

'A lot can get done by one person'



Okabena-Ocheda Watershed District Administrator Dan Livdahl accepted the Watershed District Outstanding Employee award from Minnesota Board of Water and Soil Resources Executive Director John Jaschke, left, during the Minnesota Association of Watershed Districts' annual conference Nov. 30 in Alexandria. Casey Ingenthron, right, of the watershed district's board of managers, joined Jaschke in congratulating Livdahl after the awards presentation.

Photo Credit: Ann Wessel, BWSR

BWSR honors Okabena-Ocheda Watershed District administrator Dan Livdahl with 2018 Outstanding Watershed District Employee Award



For more than a decade, Dan Livdahl has served as the Okabena-Ocheda Watershed District's administrator — and its monitoring technician, stream and wetland restoration specialist, groundwater specialist, public parks caretaker and outreach staff.

Livdahl received the 2018 Outstanding Watershed District Employee Award on Nov. 30 in Alexandria during the

Minnesota Association of Watershed Districts' (MAWD) annual conference.

"This is Dan Livdahl. He is the staff of the Okabena-Ocheda Watershed District," Minnesota Board of Water and Soil Resources (BWSR) Executive Director John Jaschke said during the presentation. "You want to see a person with many hats and talents, this is it right here. A lot can get done by one person."

Livdahl's primary duties involve groundwater and surface water protection efforts. Recent projects focused on reducing and treating runoff,

establishing grassed buffers along streams and around lakes, restoring wetlands, and retiring marginal agricultural land in high-priority areas.

"Dan is very efficient and dependable," said Casey Ingenthron, one of five watershed district managers. "He does a wonderful job for us."

Livdahl's Worthington-area conservation work began in 1989, when he became district manager of the Nobles Soil & Water Conservation District (SWCD). During his time with the SWCD, he frequently assisted the nearby watershed district with administrative duties, and



Dan Livdahl leads a discussion at the Prairie View Pond water improvement project during BWSR's annual board tour Aug. 22. The project, located on a former golf course owned by the city of Worthington, aims to reduce phosphorus loading in Lake Okabena by 30 percent by installing in-stream filtration structures. A \$428,000 Clean Water Fund grant is in play. **Photo Credit:** Mary Juhl, BWSR

eventually transitioned to a full-time position with the watershed district in 2007.

“One of the things that motivates me is wanting water quality not just for myself, but for our whole community,” Livdahl said.

Livdahl's achievements prove that a small office can accomplish big goals: In 2016, he helped secure a \$428,000 Clean Water Fund grant to construct in-stream phosphorus treatment filtration on a former golf course owned by the city of Worthington. The project was one of nine stops on BWSR's Aug. 22 annual board

tour.

“The structures will eventually remove 935 pounds of phosphorus per year from Lake Okabena,” Livdahl said during the tour stop. “The benefit we got this year is we have a much larger stormwater pond.”

Outside of the watershed district, Livdahl chairs the Prairie Ecology Bus Center Board of Directors. The nonprofit provides a mobile nature center and ecology lab to southwestern Minnesota residents. The bus transports students on field trips to wetland and prairie sites for a firsthand look at ecology. The bus center serves about 10,000 students annually.

“The whole time they're on the bus, they're getting an educational experience,” Livdahl said. “It's our big goal to get children out into nature.”

Each year, BWSR celebrates the excellent work accomplished by local government staff members who advance conservation efforts throughout the state. In addition to the award for Outstanding Watershed District Employee, BWSR honors an Outstanding Soil and Water Conservation District Employee during the Minnesota Association of Soil and Water Conservation Districts' (MASWCD) annual conference in December.