

North St. Louis  
Soil & Water  
Conservation  
District

# 2019 Annual Activity Report

## A Year of Change

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[www.nslswcd.org](http://www.nslswcd.org)

[www.facebook.com/nslswcd](https://www.facebook.com/nslswcd)



The mission of the North St. Louis Soil and Water Conservation District is to encourage sustainable use of our natural resources by engaging people in soil and water conservation in northern St. Louis County.

## Where we were...

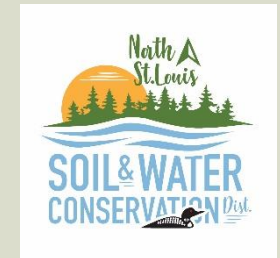
North St. Louis Soil and Water Conservation District has operated steadfastly with a goal to expand District programs as local demands required since reopening in 2015.



## Where we are.

North St. Louis Soil and Water Conservation District set goals in 2018 to provide services, spread the message, and expand our capacity, by the end of 2019 we had...

- 5.4 full time equivalent employees and 2 seasonal staff.
- \$975,015 revenues and \$959,926 expenses
- Secured 4 months of operating reserves
- New programming across the District
- Moved to a new spacious office with room to grow!
- Adopted a new logo



## In the Works for 2020

### AIS Prevention Program

- Expand watercraft inspection program to 12 lakes
- Recruit more resorts to conduct watercraft inspections at their access
- Implement several Community Based Social Marketing initiatives

### Resource Conservation

- Cost share with landowners to restore/stabilize 425 feet of shoreline.
- Water quality sampling 9 stream sites and 7 lake sites in the St. Louis River Watershed
- Supervise replacement of a culvert that is a barrier to fish passage on the Bulldog Hanson Creek, a trout stream in the Little Fork River Watershed, near Orr.
- 'Sediment Fingerprinting' project with USGS and MPCA, to determine sources of sediment pollution in the Little Fork River Watershed.

### Forestry

- 11 planned projects of pine thinning, spruce budworm cleanup, young forest habitat improvement, and terrestrial invasive species (TIS) removal on public lands around the District.
- Monitor treated areas and conduct outreach about TIS.
- Contract for brush sawing for conifer habitat enhancement on 4 sites in the St. Louis River Corridor

### Outreach and Education

- Reach larger and broader audiences with conservation education
- Begin the planning process for a St. Louis River Watershed Plan
- Host 'We Are Water MN' exhibit at the Minnesota Discovery Center in Chisholm from April 16- June 15, 2020.



# Aquatic Invasive Species Prevention Program

19,484 watercraft inspections and 241 decontaminations were conducted in 2019 on **20** public accesses and **12** private accesses on Burntside, Ely, Fall, Gilbert, Moose, Pelican, Shagawa, Snowbank and Vermilion Lakes. This program educates boaters on aquatic invasive species (AIS) and how to prevent their spread as watercraft inspections and decontaminations are conducted. The program would not be possible without the partnership of lake associations, municipalities, other SWCDs and funding from the County.

## Public Access Inspection

- **19,484** watercraft inspections conducted
- **241** watercrafts decontaminated
- **12,010** inspector hours worked
- Employed **>30** seasonal workers
- Utilized boat traffic data to efficiently staff inspectors - averaging **1.6** inspections/hour
- Data analysis suggests AIS infestation risks at each access. This information helps determine where and when to staff inspectors and decontamination units
- 2020 plans include expanding AIS prevention to the White Iron Chain of Lakes, Kabetogama Lake and Crane Lake



Spiny Waterflea



Eurasian Water Milfoil



Curly Leaf Pondweed

## Private Access Inspections

- **2,273** watercraft inspections
- **10** resort participants on Lake Vermilion
- **2** resort participants on Pelican Lake
- Risk analysis suggests resort visitors may pose a higher risk in introducing AIS to lakes.



Rusty Crayfish



Zebra Mussels



Decontamination of a Watercraft



AIS Outreach event



# Forestry Services

**Working with private landowners to plan for the next generation of forested lands**  
**Let us help you determine options to maximize your woodlands.**

The District continues to partner with the NRCS to plan and implement EQIP projects related to forestry. This partnership has been important in order to make use of additional funds reserved for the Mesabi region of the Superior National Forest, and the Lake Superior watershed.

In 2018 the District received a multiyear USDA-NRCS grant to support forestry projects in the Arrowhead region of Minnesota. Existing SWCD Forestry staff are able to assist landowners applying for EQIP funds, and implementing funding projects. The District's Farm Bill Forester works directly with landowners, and provides support to the other SWCD Foresters, specifically with navigating the NRCS EQIP System.



**4** spruce budworm damaged clean-up projects completed on **45** acres

## Stewardship Plans

Free site visits are offered to all landowners, with a focus on those owning small acreage of wooded lands.

**8** landowners participated  
**628** acres enrolled in programs

## Weed Management for Wildlife

A 2019 DNR Conservation Partners Legacy grant allowed a contractor to remove terrestrial invasive species on public lands

### Removed and Treated:

terrestrial invasive species at **8** wildlife management areas totaling **~200** acres and **~70** miles of walking trails

## Annual Tree Sale

Orders take place the beginning of January each year, with pickup dates in May. In 2019, over **25** types of trees and shrubs were offered.

A total of **11,800** trees were planted.

In 2019, unsold trees were donated to the Laurentian Environmental Learning Center and to Camp Esquagama.

Orders are underway for the 2020 planting season. In addition to trees, we are offering native plants for pollinators, shoreland and woodland shade. Order at [www.nslswcd.org](http://www.nslswcd.org).

North St. Louis SWCD Annual Activity Report



# Outreach and Education

New and engaging programs to reach school age children and adults are available through our community conservationist.

- Partnered with **5** local organizations including 4-H to provide plant raised bed gardens in Virginia and Chisholm via a competitive grant from the National Association of Conservation Districts. Fruit trees will be planted in 2020.
- Coordinated the 2019 Area III Envirothon for high schoolers at the Cloquet Forestry Center.
- Conducted youth programs on soil health, pollinators, environmental careers, water quality, terrestrial and aquatic invasive species, forest health, and urban agriculture.
- Conducted adult workshops and events on watersheds, loons, wild rice, rainwater harvesting, composting, pollinators and private septic and well maintenance.

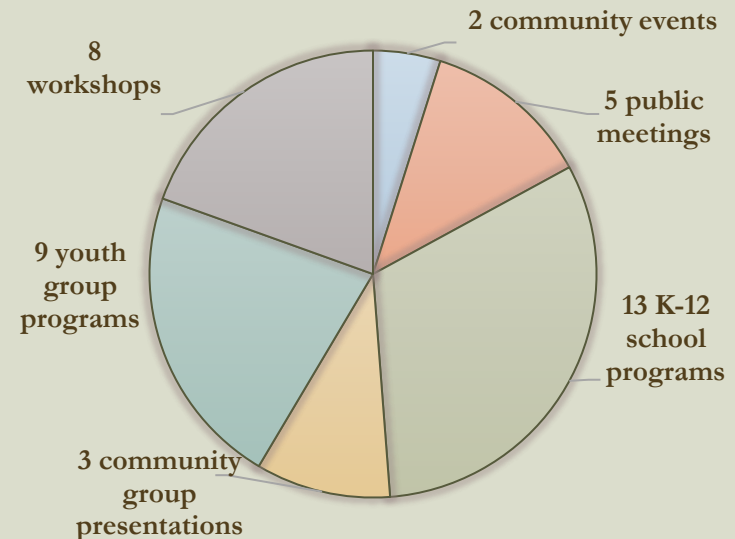
## Statistics

802 students reached

51 teachers supported

8 schools visited

23 youth programs conducted



Watershed Walk



Education event at a local school



4H soil health program



Area III Envirothon 1st Place Team



Poster Contest Winners

# Public Participation & Data Collection

## Watershed Restoration and Protection Strategies (WRAPS)

- Conducted storm drain stenciling in Ely in cooperation with youth from Ely Community Resources and the group 'Keep Ely Clean'.
- Coordinated with the U of M Water Resources Center to offer free well testing through the Minnesota Department of Health by attending a private septic and well workshop. There were **75** attendees.
- 20 interested people attended a research update meeting on Myrtle Lake near Orr.
- **5** public meetings were held on water quality in different watersheds featuring a presenter from the MN DNR and a citizen loon monitor.
- Monitored 1 site on the Pelican River in the Vermilion River Watershed

WRAPS are active in the Cloquet, Little Fork, St. Louis, Rainy River Headwaters and Vermilion River watersheds through MPCA contracts.



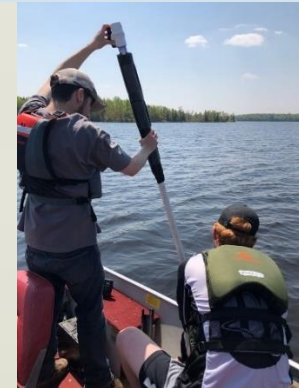
Storm drain stenciling in Ely



Septic and Well Workshop



Cloquet River Float Presentation



Integrated water Sampling



Water clarity with secchi

## Surface Water Assessment Grants (SWAG)

To determine the health of lakes and streams the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency's provided funding to North St. Louis SWCD and partners to collect water quality data on lakes and streams in 2019 in the Little Fork River and St. Louis River Watersheds.

### Sampled Water From

**8** stream sites in Little Fork Watershed

**9** stream sites in St. Louis River Watershed

**7** lake sites in St. Louis River Watershed

**3** volunteers assisted



# Resource Conservation

## BWSR State Cost-Share Program

North St. Louis SWCD receives funding from the State of Minnesota's Board of Water and Soil Resources to help landowners implement projects that control erosion and improve water quality.

- After visiting the landowner on-site, our resource conservationist and Technical Service Area III's engineers develop a plan to control erosion.
- Landowners apply to the District Board for cost share funding. When multiple projects are proposed at the same time, ranking score determines priority. Limited funds are available.

### Completed in 2019

**2** shoreline protection projects

**3** runoff control projects

**225** linear feet of shoreline  
was stabilized

### Pollution Prevented

**34.02** tons of soil from eroding

**19.09** pounds of phosphorus  
from entering the water annually



Shoreline protection project Before & After

## Orr Area Trout Stream Improvements

A 2018 DNR Conservation Partners Legacy grant enabled the District to contract out trout habitat work on the Lost River system and Fawn Creek, near Orr.

A Conservation Corps of Minnesota & Iowa crew was hired to plant 1,600 trees on an abandoned beaver meadow adjacent to Fawn Creek in 2019. The trees planted will eventually provide shade to the stream to help keep cool water temperatures, a necessity for brook trout.

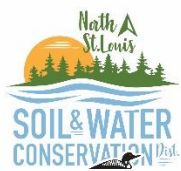
In 2020, a contractor is scheduled to replace an undersized culvert on the Bulldog Hansen Creek that is a barrier to fish passage with this funding.

## Wetland Conservation

The **Minnesota Wetland Conservation Act** is a state regulatory provision that aims to both increase and achieve no net loss to the quantity, quality, and biological diversity of Minnesota's wetlands. When wetland impacts must occur, the value of those wetlands must be replaced.

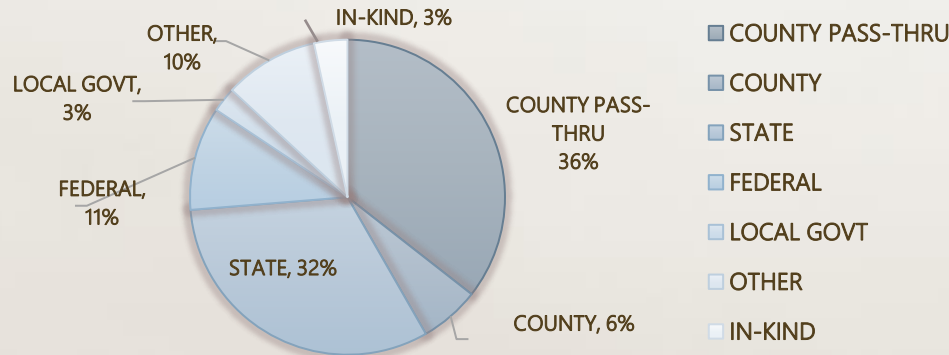
North St. Louis SWCD has experienced staff available to provide technical assistance to both public and private entities regarding wetlands regulations.

North St. Louis SWCD Annual Activity Report



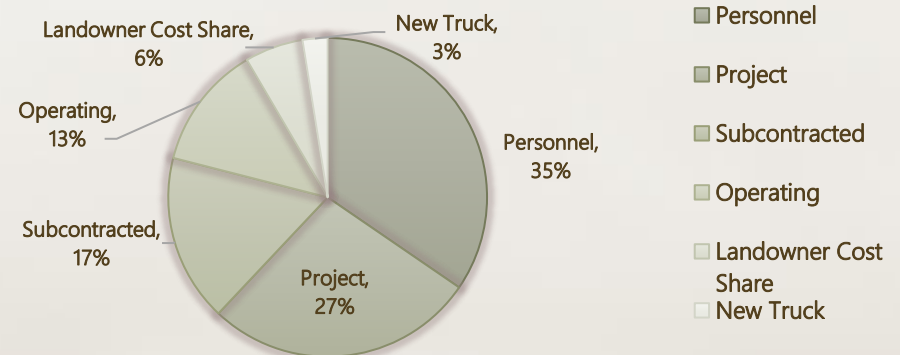
# Financial Summary

## 2019 SWCD Revenue



Revenue Source	Amount	Percentage
COUNTY PASS-THRU	\$346,725	36%
COUNTY	\$60,000	6%
STATE	\$311,992	32%
FEDERAL	\$103,635	11%
LOCAL GOVT	\$24,823	3%
OTHER	\$94,501	10%
IN-KIND	\$33,339	3%
Total	\$975,015	100%

## 2019 SWCD Expenses



Expense type	Cost	Percentage
Personnel	\$331,763	35%
Project	\$263,562	27%
Subcontracted	\$162,842	17%
Operating	\$120,558	13%
Landowner Cost Share	\$56,878	6%
New Truck	\$24,323	3%
Total	\$959,926	100%

## North St. Louis Soil and Water Conservation District

### Staff

Anita Provinzino- **District Administrator**  
anita@nslswcd.org

Becca Reiss- **Community Conservationist**  
becca@nslswcd.org

Beth Kleinke- **Forester**  
bethk@southstlouisswcd.org

Natalya Walker- **AIS Program Coordinator**  
natalya@nslswcd.org

Phil Norvitch- **Resource Conservationist**  
phil@nslswcd.org

Roger Marks- **Regional Farm Bill Forester**  
roger@nslswcd.org

### Board of Supervisors

**District 1**  
Peggy Pearson, Chair

**District 2**  
Gary Rantala, Vice-Chair

**District 3**  
Frank Modich, Supervisor

**District 4**  
Charles Bainter, Treasurer

**District 5**  
Mark Peterson, Secretary

### Funders & Partners

St. Louis County  
MN Board of Water and Soil Resources  
MN Department of Natural Resources  
MN Pollution Control Agency  
Natural Resources Conservation Service  
University of MN Extension  
University of MN NRRI  
Technical Service Area 3 Engineers  
National Association of Conservation Districts  
Friends of the Olcott Greenhouse  
MN Humanities Center

Carlton, Cook, Itasca, Koochiching, Lake & South St. Louis SWCDs  
Fayal Township  
Cities of Ely, Gilbert, Virginia  
Wildlife Forever  
Burntside Lake Association  
Pelican Lakeshore Owners Association  
Vermilion Lake Association

