



Sauk River Watershed District Newsletter Special Edition for the

# Sauk River Chain of Lakes



**Great News!**

The Watershed District received a new grant valued at over \$800,000 for water quality projects in the Chain of Lakes area

**Did You Know?**

- The SRWD covers **5 counties**: Douglas, Pope, Todd, Stearns and Meeker
- The SRWD has 9 board members representing the different counties of the watershed.
- Meetings are held the 1st and 3rd Tuesdays of the month at 7:00pm at the District Office.
- The District **monitors 20 streams** and 11 lakes throughout the 1,007 square mile watershed.
- **Services are provided** to residents wishing to volunteer.
- The SRWD has an active education program for **schools**.
- Assistance is available for land use **improvements** that positively affect water quality.

## What's up with water quality in the Chain? Phosphorus Drops in Half!

The great news is that the water quality in the Chain of Lakes is improving!

The MPCA conducted a study in 1985 that indicated the water quality was very poor with nearly 350,000 pounds of phosphorus per year coming into the Chain from the Sauk River. Data from the 2003 monitoring season indicate that level has dropped nearly in half to 167,000 pounds/year.

Most of the reduction in phosphorus 'loading' is the result of many upstream waste water treatment plants achieving a reduced phosphorus level in their effluent. Reductions of 10-20% are due to improved watershed management measures such as better

feedlot management, shoreline buffer strips and septic system upgrades.

The Chain is a very complicated lake system with flowage lakes on the 'river' typically having higher nutrient levels than the bays off the main river channel.

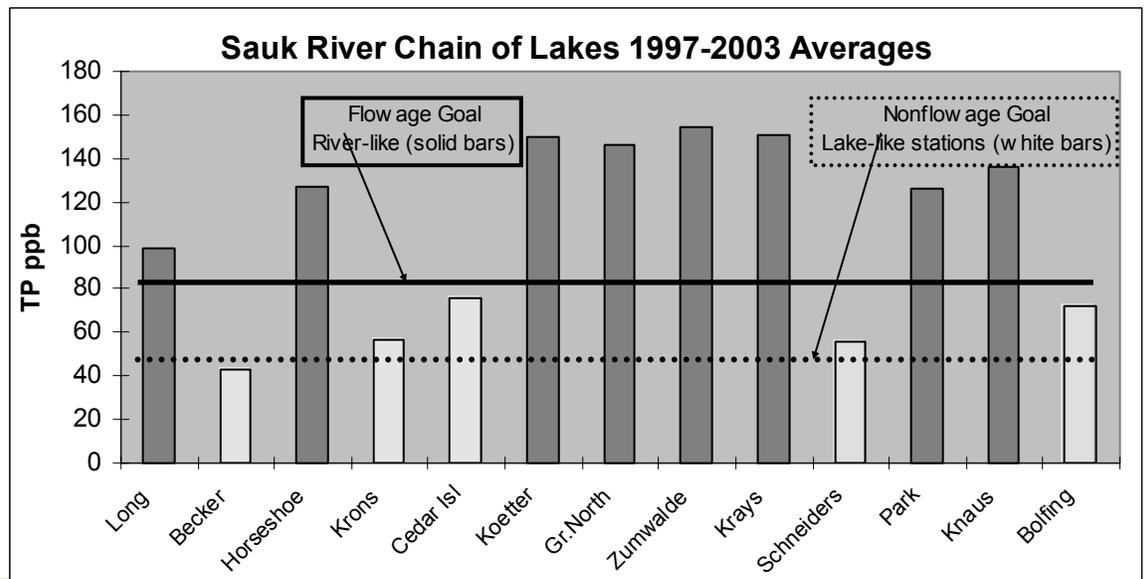
*Fast Facts* about the Chain:  
2,456 acre surface area  
79' maximum depth  
12.5' mean depth

Also, lakes at the end of the chain, by Cold Spring, have higher nutrient levels since receive all the pollution from all the lakes and tributaries. Nutrient levels will be higher in years with more spring and summer rainfall especially in the flowage lakes because increased run-off

results in increased pollution from the watershed.

The Watershed District and the MPCA have been working collaboratively to determine where the other sources of phosphorus are coming from and will work toward evaluating some of the smaller tributaries that enter the Chain such as Kolling Creek (into Becker), Schneider Creek, Kinzer Creek (into Knaus) and Browns Creek. Currently there is no monitoring of these tributaries. We also hope to get some stream volunteers to help out on this effort.

The Watershed District has applied for additional grants to continue monitoring—which costs about \$15,000 a year!





Make sure you are not using phosphorus in your lawn fertilizer! Better yet, don't use any.

### 2004 Monitoring

The Sauk River Watershed District will continue to monitor the inlet and outlet of the Chain of Lakes for the 2004 season. We take flow and water level measurements as well as phosphorus, total suspended solids and ammonia for chemical parameters. Monitoring will also continue on six of the chain of lakes: Schneider, Horseshoe, Zumwalde, Cedar Island, Krays and Knaus. Our goal is to conduct monitoring twice a month from April through October.

### Sauk River Watershed District

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Send Comments and Questions to:  
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## We Need Volunteers!

Volunteers who help us monitor lakes or streams play a major role in our monitoring program. Whether reading rain gauges, staff gauges, transparency tubes, or secchi disks, all are essential components.

In the spring of every year, the Watershed District hosts a Volunteer Monitoring Workshop. In the last two years nearly 110 interested

citizens have attended and many are now volunteering their time and efforts.

Volunteers provide data used in assessing future monitoring efforts. They may monitor where time and money have limited previous work. They also are a liaison between agencies and local citizens and help build an awareness of the health or the threats to our water resources.

This year we applied for a grant that, if approved, will pay for

some of our volunteers to take chemistry samples in order to increase the amount of data we obtain.

We may not be able to get training for you this year, but contact **Amy** at the Watershed District office and she will let you know about future training events.



## Low Interest Loans Available for Improvements

Are you looking to upgrade your septic system or restore your shoreline? Or maybe you are in the farming industry and want to reduce the impacts from run-off or upgrade your manure management facilities?

The Watershed District may be able to help! We have over \$100,000 to provide in low-interest loans (3.5%) for these types of projects. The great part of getting a loan through the Watershed is that

you repay it through a special assessment on your property taxes. No monthly payments! Septic system upgrades are repayable in 7 years, up to 10 years for repayment is allowed for other projects.

Since 1999 the Watershed District has funneled nearly \$100,000 in low interest loans for septic upgrades for 18 residents in the Chain of Lakes area— including two large resorts. We have also helped fund 23 feedlot

upgrades and numerous other improvement projects in your area totaling over \$500,000 in low interest loans. Many projects, except septic systems, are eligible for grant dollars as well.

The SRWD coordinates such projects with the Soil and Water Conservation District and Stearns County. For more information contact **Lynn** at the Watershed Office.



### Stream Sampling for Macro Invertebrates Workshop

June 12, 9AM to 2:30PM  
Sauk River Park, Melrose

Participants in this hands-on workshop will learn about how the 'critters' of river systems help us to evaluate water quality. Participants will learn about which of various species of macro-invertebrates indicate either healthy or poor environments. Learning about this option as a method of evaluating your local stream or river provides for an inexpensive, readily available monitoring method that doesn't take precision instruments or big budgets. **Pre-registration is required—call the watershed office.** Free to Sauk River Watershed District Residents. Bring waders or knee boots.



### Streambank and Shoreline Stabilization Techniques Workshop

Date and time to be determined—call to receive information

75% of sediment transported in agricultural, suburban and urban streams comes from near bank erosion. The impact to fisheries and downstream lakes is catastrophic and expensive. Recent studies show that clear lakes have higher lake-shore property values than murky lakes. Learn how to use lakescaping and streambank stabilization to increase water quality, watchable wildlife, values, fishing and aesthetics. Problems, solutions, costs, benefits, planning, building and maintaining them will be discussed. Examples will include residential to large-scale projects.