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Contact Robb Leer 612.701.0608

## Central Minnesotans encouraged to be heard about water cleanup efforts

*Sauk River Watershed District officials hungry for citizen input about two projects being funded with tax-payer dollars.*

**SAUK CENTRE, MN. (March 2, 2011)** – Your environment. Your government. Your money.

These are the three legs beneath the many projects design to improve water quality throughout the state.

Now, let's add one more: Your voice.

Starting at 7:45 p.m. on March 15, citizens who live and work within central Minnesota's Sauk River Watershed District (SRWD) are encouraged to make their voices heard as they learn about two environmental protection efforts that use a combined \$754,000 in mostly taxpayer dollars:

***Sauk River Stormwater Runoff Reduction and Riparian Restoration Clean Water Fund Project.***

**Funding source:** Minnesota Board of Water and Soil Resources.

**Purpose:** Providing financial and technical assistance to landowners to implement stormwater management and land-use conservation practices.

**Cost:** \$544,111, with \$435,289 in grant money and \$108,822 in matching money and in-kind contributions from state and local agencies, organizations and landowners.

**Technical Assistance Clean Water Fund Project for the Mississippi River Basin Initiative.**

**Funding source:** Minnesota Board of Water and Soil Resources.

**Purpose:** Providing technical assistance to local landowners to implement conservation practices using Federal Mississippi River Basin Initiative funding.

**Cost:** \$210,526, \$168,421 being in grant money and \$42,105 in matching money and in-kind contributions from state and local agencies and organizations.

“Democracy is more than about voting every two or four years,” said SRWD Administrator Holly Kovarik. “Not only do we want residents to know what the money is being spent on and how the water we depend on benefits, but it’s the feedback from those most affected that helps us prioritize the funding allocations based on what the people believe is most important.”

In 2008, Minnesotans passed the Legacy Amendment to the state Constitution, and the fruits of that vote – financed by 0.375-cent sales tax increase -- are helping fund the two projects being discussed March 15 and many others. (To learn more, visit [www.legacy.leg.mn](http://www.legacy.leg.mn) .)

For more information about projects financed through the Clean Water Fund (which receiving 33 percent of Legacy Amendment money), visit <http://www.bwsr.state.mn.us/cleanwaterfund/stories>. Visitors to the site can track how tax dollars are being spent as projects move along.

“The voters decided they were willing to pay more to protect Minnesota’s environment, and we are grateful for that landmark event at the ballot box,” Kovarik said. “But public participation should not stop there. If you care about how that money – your money – is being spent, it is vital to attend hearings such as the one on March 15<sup>th</sup>.”

The March 15 hearing will be held at the SRWD headquarters at 524 4<sup>th</sup> Street in downtown Sauk Centre. For more information, call 320-352-2231.

“Simply put,” Kovarik added, “we need you, each and every one of you, to help us direct the money toward projects that will impact the lives and economic well-being of central Minnesotans for decades to come.”

**About the Sauk River Watershed District:**

As a local government body, the SRWD was formed in 1982 and extends from within 3 miles of Alexandria at the outlet of Osakis Lake flowing south to the Mississippi River near St. Cloud. The district’s namesake, the Sauk River, meanders for 120 miles. The SRWD District marks its 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary in service to citizens on July 25, 2011. Members of its Board of Managers are appointed to three-year terms by commissioners from five counties to represent the interests of Douglas, Meeker, Pope, Stearns and Todd counties. For more about the SRWD, visit [www.srwdmn.org](http://www.srwdmn.org) or call 1-320-352-2231.