

Rain Gauge Volunteers Needed in Koochiching County

Rain gauge volunteers have been extremely important to the SWCD and to the University of Minnesota for many decades. Here in Koochiching County, there is a data gap that is not filled by any nearby weather radars. Helping to fill the data gap are rain gauge volunteers who take physical rain measurements each day at their homes, record that data on provided forms, and send those forms to the SWCD office. The SWCD then submits this much needed data to the University of Minnesota. Uses for this information are many, including water supply and flood forecasts which is especially important during major weather events, such as the flood of 2014.



We are so grateful to all of our past and present rain gauge volunteers who have invested their time capturing rain fall information in our county. Your continued commitment to this valuable program is very appreciated...we couldn't do it without you!

We are also looking for additional rain gauge observer volunteers in the Big Falls, International Falls, and Mizpah areas.

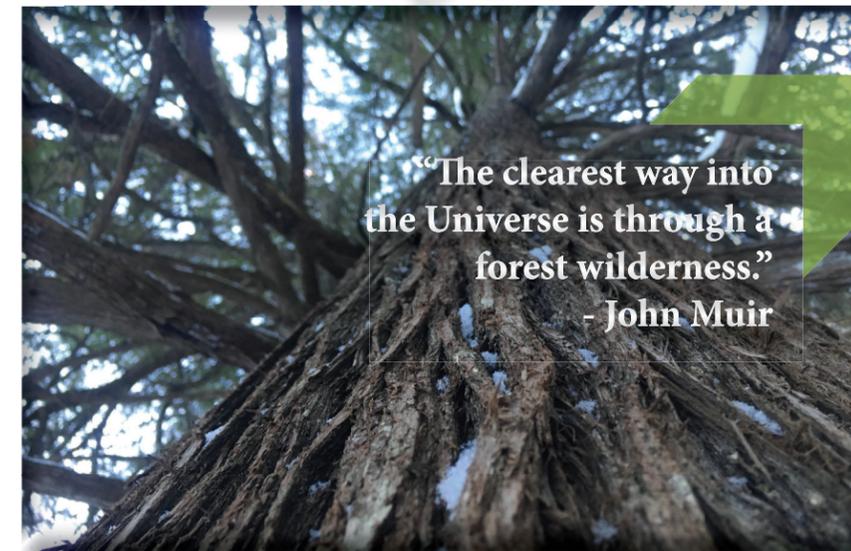
NO EXPERIENCE NECESSARY!

Rain gauge, reporting sheets, and return envelopes will be provided to you by the SWCD.

If you live in Koochiching County and are interested in becoming a rain gauge observer, contact:

Jolèn Simon
Program Coordinator
218-283-1180
jolen.simon@co.koochiching.mn.us

Koochiching Conservation



“The clearest way into
the Universe is through a
forest wilderness.”
- John Muir

Forest Stewardship Plans

Planning for the future of your family woodlands

The SWCD is happy to announce the return of local Forest Stewardship services as part of our recently expanded forestry program. This voluntary program provides professional advice and assistance from a certified forester to private landowners who are interested in actively managing the health and productivity of their woodlands. As a part of the process, a 10-year management plan is developed based on a personal forest inventory, research into the local landscape, current forest management techniques and most importantly, your property goals. Plans provide a record of how your forest has come to look like it does and what the best practices are to manage it according to your vision of the future.

Your plan will cover topics including:

- Timber Harvest and Management
- Recreation and Trail Development
- Tree Planting Strategies
- Insect and Disease Issues
- Wildlife Habitat Improvement
- Forest Project Cost-Share Opportunities

Obtaining a Forest Stewardship Plan also gives participating landowners eligibility for 2c and Sustainable Forest Incentive Act (SFIA) State financial incentive programs.

If you are interested in the MN Forest Stewardship Program, looking at a map of your property, seeing a sample Stewardship Plan, and/or discussing cost-share opportunities to offset the price of obtaining a plan, contact our Forest Resource Specialist, James Aasen, at 218-283-6742 or james.aasen@co.koochiching.mn.us.

Spring 2017

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2017 Tree Program

Order form inside!

Look inside for the 2017 tree order form for the upcoming season. We've brought back some favorites from last year including the Wildlife Packet (a mix of Cherry, Cranberry Bush, Villosa Lilac, Crabapple, Redosier Dogwood, and Juneberry).

For the best selection, be sure to get your orders in early as quantities are limited. A 10% discount will be given on orders totaling \$250 or more.

We also carry a broad selection of Plantskydd® deer repellent products to protect your investment.

As always, THANK YOU for your continued support!

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Rat Root River Progress

In partnership with the Rainy Lake Sportfishing Club and local DNR Fisheries, the Koochiching SWCD will continue working on enhancement projects on the Rat Root River throughout 2017. Funding for this work is made possible through a grant awarded by the Conservation Partners Legacy (CPL) in 2016 and local match dollars provided by the Rainy Lake Sportfishing Club.

Earlier work in 2011-2015, funded by a previous CPL grant, to improve water quality, reduce sedimentation, improve fish



passage, and enhance fish spawning habitat has been successful.

Building on that success, the current project area has increased by 3 miles from the previous project area and spans from Highway 217 east of Littlefork and north 18 river miles to Hwy. 53 near Ericsburg.

During the fall of 2016, the Conservation Corps of Minnesota (CCM) spent three weeks removing log jams from approximately 3.5 river miles upstream of the snowmobile bridge off of County Road 97.



Before



After

Rat Root River log jam removal completed by the Conservation Corps of Minnesota Crew

Plans for 2017 include working with local contractors, the CCM, and the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) Fisheries Division removing log jams to aid in walleye passage and the enhancement of a historically successful spawning location in the spring. Adding a variety of spawning rock sizes in an arc formation just downstream of the County Road 145 bridge near Ericsburg will increase the chances of walleye spawning success. Throughout the year, we will continue to work with local partners, agencies, and landowners on assessing the condition of the river and its surrounding habitat.

To ensure the success of these projects, the DNR will continue to assess fish populations throughout the Rat Root River system.

A story map of this work can be seen on our website at

www.koochichingswcd.org/conservation-partners-legacy-grant-cpl

For more information about the *Rat Root River Habitat Enhancement project*, contact Eric Olson, Koochiching SWCD Resource Conservationist at eric.olson@co.koochiching.mn.us or 218-283-1175.



NEW STAFF MEMBER

Koochiching SWCD Welcomes James Aasen

In June 2016, the SWCD was able to bring back a service to meet a growing need in our county: private forest management. Attaining additional state funding in 2016 and 2017 has allowed us to hire a Forest Resource Specialist.

James Aasen, a dislocated Boise employee in 2013, opted to go back to school at the University of MN Crookston and earned a B.S. in Natural Resource Management. He also holds a previous degree in Natural Resource Technology/Forestry Associate from Vermilion College.

In addition to writing Forest Stewardship plans (see cover story), James will also be assisting the Northern Landscape Committee and coordinating the new Buffer Program.

SWCD CONTACT INFO

ADDRESS

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International Falls, MN 56649

PHONE

(218) 283-1180

EMAIL

koochswcd@gmail.com

STAFF AND BOARD INFO

BOARD MEETINGS

Held on the first Monday of each month, (unless otherwise posted) in the Koochiching County Board Room located on the 1st floor of the County Courthouse :
715 4th Street in International Falls

BOARD MEMBERS

BOARD CHAIR	Richard Dreher
BOARD VICE-CHAIR	Al Linder
BOARD TREASURER	Eldon Voigt
BOARD SECRETARY	Ralph Lewis
BOARD MEMBER	George Aitchison

STAFF MEMBERS

DISTRICT ADMINISTRATOR	Pam Tomevi
RESOURCE CONSERVATIONIST	Eric Olson
WATER RESOURCE SPECIALIST	Sam Soderman
FOREST RESOURCE SPECIALIST	James Aasen
PROGRAM COORDINATOR	Jolén Simon

Aquatic Invasive Species (AIS) Collaborative Efforts Continue

A county aid tax bill provided \$4.5 million in 2014 and \$10 million a year in 2015 and years to follow allowing Minnesota counties to help prevent the spread of Aquatic Invasive Species (AIS). The Department of Natural Resources (DNR) has made it a priority to prevent the spread of AIS from lake to lake as well as manage current AIS problems.

The Association of Minnesota Counties, Minnesota Department of Natural Resources (MNDNR), and MN Sea Grant have been working with local governmental units around the state to implement AIS programs. The funding distribution is calculated by the number of paved and marked parking spots at public landings.

This summer the SWCD and County will be implementing a watercraft inspection program on Rainy Lake. This program will consist of trained watercraft inspectors at local water accesses checking incoming and outgoing boats for aquatic invasive species. There will be a mobile decontamination unit that will be used to decontaminate boats if aquatic invasive species are present (see photo, left).

If interested in becoming a watercraft inspector, watch for job announcements coming soon.



Above: A mobile decontamination unit will be placed in the parking lot of the Road House on HWY 11 East in May 2017. Boat inspectors will be stationed at landings and will send people whose boats need to be decontaminated to this unit.

The Koochiching SWCD has been working with Koochiching County's Environmental Services Department (ESD) to create education materials, attend local events, and plan for future use of the AIS funding in Koochiching County.

For more information on aquatic invasive species or the inspection program visit:

<http://koochichingswcd.org/ais/>
or
Contact Sam Soderman, Koochiching SWCD Water Resource Specialist
sam.soderman@co.koochiching.mn.us
218-283-1176.

2016 Envirothon

Soil and Water Conservation Districts (SWCDs) around the nation take part in an annual event called the "Envirothon", an outdoor learning event where high school students (grades 9-12) and junior high students (grades 6-8) attend five sessions on environmental issues.

Koochiching County sent 2 teams from Northome School to the competition, one junior high team and one senior high team. Led by science teacher Jim Schneider, the Seniors took sixth place and the Juniors took second place in their respective divisions.

We would like to extend our sincere thanks to our local 2016 sponsors for



2016 Junior Team



2016 Senior Team

their very generous contributions to this event: Coca-Cola Bottling Co.; Peter Graham Auxiliary, VFW #2948; Bremer Bank of International Falls; and Super One Foods. Without local support of area businesses, this event would not be possible.

The 2017 North Central Envirothon will be held at Bemidji State Park, May 3, 2017.

For more information, contact Jolen Simon at 218-283-1180 or jolen.simon@co.koochiching.mn.us