

2014 Lake Assessments

With funding from the Clean Water, Land & Legacy Amendment, the EOT SWCD was able to complete lake assessment reports on 37 lakes in Otter Tail County in 2014. These reports contain a variety of information, including: average water quality, transparency, nutrient levels, historic trends, and a look at the surrounding land use. The lake assessment reports are available on our website for viewing. RMB Labs was contracted to do the gathering & compiling of several years of lake data. This critical data wouldn't exist without the lake volunteers & lake associations that continue to spend years monitoring lake levels & changes.

Honey Bee Effort in the Midwest

NRCS announced in October 2014 that the agency was investing \$4 million in conservation activities that help farmers implement honey bee-friendly conservation practices. This fiscal year 2015 investment builds on more than \$3 million invested in fiscal year 2014. The financial assistance was made available to farmers in Michigan, Minnesota, North Dakota, South Dakota and Wisconsin. These practices include, for example, appropriate cover crops or rangeland and pasture management may provide a benefit to producers by reducing erosion, increasing the health of their soil, inhibiting invasive species, and providing quality forage and habitat for honey bees and other pollinators.



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Adaptive Ag

Farmers are annually faced with the challenge of balancing nitrogen inputs to maximize profit while limiting losses to the environment. Some innovative on-farm tools can offer insight to tip the scale in the farmers favor toward more efficient nitrogen use. To provide access to these tools, EOTSWCD has partnered with the Minnesota Department of Agriculture to offer imagery guided basal stalk nitrate test for corn acres. A basal stalk nitrate test evaluates the adequacy of the nitrogen program for the current growing season, and can provide insight into management options for upcoming years. Please contact the office if you are enrolling a field free of charge.



Community Partners Grant

In 2014 the SWCD, along with assistance from lake associations, landowners, and the Conservation Corps Minnesota, was able to install over 15 shoreline buffers using funding from the Community Partners Grant. That's over 29,700 square feet (or 1,658 linear feet) of shoreline restored using native grasses & flowers! The SWCD has Community Partners funding available for years 2014-2016, made possible by the Clean Water, Land & Legacy Amendment. This funding is available to lake associations within Otter Tail County for shoreline restoration, rain gardens, and any other project that may be considered to improve water quality. If you or your lake association has any questions about funding opportunities, native buffers, shoreline erosion, or to see if your shoreline might be a good fit for a project, please contact our office.

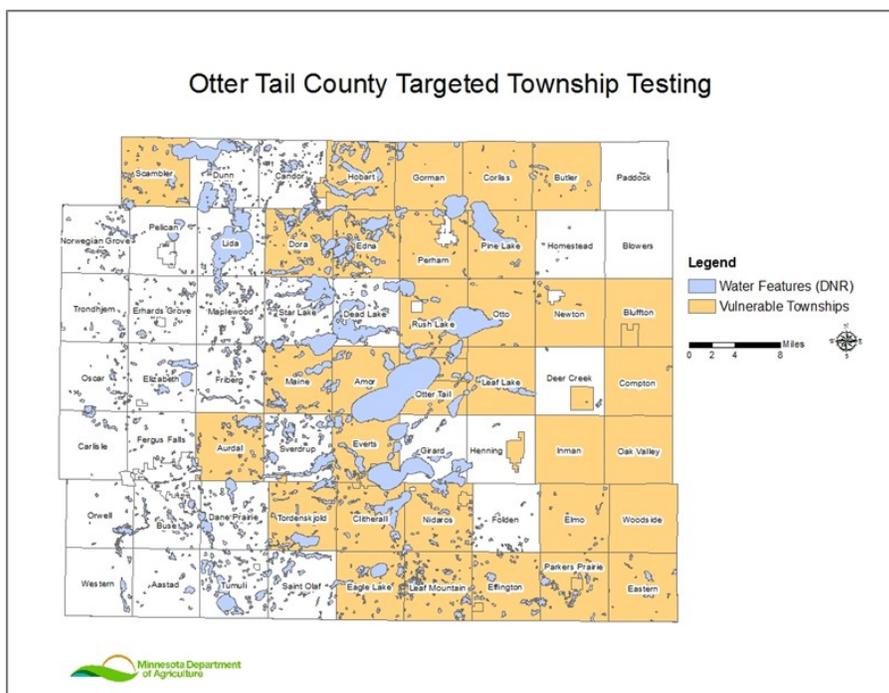
Private Well Nitrate Testing to be Offered in Otter Tail County

The quality of our drinking water is an important issue for every private well owner. Nitrate is one of the most common ground water contaminants found in rural areas. Drinking water with high nitrate concentrations can cause serious health effects in infants and the presence of nitrates may be an indicator of other contaminants in water.

With Clean Water Land and Legacy funding coming through the Minnesota Department of Agriculture (MDA) the EOT SWCD will be spearheading a project to test the nitrate levels of the private drinking water wells in 32 townships in Otter Tail County in 2015. Townships that were selected for this project have coarse soils that make the underlying aquifers more vulnerable to possible contamination. Through this project we hope to be able to characterize the current nitrate conditions of the groundwater being used as drinking water from the private wells in these areas.

In early spring of 2015 homeowners in the target townships can expect to receive a letter explaining the nitrate testing program. Shortly afterwards, they will receive a water sampling kit from a certified lab containing a one-page survey about your well, a participation form, and a water sample bottle. Once you receive the kit, simply answer the survey and fill your water sample bottle following the instructions. Then, mail the sample bottle and paperwork back to the lab using the enclosed prepaid mailer. Each participant will receive the results of their water sample.

The knowledge gained by having your well tested will not only help protect you and your family, but will also assist your county to gain a better picture of the presence of nitrate in drinking water. If you have questions or comments please contact your local project coordinator at the Otter Tail County SWCD.



Root Weevil



Spotted Knapweed

County Ag Inspector Update

In 2014 we were able to get biological control (bio-control) on the ground for spotted knapweed control. Bio-control is using natural enemies to control non-native plants, or in this case, seedhead & root weevils to manage spotted knapweed. The MDA intensely evaluated the weevils for 5 years to make sure they'd only harm spotted knapweed and not spiral out of control, like the infamous asian beetles, before approving them for control use. The seedhead weevil eats away at the purple flower, while the root weevil does most of its damage to the underground parts of the plant. Bio-control is a popular way for organic farmers and absentee landowners to manage their spotted knapweed. After checking out several spotted knapweed sites in the county, we were happy to see that several already had these weevils present! For more information on bio-control or noxious weeds, please contact our office.