

LOCALNEWS

SWCDs seek involvement in river watershed

JOURNAL STAFF REPORT

The Koochiching Soil & Water Conservation District is collaborating with Itasca SWCD and the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency to work with local officials and citizens to ensure the health of the Bigfork River and Littlefork River watersheds.

Work in the Bigfork River Watershed begins with two open house events that have been organized to inform the public of MPCA findings and to gain information from those who live on or near the Bigfork River and its tributaries. Similar work in the Littlefrk River Watershed started in 2014.

The first open house will take place in Big Falls from 4-6:30 p.m. Sept. 10 at the Big Falls Community Building Legion Room; the second is scheduled for 4-6:30 p.m. Sept. 17 in Marcell at the Marcell Family Center, W49023 State Highway 38.

For more information, contact Jolén Simon, Koochiching SWCD Program Coordinator at 218-283-1180 or jolen.simon@koochichingswcd.org or visit the website at www.koochichingswcd.org to access links to Bigfork River Watershed reports.

The Clean Water, Land, and Legacy Amendment approved by Minnesota voters in 2008 underscored the value Minnesotans place on clean water and the life-style quality it supports. Funding from this amendment related to protecting and improving the state's waters is directed to the MPCA, the agency charged with cataloging the status, or health, of Minnesota's 81 watersheds. This funding, in turn, is available to local government units such as the Koochiching SWCD to carry out watershed work locally.

What is a watershed and

If you go

Sept. 10 — open house, 4-6:30 p.m., Big Falls Community Building Legion Room, Big Falls.

Sept. 17 — open house, 4-6:30 p.m., Marcell Family Center, W49023 State Highway 38, Marcell.

how does it work?

A watershed is the flow, or shed, of water from a defined landscape downhill to the same lake, stream, or river. The smallest watersheds are drainage areas for small streams and lakes. Collectively, each small watershed is a piece, or subwatershed, of a larger watershed that feeds into a river, larger lake, or larger bodies of surface water in the vicinity.

Surface water refers to bodies of water we see on top of the landscape, such

as lakes, streams, and wetlands. Surface water is also connected to groundwater, the water below the surface. The groundwater level is commonly referred to as the water table.

The Bigfork River Watershed is one of 81 major watersheds in the state and has a total drainage area of 1,300,00 acres. The 165 mile river begins in Dora Lake, about 45 miles northeast of Bemidji in Itasca County, runs through portions of Itasca and Koochiching counties, where it drains into Rainy River and Lake of the Woods, finally flowing into Hudson Bay and Canada.

Why is watershed management important?

Water, and in particular water quality, is one of Minnesota's most abundant and precious resources. Good water quality supports abundant fish populations and quality habitat for wild-

life, clean surface water for recreating, and safe drinking water for residents. As the human population increases, landscape development increases the amount of runoff and material carried with it, such as road salt, fertilizers, pesticides, and sediment, directly into surface waters.

Once impaired, restoring water quality is expensive and often unattainable. Keeping "clean water clean" is easier and less costly in the long term.

What happens on the land determines the quality of our waters. Understanding how our activities on the landscape impact water quality and more importantly how we can minimize the effects of our actions, is fundamental to ensuring high quality waters that provide a quality lifestyle and economic sustainability for our region for future generations to come.

What is a WRAP?

The MPCA, Minnesota Department of Natural Resources, Minnesota Board of Soil and Water Resources recently initiated a 10-year Watershed Restoration and Protection Project, or WRAP, to determine the quality of the waters in the Bigfork River Watershed and develop a long-range plan for keeping its waters healthy. Each of the other 80 watersheds in Minnesota is undergoing a similar project over the next 10 years to extensively monitor the chemical and biological health of the watershed's lakes and streams.

The success of the Bigfork River WRAP will depend on the collaboration of other state agencies, local governments, the business community, lake associations, and citizens that live and play in the watershed, according to staff with the Koochiching SWCD.

RRCC speaker encourages students

Richard Coffey was the keynote speaker at Rainy River Community College's freshman orientation Aug. 25.

In coming students heard Coffey talk about the importance of stepping outside of the box, challenging themselves, and striving to reach their full potential. According to Coffey, "You can't win at the game of life if you are not willing to get off the bench."

Coffey, a native of North Carolina, is a businessman and former professional athlete, playing basketball for both the Minnesota Golden Gophers and Minnesota Timberwolves. He served three years in the



Richard Coffey



CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

RRCC students took part in orientation activities Aug. 25.

United States Army as an airborne paratrooper, a member of the "first to fight last to fall 82nd Airborne."

The morning also included breakout sessions on making the most of the college experience, a sophomore question and answer session, and a free lunch. Afternoon sessions included program specific meetings for post-secondary enrollment students, who are high school students taking college classes, as well as students in the industrial maintenance program.



CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

The Rev. Irv Arnquist, a member of the Greater International Falls ACT on Alzheimer's action team, interviews community member Elaine Beach. Nearly 70 individuals have been interviewed about their knowledge of dementia and the community's support of those affected by it. Surveys will be used to set priorities of action towards becoming a dementia friendly community.

ACT on Alzheimer's surveying community

JOURNAL STAFF REPORT

Volunteers of the Greater International Falls ACT on Alzheimer's initiative are now calling on community members to ask them about their knowledge of dementia and the supports available to those who suffer from a loss of cognitive ability due to dementias such as Alzheimer's disease.

The goal of the Greater International Falls ACT on Alzheimer's initiative, part of a statewide volunteer collaborative, is to help the community become more dementia friendly.

A dementia friendly community is defined by the Act on Alzheimer's collabora-

tive as informed, safe and respectful of individuals with dementia. More particularly, it is one in which awareness is raised and the stigma associated with dementia is reduced.

"A dementia friendly community may ensure quality care, support independent living, be easy to navigate, and have responsive businesses and services that support families and care givers," according to local ACT Coordinator Myrna Meadows.

The local project, one of 32 participating communities in Minnesota, has been following a community toolkit divided into four stages. First, an action

team of interested individuals was convened early this summer. That team is now surveying representatives of various sectors of the community. The results of those surveys will be analyzed later this year to determine priorities for action. Finally, steps will be taken to address one or more of the identified priorities.

"We are anxious to see what our survey of community members reveals," said Meadows. "And we hope to be setting goals for action by the end of the year. We invite anyone interested to join the effort."

Meadows can be reached at 286-5622 or meadows@midco.net.

DISTRICT COURT

The following people have been sentenced for aggravated misdemeanor or felony crimes in Koochiching County District Court.

Mitchell B. Olson, 57, Burnsville, was sentenced Aug. 11 for gross misdemeanor driving while intoxicated — refusal to submit to chemical test.

He was sentenced to one year jail and \$4,125 fine and fees. All but 10 days jail and \$2,125 was stayed on court conditions and he was placed on three years supervised probation. He was ordered to follow the recommendations of an evaluation and

not to use alcohol or enter places where it is sold or used. He must submit to random tests and searches and serve 80 hours with the Sentence to Serve program.

Margaret E. Rise, 28, Kelliher, was sentenced Aug. 11 for gross misdemeanor driving while intoxicated.

She was sentenced to one year jail and \$4,200 fine and fees. The jail time and all but \$2,200 was stayed on court conditions and she was placed on three years supervised probation. She was ordered to follow the recommendation of an as-

essment and may not use drugs and alcohol or enter places it is sold. She must submit to random tests and searches and serve 120 hours with the Sentence to Serve program.

Todd C. Lukken, 47, Littlefork, was sentenced Aug. 11 for gross misdemeanor driving after cancellation posing a threat to public safety.

He was given a stay of adjudication of sentence and placed on one year probation to the court. He was ordered to serve 32 hours with the Sentence to Serve program and to pay \$200 court fees.

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