

## PROTECTING WATER RESOURCES THROUGH A HAYED BUFFER PROGRAM

Within the Sauk River watershed there are 253 lakes and over 500 perennial and intermittent streams that eventually reach the Sauk River. This incoming water is made up of stormwater runoff from many different types of land use. Stormwater runoff picks up and carries nutrients such as phosphorus and soil particles, called sediment, and deposits them in the receiving water body. However, the longer stormwater is held on the land the more nutrients are captured and used by vegetation. One of the simplest form of stormwater retention is a vegetated buffer strip. The vegetation slows down runoff allowing the vegetation to draw up the nutrients and trap the sediment. A well maintained grass buffer can reduce nutrient runoff significantly while providing better habitat along lakes and streams.

The Sauk River Watershed District (SRWD) has taken a proactive approach to protect the Sauk River from becoming impaired for nutrients and sediment. For the past year, the SRWD has been working with local farmers, a crop consultant, the Minnesota Extension Service and technical staff from the Todd and Stearns County Soil and Water Conservation Districts (SWCD) to develop a buffer program that benefits both the landowner and the water resource of concern. This cooperative effort designed the SRWD's new "Hayed Buffer Program" which allows a landowner to meet the 50 foot vegetated buffer State rule and still benefit financially.

The SRWD's Hayed Buffer Program offers landowners 75% cost share to establish a 50 foot vegetated buffer and offers a \$150 annual payment per acre to keep the buffer in place for 10 years. In addition, the landowner is allowed to harvest the vegetation twice a year for forage. It is anticipated that by the end of the 10 years the landowner has adopted the buffer into their farm management practices.



Photo submitted by Stearns SWCD

## HELP PROTECT OUR WATER RESOURCES

### New Pilot Program Offers by SRWD-Hayed Buffer Program

**Pilot Area:** Sauk Lake Dam to CR 111  
at Richmond

**Eligibility:** Must currently be crop land  
or pasture land adjacent to  
intermittent streams, public ditches,  
or private ditches.

- Buffer zone must be min. 50' wide
- Land must be maintained for 10 years

#### TO PARTICIPATE CONTACT:

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