



## West Otter Tail Soil and Water Conservation District

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### **Clean Water Fund grant awarded to West Otter Tail SWCD for Otter Tail County Buffer Initiative**

Fergus Falls, Minn – West Otter Tail Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD) is honored to announce that the Otter Tail County Buffer Initiative has been awarded over \$290,000 in funding from the Minnesota Board of Water and Soil Resources (BWSR) through the Clean Water, Land and Legacy Amendment.

In March 2014, the West Otter Tail SWCD, East Otter Tail SWCD, and Otter Tail County developed and adopted the Otter Tail County Buffer Initiative. Otter Tail County is unique in that there are 1,049 lakes, more than any other county in the United States, and 1,174 miles of rivers, streams, and ditches which totals 4,618 miles of shoreline. Because of this unique resource West Otter Tail SWCD, East Otter Tail SWCD and Otter Tail County are working in cooperation to protect the water resources within Otter Tail County.

The Otter Tail County Buffer Initiative was developed to address the resource concern for Agricultural Use Standards, as outlined in Otter Tail County's Shoreland Management Ordinance and Minnesota Shoreland Management Rules for shoreland areas along public waters. The Agricultural Use Standards states that 50 feet of permanent vegetation must be maintained along all public waters.

Through the awarded Clean Water Fund grant, this initiative will accelerate the inventory of public waters and identify compliance with Shoreland Management Ordinance. This initiative aims to educate landowners and provide conservation programs to move in the direction of 100% compliance.

"Otter Tail County's abundance of lakes, river, and streams are an important natural resource in our community," Brad Mergens, District Manager said. "This grant funds will allow us to accelerate our work to protect and restore water quality. We're grateful for support from all our partners and the commitment of our community to move this project forward."

Since the Amendment was passed by Minnesota voters in Nov. 2008, more than \$100 million has been invested in "on-the-ground" projects. Citizens and local governments have installed more than 4,100 conservation practices to improve the quality in the state's lakes, rivers and wetlands.

In this grant round 197 applications were received, totaling \$37 million in requests for the \$14 million in available funds. “Using the on-the-ground knowledge and experience of our local government partners we are able to fund projects that are targeted towards the most critical areas,” BWSR Executive Director John Jaschke said. “These projects will make a local impact, and also help move our state towards its water quality goals.”

For more information please contact the West Otter Tail SWCD at 218-739-4694 ext. 4.