

Spring 2021



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# Koochiching Conservation

## NATIVE PLANT AND TREE SALE

*BOTH ORDER FORMS INSIDE!*



### Annual Tree Sale: Order by April 19

We're happy to announce the 2021 Koochiching SWCD Tree Sale! We've brought back some favorites from previous years such as Red Pine and White Spruce. You'll also find that we've updated the species in our Wildlife Packet (see form inside for species). 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.

To protect your investment, we carry a broad selection of Plantskydd® deer repellent. Need assistance planting? We may be able to help! A huge **THANK YOU** for your dedication to conservation and continued support!

For additional information, visit our website: <https://koochichingswcd.org/tree-sales/>

### Native Plant Sale: Order by May 1

It's back! Do you like to plant beautiful flowers and forbs to improve the look of your yard or property? Would you like to help improve pollinator habitat? Then our native plant sale may be right for you. The Koochiching SWCD will be offering native plant kits for purchase this spring. Kits come in two forms: Custom seed packs and immediately plantable plug starters. Each kit comes with a variety of flower, forb, and grass species specially selected for site conditions and your project goals. Whether hoping to attract butterflies or looking for an aesthetically nice seed mix for your septic field, the Koochiching SWCD Native Plant Sale has a kit for you.



*\*Note: some 2021 species have changed, please check the form for availability.*

For more information: <https://koochichingswcd.org/nativeplantsale/>

# 2020 KCCWMA PARTNERSHIP UPDATE



*KCCWMA project contractors clear invasive shrubs on a property near Rainy River.*

In the Spring of 2020, the Koochiching County Cooperative Weed Management Area (KCCWMA) partnership and Koochiching SWCD saw good progress made during the first year of a project targeting invasive terrestrial species on critical private properties in and around the International Falls and Ranier areas. The project was made possible through a Board of Water and Soil Resources (BWSR) grant that funds terrestrial invasive weed control projects and the implementation of cooperative weed management area plans.

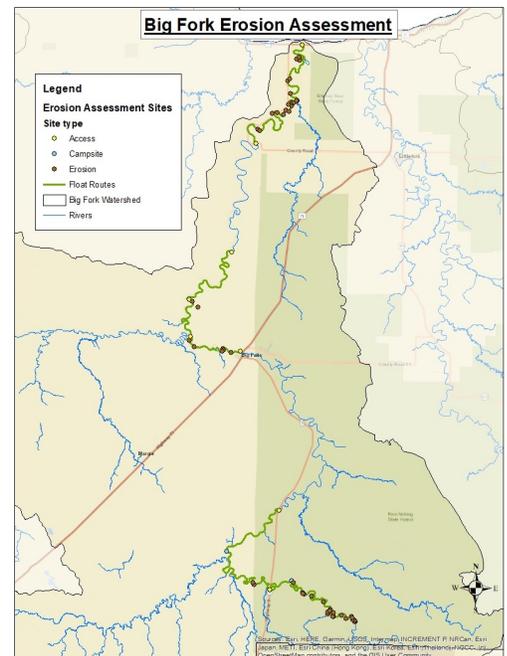
In order for the grant's funding to have the most positive impact on our noxious weed areas of concern, the project managers and KCCWMA partners identified private properties with high concentrations of invasive species or where potentially hazardous invasive species like wild parsnip could spread into neighboring residential or recreational zones.

Engaged landowners worked with the project's conservation staff to develop control plans and a professional contractor was hired to carry out the mowing and herbicide application schedule that best fit the invasive species identified at each site. In 2020, 26.8 acres were managed for invasive species infestation. The sites will be monitored for the control measure's success and follow-up will be done during the second year of the grant in 2021. Project managers recognize that, in many cases, continued application of herbicide is not a viable long-term solution. After initial chemical control of heavily infested areas, many invasive species can be controlled with strategic regular mowing and, potentially, replacing the problem species with native or other non-invasive alternatives.

The KCCWMA and Koochiching SWCD are dedicated to controlling invasive species in our region to maintain the ecology and biodiversity of our private and public lands. If you have or need help identifying invasive species on your property contact the Koochiching SWCD at 218-283-6742 or [james.aasen@co.koochiching.mn.us](mailto:james.aasen@co.koochiching.mn.us) for advice, we're happy to help.

## 2020 BIG FORK RIVER EROSION ASSESSMENT

In the summer of 2020, the Water Resource Specialist and Resource Conservationist floated sections of the Big Fork River to access landings, campsites, and major erosion points on the shoreline. This work is funded by the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency (MPCA) and will assist with prioritizing erosion issues to be addressed in the future. Results will be used in the Watershed Assessment and Protection Strategies (WRAPS) process that is currently underway in the watershed. In addition to the erosion assessment, there is a Surface Water Assessment Grant underway in the watershed. This collaborative effort between Koochiching SWCD, Itasca SWCD and MPCA will utilize experienced staff to obtain comprehensive data of surface waters. This project will support the biological data collected by MPCA and will establish whether these surface waters meet state and federal standards for aquatic life/recreation.



*2020 erosion assessment sites assessed by SWCD staff*

### District Supervisors

Eldon Voigt	Chair
Richard Dreher	Vice-Chair
George Aitchison	Secretary
Ralph Lewis	Treasurer
Al Linder	Member

### REGULAR MEETING TIMES:

May to October: 7:00 p.m.

November to April: 6:00 p.m.

### District Staff

**Pam Tomevi**—District Administrator  
[pam.tomevi@co.koochiching.mn.us](mailto:pam.tomevi@co.koochiching.mn.us)  
218-283-1174

**Eric Olson**—Resource Conservationist  
[eric.olson@co.koochiching.mn.us](mailto:eric.olson@co.koochiching.mn.us)  
218-283-1175

**Sam Soderman**—Water Resource Specialist  
[sam.soderman@co.koochiching.mn.us](mailto:sam.soderman@co.koochiching.mn.us)  
218-283-1176

**James Aasen**—Forest Resource Specialist  
[james.aasen@co.koochiching.mn.us](mailto:james.aasen@co.koochiching.mn.us)  
218-283-6742

**Jolén Simon**—Program Coordinator  
[jolen.simon@co.koochiching.mn.us](mailto:jolen.simon@co.koochiching.mn.us)  
218-283-1180

### COMMITTEES:

**Budget Committee-** *Ralph Lewis & Eldon Voigt*

**Personnel Committee-** *Richard Dreher & Ralph Lewis*

**Education/Public Relations Committee-** *Al Linder & Richard Dreher*

### SPECIAL ACTIVITIES:

**North Central MN Joint Powers Board-** *Al Linder*

**Laurentian RC&D Council-** *Al Linder*

**Big Fork River Board-** *George Aitchison*

**Littlefork/Rat Root River Board-** *George Aitchison*

**MN SWCD Forestry Association-** *Eldon Voigt*

**Int'l Watershed Advisory Committee-** *Eldon Voigt & Ralph Lewis*

**Wood Ash Committee-** *Al Linder & Richard Dreher*

*The mission of the Koochiching SWCD is to conserve and protect the soil and water resources by educating and assisting land users in Koochiching County in being good stewards of the land and its natural resources.*

## AQUATIC INVASIVE SPECIES UPDATE



Since 2015, the Koochiching SWCD has been working with Koochiching County's Environmental Services Department (ESD) to perform watercraft inspections on Rainy Lake, create education materials, attend local events, and plan for future use of the Aquatic Invasive Species (AIS) funding in Koochiching County.

The summer of 2017 was the start of the watercraft inspection program in Koochiching County. The first year consisted of watercraft inspectors manning five boat landings on Rainy Lake with a decontamination unit being utilized offsite. In 2018, the watercraft inspection program expanded to include spring fishing season on the Rainy River. This was a collaboration between Koochiching County/SWCD and Lake of the Woods County/SWCD to educate and inspect in-state and non-resident boaters regarding AIS and the threat they pose. In 2019, the watercraft inspection program utilized a decontamination unit at Bohman Landing and Voyageurs National Park, and watercraft inspectors on Rainy Lake's public water accesses. In 2020, the watercraft inspection program hit an all-time high for inspections and hours of AIS monitoring time. This was partially due to the COVID-19 pandemic, but also because of the collaboration that provided inspection hours on Kabetogama Lake to fill a void in the area. This year the program is planning to partner with North St. Louis SWCD again to provide inspections on Kabetogama Lake in addition to Rainy Lake. This will expand the education and outreach of proper techniques to stop the spread of aquatic invasive species.

If interested in becoming a watercraft inspector, watch for job announcements coming soon on our website at <https://koochichingswcd.org/ais/> or contact Sam Soderman at (218) 283-1176.

# LITTLE FORK RIVER EROSION ASSESSMENT



*Staff collecting sediment fingerprinting samples.*

In fall of 2019, a sediment fingerprinting study began in the Little Fork River watershed. This project is being led by the United States Geological Survey (USGS) and the Minnesota Pollution and Control Agency (MPCA) with support from the Koochiching SWCD and North St. Louis SWCD to address a 105 mile stretch that is impaired for turbidity (suspended soil particles in water).

## **What is Sediment Fingerprinting?**

The sediment fingerprinting process is an analysis of sediment that can attribute the particles' source to different locations in the watershed. The procedure establishes a set of physical and/or chemical properties (tracers) based on samples collected in upland or channel locations identified as potential sources of sediment. These properties are

unique for each location within the watershed. Fluvial sediment samples (sediment transferred by a river system) collected exhibit a composite, or "fingerprint" of source properties. Through statistical procedures, the target sediment properties can be matched to their respective upland or channel source "fingerprints". Determining the sources (erosion sites) and sinks (deposit locations) of sediment is important in developing strategies to reduce sediment loads to water bodies impaired by turbidity.

## **What Will This Mean in the Little Fork River?**

Sediment sampling will occur throughout the watershed in 2021 to help distinguish where sediment in the Little Fork River watershed is coming from. Staff from all four organizations will be collecting samples starting at ice out and continuing throughout the summer.

While it has been established that there is an excess of sediment present in the Little Fork River, it's been unknown how to proceed in reducing it to acceptable levels. Identifying sediment sources is the first step in targeting sediment-laden stream reaches for projects. Updates will follow as more information is gathered on this very important project.



*A passive sampler collecting sediment.*

# WETLANDS ASSISTANCE AVAILABLE

The Koochiching County Soil and Water Conservation District assists Koochiching County in administering the Wetland Conservation Act (WCA) within county boundaries. The Wetland Conservation Act was enacted in 1991 to conserve surface waters, maintain and improve water quality, preserve wildlife habitat, provide recreational opportunities, reduce runoff, provide for floodwater retention, reduce stream sedimentation, contribute to improved subsurface moisture, enhance the natural beauty of the landscape, and support comprehensive water management.

The WCA regulatory process can sometimes be confusing. Various factors of a proposed project may determine the amount of wetland a landowner is able to impact including the size, type, and location of the project and proposed impact. In most cases, local landowners have sought fairly straight-forward projects such as:

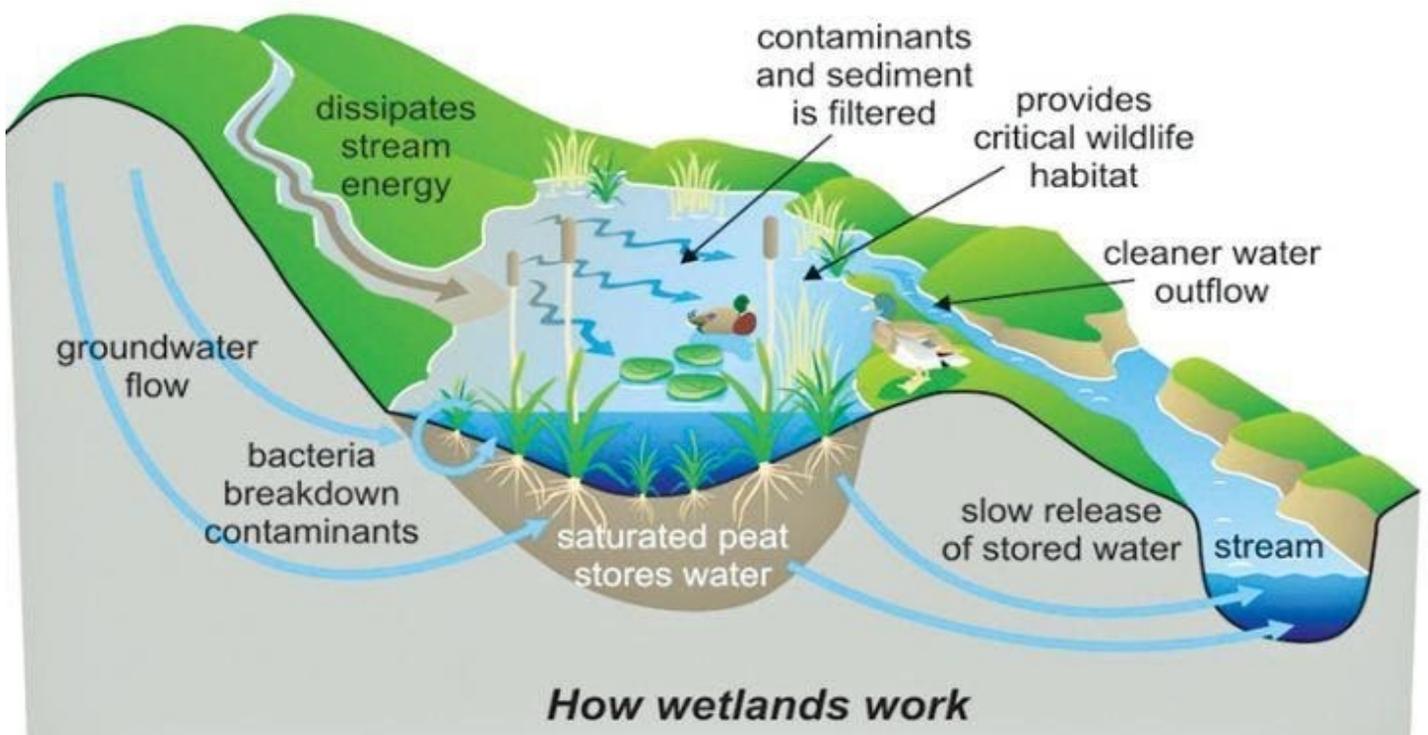
- building a road;
- hauling fill to a location for a building site;
- or digging a pond.

While many projects can be completed without purchasing wetland mitigation credits, all projects that may impact wetlands do require you to talk to the correct agencies in order to move forward with your project. In some cases, these projects will allow you to impact a given square footage of wetland area based on:

- the distance from a public water body;
- the classification of the wetland impact area;
- and the geographic location and/or reasoning for the impact.

The Koochiching Soil and Water Conservation District can assist you with answering these questions.

For more information regarding your next project, contact Eric Olson, Resource Conservationist, at 218-283-1175 or [eric.olson@co.koochiching.mn.us](mailto:eric.olson@co.koochiching.mn.us).



*Image Credit: How wetlands work. Public Employees for Environmental Responsibility.*



# SOIL & WATER

CONSERVATION DISTRICT

Serving Koochiching County since

501 3rd Street, Suite 201  
International Falls MN 56649

[www.koochichingswcd.org](http://www.koochichingswcd.org)



**Tree Sale  
and  
Native Plant Sale  
Order Forms Inside!**



## BENEFICIAL USE WOOD ASH PROGRAM

- Cost savings for farmers
- Reduces purchased lime and fertilizer usage
- Improves crop economics

### PROGRAM DETAILS:

- Soil tests done year round
- Soil packets available at the SWCD office

CONTACT: Eric Olson (SWCD) 218-183-1175  
Whitney Junker (PCA) 218-285-5264  
Destry Hell (D.H. Contracting, LLC) 218-244-2234

The beneficial use wood ash program is a free program for farmers offered by:

