



North Oaks

www.northoaksnews.com

News

NORTH OAKS NEWS
4779 Bloom Avenue
White Bear Lake, MN 55110
CHANGE SERVICE REQUESTED

PRESORTED
STANDARD
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
PERMIT NO. 9
CIRCLE PINES, MN

APRIL 2022

VOLUME 40

NUMBER 4

City briefs

Natural Resource Commission

Learn about lawn and pesticide preparation for spring.
Page 12A

Deer Resistant Plants

See which plants will help keep deer from getting a bite out of your flowers and plants.
Page 7B

VLAWMO

Planned spring workshops for yard and garden enthusiasts.
Page 4A

Grant funds and local partnerships coming together to improve North Oaks impaired lake

Dawn Tanner

Contributing Writer

In last month's article in the North Oaks News about Pleasant and East Vadnais Lakes, we concluded by mentioning that work to improve water quality in Wilkinson Lake is a priority for the Vadnais Lake Area Water Management Organization (VLAWMO).

Wilkinson is a shallow lake in North Oaks that is listed on the Minnesota Pollution Control

Agency's (MPCA) Impaired Waters List because of excess nutrients. Wilkinson flows into Deep and Pleasant Lakes and may have broader implications to water quality because of these connections.

A proposed project is now gaining momentum to improve Wilkinson Lake.

Behind the scenes, we've been working to conduct planning, prepare project concepts, build partnerships, and apply for grant funding to work toward the goal of improved water

quality in Wilkinson Lake. In 2019, VLAWMO applied for and was selected as a small, priority watershed with the MPCA as part of their federal Clean Water Act Section 319 program. This grant program provides 60% of the project cost in grant funding and requires 40% support in local match.

The program is exciting because it allows a long-term vision and implementation of projects in a focal area. In this case, the timeframe is 16

years with grant funding to priority watersheds during 4 separate years. In the intervening years, watershed projects are implemented, and proposals are prepared for the next funding round. VLAWMO's first funding round for this program was 2021. Our focal area includes the subwatersheds of Wilkinson, Birch, and Tamarack Lakes. Our first proposed project in this program focuses on

SEE WILKINSON LAKE - PAGE 3A



The figure shows the most likely, general location of the proposed Wilkinson Lake BMP project area in the yellow boxed area south of Wilkinson Lake. The area is slightly enlarged to allow it to be clearly visible in the figure and to display nearby lakes for context. Formal boundaries are established in the project easement. The white arrows show movement of water from other parts of the watershed converging at the project location before emptying into Wilkinson Lake.

improving water quality in Wilkinson Lake.

VLAWMO doesn't own land, so our partnerships are crucial in building successful projects to improve water quality. Partners include local governments and municipalities, State and Federal agencies, utilities, organizations, private landowners, and more.

For the proposed Wilkinson project, a key area was identified through site investigation and feasibility studies to the south of Wilkinson Lake. This area is of regional importance because it is the last stop before stormwater empties into Wilkinson Lake and because the ditch

system carries water primarily from upstream cities, county, and highway areas.

These local entities and their stormwater contributions are identified in a formal document that guides water-quality improvements for Wilkinson Lake, which is called a Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL). The TMDL is available on the VLAWMO website.

The landowner in the area identified by feasibility studies is North Oaks Company/North Oaks Farms (NOC). As such, they are an essential project partner in implementation of this important water-quality project at this key, strategic location. In 2020,

NOC initiated a contract with an environmental consultant to identify possible project locations.

This work was essentially on a parallel track with feasibility work VLAWMO was conducting in partnership with Ramsey County Soil and Water Conservation Division (RCSWCD). These parallel efforts formed a solid foundation for this effective collaboration.

NOC has been involved in preparing for the project in a variety of ways. They agreed to be a local cash-match partner, providing 50% of the cash-match requirement (with VLAWMO providing the other 50%). They are a partner in providing and funding

project maintenance and contributed the easement for project construction and maintenance.

They have led conversations and negotiation with the Minnesota Land Trust (MLT) because the project area is part of the landowner's permanent Conservation Easement. MLT is a partner and signatory on the project easement and will be closely involved with project design plans as they continue to be developed.

St. Paul Regional Water Services (SPRWS) is another important partner involved with this project.

SRPWS led the development and accepted a grant on behalf of VLAWMO from the Minnesota Department of Health (MDH) to support early site investigation, sampling, engineering, and legal costs to develop easement documentation.

This grant support, provided during the summer of 2021, has been important in allowing project preparation to be completed prior to the official grant contract start date with MPCA. The official Section 319 grant contract with MPCA was fully executed in Feb. 2022.

Updates regarding project progress and conceptual design development so far have been provided by VLAWMO to the City of North Oaks and the North Oaks Homeowners' Association (NOHOA). We are delighted to be at a stage where we will have more frequent communication and progress updates available. We look forward to providing updates and more detail as designs for the proposed project are honed to specifically suit the project area, and as construction approaches for this important project.

We will continue to share information with you as it becomes available.

— Dawn Tanner is the VLAWMO Program Development Coordinator