

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Species

As most of you know the main stem of the Pomme de Terre River is infested with zebra mussels. This includes the following lakes in Grant County; Pomme de Terre, Barrett, Elk, Spring, Turtle, and Round Lakes. There are several important things we should do to keep these and other aquatic invasive species, AIS, from being spread to other waters in the county and state.

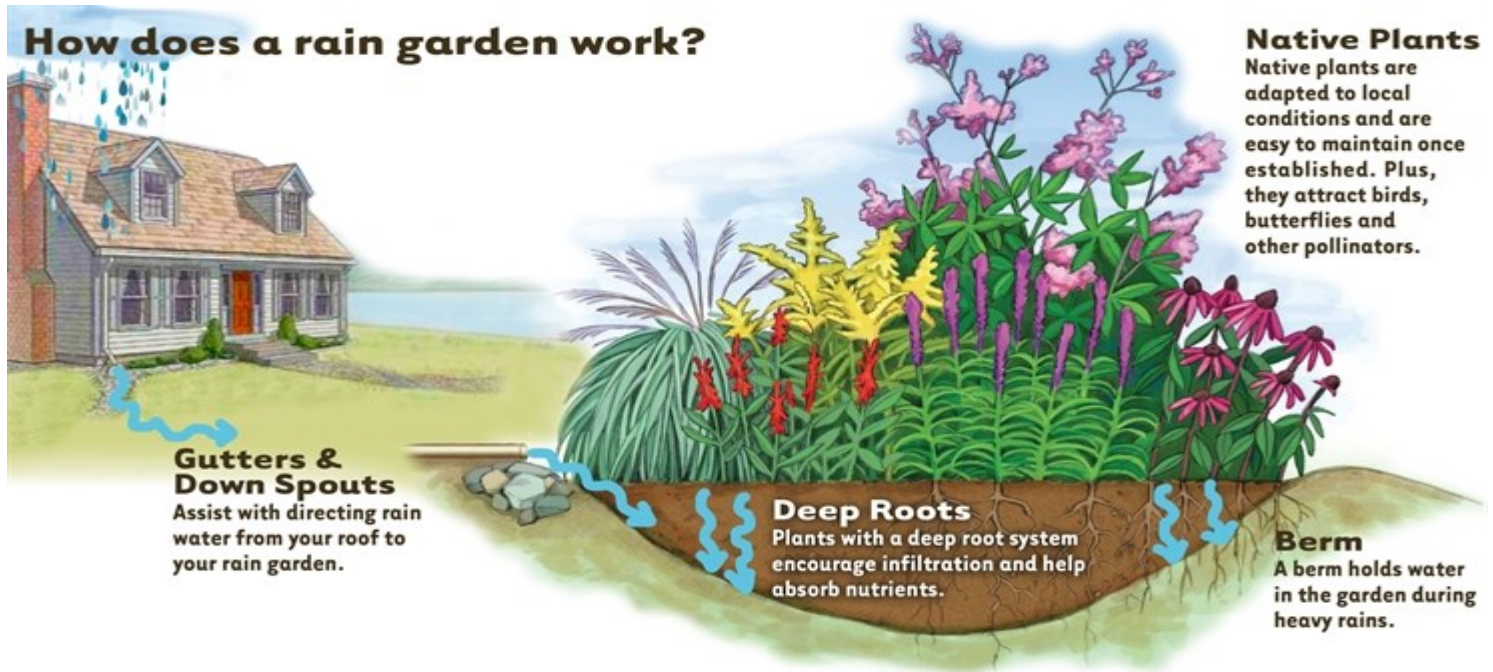
First, Minnesota law requires docks and boat lifts, that were in infested waters, to be out of the water for at least 21 days before putting them in another body of water. So, if you plan to sell or move a dock, lift or other water equipment from one lake or river to another, all visible zebra mussels, and aquatic plants must be removed whether they are dead or alive. It is unlawful transport equipment with prohibited invasive species or aquatic plants attached. If you hire a business to install or remove your water-related equipment, make sure they have completed AIS training and are on the DNR's list of Permitted Service Providers. Lake service providers that have completed DNR training and obtained their service provider permit will have a permit sticker in the lower driver's-side corner of their vehicle's windshield. They have attended training on AIS laws and many have experience identifying and removing invasive species.

Second, if you take your boat off the lake you should complete three main actions before leaving the public access or private ramp. 1. Clean off the boat by removing all plants, mud, debris and organisms from the exterior and interior of the boat (including angling equipment and the anchor). 2. Drain all water from the boat and other water related equipment, including bait water, live wells, and bilges'. 3. Pull the plug (it must remain out during transport). This includes live wells.

There are several other aquatic invasive species that have not been introduced to the Pomme de Terre River Watershed within Douglas and Grant Counties. So if you plan to fish or recreate on lakes outside the watershed be sure to follow the above steps. If you visit a lake that as a known infestation take appropriate measures such as using a decontamination station to insure they aren't introduced to your lake.

Any questions or concerns about aquatic invasive species please reach out to us anytime.

Rain Gardens



A rain garden is a shallow, constructed depression to catch rainwater. It contains plants that tolerate standing water for several hours. If it is designed properly, all water from a rain event will soak into the

Looking for volunteers for the Rainfall Monitoring Program



We are currently looking for rainfall volunteers to collect rainfall data in all of Grant and Douglas counties. If you would like to volunteer, or have questions, please call your local SWCD office and we will get a rainfall kit out to you.

ground within 24-48 hours. Rain gardens receive a rush of polluted stormwater from hard surfaces (such as sidewalks, driveways, roofs, and streets), hold the water for a short period of time, and allow it to naturally soak into the ground. The plants and soil remove most pollutants so that the rainwater can recharge the groundwater with clean healthy water.

Grant SWCD and Douglas SWCD have been designing and helping landowners around the counties put in rain gardens. If interested in rain gardens, or curious about how they can make a difference on your property, reach out to either Grant SWCD or Douglas SWCD.



Services may be obtained without regard to race, color, religion, sex, national origin, age, marital status, or handicap.



Nitrate Testing Clinic
At Both
Douglas SWCD and Grant SWCD

Grant SWCD

Douglas SWCD

Friday September 17th 9:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. Thursday September 2nd 9:00 a.m. to 4 p.m.

Saturday September 18th 8:00 a.m. to Noon

Bring your water samples to your SWCD and get it tested for excessive nitrates. City or well samples accepted. For more information contact your SWCD.