Protecting water quality, recreation, and wildlife by helping landowners and local government manage natural resources

1318 McKay Dr. NE Suite 300
Ham Lake, MN 55304
Ph: 763-434-2030 www.AnokaSWCD.org
The Anoka Conservation District (ACD) was established in 1946. The mission of ACD is to:

"Conserve and enhance the natural resources of Anoka County. We do this by:

- informing and assisting landowners and local government in natural resource management,
- promoting stewardship practices for soil and water conservation, and
- conducting research and monitoring."

Through the years, as the character of Anoka County changed, so did the ACD. We now offer a wide variety of services and are involved in all areas of natural resource management in the county.

The ACD Board of Supervisors is composed of five elected officials serving four year terms. They determine the direction of the District and oversee its operations.

- Chair - Mary Jo Truchon - Term ends Dec. 31, 2014
- Vice Chair - Jim Lindahl - Term ends Dec. 31, 2016
- Treasurer - Vici Nass - Term ends Dec. 31, 2016
- Member - Karla Komec - Term ends Dec. 31, 2016
- Member - Karl Tinglestad - Term ends Dec. 31, 2014

Daily activities are attended to by staff including:

- District Manager - Chris Lord - (763) 434-2030 ext. 13
- Administrative Assistant - Kathy Berkness - ext. 10
- Wetland Specialist - Aaron Diehl - ext. 14
- Water Resource Specialist - Jamie Schurbon - ext. 12
- Conservation Specialist - Nate Zwonitzer - ext. 11
- Water Resource Technician - Mitch Haustein - ext. 15
- Landscape Restoration Specialist - Andy Schilling

E-mail: first-name.last-name@AnokaSWCD.org

Public Expectations

The public expects safe and plentiful drinking water, clean lakes and streams, good fishing and hunting, and plenty of opportunities to enjoy nature. Soil and Water Conservation Districts are the only statewide form of government that works with private landowners to implement projects to meet these expectations. 78% of natural resources are found on private lands, so this approach is critical to our long term quality of life.

Conservation districts are known nationwide as the most efficient way for improving natural resource quality, and are the only local conservation delivery system that covers the entire state.
Benefits

All Anoka Conservation District programs address one or more natural resource concerns. In order of priority they are:

**Water Quality:** Lakes, Streams and Groundwater

**Water Quantity:** Flood reduction and drinking water recharge

**Habitat:** Wildlife habitat and connectivity

**Wetlands:** Prevent loss and degradation

**Soils:** Maintain soil productivity through sound agricultural practices
Conservation News

Outstanding Conservationist—ACD selected the Martin Lake Association as the 2012 Anoka County Outstanding Conservationist. The Martin Lake Association proactively educates its membership on lake friendly stewardship practices and has provided financial support to install lakeshore restorations, rain gardens and rough fish barriers.

Lifetime in Conservation Award—ACD selected Lyle Bradley for the first Lifetime in Conservation Award ever awarded by the ACD. The award acknowledges individuals or organizations for consistent effort to promote natural resources conservation over several decades.

Rain Guardian™ Pretreatment Chamber—ACD staff invented pretreatment chambers to address many of the challenges associated with rain garden maintenance. ACD filed a patent in 2011 which was published in 2012. ACD is actively promoting its incorporation into the design of curb-cut rain gardens. The RainGuardian.biz website was created to feature this innovative product. In 2012 ACD developed a concrete version called the Turret for commercial applications. Target Corporation installed 46 Turrets at their Lino Lakes store. Proceeds from sales will help fund conservation initiatives in Anoka County.

Oak Glen Creek corridor stabilization efforts progressed in 2012 with the acquisition of all needed access and drainage easements and clearing of much of the downed trees by Conservation Corps members. The bidding process will occur in the spring of 2013 with installation following in late summer and fall. ACD secured $339,700 in Clean Water, Land, and Legacy Amendment Funds for this project. The City of Fridley and homeowners will provide the remainder of the funds needed.

Martin and Typo Lake carp barriers are planned for installation at up to four location along the chain of lakes in Linwood Township. The first round of bids came in too high and efforts are now underway to trim costs. ACD secured $217,268 in Clean Water Funds from the Lessard Sams Outdoor Heritage Council. The Sunrise River WMO and the Martin Lake Association have also allocated funds for the project.
Mississippi Riverbank Inventory was completed north of the Coon Rapids Dam extending upstream to the Anoka/Ramsey city boundary. Both sides of the 7.5 miles stretch of Mississippi River along with the lower reach of the Rum River were inventoried. Bank erosion severity, structure type and condition, and bank morphology were included in the inventory. A complete photo record of the entire riverbank was created and erosion volumes were estimated for the worst 13 sites, which if treated, could reduce sediment loads to the river by 5,220 tons per year.

Rum River Watershed Coalition between the conservation districts along the Rum River from Mille Lacs Lake to the Mississippi River has been formalized under ACD staff’s leadership and has received over $335,000 from MPCA for water monitoring, analysis, planning and outreach.

**Technical Assistance**

**Water Monitoring** - In order to manage water resources for consumption, recreation, and wildlife, ACD monitors water quality and quantity. Cities and water management organizations often contract for these services.

- 6 Electronic Stream Elevation Monitoring Wells
- 22 Lake Level Gauges
- 15 Deep Groundwater Observation Wells
- 18 Electronic Reference Wetland Shallow Wells
- 15 Rain Gauges Monitored by Volunteers, six automated
- 1 Fully Automated Monitoring Station at the Rum River Outlet
- 29 Lake Water Quality Monitoring Sites Since 2000
- 63 Stream Water Quality Monitoring Sites Since 2000
- 13 Stream Biomonitoring Sites

Volunteer Stream Biomonitoring - Macroinvertebrates (bugs living in the stream) are monitored in streams throughout Anoka County by area students. Classes from seven area schools were recruited to conduct the field sampling, identify the invertebrates and summarize findings. The entire process is integrated into the class curriculum and provides valuable data for resource managers. Analysis of what’s living in a stream provides insight into the quality of the water.

**Shoreland Inventory** - Since acquiring Global Positioning System capabilities, ACD staff have inventoried erosion, and landuse practices that degrade water quality on eleven lakes and three rivers/streams in the county.
Resource Investigation/Assessment - When routine monitoring identifies a problem, ACD responds by conducting a thorough analysis to determine the nature and extent of the problem and develop a plan to improve the resource. The most recent example of this was analysis of Lower Coon Creek for excess sediment.

Wetland Conservation Act - The ACD employs one full time Wetland Specialist whose state mandated responsibilities include serving on Technical Evaluation Panels, processing cease and desist orders, providing quality control reviews of wetland replacement plans and other projects that impact wetlands, and assisting project applicants by providing technical and regulatory interpretations to facilitate project review and permitting at the local level.

Site Planning and Design - ACD staff provide landowners with design assistance to restore some of the ecological function of their properties. These designs are targeted to attract wildlife, reduce erosion, conserve water, and improve water quality for the same types of projects listed above in the Cost Share section.

Comprehensive Planning - ACD provides assistance to local governments to develop local water plans and resource management plans. ACD leverages other funding sources to help reduce costs. In 2009-2012, ACD assisted the Upper Rum River, Lower Rum River and Sunrise River WMO’s with all or portions of their water resource management plans.

Annual Tree Program - Each year ACD sells approximately 15,000 tree and shrub seedlings to promote the production of wildlife habitat and to control erosion. More than twenty varieties are available, the majority of which are native to Anoka County. We also distribute prairie seed and information on shelterbelt and windbreak planning and are available to help landowners develop site-specific plans.

Public Education and Information Access
www.AnokaSWCD.org - In addition to providing information about ACD’s official policies, board actions, and financials, our website highlights the technical and financial assistance available to landowners as well as detailed information on all of the projects that we complete. An “Active Projects” section has been added to keep landowners up-to-date on projects that they are directly involved in. Our water resource database is accessible with a charting tool to enable users to gather and customize available resource information.

Videos for the Web - ACD staff has developed or is in the process of developing videos on the Rain Guardian pretreatment cham-
bers, cedar tree revetments, the Lower Rum River WMO, lakeshore buffers, the Metro LRP, stormwater infrastructure inspection services, rain garden installation, Mississippi riverbank inventory, and annual reports of ACD activities. Completed videos can all be found on www.AnokaSWCD.org and YouTube.

Educational Literature - ACD developed a series of six brochures covering Rain Gardens, Landscaping for Wildlife, Lakeshore Restoration, Watersmart, Riverbank Restoration, and Native Plants and gives presentations on related topics. The brochures are available under the technical assistance section of the AnokaSWCD.org website.

Financial Assistance

Engineering Assistance - Through a state funded program, ACD has access to funds to contract with consulting engineers to design non-point source pollution projects such as riverbank and lakeshore restoration, gully stabilization, and sediment basins.

Cost Share - ACD utilizes many funding sources to provide cost share funds to Anoka County residents and local governments including but not limited to USDA Wildlife Habitat Improvement Program, USDA Environmental Quality Incentive Program, DNR Conservation Partners Grants, State Cost Share funds, MPCA Clean Water Partnership Grants, MN Clean Water, Land and Legacy Fund, County Ag. Preserves Grants, and Watershed District and Watershed Management Organization cost share programs.

The most common projects include:

- Lakeshore stabilization and buffer restoration
- Streambank stabilization and buffer restoration
- Rain garden installation
- Wildlife habitat enhancement and invasive species control

Projects

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Consultations</th>
<th>Designs</th>
<th>Installations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lakeshore</td>
<td>93</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Streambank</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rain Gardens</td>
<td>91</td>
<td>113</td>
<td>93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Habitat Enhancement</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>302</strong></td>
<td><strong>225</strong></td>
<td><strong>177</strong></td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Streambank stabilization and restoration

In addition to the project shown here, which was completed in 2012, several riverbank stabilization projects have been completed, or are underway on Rice Creek, Rum River, Coon Creek, Mississippi River, Glen Creek, Pleasure Creek, Hardwood Creek, and Clearwater Creek.

Riverbanks can be stabilized by anchoring cedar trees into the soil along the toe of the slope. This is called a Cedar Tree Revetment.

Wildlife Habitat Enhancement

While many projects that ACD helps landowners install are designed to improve water quality, reduce flooding, or preserve soil resources, some installations are primarily done to enhance wildlife habitat. The listed projects have been complete or are underway.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>City</th>
<th># of Projects</th>
<th>Wetland (ac)</th>
<th>Savanna/Prairie (ac)</th>
<th>Forest (ac)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Nowthen</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>46.7</td>
<td>89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oak Grove</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>5.2</td>
<td>8.4</td>
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<tr>
<td>East Bethel</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>430.5</td>
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<tr>
<td>Fridley</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anoka</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>148</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Andover</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
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<td>St. Francis</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ramsey</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>12.6</td>
<td>253.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>43</strong></td>
<td><strong>15.5</strong></td>
<td><strong>202.4</strong></td>
<td><strong>942.6</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Anoka Nature Preserves woodland restoration is well underway. In the fall of 2012, ACD staff along with Anoka County Corrections Sentenced-to-Serve crews treated European Buckthorn and other invasive species with herbicide throughout 148 of the 200 acre property located in the northern tip of the City of Anoka on the Rum River. The process will continue through 2014 with removal of treated trees and shrubs, controlled burns, and additional herbicide applications. $99,400 in Outdoor Heritage Funds and $75,000 in Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund money were secured for this project.
**Rain Gardens**

Curb-cut residential rain gardens are an effective and attractive way to reduce stormwater runoff and improve water quality by collecting stormwater runoff from roads: fostering infiltration or evapotranspiration. This traps sediment and nutrients and keeps them out of lakes and streams. Rain gardens can be integrated into a home landscape, making them ideal for urban and suburban retrofit projects. Rain Gardens seldom have prolonged standing water and thus don’t create a safety hazard or mosquito habitat. In 2012 ACD assisted with the installation or enhancement of 10 residential and 27 commercial rain gardens.

**Pond Modifications**

Modification of stormwater conveyance through ponds to improve water quality treatment and flood control can be highly cost-effective. ACD identified a new pond opportunity and secured funding for Coon Creek Watershed District to install one in 2012. The pond is just north of Sand Creek on Xeon St. in Coon Rapids.
Subwatershed Retrofit Analysis

Installing practices to improve water quality is being done much more cost-effectively in Anoka County thanks to the watershed retrofit analysis program initiated in 2008. The process begins by identifying the minor-subwatersheds that contribute the most pollution to high priority water bodies. Those subwatersheds are analyzed to find opportunities to retrofit stormwater treatment. Modeling is used to determine how much can be accomplished with water quality treatment practices and cost/benefit analysis is used to select the most cost effective approaches. **ACD staff has identified 624 cost effective projects** during the completion of 7 analyses in Anoka county and assisted Isanti county with two analyses in the Rum River watershed.

Areas are precisely mapped and modeled using advanced computer applications to calculate how much stormwater turns into runoff and makes it untreated into our lakes and streams. Ideal project locations are then identified to maximize benefits while minimizing costs.
Funding

Funding Trends

Over the years ACD has drastically increased revenue generated from fees for services as well as grants from local sources. State funding is available in three general categories: conservation delivery funds that can be used to fund district operations, competitive grants that must be applied to state objectives, and state cost share that is passed through to landowners to install conservation practices. Conservation Delivery funds from the state have remained unchanged over the last decade. A substantial portion of revenue is passed through to other local units of government and to landowners as cost share for projects. The peak in 2011 was due to a $1,000,000 Clean Water Legacy Fund grant that was primarily passed on to other SWCD’s in the eleven county metro area.

The state provides approximately $21,000 per year of general funds toward the District’s operating budget of $400,000-$500,000.
Making Sense of the Dollars
Although governed by an elected board, conservation districts do not have levy authority and so must secure funds from many sources to maintain programs and services. The chart of 2012 revenues below begins to convey this but does not show the many sources that comprise each category for a total of 50 separate funding sources and grants. County grants alone is comprised of 6 grant projects. As part of this complex structure, ACD fosters partnerships with cities, water management entities, state and federal agencies, county departments, non-profits, and landowners.

Making Dollars of the Cents
Over the last decade, ACD leveraged 70¢ in federal, county and local funding for every 25¢ provided by the state. The county provides seven times what the state does to support general district operations. This is critical because many grants do not allow reimbursement of overhead expenses.

ACD uses general services funds and various grants to fund operations. The county provides substantially more than the state (see not under Making Dollars of the Cents). This is typical for counties with a large tax base.

*ACD purchased its office headquarters in 2010. The facility has six suites. ACD occupies one of those and rents out the others, providing a positive net cash flow.*