



E-Currents

: Newsletter of the Crow River Organization of Water

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Crane Creek Wetland Restoration Project

Submitted by John Bilotta – Minnesota Extension

The Crane Creek Wetland Complex is located in the northwest corner of Carver County. For the past two years the Carver SWCD and the Carver Land and Water Services Division have been working with local land owners to design a project that will improve the functions of the complex by restoring wetland hydrology.

The project will increase the extent of shallow water and saturated soils during dry periods, providing more reliable nesting/brood rearing habitat for waterfowl. The project will also substantially increase residence time for local runoff, allowing for the removal of more sediments, nutrients and particulates.

This project consists of two phases. Phase I involved conducting a feasibility study and assessment of landowner willingness. This phase was completed between during 2004 and 2005. Phase II was initiated in the fall of 2005 after determining that the project was indeed feasible and that landowners were willing to participate. Phase II involves securing financing (completed), engineering and design, approval by landowners, and approval by the ditch authority.

The design of the project will include the construction of two water control structures within the Crane Creek Wetland Complex. The structures will create a more stable wetland pool in certain areas of the basin. Funding for the project comes from several sources. A grant has been secured from the Metropolitan Council, and additional sources of funding may include funds from the metro SWCD and Carver County WMO levy funds. Supplemental funding may come from the USFWS, DNR and Ducks Unlimited.

Project construction is proposed to commence during the winter of 2006-2007. The project should be completed by the end of 2007. Questions related to the project can be directed to the Carver County Land and Water Services Division at 952.361.1820 or the Carver SWCD at 952.442.5101. There will be public hearings regarding the project sometime during the summer of 2006.

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Local Partnership Explores Recovery of Pelican Lake – Submitted by Fred Bengtson

Old duck hunters in the Wright County area will tell you that Pelican Lake was once one of the 10 premier water fowling lakes in Minnesota. Sadly, habitat conditions for this 3,000 acre shallow lake near St. Michael have deteriorated due to excessive high water conditions. Climate variation and increased drainage into this landlocked lake is mostly responsible for the rise in water and fish population. This change in the food web usually spells trouble for shallow lake wildlife species.

Now a partnership of local, state, and national interests is meeting to find ways of bringing back Pelican Lake's glory days. The Pelican Lake working group includes local landowners, and city and county officials, as well as local legislators and representatives of the DNR, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency, the Natural Resources Conservation Service, the Wright County Soil and Water Conservation District the Crow River Organization of Water, and private conservation groups such as Ducks Unlimited, the Minnesota Waterfowl Association and Wright County Pheasants Forever. DNR and DU are completing a cooperative engineering study to determine the feasibility of creating a controlled outlet for actively managing the lake's water levels in a way that would improve water quality and habitat conditions.

Since April 2005, much progress has been made. The feasibility study incorporates a broad approach to measuring ecological impacts downstream from potential outletting of the lake. Regal Creek has been identified as the best stream to receive these new waters partly due to wetland restoration possibilities along its course. Regal Creek flows through much of St. Michael before it reaches the Crow River and the city has been closely consulted on concerns and issues that additional waters may present.

Water quality concerns will likely be addressed by timing the majority of lake water outletting during winter months when phosphorous and other nutrient levels are low. Larger wetland restorations will further filter receiving water helping to purify and clean water before it reaches the Crow River and ultimately the Mississippi River. Winter outletting will also minimize potential for downstream flooding when creek bed water levels are the lowest.

The next process includes public information meetings and review of an Environmental Assessment Worksheet (EAW) being prepared now. Depending on the outcome of the EAW review, future work tasks will be securing the various permits for the project and likely the biggest task of acquiring funding necessary to cover construction costs.

The future of Pelican Lake is still uncertain, but there seems to be general agreement by the work group and local community members that we are getting closer to finding a way to bring back the "glory days" to Pelican Lake.

Crow River Trail Guards

The Crow River Trail Guards began in 1992 with the original intent of involving local youth in the creation of a local trail system. Tom Koshiol is the founder of this self funded private youth group that "provides an opportunity for local youth to share in the creation and maintenance of the Crow River Nature Park and area trails, and offers in return affordable, wholesome outdoor adventure rewards".

About 50 kids, ages 8 to 19 participate as trail guard members each year. The group meets each Saturday morning between April and October to build and maintain a park along the North Fork of the Crow River. Work points are earned during each work session, and are redeemed on Outdoor Adventure Rewards. Outdoor Adventure Rewards are outdoor activities designed for personal growth in a wilderness setting. Examples of the rewards include a 5 day trip to the BWCA, and a one day White Water Rafting trip near Carlton. Local reward opportunities include a canoe and kayak day or fishing day. The reward trips are provided at no cost to the participating youths who have earned enough points. For more information about the Trail Guards, check out their website at

www.trailguards.org