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Contact Robb Leer 612.701.0608

Spring meltdown has waterway quality detectives poised to pounce

Armed with precision and urgency, a team from Sauk River Watershed District has a limited window of time to collect vital data about the region's creeks, rivers and lakes.

SAUK CENTRE, MINN. (March 21, 2011) – Protectors of creeks, rivers and lakes in central Minnesota are scrutinizing the unfolding spring meltdown to pinpoint the right time to start the clock and take stock of water quality throughout the region.

This annual springtime ritual by the Sauk River Watershed District's (SRWD) team of aquatic detectives is crucial in making sure residents, farmers and other business people understand the state of the water around and below them.

Once there is sufficient waterway thawing, samples can be taken to collect temperature and oxygen readings as well as check for levels of pollutants from land runoff and erosion.

"We need to make sure our waterways are meeting state water quality standards," said Heather Lehmkuhl, the SRWD's Monitoring Coordinator. "This information allows all of us – especially landowners – to better understand the status of this life-giving natural resource and determine what needs to be done to improve its quality throughout the region."

There are 28 monitoring sites to be visited, starting with the headwaters of the Sauk River at Lake Osakis and reaching as far south as Eden Valley. The Sauk River itself converges with the Mississippi River at St. Cloud.

"The more we can learn about the environment, the more we can assist landowners," said Lehmkuhl, a native of Wadena and a St. Cloud State University graduate. "It took a long time to get our waterways impaired. What we learn in this critical monitoring timeframe will allow us to educate everyone on how to implement the waterways' cleanup."

For more about how the SRWD team collects its information, visit: <http://bit.ly/frltEm> .

For general monitoring information visit SRWD website at www.srwdmn.org

About the Sauk River Watershed District:

As a local government body, the SRWD was formed in 1986 and extends from six miles west of Osakis flowing south to the Mississippi River near St. Cloud. The district's namesake, the Sauk River, meanders for 120 miles. The District marks its 25th 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 or call 1-320-352-2231.

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