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WAPOA NAMED 2010 COMMUNITY CONSERVATIONIST  

St. Paul, Minn.—The Minnesota Association of Soil and Water Conservation Districts (MASWCD) and the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency (MPCA) have awarded Whitefish Area Property Owners Association (WAPOA) with the 2010 Community Conservationist Award. Crow Wing Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD) nominated the organization for the award.

The award will be presented at the 74th annual MASWCD convention, to be held Dec. 5-7 at the Crowne Plaza St. Paul Riverfront Hotel, in St. Paul, Minnesota. The award provides SWCDs with the opportunity to nominate an individual, business, company, municipality, or organization for concern, cooperation, or implementation of conservation practices in a community environment. This year’s award recipient has been a leader in water quality monitoring, educational events, stormwater management, and erosion control practices.

In the fall of 2009, WAPOA, Pine River Watershed Alliance (PRWA), and Cass County Environmental Services led the way for local organizations to receive a $105,000 Clean Water Partnership Grant through the MPCA. Through this grant volunteers from PRWA and WAPOA will complete intensive water quality monitoring on the Whitefish Chain and throughout the Pine River Watershed. The data will be used to complete a diagnostic study which will determine the amount of nutrients in the watershed. Upon completion of the diagnostic study, WAPOA and others will have an implementation plan identifying the highest priorities for water quality protection within the watershed.

In addition, for the last two years, WAPOA has taken the initiative to provide opportunities and financial resources for landowners on the Whitefish Chain to implement stormwater management practices such as raingardens, shoreline stabilization projects and shoreline buffers. WAPOA, in collaboration with the SWCD, DNR and 1000 Friends of Minnesota, runs a shoreline management contest for its members, providing resources for innovative ways of controlling erosion and sediment on the steep sugar sand slopes of the Whitefish Chain. In 2009, the contest resulted in WAPOA’s stabilization of 183 feet of shoreline on Upper Whitefish Lake by installing brush bundles along the contours, coco mattes, willow wattles, and native vegetation. In 2010, they will install a raingarden on Upper Hay Lake to capture runoff, allowing precipitation it to infiltrate the soil instead of running directly into the lake.

WAPOA has also demonstrated its leadership in the community through a Harvest Dinner event, where farmers meet the lake. This event is designed to help provide opportunities for local farmers and lake associations to network and connect on area land use within their watershed. The event raises awareness about how everyone in a watershed can affect the area’s water quality.

Crow Wing SWCD Water Educator Melissa Barrick commented on the achievements of WAPOA’s efforts by stating, “We really appreciate all the time and hard work WAPOA volunteers have contributed to successful water quality protection efforts with the SWCD and state government agencies. We hope they inspire other lake associations to similarly engage their citizens and their SWCDs in collaborative efforts that protect and improve Minnesota’s soil and water resources.”

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