



Kittson SWCD targets grass filter strips to restore Lake Bronson

February 2014 Snapshots



Although Minnesota is the land of 10,000 lakes, they come few and far between in Kittson County. Lake Bronson is the only major recreational lake in Kittson County, and Kittson Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD) in partnership with the Two Rivers Watershed District, Roseau SWCD, Natural Resource Conservation Service, and Farm Service Agency are finding creative ways to work with landowners to restore the lake through targeted implementation of grass filter strips.

The lake was created by the Works Progress Administration (WPA) in the late 1930's with the construction of a dam across the South Branch Two River. In 1937 the dam and other facilities, including a combination water and observation tower, were turned over to the State of Minnesota and the area became Two Rivers State Park. Renamed Lake Bronson State Park in 1945, the park currently receives over 128,000 visitors annually.

Lake Bronson is subject to sediment and nutrient loading from several upstream state and county ditches, which causes a significant algae bloom in early July of each year. The presence of blue green algae in July of 2012 caused the recreational use of the lake to be shut down.

In Kittson County, like many other parts of the state, high commodity prices were driving up land values and rental rates, and the USDA soil rental rates were not keeping up enough to persuade landowners to participate in the Continuous Conservation Reserve Program (CCRP). Kittson SWCD noticed this and applied for a Clean Water Fund grant in 2011 to add extra incentive for landowners to participate in the CCRP.

Darren Carlson, Kittson SWCD's District Manager said that by combining the CCRP soil rental rates and Clean Water Funds landowners are more likely to participate in this common sense practice. "Before applying for the funds, we conducted a survey of landowners in the target area and an astounding amount said they would be interested in establishing grass filter strips if the rates were more competitive," Carlson said.

With the original \$100,000 Clean Water Fund grant, Kittson SWCD was able to enroll 12 contracts for 104.1 acres of grass filter strips, reducing the sediment entering Lake Bronson by 3,077 tons per year and phosphorus by 3,021 pounds per year.

The program was so successful that Kittson SWCD applied for and was awarded Clean Water Funds again in 2012 and 2013. From these 2 grants combined they received another \$300,000 to provide incentives to establish 300 additional acres of grass filter strips and also install side water inlets where needed in the sub-watersheds contributing to Lake Bronson.

"Thanks to these Clean Water Funds, in addition to the federally funded CCRP, sediment movement will decrease and in return water quality will improve within Lake Bronson and its watershed," said Carlson. "Lake Bronson is a very important local resource and we want to make sure it's a source of recreational enjoyment for generations to come."



Top: Farming adjacent to County Ditch
Bottom: After 120 foot grass filter strip is established