



WATER QUALITY SERVES IMPORTANT WATERSHED FUNCTION

For Wayne Goeken, testing water samples from major streams, rivers, and outlets throughout the Red River basin is an obligation he takes seriously.

For the last 13 years, Goeken has coordinated the Red River Watershed Management Board's water quality initiatives.

As trained scientists, each water sample collected goes through a variety of tests that provide information on turbidity, oxygen content, phosphorous and nitrate levels, and even measurements of coliform bacteria. The purpose of the testing is to better understand the relationship between land use and water quality which will lead to better land conservation practices and improved water quality.

Although the primary goals of the Red River Watershed Management Board focus on flood control, board president John Finney of Humboldt is quick to point out that water quality initiatives are also important. "Wayne and his team provide an important public service," says Finney. The Sand Hill River Watershed District administrator and Red River Watershed Management treasurer Dan Wilkens of Fertile agrees. "The board has a long tradition of funding water quality studies because our mission is all about the public good," says Wilkens.

Without good water quality monitoring, flood protection and mitiga-



River Watch Forum participants experience the "Sea Perch" program.

tion projects would not be possible because federal and state funding requires solid evidence of water quality. "Water quality and flood control really go hand-in-hand," says Goeken. "Good flood protection can significantly improve water quality."

Goeken recognizes that water monitoring potentially provides an even more important function: watershed education. Goeken, along with Danni Halvorson, and Evelyn Ashiamah-Finch see water

quality monitoring as an opportunity to teach high school students the importance of applied science. "Through the River Watch program, the science of water quality and conservation is made real by engaging students in hands-on science in their local watersheds," says Goeken.

The River Watch program, also funded with financial assistance provided by the Red River Watershed Management Board, is a watershed science program involv-

ing over 30 high schools monitoring over 150 river sites throughout the Red River basin. High school students engage in community and water science projects, including river clean-up projects, water quality monitoring, and watershed research projects. The culmination of the River Watch program is an annual forum held each March at the University of Minnesota-Crookston where all schools share their results about the health of waters in the Red River basin.

Whether it be funding flood control projects, water quality studies, or watershed education programs like River Watch, the Red River Watershed Management Board takes all three initiatives seriously. "It's our mission to be proactive in flood control, water quality, and watershed education," says Wilkens.

TEACHING THE SCIENCE OF WATER

DEDICATED HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS PARTICIPATE IN YEAR-LONG PROGRAM

For River Watch coordinator and director, Wayne Goeken, the rivers, streams, marshes, and lakes of the Red River valley is his ideal classroom. Since 1995, the River Watch program that Goeken now directs gets students out of the traditional brick walls of the high school laboratory and into the water.

River Watch incorporates watershed science as the context for developing critical thinking and leadership skills while emphasizing citizen engagement and water resources management. The result is more informed decisions and actions which foster sustainable and vibrant communities.

Donning hip waders in the summer, fall, and spring and snow shoes in the winter many high school students are learning about watershed science by participating in the River Watch program. Their task is to monitor the water quality of local lakes, rivers, and streams and measure the snow depth.

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WATERSHED DISTRICT DEVELOPMENTS

ROSEAU RIVER WD

The Roseau River WD reported on the Hay Creek/Norland Project. The Spruce Valley Corporation has halted construction on Phase 2 of the project until weather permits.

Signing of the Operation and Maintenance agreement for the Palmville Flood Damage Reduction & Fen Restoration Project is scheduled for May 4th. The agreement is between the District, Roseau County and the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources (DNR).

RED LAKE WD

The Red Lake WD reported on a proposed boundary change with the Sand Hill River Watershed District. A meeting was conducted to discuss the proposed change and following approval by both districts, a petition will be submitted to the Board of Water & Soil Resources (BWSR) for a boundary change. At the request of Beltrami County, the Red Lake WD has another boundary petition application pending which will remove approximately 2,200 acres which is presently in the District but will be transferred to the Mississippi Watershed.

WILD RICE WD

The Wild Rice WD reported on the Upper Becker Dam Enhancement Project. The Board of Managers decided to proceed with the revised project. The DNR has requested repayment of the \$660,000 that was submitted for the original project design. The District is currently working with local banks to secure a loan to repay the funding advance. The Board of Managers has submitted a Step 1 application to the Red River Watershed Management Board for consideration.

Teaching the Science of Water (continued)

"The information the students collect is shared with state agencies and helps officials make decisions on a variety of water issues and flood retention efforts," says Goeken. Thirty-seven high schools throughout Minnesota, North Dakota, and Manitoba participate in the program.

Each March, the students gather in Crookston to share their year-long work. The River Watch Forum is a fun way for students to celebrate what they have learned. Chuck Fritz, director of the International Water Institute believes that the River Watch program combines science education with leadership development and civic engagement. "These kids are doing important work on behalf of their communities."

EVENTS COMING UP

The next meeting of the RRWMB will be on Tuesday, May 17, 2011 at 9:30 a.m. at the Wild Rice Watershed District, 11 5th Avenue East, Ada, MN.

RRWMB MEETING HIGHLIGHTS

At it's regularly scheduled April meeting, the RRWMB:

- *Discussed the project prioritization process of the Red River Retention Authority (3RA) with Congressman Peterson.*
- *Received a report from Naomi Erickson, Administrator.*
- *Reviewed a proposal from the Basin Technical and Scientific Advisory Committee (BTSAC) of the 3RA and authorized a two-phased approach to investigate tile/subsurface drainage impacts with an estimated cost of \$60,000 to be shared equally with the Red River Joint Water Resource District.*
- *Received a report from Mark Meister, Public Information Officer.*
- *Received a report from Henry VanOffelen, Minnesota Center for Environmental Advocacy (MCEA) regarding the Technical and Scientific Advisory Committee's (TSAC) Report No. 14.*
- *Authorized a letter to the Red River Basin Flood Damage Reduction Work Group stating the RRWMB's opposition to TSAC Paper No. 14.*
- *Received a report from Ron Harnack, Project Coordinator.*

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