

The following information, titled “Restoring the Redwood River,” was copied from the Community-Based Social Marketing website on June 14, 2022. To view the information on the website, please go to: <https://cbsm.com/cases/22696-restoring-the-redwood-river>

Restoring the Redwood River

SUMMARY

RESULTS

The Redwood River Clean Water Project, an accelerated program to restore the Redwood River and Lake Redwood, was officially launched in 1995. It began as a response to deteriorating water quality conditions in the watershed. Project goals are to reduce sediment and nutrient loadings, expand game fishery habitat and fishing opportunities, reduce peak flows and improve flow stability, and increase awareness of water quality issues throughout the watershed. The Minnesota River and the streams and lakes within its drainage basin are a natural resource for all of Minnesota. This water is a habitat for a variety of wildlife, as well as a source of drinking water for communities and rural residents. The use of this natural resource as a habitat and source of drinking water is limited by poor water quality due to: bacteria, sedimentation, phosphorus pollution, nitrogen pollution, and annual flooding. The sources of these problems become easier to identify when water quality management services are carried out in small-scale approaches. The largest scale of activity would be a basin wide approach. The smallest scale approach (used in the Redwood River area) focuses on sub-watersheds that vary in size from 41.5 - 120 square miles. This small-scale approach is conducive to community involvement.

Both local government and community organizations have been successful in fostering support amongst residents for a local water source. Residents know they have a direct impact on nearby water sources and they can clearly see the impact of their participation on these streams and lakes. The goals of the Redwood River Clean Water Project are accomplished by communicating with landowners one-on-one. Landowners receive extensive education and information on best management practices (BMPs). They are encouraged to implement one or some of these practices on agricultural land. Best management practices help control agricultural pollution by reducing soil erosion and preventing polluted runoff from reaching nearby water sources. Best management practices are land use practices that in combination significantly reduce agricultural

pollution. Best management practices can include grassed waterways, terraces, conservation tillage, pasture planting, multipurpose dams, riparian buffer strips, and nutrient management. Landowners who voluntarily choose to use BMPs receive technical assistance and monetary incentives. Landowners receive up to 90% cost share assistance for grassed waterways and up to 75% cost share assistance for other practices. They also receive help with the design of their chosen best management practice(s). BMPs increase productivity, help protect the resource base, and increase profits by decreasing production costs.

The Redwood River watershed has a total area of 703 square miles. Within this area, members of the Redwood River Clean Water Project developed five sub-watersheds and one corridor. The sub-watersheds range in sizes from 41.5 - 120 square miles and the Redwood River Corridor is 295 square miles. Sub-watersheds were developed to show residents that everyone can have an impact. When a program is localized, emphasizing the efforts of participants becomes less of a challenge. Farmers receive personal visits from a member of the watershed program. This one-on-one contact is an excellent way to encourage farmers to participate in the program. Another key to participation is landowners who recognized the benefits of best management practices. Landowners are more willing to listen to neighbouring landowners who utilize BMPs, thus it is important to have these landowners as spokespersons for the project. To increase public awareness about the Redwood River Clean Water Project, residents and farmers receive continual updates on the progress of the program. Information is provided via newsletters, public meetings and events, updated written material, and water quality brochures. Media coverage also helps spread the word about the program, and members found that developing personal relationships with one or two key people at each media outlet works best. Newsletters are an effective way to increase public awareness about the program, but personal contact is the most effective way to promote the benefits of the Redwood River Clean Water Project.

Perhaps the most important piece of educational information is a booklet that summarizes the participation of watershed residents from 1994 - 2000. The booklet includes a map of the Redwood River sub-watersheds and monitoring sites. For those not familiar with BMPs, there is a section that describes the different BMPs used by farmers. The booklet informs people of the local efforts in place to improve the quality of water in Redwood River and Lake Redwood. It

also acts as a resource for those interested in adopting best management practices. The booklet is entitled, "Restoring the Redwood River: Examples of Involvement by Local Citizens" and it has pictures of farmers who participate in the program. The booklet also chronicles the changes these farmers made to their farms and provides travel directions to their farms. Interested residents can drive to a particular farm and look at the practices in place. This visit provides people with a primary resource if they are interested in implementing BMPs. Farmers may want to implement more BMPs after seeing the practices used by other farmers. Most farmers were very willing to participate in the booklet, with only eight farmers refusing to do so. The booklet documents the farmers' soil or phosphorous reduction in tons per year, the amount of area that has BMPs in place and the acres of land that benefit from these practices. There was a lack of interest in the program when it first began in 1995. Farmers who believed in the benefits of BMPs helped create interest in the program. These farmers spoke to other farmers about the benefits of BMPs and in doing so gave the program credibility. Towards the end of the project's sign-up phase, interest started to exceed the amount of funds available. Introducing new ideas can be difficult. Encouraging farmers to attend a seminar on Holistic Resource Management (HRM) has been difficult. When introduced, Holistic Resource Management was a new and untested approach; therefore, people perceived it with a certain amount of scepticism. A brochure describing the program was mailed out, but registration for the seminar did not increase. An ad in the local newspaper with testimonials from those who attended the seminar also failed to spark an interest in the three-day long course. Gathering people for events can be a challenge, but one that is easily overcome by providing food and prizes. Events scheduled for the wintertime typically have lower attendances. In the winter of 1996, many events were cancelled due to weather conditions. Events scheduled in the spring and summer generally have full participation.

The 1995 fish population assessment indicated an increase in the number of species sampled, when compared to the 1991 assessment. In 2000, the total number of landowner/operators participating in the Redwood River Clean Water Project was 159. The total number of BMPs and conservation practices in place was 350 and the total number of structural BMPs completed was 246. In 2000, when the Restoring the Redwood River Booklet was last updated, landowners in the Redwood River corridor averaged a soil or phosphorous reduction of 158.40 tons per year.