

Saturday, March 21, 2009

Briggs Lake Chain Association focuses on lakeshore restoration April 4 workshop planned

Briggs Lake Chain property owners will benefit this year and next from funds provided to the lake association for shoreland restoration projects, thanks to support from the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources Shoreland Habitat Program.

With the Briggs Lake Chain (Big Elk, Briggs, Rush and Julia) and the Elk River recently added to Minnesota's "impaired waters" list, the BLCA's SERP (Shoreland Education Restoration Project) will provide funds to lakeshore property owners to restore their shorelands. The Briggs Lake Chain Association will administer the funds to property owners, and provide education and assistance to establish these restoration projects.

"Shoreland restoration is one important piece of the puzzle to improve water quality on the chain of Lakes," BLCA Healthy Lakes Chair Walt Munsterman said. "The future of our lakes and streams is determined in part by what we do now. While there are a number of factors that contribute to impaired waters, adding natural buffer zones and breaking the lawn to water habit is something each property owner can do to help restore our waters."

The BLCA, with assistance from the Sherburne Soil and Conservation District and MN Waters, has over the past several years helped fund and establish a number of restoration and rain garden projects. With the current grant from the MN DNR Shoreland Habitat Program the BLCA plans to assist in establishing a minimum of 13 new projects over the next two years. As part of SERP, the BLCA is holding an introduction and planning workshop for interested property owners April 4. The workshop is free, and will be held at the Palmer Town Hall from 8:30 a.m.-noon. At the conclusion of the workshop property owners will know how to start their projects and have a clear next step.

BLCA members who have already established restoration projects will provide technical assistance and labor for each new project.

For more information contact: Kenzie Phelps, BLCA Healthy Lakes Committee, kenziephelps@gmail.com; Tom Koontz, BLCA Vice President, tmkoo43@aol.com.

Saturday, March 28, 2009

Elk River water quality studied

By David Hannula
Staff Writer



WATER QUALITY PROGRAM.
Elk River Watershed
Coordinator Tiffany Determan
gave a presentation on Total
Maximum Daily Loads (TMDL),
a means of measuring
pollution in local waters, at an
open house at the Palmer
Township Hall last week.
(Photo by David Hannula.)

A group of 30 area residents attended an open house at the Palmer Town Hall last Thursday evening which dealt with water quality levels in the Elk River watershed.

The program included presentations on the results of an ongoing Total Minimum Daily Load (TMDL) study which measures pollution levels in lakes and streams in the watershed. Phil Votruba of the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency (MPCA) and Tiffany Determan, Elk River Watershed Coordinator, gave PowerPoint® presentations which detailed the types and levels of pollutants in the watershed area.

The Elk River Watershed Association (ERWA) received funding from the MPCA to conduct TMDL studies on Mayhew Lake, Big Elk Lake and on the Elk River from Big Elk Lake to the St. Francis River. Votruba described the TMDL study in his presentation, breaking the project down into four phases as follows: Phase 1 reviews existing data, identifies gaps in the data base, and develops plans to collect and analyze needed data going forward. Phase 2 consists of the collection and evaluation of new data, with Phase 3 being the setting of the target TMDL and creation of a plan to meet pollution load reductions. Phase 4 implements the plan to reduce pollution

levels to meet established water quality standards.

Determan noted that the first phase of the project was completed in the winter of 2008, and that the second phase, which will consist of increased monitoring and data collection, will end in 2010. The TMDL will be established in 2011, she noted.

The bodies in the Elk River watershed that are listed as impaired include the following: Rice Creek, dissolved oxygen and turbidity; Elk River, turbidity, bio-assessments (invertebrates), fecal Coliform, mercury; Mayhew Creek, bio-assessments (fish and invertebrates); Battle Brook, bio-assessments (invertebrates), and Mayhew Lake, Big Elk Lake, Julia Lake, Rush Lake, Birch Lake, Briggs Lake, Lake Orono, excess nutrients (total phosphorous).

The open house was designed to provide residents with information and to encourage participation in the TMDL study, Determan said. The program will also encourage residents to participate directly by planting rain gardens and creating shoreline and farmland buffers on their own property to help prevent sediment, nutrients or bacteria from entering the local water table.

For more information, residents can contact the following: Phil Votruba, MPCA TMDL Project

Manager, toll-free at (800) 657-3864, or e-mail phil.votruba@pca.state.mn.us; Tiffany Determan, Watershed Coordinator, (763)241-1170, ext.3, e-mail tiffany.determan@mn.nacdnet.net, or Stephen Mikkelson, MPCA Public Information Officer, toll-free at (800) 657-3864 or e-mail Stephen.mikkelson@pca.state.mn.us.



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Open house studies water quality

By David Hannula
Contributing Writer

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