United States Department of Agriculture
Natural Resources Conservation Service

Watershed Operations

August 2009

Investing in the Whitewater River Watershed, Minnesota

Introduction

The purpose of this project is to protect the soil resource base for sustained agricultural productivity and improved ground and surface water quality. The Whitewater River Watershed also includes State wildlife management areas, two State parks, and a State-operated fish hatchery.

The project area is located in Olmsted, Wabasha, and Winona Counties.

Funded through the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) of 2009, this project is part of the Obama Administration's plans to modernize the nation's infrastructure, jump-start the economy, and create jobs. NRCS is using Recovery Act dollars to update aging flood control structures, protect and maintain water supplies, improve water quality, reduce soil erosion, enhance fish and wildlife habitat, and restore wetlands. NRCS acquires easements and restores floodplains to safeguard lives and property in areas along streams and rivers that have experienced flooding.

Project Description

- **Location:** Olmsted, Wabasha, and Winona Counties, 1st Congressional District
- **Federal Funding:** $299,000

The watershed contains eight designated trout streams covering over 100 miles. To protect those streams, grassed waterways, water and sediment control structures, and terraces on agricultural lands will be installed.

Partners

- USDA, Natural Resources Conservation Service
- Olmsted, Winona and Wabasha Boards of Commissioners
- Olmsted, Winona and Wabasha Soil and Water Conservation Districts

Bene□ts

The project will assist landowners to install conservation practices that contribute to the overall project objectives to improve the environment. The Whitewater River outlets into Weaver Bottoms, part of the Upper Mississippi River National Wildlife Refuge. When complete, this project will provide over $581,000 in average annual benefits.

A picturesque river valley in southeastern Minnesota. The Whitewater River □ows through this rugged terrain to the Mississippi River.

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Economic Opportunities

Over 11,000 residents will benefit from improved water quality, land protection, and reduced soil erosion. The Whitewater River has significant importance as a trout fishery, and also delivers water directly to the Weaver Bottoms Upper Mississippi National Fish and Wildlife Refuge. Funding will increase the workload of local land improvement contractors through installation of conservation projects and help create or save jobs.

Statewide Perspective

ARRA funds for the Whitewater River Watershed will accelerate the conservation and protection of the soil and water resources in this unique landscape of southeast Minnesota. Already an authorized project through the Watershed Protection and Flood Prevention Program, the Recovery Act accelerates the protection of the area's natural resources.

For More Information

USDA, NRCS
375 Jackson St.
St. Paul, Minnesota 55101-1854
Telephone: 651-602-7900
Fax: 651-602-7914
www.mn.nrcs.usda.gov

Grade stabilization structures stop gullies and provide wildlife habitat.

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