

Le Sueur County Environmental Services

NEWSLETTER

July 1, 2021

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Le Sueur County Shoreline Residents – Help Protect Our Lakes

Le Sueur County was recently awarded a grant from the Minnesota DNR. Le Sueur County will be partnering with Lake Associations to communicate with residents to dry their used docks, rafts, lifts, and associated equipment for 21 days before moving anything to a different lake.

Did you know? Drying your equipment for 21 days is required by law before you move it to or from a different lake (MN State Statute 84D.10 Subd. 4).

What can you do to help out?

We are looking for participants with this program!

- Are you interested in being more involved with your community when it comes to preventing and limiting the spread of AIS?
- Would you like to attend trainings and/or demonstrations to learn how to properly clean and dry your docks, rafts, lifts, and other associated equipment?
- Are you planning on moving and bringing your water related equipment to a different lake?
- Do you plan on selling your water related equipment to other lakeshore owners?
- Have you just moved to a lakeshore home and want to purchase water related equipment?

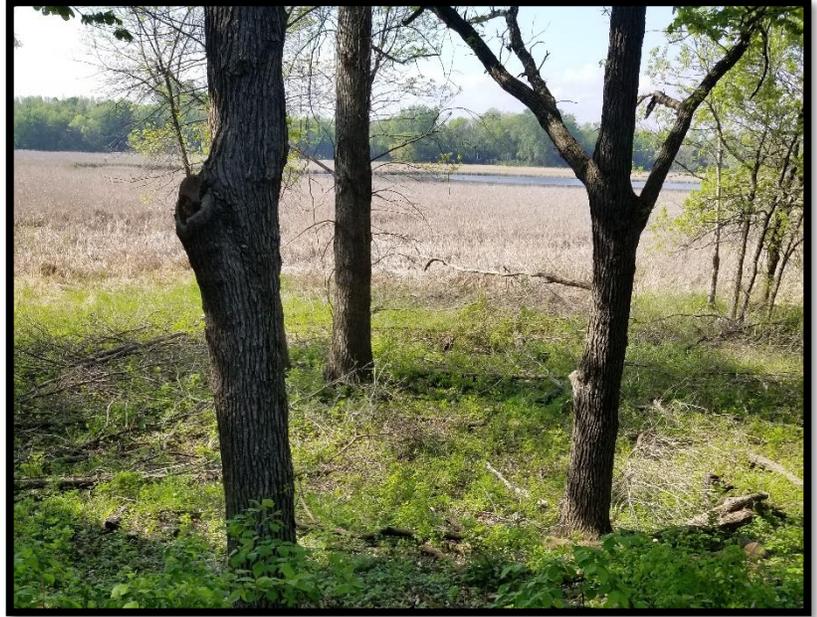
If you answered yes to any of the questions, then this program is for you! In order to participate with the program, please fill out the commitment and participation form. You may either contact your Lake Association, contact Holly Kalbus (507-357-8540, email address located below), or visit the Le Sueur County AIS page ([Le Sueur County Aquatic Invasive Species Education and Outreach Page](#)) to access the form. Once you have filled out the form it can either be emailed to hkalbus@co.le-sueur.mn.us or mailed to Le Sueur County Environmental Services, Holly Kalbus, 88 South Park Ave, Le Center, MN 56057.



Wetlands

What is a wetland?

The Army Corps of Engineers defines wetlands as “Those areas inundated or saturated by surface or groundwater at a frequency and duration sufficient to support, and that under normal circumstances do support, a prevalence of vegetation typically adapted for life in saturated soil conditions.” There are many different types of wetlands; eight to be exact. The types of wetlands are classified by their characteristics such as type of vegetation present, soil types, and water inundation/saturation periods.



History of Wetlands in Minnesota

Historically wetlands covered a significant portion of Minnesota. It is estimated that we have lost about half of wetlands that were once found throughout the state. “When looking at wetlands that are located in southern and western Minnesota, wetland loss is at 90% or greater due to artificial drainage and agriculture,” (Minnesota Pollution Control Agency. The state of wetlands. <https://www.pca.state.mn.us/water/state-wetlands>. 2021).

To see where current and historic wetlands are located in the State, you can view the National Wetland Inventory: <https://www.fws.gov/wetlands/Data/Mapper.html>.

Why are wetlands important?

- Provide flood control/storage areas
- Groundwater recharge
- Improve water quality
 - Filters out pollutants and nutrients
- Provide habitat for rare, endangered, and threatened species
- Erosion control
 - Slows down wave action due to presence of vegetation
- Recreation
 - Fishing, hunting, bird watching, kayaking, and canoeing
- Economic Value
 - Wild rice
 - Cranberries
 - Blueberries
 - Fish
 - Timber

Grants and Programs Currently Available



SSTS Low Income

This program assists landowners with the financial costs to design, install, repair, and replace a septic system on residential property that has been deemed an imminent threat to public health or is failing to protect groundwater. Cost-share is limited to 75% of the total cost not to exceed \$10,000 maximum for the design and installation of a conforming septic system. We received an extension for this grant, and funds are available until the grant expires on December 31, 2021. There is no longer grant funds available for this year. Other financial assistance may be available; please contact our department to learn more.

Water Monitoring

Currently, Le Sueur County is able to test your drinking water for Nitrates and Phosphorus. The cost is \$15/test. If you are interested in testing your water for any other pollutants/contaminants, it will need to be completed at a certified lab. The best time to test your water is in the spring. During this time, the amount of nutrients and sediments present in water are typically higher due to the snow melt and large rain events.



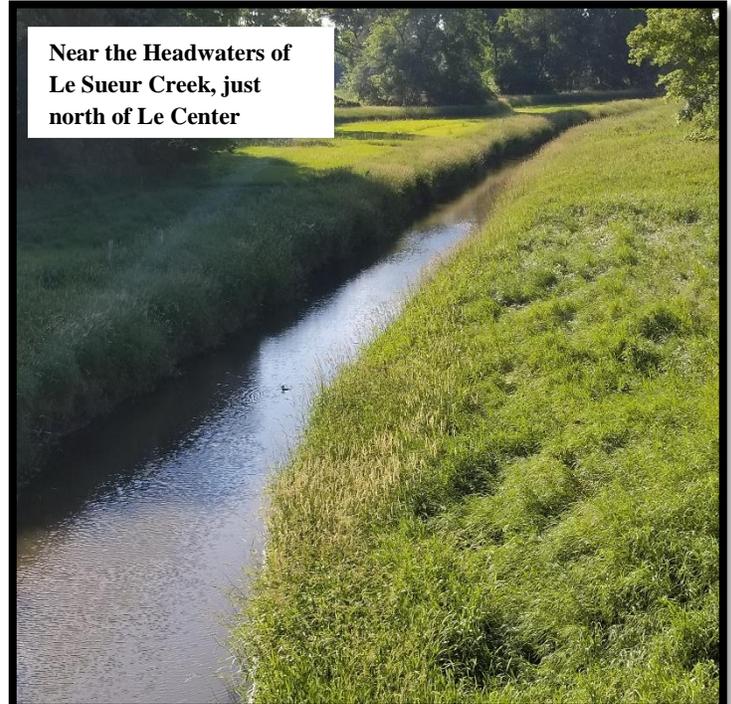


Water Resource Spotlight

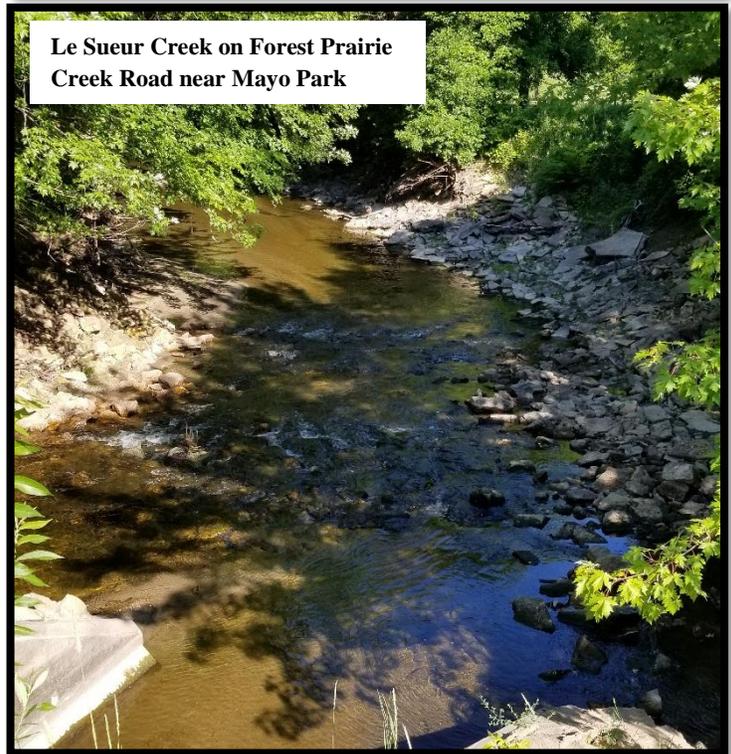
This week we are spotlighting Le Sueur Creek!

Le Sueur Creek is roughly 22.2 miles long. The headwaters connect with County Ditch 23 and start south of West Prairie Road, which is just east of Le Center. The creek then flows directly west of Le Center, and begins to meander north near Highway 112, where it continues to flow north until it joins with Forest Prairie Creek. Eventually the creek outlets into the Minnesota River through the City of Le Sueur. The landscape along the creek is predominately agriculture and forested areas. The stretch of the Le Sueur Creek that is closer to Minnesota River provides a more diverse landscape due to the presence of bluffs.

Le Sueur Creek provides recreational opportunities such as fishing and bird watching. Unfortunately, the creek has numerous stressors or impairments such as degraded habitat, altered hydrology, phosphorus, nitrates, E. coli, and total suspended solids. Many of the stressors and impairments are due to nonpoint source pollution sources. Best management practices that have been identified to address these stressors and impairments include but are not limited to: stormwater practices (raingardens, filter strips, swales, etc.), septic system improvements, feedlot runoff reduction/treatment, culvert replacement, buffers, perennial cover, and lastly soil health practices (cover crops, reduced tillage, and nutrient management).



Near the Headwaters of Le Sueur Creek, just north of Le Center



Le Sueur Creek on Forest Prairie Creek Road near Mayo Park

Minnesota Native Plant

Butterfly Milkweed (*Asclepias tuberosa*)

Butterfly Milkweed is a perennial that is a part of the Apocynaceae (Dogbane) family. It grows 1-2 feet tall with numerous stems that comprise one plant. The leaves are long, dark green in color, and have an alternate arrangement on the stem. A mature plant has a deep and drought tolerant tap root. The inflorescence (flower head) is made of up many individual flowers which can be yellow to orange in color, and blooms from June through August. Butterfly Milkweed establishes well in dry and well drained soils, and prefers part to full sun. You'll find this plant thriving in prairies, open woodlands, on hillsides, and grasslands. These plants are great for pollinators because they provide a food source and habitat. Humans have benefited from this species as well. Butterfly Milkweed, specifically the root, has been used for medicinal purposes to treat pulmonary conditions.



Non Native Plant

Reed Canary Grass (*Phalaris arundinacea*)

Reed Canary Grass is a perennial that is a part of the Poaceae (Grass) family. It originates from Europe and was originally introduced for livestock forage and erosion control efforts. It is now considered invasive, a noxious weed, and should be eradicated. The plants grow roughly 2-9 feet tall in dense colonies. The leaves are alternate on the stem, have smooth margins (leave edges), and can range from 4-10 inches long. A mature plant has an extensive root system which is comprised of rhizomes. The flowers form a spike and can be green to purple in color which blooms from May through June. Once blooming season is complete, the flowers turn tan in color. Reed Canary Grass prefers moist soils, and tend to thrive in wetlands and riparian areas. These plants are very resilient and aggressive; therefore, they often outcompete native plant species. Additionally, Reed Canary Grass is very difficult to remove from an area once established.

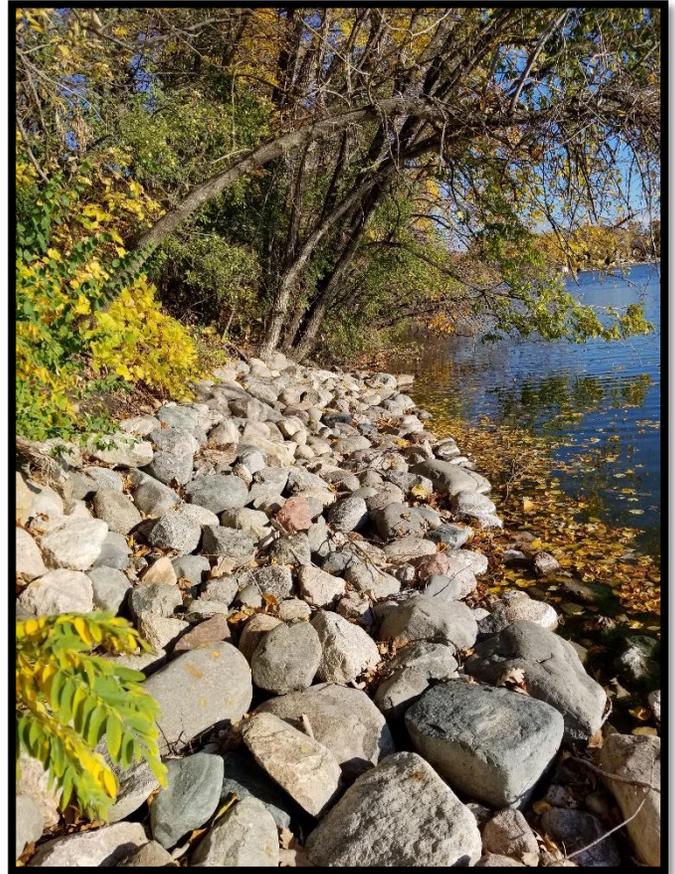


County Ordinance Revisions-Riprap

Le Sueur County recently approved Ordinance Revisions for Section 13 Shoreland Management. The revisions in Section 13 were focused on riprap installation. Riprap is no longer apart of the grading, excavating, and filling definition. Additionally, if property owners would like to install riprap they must also establish native vegetation as part of their project.

How does this affect you if you are a lakeshore property owner?

- Your riprap project is now considered a permitted use as long as you meet County and DNR installation requirements.
- Reduces the complexity of approvals and paperwork that are needed from County in order to install your riprap project.
- Ability to install your project in a quicker timeframe to help prevent erosion and runoff and protect your shoreline.



How do these changes benefit the lake?

- Erosion and runoff issues are being addressed which will reduce the amount of pollutants entering the lake.
- The native vegetation component will help filter pollutants, increase soil stability, create habitat, and improve water quality.



Contact Information

Environmental Services Department

Planning & Zoning, Feedlots, Solid Waste, & Septics

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Environmental Resources Specialist/Water Planner-Holly Kalbus

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Le Sueur County Soil & Water Conservation District (SWCD)

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Todd Piepho-Area Hydrologist

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Carli Wagner-Aquatic Invasive Species Specialist

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To see which DNR staff is the Area Hydrologist for your region, please click on the following

link:

https://files.dnr.state.mn.us/waters/area_hydros.pdf