



P.O. Box 161 111 6<sup>th</sup> St.  
Gaylord, MN 55334  
Ph. (507) 237-5435 ext. 103  
Fax (507) 237-5249

**Fall of 2007**

# *River Watcher*

High Island Creek & Rush River  
Watersheds Implementation Project

**NEWSLETTER**

Vol. 4 Issue 3



## **Introducing the new High Island Creek Project Coordinator**

Residents of High Island Creek Watershed will be seeing a new face in the local effort to improve water quality. Joel Wurscher started work on August 1<sup>st</sup> as the project coordinator for the High Island Creek Clean Water Partnership. In this position, Joel will work with landowners, farmers and individuals to put conservation practices on the ground.

"My prior experience is more on the sampling side but now that I have started this position, I would say my greatest interest probably would be in all the programs that improve water quality," stated Wurscher. "I never realized the depth of programs until I first stopped into the Sibley County USDA office and home to the local Soil and Water Conservation District, Natural Resources Conservation Service and Farm Service Agency."

Joel will be responsible for promoting the various Best Management Practices offered by the project and other natural resource agencies, along with providing educational opportunities and water quality monitoring. A recent graduate of Minnesota State University, Mankato, Joel has a wide range of experience in the environmental field.

Over the last three years, Wurscher worked for the Water Resources Center at MSUM on a variety of projects including a fish and macroinvertebrate study, population study of ring-necked pheasants and wetlands monitoring program. Under these projects, he worked with a number of agencies including the MN Department of Natural Resources and Board of Water and Soil Resources.

This experience gave Joel a chance to be involved with some of the main issues affecting water quality in the Minnesota River Watershed. "I would say the two biggest issues affecting water quality would be nutrient and sediment loading," said Joel. "Also, people in the watershed need to become aware of all the different conservation practices they can partake in, to help solve some of these problems."

Joel is looking forward to working with the watershed residents and all the organizations involved in water quality efforts in High Island Creek Watershed. "I'm really excited about this position and just hope I can make a big contribution to this project," said Wurscher. "I look forward to working with the people in this watershed to improve water quality."

High Island Creek Clean Water Partnership project is now housed at the Sibley County Government Center at 111 8<sup>th</sup> Street, in the University of Minnesota Extension Service office. Stop by to welcome Joel Wurscher and ask about the various Best Management Practices available to watershed residents.

### **Contact Information:**

Joel Wurscher, Coordinator  
High Island Creek Clean Water Partnership  
111 Eighth Street  
Gaylord, MN 55334  
E-mail: [joelw@co.sibley.mn.us](mailto:joelw@co.sibley.mn.us)  
Phone: 507-237-4050  
Fax: 507-237-4099

## UPCOMING EVENTS / PROGRAMS

### RURAL LAND OPPORTUNITIES SHOW

Come out for the 4<sup>th</sup> annual Rural Land Opportunities Show to learn about what's going on with renewable energy initiatives. Speakers:

- Joe Domeier, Greater Blue Earth Alliance
- Linda Meschke, Rural Advantage
- Mark Lundquist, MN DNR
- Potential investment opportunities,
- Learn how to make money
- Provide for Domestic Natural Energy Security on your land – “American made”
- Explore new crops for profit,
- Entertainment by the Ox Bow Boys
- Booths & Displays

**Date:** August 25, 2007 (Saturday)

**Time:** 1:00 to 5:00 p.m.

**Location:** Nicollet County Fairgrounds, St Peter

**Cost:** Free and open to the public

**For More Information:** 507-934-0252

Sponsors: Friends of the Minnesota River Valley

- Coalition for a Clean Minnesota River
- Greater Blue Earth Alliance
- Nicollet and Le Sueur counties
- Board of Water and Soil Resources

### EXPLORE THE WONDERFUL WORLD OF MUSSELS

Come out on September 21<sup>st</sup> and 22<sup>nd</sup> for a close-up view of the mussel world in Minnesota. Mike Davis of the MN DNR, an expert in this field will give an interactive presentation on this rarely seen and understood native species.

**Date: September 21<sup>st</sup> (Friday): 7:00 p.m. presentation at the New Ulm Civic Center; 1212 N. Franklin Street**

**Date: September 22<sup>nd</sup> (Sat.): 9:00 a.m. mussel hike in the Cottonwood River at the Flandru State Park Group Shelter. Be prepared to get wet (park fee required).**

Mussels are members of the second largest group of animals in the world, the Mollusks. Freshwater mussels inhabit lakes and rivers, throughout the world, with North America supporting more species than any other continent.

This event is sponsored by the Minnesota River Watershed Alliance, a loosely organized network of citizens, public agencies and private organizations dedicated to communicating the benefits of an ecology healthy Minnesota River Watershed to others, and are actively working toward its improvement and protection.

### "NEWS FROM THE WATER RESOURCES CENTER at MSU MANKATO"

This is the last edition of the River Talk newsletter to be produced by the Water Resources Center of MSU Mankato. We are excited to hand over this ongoing communication piece to the Joel Wurscher, the new High Island Creek Clean Water Partnership Coordinator. It has been a privilege to help continue moving this project forward.

Joel comes out of the Water Resources Center after graduating from MSU Mankato with a Bachelor of Science Degree in Biology and spent three years working on wetland and fishing monitoring projects for us. Joel will do a good job in this position as we continue to provide whatever guidance and assistance he needs.

We will continue to collect water quality samples for the 2007 season and hope to be part of this work in the future. The Water Resources Center produced the Fecal Coliform Bacteria TMDL report for High Island Creek and Rush River watersheds and plans to be part of the Turbidity TMDL Study scheduled in a couple of years. Both of these studies will help identify implementation projects to reduce



**Water quality monitoring on High Island Creek**

excessive levels of nutrients and sediment. This will also help secure future Clean Water Legacy funding.

A High Island Creek Watershed web site is in the process of being developed. This communication medium will allow people from the watershed and others find the latest information on the watershed including water quality data, conservation practices and education efforts. The web site will also include the Diagnostic Study, Fecal Coliform Bacteria TMDL Report and all issues of the River Talk newsletters. Look for this site to be up on the World Wide Web some time this fall.

## “Rain Gardens for New Auburn Recently Completed”

by Scott Sparlin,  
Watershed Initiative Coordinator  
Friends of the Minnesota Valley

Faced with the reality of treating storm water that drains directly in to High Island Lake and Creek, the City of New Auburn has opted to install rain gardens as opposed to city wide curb and gutter construction. Choosing curb and gutter would involve an expensive upgrade and substantial additional piping underground throughout the city. Utilizing rain gardens is an option that is gaining much popularity across the country as an alternative to conventional city drainage of storm water and New Auburn has committed to it. “It should be quite a tourist attraction when it is all completed” said Mayor Roger Becker. “It should be quite a stunning site when this is all done” said Deb Wuetherich volunteer. “This will help contain and clean up storm water and provide a lot of beauty to the city,” she continued.

With the help of volunteer labor and equipment Friends of High Island/Rush River has completed number 3 of 43 planned rain gardens in the city of New Auburn. The group meets once a month on the last Tuesday in New Auburn at City Hall 7 PM. Other meeting places throughout the two watersheds will also take place this coming year. If you wish to participate, contact Scott Sparlin at 507-276-2280 for details. All individuals interested in water quality improvement in High Island and Rush River Watersheds are welcome. There are no dues and it is open to the general public. Other projects the group is currently assisting funding for and

Implementing as well as planning on participating in, are rock tile inlets, conservation drainage systems, buffers, and water monitoring. Attendees have identified a high priority focus on High Island Lake and will continue expanding to other parts of the watershed as work progresses. The group is supported by facilitating staff from the Friends of Minnesota Valley based in Bloomington, MN who have a focus on natural resource improvement of the Lower Minnesota Valley.

Rain gardens drain in less than 48 hours, while recharging the ground water and purifying any water that runs off. Cities such as Maplewood, MN have opted to actually tear up existing curb and gutter for the more environmentally sound rain garden method of dealing with storm water runoff. Rain gardens come in all sizes and shapes with numerous types of native plants all capable of dealing with wet and dry conditions.

Donations and monetary support for the project to date have come from: Al's Septic, Barb and John Schutte, Charles Goettl Construction, City of New Auburn, High Island Lake Assn, High Island Lake Conservation Club, Jim and Linda Stark, Kraig Kunkel, New Auburn Fire Dept., Rose Farms, Wuetherich Drainage, Minnesota Waters, Friends of the Minnesota Valley, High Island/Rush River Clean Water partnership and all who attended last year's fund raiser “Mid Winter Bash” in Gaylord.



Pictured L to R:  
Kerry Wuetherich,  
Barb Schutte, Scott  
Sparlin, Al Odenthal,  
Linda Stark, Bonnie  
Walker, Dustin  
Schimmelpfenning,  
Vickie Holtz, Sherry  
Wuetherich, Bill  
Holtz & Lottie  
Schultz. Not  
Pictured: Harlow  
Schultz, Deb  
Wuetherich, Kraig  
Kunkel, Chuck Goettl  
(New Auburn Fire  
Dept.), Jim Stark  
(City Council), Major  
Roger Becker,  
Michael, Nicholas  
and Catie Holtz.

# EQIP Program

By Joel Wurscher, HICCCWP Coordinator

Fall is coming up which means harvest time is upon us and that brings up a great opportunity to assess the needs of conservation. Scanning the plowed fields allows us to pick out areas that stand out in need of attention. Some popular practices that could help those areas include; nutrient or residue management, conservation cover crop, buffer strips, water and sediment control basins, windbreaks, terraces, and wetland restoration. These practices can be implemented through the EQIP program.

The Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) is a voluntary program designed to assist farmers, using a variety of conservation practices to protect our natural resources. Through EQIP, the Natural Resources Conservation Services (NRCS) provides assistance in a manner that will promote agricultural production and environmental quality as compatible goals and optimize environmental benefits. Under this program, farmers are eligible for technical assistance, cost share monies, and incentive funds to assist crop, livestock and other agricultural producers to implement environmental and conservation improvements to their operations.

**In order to be eligible to participate, applicants must:**

- Be an agricultural producer;
- Be in compliance with the highly erodible land and wetland conservation provisions of the 1985 Farm Bill;

- Provide the Social Security number;
- Develop an EQIP plan of operations.

Under EQIP, producers are eligible for cost share funds which currently are set at 50%. But, producers in the High Island Creek and Rush River Watersheds can receive an additional 25% cost share for their practices funded under EQIP pending on approval by the local SWCD. Sign up dates for EQIP 2008 will be announced this fall. Other conservation programs to look into but not limited to include; CRP, GRP, WHIP, & WRP.

**For more information contact:**

**Sibley County:** John Dotolo  
Sibley USDA Office  
P.O. Box 161; 111 6<sup>th</sup> Street  
Gaylord, MN 55334  
(507) 237-5435 ext. 3

**McLeod County:** McLeod NRCS office  
2570 9<sup>th</sup> St. E. Box 170  
Glencoe, MN 55336  
(320) 864-5177 ext. 3

**Renville County:** Jeff Kjorness  
Renville USDA Office  
1008 West Lincoln Street  
Olivia, MN 56277  
(320) 523-1550 ext. 3

**Nicollet County:** Stephanie Nelson  
Nicollet USDA Office  
424 S. Minnesota Ave.  
St. Peter, MN 56082  
(320) 864-5178 ext. 3

## PESTICIDE CONTAINER RINSING

Proper rinsing of pesticide containers is easy to do, saves money, and helps protect people and the environment. It also helps prevent potential problems with unrinsed containers, rinsate storage, and pesticide wastes. Even during a busy season the few extra minutes it takes to properly rinse empty pesticide containers is time well spent.

- Rinsate from the containers, when added directly into the sprayer tank, efficiently and economically uses all pesticide in the container. This eliminates the need to store and later dispose of the rinsate
- Unless rinsed from the container immediately, some pesticides will solidify and become difficult to remove.
- Rinsing containers removes a potential source of pesticide exposure to people, animals, and wildlife.
- Proper rinsing is required by federal and state regulations and is a good, sound agricultural and environmental practice.



Proper rinsing of pesticide containers reduces a potential source of contamination of soil, surface and ground water. When contamination occurs, plants and animals may be harmed and water supplies affected. Prevention of environmental contamination is always better than cleanup. Rinsing also helps in reducing problem of handling pesticide wastes.

No matter how an empty pesticide container is disposed of, it must be properly rinsed. Both federal and state laws required rinsing. Landfill operators and recyclers can only accept properly rinsed containers. Pesticide containers should only be offered to recycling projects designed for pesticide containers and not general plastic and metal recycling programs. Pesticide container recycling project personnel will inspect containers to determine if they have been properly rinsed.

For more information on the pesticide container rinsing contact your local MN Extension Service office.

*"Rinsing Pesticide Containers" by Dean Herzfeld, Thomas R. Halbach, Rick Hansen, and Larry Palmer*

## Low Interest Loans available for upgrading of Noncompliant Septic Systems"

*All non-Conforming septic systems are eligible under this program. This low-interest loan program is available at a 3% interest rate for a ten year period. An application must be made before construction.*

### To Be Eligible:

- It must serve a residential, non-commercial property located in either watershed.
- Applicant must be a property owner of a non-conforming septic system:
  - ✓ Discharge to the surface,
  - ✓ Tiled to drainage or road ditch,
  - ✓ Discharge to cesspool, seep-age pits or dry wells,
  - ✓ Less than a 2-foot separation to seasonally saturated soil,
  - ✓ Lack of a system,
  - ✓ Does not meet setbacks to existing well.

### Not Eligible:

- ✓ Refinancing a previously installed system,
- ✓ Septic for new homes,
- ✓ Non-residential property,
- ✓ Project started before design and loan approval,
- ✓ Under court order to repair system.

### CONTACT INFORMATION:

- **Sibley County:** Ron Otto  
Sibley County SWCD  
111 6<sup>th</sup> Street; P.O. Box 161  
Gaylord, MN 55334  
507-237-5435 ext. 103
- **Nicollet County:** Tina Rosenstein  
Environmental Services Office  
501 South Minnesota Avenue  
St. Peter, MN 56082  
507-934-0254
- **McLeod CO:** Roger Berggren  
Environmental Services Office  
830 11<sup>th</sup> Street East, Suite 110  
Glencoe, MN 55336  
320-864-1214
- **Renville County:** Diane Mitchell  
Water Management Office  
County Office Building  
410 East DePue Avenue  
Olivia, MN 56277  
320-523-3760

## "Cost Share & Incentive Monies available for Best Management Practices"

A variety of cost-share and incentive monies are available to producers looking to implement conservation practices in High Island Creek & Rush River watersheds. Practices include Open Tile Intake Alternatives, Structural Practices, Cover Crops for Canning Ground & Sugar Beet fields, and Vegetative Practices.

**Open Tile Intake Alternatives:** cost-share monies are available for the following options:

1. Removal of the intake
2. Removal of intake & replacement with denser pattern tiling
3. Removal of intake & replacement with a rock inlet
4. Installation of a slotted riser

75% cost-share for removal of structure or installation of Rock Tile Intake, with a cap of \$300 per intake. Cost of Slotted Riser Intake is paid.

**Cover Crops for Canning Ground & Sugar Beet Fields:** incentive payment of \$10 - \$12 per acre will be offered for producers planting a cover crop after the harvest of canning crops (fall harvest) and sugar beets.

**Structural Practices:** an additional 25% cost-share will be offered for those projects being funded through the USDA's Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP). Practices will include Water & Sediment Control Basins, Terraces, Diversions and Grade Control Structures.

**Vegetative Practices:** filter strips, riparian buffers and grassed waterways installed under the USDA's Continuous CRP program might be eligible for an incentive payment depending on length of contract.

**Farmable Wetland Program:** producers can restore up to 10 acres of wetlands and 15 acres of buffer land on cropland. For each acre receiving CRP payments; a landowner might be eligible for an up-front incentive payment depending on length of contract.

**CP23A Wetland Restoration:** this new program allows producers to restore large wetland complexes and playa lakes that are located outside the recognized 100-year floodplain. There is no size requirement, just a 4 to 1 buffer to wetland ratio. Landowners are eligible for an up-front incentive payment: \$100 per acre for a 10-year contract and \$150 per acre for 15 years.

**HIGH ISLAND CREEK & RUSH RIVER  
Watersheds Implementation Project  
P.O. Box 161  
111 6<sup>th</sup> Street  
Gaylord, MN 55334**

**PRESORTED  
STANDARD  
US POSTAGE  
PAID  
GAYLORD, MN 55334  
PERMIT NO 61**

**Project  
Sponsor**

Sibley County

**Sponsors:**

Renville, McLeod &  
Nicollet Counties  
Sibley, Renville,  
McLeod & Nicollet  
SWCD's  
Sibley CO Water  
Resource Advisory  
Committee  
Renville Co. Water  
Protection &  
Management  
Sibley, Renville  
McLeod & Nicollet  
County  
Environmental  
Services  
University of  
Minnesota  
Extension Service  
High Island  
Watershed District  
Natural Resource  
Conservation  
Service

***BAN THE DISPOSABLE BOTTLE***

Consumers wanting to ban the bottle can try the following:

- Do a blind taste test in your home. If the bottled water devotees in your home can't clearly distinguish between tap and Dasani, why pay extra? Keep all samples at the same temperature for fair comparisons.
- Refrigerate water in a large pitcher. Cold water always tastes better. If you don't have a water filter, let water sit in the pitcher to let odors evaporate, then put in the fridge.
- Choose a water filter if taste or odor is a concern. In its May issue, Consumer Reports linked the Pur faucet-mounted filter (Horizontal FM9400, \$40) and the Sears countertop filter (#34551, \$50) for removing common contaminants and off-tastes. For more serious water problems, the magazine liked the Whirlpool reverse osmosis system (Gold WHER25, \$160 at Lowe's), which also removes arsenic. The system requires professional installation, about \$200 to \$300.
- Carafes are a compromise, the magazine reported. The Brita (AqualLux, \$25) wasn't very good at removing lead and the Shaklee (Perfect Pitcher 82301, \$17) fell down at removing chloroform.
- Re-use commercial water bottles a few times after washing them in hot soapy water and air drying completely with the top off to kill bacteria. But you're better off using a durable, reusable sports water bottle that can be refilled many times. Choose a bottle that's easy to clean.

By John Ewoldt, Star Tribune

High Island Lake  
Conservation Club  
Cities of Arlington,  
New Auburn,  
Gaylord, Winthrop,  
Gibbon &  
Lafayette  
U.S. Geological  
Survey  
U.S. Fish & Wildlife  
Service  
Minnesota Board  
of Water & Soil  
Resources  
Minnesota  
Department of  
Natural Resources  
Coalition for a  
Clean Minnesota  
River  
Pheasants Forever  
- Sibley & McLeod  
Chapters  
Conservation  
Partners of  
America  
Green Isle  
Sportsmen Club  
Gaylord Protective  
League

This newsletter is sponsored by the High Island Creek & Rush River Watersheds Implementation Project. This publication is issued quarterly and is funded through the Clean Water Partnership grant program from the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency and various local and state organizations. HICWIP is an equal opportunity organization and employer. Questions and comments can be directed to: Joel Wurscher

Phone: (507) 389-4050

E-Mail: [joelw@co.sibley.mn.us](mailto:joelw@co.sibley.mn.us)

HICWIP & RRWIP; Sibley County, P.O. Box 231; Gaylord, MN 55334