

Go Wild! Bringing Birds and Wildlife to Woodlands, Farmlands and Big Backyards

What do woodpeckers, monarchs, fox and owls have to do with clean water? Coincidentally, the same native flowers, shrubs and trees that provide habitat for birds and wildlife also help to promote infiltration and reduce runoff pollution. Trees and native plants capture large quantities of rain and melting snow, which reduces erosion and runoff pollution. Their deep roots also help to stabilize crumbling stream banks and lakeshores and break up compacted soil in residential yards.

Last year, EMWREP used a variety of research techniques to help develop new outreach strategies for rural landowners in the east metro. The goal is to engage people living on 3-20 acres who do not typically qualify for agricultural assistance programs, but still have different land management concerns than their urban neighbors.

We began by surveying rural property owners at the Washington County Fair. The survey showed that people living on 5-10 acres were the most interested in conservation topics, especially creating wildlife habitat on their land. Additionally, landowners with property of all sizes expressed interest in controlling weeds and invasive species on their land.

During the fall, Alex Liebman, a research assistant with the CURA Program (Center for Urban and Regional Affairs) at the University



Barred owls nest in standing dead trees.

Continued on pg. 2

Blue Thumb Contractor Workshops on Raingardens and Maintenance

On Feb. 11, 15 and 17, EMWREP and other Blue Thumb partners organized a series of two classroom workshops and two hands-on workshops for contractors, subcontractors and municipal staff responsible for designing, installing and maintaining raingardens and bioretention areas. The workshops covered several important topics, including how to:

- Select an appropriate bioretention design based on soil borings, texturing and field infiltration tests;
- Pick the right inlet design for maintenance and functionality;



The first two workshops were in the classroom.

Continued on pg. 3

of Minnesota, helped to arrange two focus group sessions with rural landowners to get more in-depth feedback on topics introduced in the county fair survey. Participants in the Afton focus group were very concerned about invasive species, especially buckthorn, and expressed interest in any programs or assistance available to help them manage these invasives. They were also much more interested in managing their woods to improve wildlife habitat than in doing projects to protect the St. Croix River. People in the northern Washington County focus group were also interested in managing their land for wildlife. Unlike the folks from Afton, however, they were less familiar with assistance programs offered by EMWREP partners and stated a preference for working with a non-profit or sportsmen group like Ducks Unlimited rather than a government entity.

We are recommending that the EMWREP partnership work with local non-profits and sportsmen groups to promote habitat improvements in strategic locations where there is also a good potential to improve water quality.

Ideal locations include shorelines and streambanks, steep hillsides and bluffs, and natural drainage ways through farmfields and back lots.

In addition to our survey and focus group research, EMWREP worked with Cindy Ratzlaff, a University of Minnesota student whose family has been farming in southern Washington County for several decades, to conduct phone interviews with rural landowners who have participated in water quality projects in the past. The people who Cindy spoke with were very satisfied with how their projects went and cited design assistance and staff support as two components that most helped them get their projects done. These folks were also interested in creating wildlife habitat.

One major finding from both the focus groups and interviews will come as no surprise to those accustomed to working with rural landowners; people were incredibly hard to reach via mail, phone and e-mail and many were too busy or unwilling



to participate in interviews. For this reason, it will be important for EMWREP partners to develop one-on-one relationships with local landowners and to use existing social networks whenever possible. Working with non-profits and sportsmen groups to target their supporters will be another way to approach this challenge.

A collection of resources to help rural landowners “Go Wild!” can be found at www.mnwcd.org/gowild. Share your suggestions and ideas to help EMWREP further develop this new outreach plan at the next Water Consortium meeting, March 2, 2-4pm at the Washington County Government Center in Stillwater, Room 21.

EMWREP’s rural outreach kicks-off on March 22, 6-8pm at Gander Mountain in Woodbury with a presentation from Sharon Stiteler “Bird Chick” and WCD staff on local birds and resources for clean water and habitat projects.

Register for this free workshop with Tara Kline at 651-275-1136 x.28 or tara.kline@mnwcd.org. Learn more about Sharon at www.birdchick.com.

- Blue Thumb workshop
Continued from pg. 1
- Design bioretention cells and raingardens to reduce maintenance costs and increase the life of the projects;
 - Avoid the three most common maintenance problems;
 - Manage typical unwanted and aggressive weeds; and
 - Evaluate unmaintained raingardens, develop a maintenance plan and estimate time and material costs.

The hands-on workshops at Hedberg Landscaping's heated warehouse in Plymouth, allowed participants the opportunity to practice building an actual raingarden - in the middle of the winter! After using laser levels, construction staking and line levels to layout a raingarden, participants actually built the garden in a giant sandbox inside the warehouse.

This is the sixth year in a row that raingarden design courses have been offered to local contractors, first through Washington Conservation District and Rice Creek Watershed District, and later through EMWREP and Blue Thumb partners. For the past three years, we have also partnered with Minnesota Nursery and Landscape Association (MNLA) to increase the number of private contractors reached. We have had 75-100 people attend each of these workshops, each of whom goes on to install countless numbers of raingardens and bioretention areas in their communities. EMWREP is providing important leadership on education and training for raingardens and bioretention, both locally and statewide.



The second two workshops were held at Hedberg's indoor heated warehouse.

Upcoming Blue Thumb Events - Spring 2011

Wild Ones, 2011 Design with Nature Conference: Building Tomorrow's Heritage

Feb. 26, 8am-5pm at the St. Paul Student Center
Hear Rick Darke, Lynn Steiner, Stan Temple and Paula Westmoreland talk about rebuilding the ecological health of our yards, gardens and landscapes.
www.DesignWithNatureConference.org

Minneapolis Home and Garden Show

March 2-6 at the Minneapolis Convention Center
Blue Thumb will have a booth in the MN State Horticultural Society's room.
www.homeandgardenshow.com

Master Gardener's Spring Fling

March 12, 8am-noon at the Woodbury High School
Register: crabbysister4@gmail.com or 651-653-7371



EMWREP NEWS

- ✿ The EMWREP steering committee will be meeting on Wed., Feb. 23, 1-3pm at the Washington Conservation District.
- ✿ Find the 2011 Education Plan, reports and other materials at www.mnwcd.org/emwrep.
- ✿ Partner pages have also been updated at www.mnwcd.org/cleanwater.



- ✿ Read the latest news articles at the East Metro Water Blog. www.eastmetrowater.areavoices.com.

EMWREP Upcoming Presentations, Workshops and Events

Feb. 22, 7pm	West Lakeland Planning Commission Meeting
Feb. 28, 6-8pm	Blue Thumb workshop for Silver Lake residents North St. Paul Community Center Register: tara.kline@mnwcd.org or 651-275-1136 x.28
Mar. 2, 2-4pm	Washington Water Consortium Government Center, Room 21
Mar. 5 (Tent.)	Forest Lake Ice House Clean-up with boyscouts
Mar. 7, 1-2pm	Stillwater Reading Club
Mar. 7, 5-7pm	Lily Lake Open House - MSCWMO Family Means Center, Stillwater
Mar. 8, 6-8pm	Blue Thumb workshops for Oakdale and Woodbury Woodbury City Hall Register: tara.kline@mnwcd.org or 651-275-1136 x.28
Mar. 9, 7pm	Cottage Grove Env. Planning Commission Meeting
Mar. 22, 6-8pm	Bird Habitat for Clean Water Workshop with "Bird Chick" Gander Mountain in Woodbury Register: tara.kline@mnwcd.org or 651-275-1136 x.28
Apr. 2, 8:30-12pm	Woodbury Environmental Sustainability Workshop
Apr. 2, 12:30-2pm	Washington County Environmental Center Open House and Annual MS4 Public Meeting

Other Workshops, Training and Events

*Please share info about these learning opportunities with people you know.

For Citizens

Statewide Lakes and Rivers Conference Hosted by Minnesota Waters

April 28, 29 2011 - St Cloud Civic Center, St. Cloud MN
www.minnesotawaters.org/content/mark-your-calendar

Ramsey-Washington Metro - Raingarden for Your Yard Series

Part 1: Wed. March 16, 6:30-8:30 p.m. at the North St. Paul Community Center or
Thu., March 31, 6:30-8:30 p.m. at RWMWD in Little Canada

Part 2: DRAINAGE AND SOILS—April 14

Part 3: GARDEN LAYOUT & PLANT DESIGN—April 28

Open House: 2010 Extreme Green Make-Over, 2211 Ariel St., Maplewood
www.ci.maplewood.mn.us/nc

For Builders

Small Site Stormwater Management

Wed. Mar. 2, 8am-noon, MECA Pre-conference Workshop

This ½ day class will focus on NPDES Construction Permit Compliance for light construction and residential builders.

www.erosion.umn.edu/courses/schedule.htm

Product Selection and Installation For Small Road Project Erosion Control & Stormwater Management

Tue., Mar. 8, Stearns County Service Center

<http://mnerosion.org/wp-content/uploads/2010/10/Road-Repair-Erosion-Control-Workshop-Brochure-20111.pdf>

For Decision Makers

Retrofitting Stormwater Best Management Practices (BMPs)

In Redeveloping Highly Urban Communities

* For Elected officials, appointed planning commissioners and members of boards of adjustment, as well as planners and zoning administrators.

Fri., April 1, 8:30-12:30 - Shoreview

<http://mngts.org/LandUse/>

Managing New and Existing Shoreline Development (Urban Emphasis)

* For Elected officials, appointed planning commissioners and members of boards of adjustment, as well as planners and zoning administrators.

Fri., April 1, 1-5pm - Shoreview

<http://mngts.org/LandUse/>

Members of the East Metro Water Resource Education Program:

Brown's Creek Watershed • Carnelian Marine - St. Croix Watershed
Comfort Lake - Forest Lake Watershed • Cottage Grove • Dellwood
Forest Lake • Lake Elmo • Middle St. Croix Watershed
Ramsey - Washington Metro Watershed • Rice Creek Watershed • Stillwater
South Washington Watershed • Valley Branch Watershed • Willernie
West Lakeland • Washington Conservation District • Washington County

