



For Immediate Release

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Central Minnesotans Inundated in learning opportunities about water

Sauk River Watershed District workshops are more numerous and better attended than ever.

SAUK CENTRE, MN. (February 24, 2011) – Water. Five letters, three molecules. And because of it, we are one.

It's no wonder that born and raised central Minnesotan Adam Hjelm is so passionate and relentless in protecting water from harm throughout the region of central Minnesota where he grew up – on a lake, of course.

Hjelm, the Sauk River Watershed District's outreach coordinator, has in just three years turned this devotion to clean water into a rapidly growing 12-month calendar of programs that engages thousands of citizens in classroom settings and in hands-on opportunities aimed at making their communities better places to live, work and play.

“Our core education programs are exploding,” said Hjelm, noting that community education events at local schools have increased from 10 last year to 30 in 2011. “How the environment is impacting our daily lives is more on people's minds than it was three years ago, even three months ago.”

The work of the SRWD's outreach got a nod from their peers in 2009, when its SHORE program (Senior High Outdoor Resources Education) won a Program of the Year from the Minnesota Association of Watershed Districts. In particular, the association gave special mention to SHORE's innovation and how it was implemented.

The next round of free community education events is upon us, starting March 1 at Sauk Rapids Middle School, where the topic will be the environmental benefits of rain barrels.

“We not only explain what a rain barrel is,” said Hjelm, who was raised along the shores of Lake Osakis, “but we tell you what it does and how it improves water quality by capturing water runoff.”

Attendees will be offered the chance to purchase a rain barrel at cost (\$60) and be instructed on how to install them.

From there, topics during the spring calendar range from native plants, invasive species and rain gardens. Class locations include Long Prairie, Melrose, Sauk Rapids and Litchfield. For the full schedule, visit the SRWD’s website at www.srwdmn.org.

“It’s up to us, the residents of the watershed to make a difference,” Hjelm said. “It took 150 years to impair the waters, but it’s now up to us to clean them up.”

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 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 the 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. For more about community outreach, contact Adam Hjelm at adam@srwdmn.org or at 1-320-352-2231

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