



Saturday, February 14, 2009

SWCD promoting planting of native tree species

(EDITOR'S NOTE: The Sherburne Soil and Water Conservation office will be contributing occasional articles regarding conservation issues. The following is their first contribution.)

The problems that plague our world seem overwhelming; from hunger, disease, homelessness and unemployment to water quality, water supply and clean air. For example, year after year there have been countless international talks on how to address the climate change challenge and it can be frustrating for us that are on the outside of those conversations. In fact, it is easy to be left with a feeling of desperation that can paralyze us to the point of inaction. But, it is empowering to find ways to be part of a solution to a larger problem.

The United Nations Environmental Program (UNEP) is offering such a way. They recently launched a new program call "Plant for the Planet: Billion Tree Campaign"; the program was developed to encourage individuals, community groups, government agencies, businesses and industry to pledge to plant one billion trees world-wide every year.

The idea for the Billion Tree Campaign was conceived by Professor Wangar Maathai, founder of Kenya's Greenbelt Movement and Nobel Peace Prize laureate. The Greenbelt Movement has enabled 900,000 rural women to work, establishing tree nurseries and planting trees that are reversing the effects of deforestation. Now the international campaign has planted more than 30 million trees throughout Africa.

Professor Maathai said, "What I have learned over the years is that we must be patient, persistent and committed. When we are planting trees sometimes people will say to me, 'I don't want to plant this tree, because it will not grow fast enough'. I have to keep reminding them that the trees they are cutting today were not planted by them, but by those who came before. So they must plant the trees that will benefit communities in the future."

Recognizing that there are many tree planting programs around the world, UNEP proposes to join these efforts in both rural and urban areas. Individuals, children and youth groups, schools, community groups, non-governmental organizations, farmers, private sector organizations, local authorities and national governments are encouraged to enter pledges online at <http://www.unep.org/billiontreecampaign/>

The responsibility will lie with the person/organization making the pledge via the campaign website to arrange for the tree planting. All contributing participants will receive a certificate of

involvement. Everyone is encouraged to follow up on the website so UNEP can verify that the trees have survived, in partnership with certification mechanisms, such as the Forest Stewardship Council. The website will record the ongoing tally of pledges, and also publish photos and accounts from registered campaign members of what they have achieved.

The campaign strongly encourages the planting of native trees that are adapted to the local environment. There are many ways to find native trees locally at a reasonable cost. This is the time of year to start planning for spring tree planting. The Sherburne Soil & Water Conservation District has provided a local tree program for decades & continues to offer native trees to residents at a low cost.

For more information visit: www.sherburneswcd.org or call 763-241-1170 ext. 3.



Saturday, February 28, 2009

Free well nitrate testing clinic for homeowners with private wells

(EDITOR'S NOTE: The Sherburne Soil and Water Conservation office is contributing their second article.)

This free clinic will be held Thurs March 5 from 11:30 a.m. to 6:30 p.m. at the Palmer Township Hall (4180 105th Ave, Clear Lake). Nitrate levels are analyzed because they are a common contaminant found in drinking water within Sherburne County wells. Nitrate is primarily a health hazard for infants.

In order to participate in the testing, homeowners must bring at least one-half cup of water in any type of plastic bag. In order to get a good sample, allow the water to run 5 to 10 minutes before filling the bag. Homeowners with water treatment equipment should take two water samples - one before and one after the treatment process. Homeowners with just a water softener should only take one sample, either before or after the water passes through the water softener. Samples should be taken no more than 24 hours before the testing, and they must be refrigerated. Samples should be cool when arriving at the clinic.

Lawn Watering Workshop- This half-day workshop is scheduled for Saturday, March 28th at the Elk River City Hall. Topics include: an overview of local water supplies and use, how to improve watering efficiency, new technology and irrigation audits, low water use landscaping alternatives, and case studies of how other communities are addressing rising summer water use. There is a \$10 cost for the workshop and pre-registration is required. Contact Sherburne SWCD at (763) 241-1170, ext. 3 for more information or to register.

Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) 1st Public Meeting- Open House- The Elk River Watershed Association is hosting this open house style meeting on March 19 from 6 to 8 p.m. at the Palmer Township Hall (4180 105th Ave, Clear Lake). This meeting will be the first of several meetings held to discuss impaired lakes and streams in the Elk River Watershed and what is being done to improve them. Topics covered will include: TMDL 101, background on impaired waters addressed by the TMDLs, and reasons why stakeholders should get involved.

Contact Sherburne SWCD for more information.

A short presentation will be held from 6:30 to 7:15 p.m.

Please feel free to stop by anytime during the meeting, there will be time for questions and discussions before and after the presentation.