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City of Cottage Grove Receives MECA Award for Environmental Excellence!

The City of Cottage Grove has been awarded the Minnesota Erosion Control Associations' Environmental Excellence Award (MECA)! MECA is an organization comprised of contractors, suppliers, engineers and government agencies with a vision to protect the quality of Minnesota's soil and water natural resources. The MECA Award was given to Cottage Grove for completing two water quality pond improvement retrofit projects in 2011. Both projects involved local partnerships with the South Washington Watershed District (SWWD) and AmeriCorps; groups that share the City's vision of improving water quality, protecting groundwater resources, and enhancing natural resources through efforts like the construction of storm water improvement projects.

These projects are consistent with the water quality goals of both the City and the SWWD, the City financially partnered with the SWWD through the SWWD Coordinated Capital Improvement Program. This project was successfully completed in the fall of 2011 with all parties involved very pleased with the project outcome.

Pond ED-P8-9 located south of the East Central Ravine Park area includes a number of ravine segments separated by berms with cross culverts. The City identified that a number of these segments were unstable, downcutting into the ravine bottom and eroding around the existing pipes. This erosion was contributing a significant sediment load to the downstream stormwater conveyance system, including a sediment load contribution to the Mississippi River. To stabilize the eroded segments the City partnered with the SWWD and AmeriCorps to successfully implement the improvements.



Pond ED-P8-9 Improvements

The Pond C-P6 Improvements project, located within Pine Tree Valley Park, incorporated innovative water quality treatment and groundwater protection practices

into an existing dry pond. The water quality treatment practices included wet ponding areas discharging to a biofiltration swale designed to reduce pollutant loads to downstream wetlands and ultimately the Mississippi River. Our calculations estimate that the constructed water quality improvements will provide annual reductions in existing loads of approximately 75 pounds of Total Phosphorus and 40,000 pounds of Total Suspended Solids.



Pond C-6 improvements

The City designed erosion corrections that involved raising and widening the existing eroded channel bottom, adding Turf Reinforcement Mat (TRM) in the new channel for stability, and including a rock weir structure to reduce ravine flow velocities.

The City worked with staff from AmeriCorps, an independent federal agency whose mission is to improve the lives, strengthen communities and foster civic engagement through service and volunteering. They helped clear brush and trees from the ravine areas. "This is a great way to learn job skills you're not going to learn in school," explained Andrea Hefty, crew leader of the Conservation Corps. "Without this program I don't think I would have gotten into Graduate School." Andrea is pursuing her Master's in Entomology. The construction of the channel improvements and the stabilization of the site were then completed by a contractor. The assistance of AmeriCorp provided an enhancement to the environment and brought about financial savings to the City. The linked video below describes the ED-P8-9 Pond Improvements project in greater detail and highlights the partnership between AmeriCorps and the City.

After hearing the news, Cottage Grove's Mayor, Myron Bailey commented, "it is very rewarding that the City of Cottage Grove has been designated as the example of excellence in 2012 by a statewide organization that has been in place for 24 years to advance effective stormwater management and erosion control practices."

SWWD Board President Jack Lavold stated, "the SWWD is continuously seeking these partnerships to improve water resources locally that contributes to the larger watershed picture."

The City received the award at the Minnesota Erosion Control Association's Annual Conference on March 9th. To view a video of this project please click on the following link <http://vimeo.com/37248513> or go to www.cottage-grove.org.