

Ongoing grant opportunities for the Knife River watershed

Knife River residents and agency personnel can work together to find funding for watershed projects. Take a look at these grant programs to see the kinds of projects they fund. It's never too early to start brainstorming ideas and finding partners.

Freshwater Future – Project Grants Program

Grant awards ranging from \$500 to \$5,000 to be used for specific project expenses. Grassroots organizations engaging in advocacy activities and projects to protect local lakes, rivers, wetlands, and other aquatic habitats will be considered.

<http://www.freshwaterfuture.org/grant-programs/request-for-proposal.html>

Contact: grants@freshwaterfuture.org, (231) 348-8200

Minnesota Board of Water and Soil Resources (BWSR)

Clean Water Fund Competitive Grants Grants for protecting, enhancing, and restoring water quality in lakes, rivers, and streams in addition to protecting ground water and drinking water sources from degradation. Available in a number of program categories to counties, cities, soil and water conservation districts, water management organizations, watershed districts and certain joint powers boards.

<http://www.bwsr.state.mn.us/grants/apply/index.html>.

Contact: Ryan Hughes, ryan.hughes@state.mn.us (218) 723-4923

MN DNR Conservation Partners Legacy Grant Program

Funding from the Minnesota Outdoor Heritage Fund for work to enhance, restore, or protect forests, wetlands... for fish, game, or wildlife. Funded by Clean Water, Land and Legacy Amendment. Local, regional, state and national non-profit organizations, including government entities, may apply.

<http://www.dnr.state.mn.us/grants/habitat/cpl>

Contact: Leslie Tannahill, LSCPgrants.DNR@state.mn.us (651) 259-5241

Minnesota's Lake Superior Coastal Program

Annual, competitive, federal-matching grant funds for projects that address coastal issues. Grants are reviewed by the Governor's Council on Minnesota's Coastal Program. Funded by National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), Office of Ocean and Coastal Resource Management (OCRM). Eligible applicants: local units of government, state agencies, nonprofits, school districts, conservation districts, and others.

<http://www.dnr.state.mn.us/waters/lakesuperior/grants.html>

Deadline: mid-November, 2011

Contact: Karla Sundberg, karla.sundberg@state.mn.us (218) 834-1447

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EDGE OF THE KNIFE

Newsletter of the Knife River Watershed and all its inhabitants

Knife River Implementation Plan Nears Completion

The document that will direct conservation work along the Knife River for years to come has reached its final stages. The Knife River Implementation Plan for Turbidity is due to be completed by year's end. The South St. Louis SWCD is shepherding it through the final stages, including community involvement.

A copy of the current draft Implementation Plan (in pdf format) is available for review on the SWCD website: www.southstlouisswcd.org/docs/draft_knife_implementation_plan.pdf

The Implementation Plan takes off where the Knife's Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) Study for Turbidity ended. It begins by reviewing the main turbidity goals for the Knife, and the scientific data behind them. The core of the Implementation Plan, however, is in action. After articulating goals and objectives, the plan gets into particular activities to undertake, called Best Management Practices (BMPs).

Action items in the Implementation Plan fall under five main categories, for instance Upland Erosion Control Activities. From there, a host of actions follows: gully stabilization; stormwater inventory & training; and wetland enhancement. For each of these activities, particu-

lar locations may deserve priority. Others are more applicable for the entire watershed.

The Implementation Plan includes a budget for each action item, so that agencies involved in overseeing area lands and waters can use the Plan to help attain funding to get these projects done.

You are invited to help prioritize activities

In October, we will hold two important meetings regarding this Plan (see Invitation below).

First, we'll hold a late-afternoon Implementation Plan Review Session to introduce the revised Implementation Plan. We'll also introduce the newly formed Advocates of the Knife River Watershed, and discuss future plans for the Knife River Steering Committee.

Two weeks later, we'll reconvene in the evening to get community input on prioritizing activities in the watershed. The Priority Party will be a time when the science of data collection meets the common sense of Knife residents. We will look at the watershed as a whole, and determine which projects should receive immediate attention and funding.

We hope to see you at both meetings. To request a printed version of the Implementation Plan, email or call: info@southstlouisswcd.org, 218-723-4867.

Calling all Agency Workers & Watershed Dwellers:

Please Attend Important Meetings for the Knife's Future

Implementation Plan Review Session

Wednesday, October 12, 3-5 pm
Two Harbors Community Center

With facilitator Lori Rothstein of UM Extension

Meet the new citizens' group:
Advocates for the Knife River Watershed

Implementation Priority Party!

Wednesday, October 26, 7-9 pm
Duluth Town Hall

From the Plan, help prioritize future activities within the watershed.

Questions about either meeting?
Call Andrew Slade, 218-727-0800.

School kids take the lead in Shilhon conservation planting

In late May, just as soon as the ground thawed, about 40 sixth graders labored to plant 500 trees in a recently logged parcel of County land along Shilhon Road. Their good work was aided by many area adults and documented by crews from local TV stations and newspapers. The students came from North Shore Community School, a charter school in Duluth Township, as part of a day-long community service project. They were joined by members of newly renamed Advocates of



the Knife River Watershed, St. Louis County Land Department employees, and others. (See “Advocating for the Knife. . .”, page 3)

The planting day was organized by the South St. Louis Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD) and St. Louis

County’s Land Department. With a legacy grant* from the Board of Soil & Water Resources, the SWCD was able to provide fencing to protect the young trees from browsing deer and snowshoe hare. Long-lived species—white pine, red pine and northern white cedar—were selected and purchased by the Land Department from Itasca Greenhouse.

The site was harvested last winter by contract loggers working for St. Louis County. The main species harvested were aspen and balsam fir, trees that were over-mature and in decline due to various insect and disease stresses, most notably spruce bud worm. The County manages over 895,000 acres, of which 620,000 are forested. Harvesting aspen and other short-lived tree species before they get too old allows for successful regeneration of the site, produces revenue for local government and schools, and is a primary goal of the County’s management plan.

The Shilhon Road area sits adjacent to the Knife River and its well established hiking trail. A buffer of trees was left unharvested along the river to protect its water quality. Such protective actions are all part of the Knife River Implementation Plan for Turbidity. This plan will take goals set in the TMDL study, and articulate them as

actions and practices to undertake in coming years. (See “You’re Invited: Priority Party” front page).

Users of the Knife River Hiking Trail will notice that regeneration—both natural and artificial—has already begun. As of early August, aspen saplings (which reproduce by root suckering) were over four feet tall, with an estimated 34,000 stems per acre. Maple and birch will naturally seed and stump sprout. Large red pine, white pine, cedar, and white spruce were spared from the harvest on site, to contribute toward natural regeneration. And in addition to the volunteer efforts on site, the County planted 40,000 white spruce and 3,000 white pine.

Thanks to all—young, old, volunteer and professional—for your concerted efforts along the Knife. Kudos to Scott Jaspersen and Larry Furo, for their extra fencing efforts.

*This is money from the Clean Water, Land and Legacy Amendment passed by Minnesotans in 2008.



Notes to neighbors:

Help bud cap this Fall at Shilhon, to protect the unfenced white pine from deer and hare browse. “Bud capping” is not popping open a frosty Budweiser. It is the simple but effective process of stapling paper around the end bud, to prevent wildlife from chewing it. Look for a call to action in mid-October. To sign-up, contact: Leo Babeu, lepat@lakenet.com, 834-2247 or Tim Rutka, rutka@stlouiscountymn.gov, 625-3713.

Get free fencing for white cedar, white pine and tamarack — while supply lasts! South St. Louis SWCD has extra 6-foot metal fencing, 4’ posts, 2’ lengths of rebar (stakes) and wire. Contact: kate.kubiak@southstlouisswcd.org, 723-4946.

Advocating for the Knife River? It’s as easy as pie!

Meet some Advocates for the Knife River Watershed:

Eric, an EPA scientist from Hawk Hill Road with a wind turbine and land on both sides of the main branch of the Knife.

Peg, a teacher who lives right above the river in the village of Knife River.

Bob, a third-generation landowner in the Westover area who lives in Cloquet.

These are just some of the 20 people who have come together in the last year to share their love and concern for the Knife River watershed. With help from the Minnesota Environmental Partnership (MEP), residents and landowners of the Knife River watershed have joined to be the critical citizen link with government agencies working on the river.

The pies that bind

It started with neighborhood meetings of four or five people over pie and coffee. With help from Minnesota Waters and a grant from the Joyce Foundation, a loose-knit group of citizens began monthly meetings, created a mission statement and adopted a group name: “Advocates for the Knife River Watershed.”

The pie tradition continues; every meeting involves at least one pie from a local bakery or restaurant. Andrew Slade, project manager from MEP, has taken requests for next month’s pie flavor.

Next steps

MEP will support the group for at least one more year, helping the Advocates to:

- Engage in the Total Maximum Daily Load implementation plan,
- Incorporate as a nonprofit, and
- Become a local voice in watershed resource planning.

The Advocates meet monthly at different locations in the area, such as Duluth Town Hall, the Knife River Rec Center, and the Felix School on Valley Road. If you would like to be involved, contact Andrew of Minnesota Environmental Partnership at (218) 727-0800 or email andrewslade@mepartnership.org.



Changes ahead for Knife River Stewardship Committee?

Since the 1990s, the Knife River Stewardship Committee has brought together state, county and local resource managers in the Knife River watershed to collaborate on projects involving the river. Citizen groups such as Trout Unlimited and the Izaak Walton League have also participated. Paul Sandstrom of the Natural Resources Conservation Service, served as chair and head cheerleader for the group since its inception. Paul retired this summer.

The Stewardship Committee oversaw the creation of the Knife River Total Maximum Daily Load study. Representatives of Lake and St. Louis county land departments and the Minnesota DNR helped the staff of South St. Louis SWCD identify the sources of turbidity and the forestry, education, and road maintenance practices that will reduce it. The Stewardship Committee has also recently reviewed beaver management plans and riparian management zone policies.

With Paul’s departure and the growing presence of the Advocates for the Knife River Watershed citizen group, the role of the Knife River Stewardship Committee may evolve. We will seek input and ideas at the upcoming Review Session (see Invitation, front page).

Many faces of the Knife

South St. Louis SWCD interviewed three Knife River landowners who received free tree planting this past summer. View photos and read the article “Tree planting project reveals the many faces of the Knife River” on the SWCD webpage. www.southstlouisswcd.org/knife_river.html