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Watershed District Tours Chain of Lakes

The Sauk River Watershed District (SRWD) Board of Managers, Citizen Advisory Board, and staff completed a tour of a portion of the Sauk River Chain of Lakes on Monday, July 26th. The tour departed from Lions Park in Cold Spring. The SRWD conducted this tour in conjunction with their regular board meeting. The SRWD Board meets monthly, typically the third Tuesday of each month, at the Sauk River Watershed District Office in Sauk Centre, MN. However to accommodate board members schedules, this meeting was conducted at another location within the watershed. The intention is to have similar tours or workshops with the board to show them hands on the various issues throughout the watershed. This is the first of such types of tours.

The Sauk River Chain of Lakes Association volunteered their time and pontoons to provide the transportation needed. A special thank you to: Jim Egan, Nita LeBlanc, Neil Cook, Rod Ogreszovich, and Denis Torborg. The SRWD has a long history of partnering with the Sauk River Chain of Lakes Association.

The evening included discussion on shoreline restorations, rain gardens, aquatic insects that can tell you the quality of water, algae, and the status of the study on the chain of lakes that will highlight the pollution issues.

There were two special guest speakers from the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency including Greg Van Eckhout (Area Project Manager from the Braiderd Office) and Matt Lindon (Aquatic Plant Specialist from the St. Paul Office). Greg gave an update on the status of the lake study and Matt discussed the various types of algae especially blue green algae affecting the chain of lakes. SRWD staff presented information on the restoration activities conducted, monitoring efforts and equipment.

It is important to note that the water quality has improved considerably since the late 1980's as a result of numerous projects that have been implemented. However, many of the lakes within the chain of lakes do not meet the water quality standards set by the state of Minnesota.

The SRWD is currently working with the MPCA on the Total Maximum Daily Load study (TMDL) to determine the issues that will need to be addressed and the amount of pollutants a water body can handle and still safely meet water quality standards. This study and the final report will need to be approved by MPCA and eventually by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). Once this happens, the study and report will be shared with the public through hearings and informational meetings. In addition it will also go out for public comment before it is sent for final approval to the EPA. During this process it will be very important to hear feed back from the public. The public is encouraged watch for public notice periods on these studies when they are released.

The chain of lakes is impaired currently for excessive nutrients so efforts will be focused on reducing them.

For more information please contact the Sauk River Watershed District at 320-352-2231 or visit our website at www.srwdmn.org.

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