



2012 Annual Report

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Watershed Project of the Year

The Middle Fork Crow River Watershed District (MFCRWD) Board of Managers has instituted a new program designed to confer special recognition upon those individuals and groups who have demonstrated a desire and willingness to protect and improve local water resources. This program, the MFCRWD Project of the Year, will be awarded in December of each year.



The Board of Managers unanimously selected the Nest Lake Improvement Association's "Nest Lake Aquatic Plant Management" program as the 2012 MFCRWD Project of the Year. The Nest Lake Aquatic Plant Management program was initiated by resident petition, and is an excellent example of a group of property owners coming together and agreeing to pool financial resources to attack an incredibly complex issue – curly leaf pondweed infestation. While these efforts to battle curly leaf pondweed to allow for a more diverse plant community have just begun and will be necessary for a long time, the Association has already reported impressive progress; a total of 5,500 cubic yards of pondweed were removed from the lake in 2012, more than double the amount removed in 2011. Congratulations to the Nest Lake Improvement Association for their admirable efforts, and for being awarded the 2012 MFCRWD Project of the Year!

Agricultural Incentives Program

The agricultural best management practices program continues within the District. The cost-share or incentive payments provided may be from grants, the District's general fund, or a combination of funding sources for the implementation of agricultural BMPs that improve water quality.

This program was designed to work with existing federal, state, and county programs so that producers may be eligible for incentives from multiple programs.

Landowners and operators interested are welcomed to contact the District office with any questions.

Funding is dictated by the availability of grant and general funds and is at the sole discretion of the MFCRWD Board of Managers.

Incentives must be approved by the Board prior to project implementation. A list of projects, descriptions, and incentive options is available at the District office.

Eligible incentive projects:

- conservation buffers
- wetland restorations
- nutrient management plans
- riparian tree plantings
- alternative tile intakes
- ditch bank side inlets
- controlled drainage
- feedlot upgrades
- sediment basins
- animal exclusions (see picture below)
- stream bank stabilizations/restorations
- projects not listed may also qualify for incentives



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Best Management Practices (BMPs)

The Middle Fork Crow River Watershed District (MFCRWD) works with landowners to implement Best Management Practices or BMPs. A BMP is a project that will improve runoff before it reaches a lake or river. The District works with cities, agricultural producers, and private residents to install a variety of different projects.



Before

There are a variety of different reasons why a landowner might want to work with the District on a project. The Myers family on Green Lake contacted us because they were having an erosion issue on their shoreline. Every year, they watched more of their valuable property wash into the lake. Unsure of what they could do, they stopped in at the Middle Fork's annual open house to talk to the staff about the problem they were having. This conversation led to a shoreline restoration project on their shoreline. The project result is a shoreline that is more stable, and as an added bonus, it is aesthetically pleasing.



After

Another BMP

In residential areas with surrounding lakes, there is an increased amount of impervious surfaces. These impervious surfaces increase the amount of runoff from a given area. Increase in runoff can often mean an increase of issues for downstream landowners. The Meier's on Green Lake were experiencing this type of issue. Over the last 12 years they have been struggling with how to deal with all of the runoff from their neighbors. After contacting us, it was determined that the best solution for the site would be a rain garden. A rain garden is a depression garden that will infiltrate runoff. The Watershed District partnered with the Kandiyohi County Soil and Water Conservation District on the design of the project. Due to the drought, we have not seen the project in a functioning



Rain Garden

state. However, everyone is excited to watch the rain garden in action this spring.

These are just a couple examples of successful projects from 2012. During the last year the MFCRWD was able to install 3 shoreline restoration projects, 2 rain gardens, and 1 grit chamber with the City of Spicer. We are always looking for new BMP projects to fund. Some examples of projects include wetland restorations, buffer strips, sediment blocks, manure management, rain gardens, shoreland restorations, and many more. If you are interested in implementing a BMP project please contact us!

New Technician

Margaret Peeters joined the District as the Hydrologic Technician in April 2012. Born and raised in Butler, a small farming community outside of New York Mills, Minnesota, Margaret is the second oldest of seven children. Her parents, John and Mary, raise cattle, corn, and sunflower seeds, and also run a greenhouse business. She graduated from the University of Minnesota in 2009 with a Bachelor of Science in Environmental Studies, Policy and Management. In 2011, she graduated with a Master of Science from Bemidji State University in Environmental Studies, Policy and Planning. She comes to the Middle Fork with Technician experience from the Heron Lake Watershed District in Southwest Minnesota.



Education and Outreach

The Watershed District has been teaming up with local teachers on our S.T.R.E.A.M. (Student Targeted Resource Education Awareness and Management) program for five years now! The program started with only two teachers in one of the three school districts in the watershed and has now expanded to working with multiple teachers and grades in all of the school districts. Teachers appreciate how our program assists them in reaching state standards through creative activities. Area students also enjoy the hands-on learning opportunity that the activities provide. One activity enjoyed by both students and teaching staff is the examining of macroinvertebrates; the little critters that live in our streams and lakes. The District has enjoyed helping students become more informed about water resource needs, because they will be the decision makers of tomorrow.



Since 2008, the MFCRWD has supported the Gary and Cindy Westby internship. This internship offers a student from the New London-Spicer School District the endeavor of a variety of conservation positions. In 2012, we had the great pleasure of working with Hannah Brown! District staff provided Hannah a variety of activities. She accompanied our technician to an on site meeting with landowners who are interested in implementing a Best Management Practice with the District. She also looked at some of the many projects that we have put in the ground over the years. District technicians spend a lot of time monitoring during the summer season, often a very enjoyable activity for the Westby intern to shadow. Hannah spent a large portion of her time with the District assisting with the maintenance of one of our urban BMPs in Spicer. Some of the maintenance included sediment and invasive weed removal. All of which is vital for the long term functionality of the project. The District greatly appreciated Hannah's hard work to help keep our Park Lane project looking great! The District would like to wish Hannah good luck on her future ventures!

In addition to our S.T.R.E.A.M. program and Westby internship support, the District enlightened public about water quality issues in many other ways. In the past year we have participated in the annual Earth Day celebration at Prairie Woods Environmental Learning Center, Willmar Agriculture Show, and Prairie Pothole Day. Our Citizen Advisory Committee continued to be active. The District's annual Open House was a great opportunity for constituents to visit with the Board and staff. The City of New London procured District funds for stormwater ordinance updates. With the funds, a consultant assessed the current ordinances and provided follow up and suggestions to the City.



The Belgrade-Broten-Elrosa National Honor Society (pictured) assisted in the community cleanup event again this year. Volunteer students raked the boulevard on one street in Belgrade and were able to collect 45 bags of leaves! This amount of leaves prevented 4,500 pounds of algae from forming in the Middle Fork Crow River and it's connected lakes! Thank you to the students who came out on a cold fall day to protect the river and downstream lakes!

Please let us know if you would like to get involved with the District! We hope to see you at these events in 2013!

Monitoring

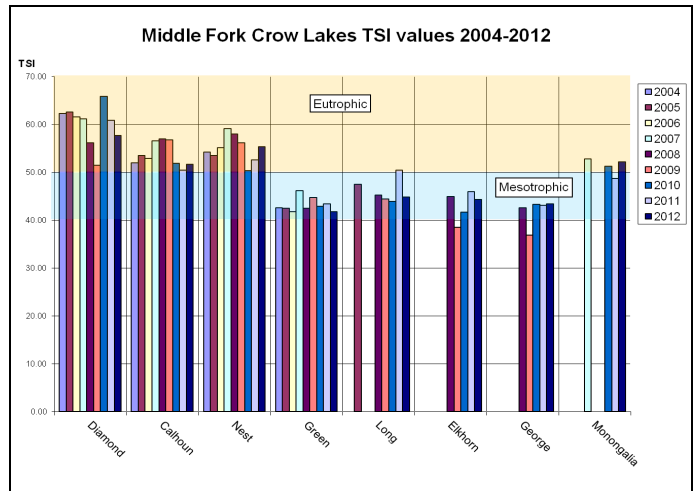
Another successful monitoring season in 2012 thanks to our 13 district volunteers.

In addition to the 72 Middle Fork chemistry samples, 67 chemistry samples were collected by our stream and lake volunteers. These chemistry samples are then sent to a lab to test for Total Suspended Solids, Total Kjeldahl Nitrogen, Total Phosphorus, and Chlorophyll A. Along with the chemistry samples, the lake volunteers took secchi disk readings, and recorded water temperature on Calhoun, Diamond, George, Green, Long, and Nest lakes.

Thanks to the help of our volunteers the District will be able to use their data to show trends in water quality, identify existing or emerging water problems, as well as determine future priority areas for improvement projects.

Our genuine gratitude goes out to those who volunteered our 2012 season: Gordy Behm, Bob Dice, Bob Hodapp, Kyle Knudsen, Riley and Jill Nelson, Randy and Mary Jo Patton, LuAnn Rudningen, Ruth Schaefer, Val Sechler, Lee Thompson, Russ Wright, and Graden West.

Funding for our volunteer monitoring program was provided through the MN Pollution Control Agency's Clean Water Partnership Continuation grant as well as from Calhoun Lake Association, Diamond Lake Area Recreational Association, George Lake Association, Green Lake Property Owners Association, Long Lake Association, and the Nest Lake Improvement Association.



New Office

The Watershed District has been discussing the need for a new office for the last three years. After an exhaustive search, the Board of Managers purchased a lot on County Road 8 across from the DNR's Spicer office. During the last year, the Board has worked with an architecture firm in Willmar to design the District's new office. The project contractor has been awarded and plans to break ground in the spring. It is an exciting time for the MFCRWD, the new location will provide the additional needed space and will also act as a meeting venue for our partners. The board and staff hope to be moving into the new office by next fall.

Trophic Status Index (TSI) What does it mean?

Mesotrophic (40-50): Water moderately clear; increasing probability of no oxygen in the lowest levels during summer.

Eutrophic (50-70): Decreased transparency, lack of oxygen in lower levels during the summer, weed problems evident, warm-water fisheries only.

Hypereutrophic (70+): Dominance of blue-green algae, algal scums probable, extensive weed problems. Heavy algal blooms possible throughout the summer.

Green Lake Water Quality Improvement: Curb-Cut Rain Gardens

Since the establishment in 2005, the Middle Fork Crow River Watershed District has undertaken several different initiatives to protect water quality in our lakes, including Green Lake.



Photo credit: Lower MN River Watershed District

The District procured legacy grant funds in 2012 to help address some of the nutrient and sediment issues that stormwater is causing in Green Lake. One of the main tools identified for attacking these issues is called a curb-cut rain garden. These rain gardens are aesthetically pleasing depressions placed near the street, accompanied by a cut in the curb that allows rainwater to flow into the basin to be filtered before reaching the lake.

Construction will start in the spring of 2013 for these curb-cut gardens. The BWSR Clean Water Assistance grant will be covering 75% of the installation cost.



Financial Report

The MFCRWD continues education, monitoring, and implementation projects with grants procured in 2012. A summary of our grant and contract agreements from 2012 follows:

- Conservation Drainage in the Middle Fork Crow River Watershed: \$15,062 in grant funds was awarded to the District for the implementation of a pilot project that focuses on drainage water management. A controlled drainage system was installed to hold water in the field at a certain level at particular times of the year. The grant runs through December 2012.
- Clean Water Partnership Continuation Grant: This grant provides \$350,000 in grant funds and \$150,000 for low interest loan funds. It allows us to conduct education and outreach programs, water quality monitoring and evaluation, and BMP implementation throughout the entire Middle Fork Crow watershed. The grant runs through June 2013.
- Clean Water Partnership Eurasian Watermilfoil (EWM)/Stormwater Study: This grant provides \$33,000 in grant funds to study the hypothesized relationship between stormwater inlets and the establishment of EWM stands in Green Lake. It runs through June 2013.
- Shoreline Enhancement and Stabilization DNR Block Grant: This grant provides \$50,000 in grant funds to create a workshop focusing on the benefits of natural shorelines and to implement shoreline restorations. It runs through June 2014.
- Green Lake Stormwater Quality Improvement Project: This grant provides \$252,125 to implement stormwater infrastructure around Green Lake to address increased runoff velocities and volumes associated with a higher percent of impervious surfaces. It runs through December 2014.
- Drainage Water Quality Improvement Project: This grant provides \$43,505 to implement agricultural BMPs including two large woodchip bioreactors and five rock inlets. It runs through December 2014.
- Shoreland and Streambank Restoration/Stabilization Program: This grant provides \$120,000 to implement shoreline/streambank stabilization projects, a rain-barrel program, and water quality education efforts. It runs through December 2014.

2012 AUDIT

SUMMARY OF REVENUES AND EXPENSES

Revenues

Grants	\$223,115
General fund	\$251,466
Special assessments	\$47,530
State aid	\$2,110
Interest income	\$8,419
Miscellaneous	\$19,763
Total Revenues	\$552,403

Expenditures

Meetings	\$17,222
Contract labor	\$201,468
Administrative	\$12,465
BMP implementation expenses	\$86,639
Professional expenses	\$22,493
Employee Benefits	\$17,461
Dues	\$3,808
Insurance	\$4,142
Payroll expenses	\$144,299
Payroll tax expenses	\$11,299
Utilities	\$1,817
Monitoring	\$14,747
Office expense	\$702
Public education	\$5,161
Miscellaneous	\$5,447
Depreciation	\$7,563
Capital outlay	\$1,847
Rent	\$8,450
Total Expenses	\$567,053

Fund Balance January 1	\$401,933
Fund Balance December 31	\$393,676

The complete audit report is available at the Middle Fork Crow River Watershed District Office.

Rain Barrel Pick-Up Day a Success!



Runoff from your roof can have adverse effects on all bodies of water, including streams, rivers, and lakes. This water carries contaminants such as grit from shingles, oil from our driveways, and fertilizers from our lawns to the receiving waters, which negatively impacts fishing and recreation. One way to reduce the amount of runoff from your roof (and consequently reduce the amount of water pollution) is to place a rain barrel at your down spouts. While the barrel will not collect all of the rain water from your house, it will reduce the volume of water from your lot. It will also allow you to use this water at a later date to water your lawn or garden. Luckily, qualifying residents within the Watershed were able to pick up a rain barrel for only \$25 dollars after the District covered the rest of the

costs with a state legacy grant from the Minnesota Board of Water & Soil Resources.

A truckload of recycled solid oak wine barrels, turned to rain barrels, was delivered on Saturday August 25th, 2012. 107 watershed residents picked up their rain barrel for use within the district.

Due to the great success of this program the Middle Fork is hoping to procure funding for future rain barrel pick up days.



Stopping the Spread of Aquatic Invasive Species (AIS)

Aquatic Invasive Species (AIS) remain a major concern for our area. Aquatic invasive species like zebra mussels (*Dreissena polymorpha*) continue to infest waters in Minnesota lakes and rivers. Zebra mussels are native to the Black and Caspian seas of central Europe. They were first discovered in the Great Lakes in the late 1980s after being allegedly transported in the ballast water of shipping vessels. Zebra mussels are small bivalve mollusks capable of producing 100,000 to 500,000 eggs in one year. Zebra mussel larvae, known as veligers, are microscopic and float freely in the water column. Veligers can be unknowingly transported in live wells and bilge water. High populations of these filter feeders can quickly lower the amount of food particles needed for young fish, and their waste can lower dissolved oxygen levels. In addition, zebra mussels' sharp shells can cut hands and feet of people walking along infested shorelines.



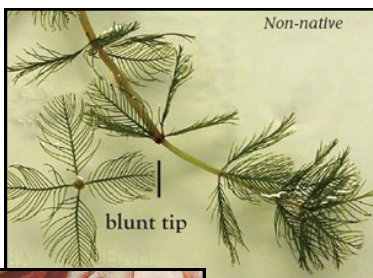
Zebra Mussels Source: MN DNR



A boat is decontaminated with high-pressure hot water before entering Green Lake

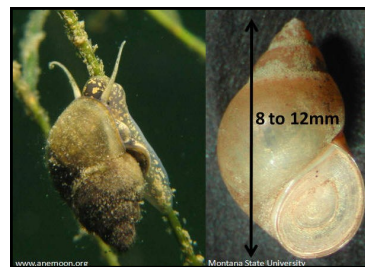
The MFCRWD has continued its effort in the prevention and spread of invasive species such as zebra mussels by hiring three interns for the 2012 fishing and boating season. MFCRWD interns inspected water-related equipment and educated lake users on AIS laws as well as techniques to reduce the spread of invasive species. The interns were able to inspect 624 watercraft at 11 public accesses on 7 lakes. Lake Associations were able to buy extra time for the accesses on their lakes by contributing to the program. The District plans to continue this program into the 2013 boating season, if your lake association or community group would like to participate please contact the District office.

Aquatic Invasive Species (AIS) to watch for: (and many more)



← Eurasian water milfoil

Photo courtesy of: University of Florida



Faucet snail →



← Zebra mussel

Photo courtesy of:

Moore Marine



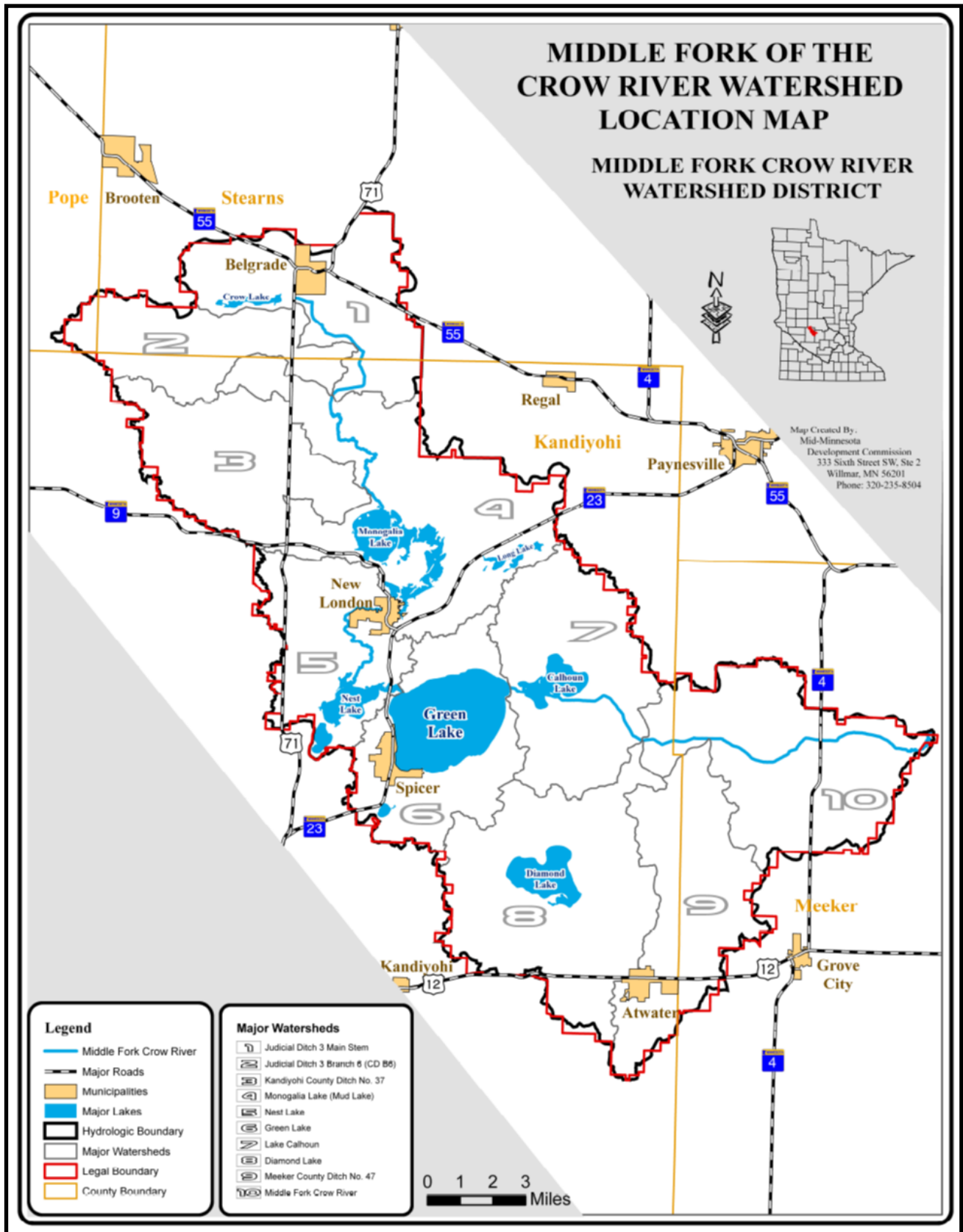
← Spiny water flea

Flowering rush →



Torbjörn Kronstedt

District Map





**Middle Fork Crow
River Watershed
District**

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Funding for Shoreline Restorations

Enjoying the lakes in our area is a favorite past time for many. This can be enhanced by having a healthy lake. Development around our lakes can sometimes reduce the amount of diversity, and impact the health of the water body, when people try to “clean up” their shoreline. The problem often lies in the fact that nature is messy, and the native plants that can be found around our lakes help keep our water clean. To help protect your lake, shoreline owners can restore their shoreline by planting native plants. If you are interested in learning more about shoreline restorations or are thinking of doing one, please contact the District because we are be able to help! Currently we have funds to assist landowners in doing shoreline restorations. Call today since funds are limited.



Coming Up in 2013

The upcoming year looks to be just as busy as the last! We are working on several different BMP projects that will be going in the ground in 2013. With the four different grants that we currently have, we are looking for landowners who might be interested in doing a BMP project. The District Board and staff are looking forward to moving into our new building once it is complete. Keep an eye out for us out in the community at different events to promote water quality issues. As always, we enjoy hearing from you with comments and ideas for the upcoming year.

Please feel free to contact us with any questions or comments.

