



# CONSERVATION TODAY

Sibley Soil and Water Conservation District & USDA

Summer 2022



## The New High Island Lake Dam

It has been a long time coming, but at last, the new dam at the outlet of High Island Lake has now been constructed! We at the Sibley SWCD recently wrapped up handling administrative duties including financial oversight for the recent water control structure replacement on the dam. The state owned dam that stood for 81 years washed out in March of 2019. Financing was expected within MN DNR in 2020, but state infrastructure funds were tight and the COVID-19 pandemic introduced some hiccups with securing funding. In late 2020, the Friends of High Island nonprofit conservation group applied for a Lessard-Sams Outdoor Heritage Council Conservation Partners Legacy grant for \$400,000, the maximum grant offering. This grant was put towards replacing the dam and a set of culverts within the outlet channel of High Island Lake to maintain and maximize drawdown potential. The Friends of High Island were awarded the grant in its entirety, which covered most of the project. The Friends group also provided the 10% match, a \$40,000 contribution, towards the replacement of the dam. Sibley SWCD worked as supporting partner on the project, working with the state and nonprofit Friends group to handle financial administration. Requests for bids, federal and state permits, and final bid awarding occurred in 2021. After Memorial Day 2022, the winning bidder, Land Pride Construction out of Paynesville, began on the project. Construction was recently wrapped up in late June. The new structure is a driven sheet pile variable crest design with fish screens and 100-year flood berm in place. The structure is designed to accommodate two-way flow, an oddity associated with High Island Lake and its direct connection to the often flashy and flood prone High Island Creek. High Island Lake will final-



Before

ize drawdown this season, the boards will be inserted sometime in the spring of 2023, and the lake will be refilled in 2023 to restore aquatic habitat and associated recreational opportunities. A special thanks goes out to all of those involved; Friends of High Island, Sibley SWCD, Minnesota DNR, the High Island Creek Watershed District, the Kranz family, and county residents. High Island Lake is back!



After



### Sibley SWCD

- Joel Wurscher,  
District Manager
- Jeremy Buckentin,  
District Technician
- Jack Bushman,  
Conservation Technician

### SWCD Board

- Kathleen Thies - District 1
- Paul Wiemann - District 2
- Loren Evenson - District 3
- Wayne Grams - District 4
- Robert Nielsen - District 5

### Board Meetings

Second Tuesday of  
Each Month  
4 p.m., SWCD Office



### USDA - NRCS

- Jacob Stich,  
Team Lead
- Joel Alecia-Hernandez  
District Conservationist

### Office Hours

Monday - Friday  
8 a.m. - 4:30 p.m.

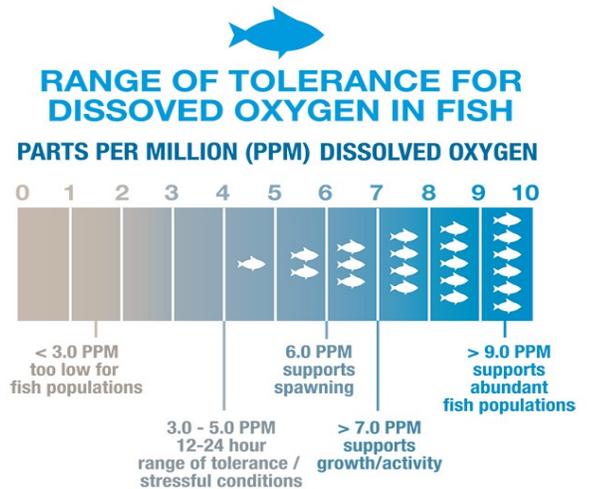


## Dissolved Oxygen

Living organisms need oxygen to survive, and the amount of dissolved oxygen in a surface water body determines how much aquatic life it can support. Dissolved oxygen levels are considered the most important and commonly employed measurement of water quality, an indicator of a waterbody's ability to support desirable aquatic life.

Oxygen gets into water by diffusion from the surrounding air, by aeration (rapid movement), and as a waste product of photosynthesis. The oxygen is used by plants and animals for respiration, and by the aerobic bacteria which consume oxygen during the process of decomposition. Dissolved oxygen analysis measures the amount of gaseous oxygen (O<sub>2</sub>) dissolved in an aqueous solution.

Dissolved oxygen is reduced through respiration by aquatic plants and animals, or the decomposition of organic material in the water, which may come from wastewater treatment plants or agricultural and urban nonpoint source runoff. Dissolved oxygen levels of 5 mg/l and greater provide protection of aquatic life.



## Farm Service Agency Now Accepting Nominations for Farmers and Ranchers to Serve on Local County Committees

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) [Farm Service Agency](#) (FSA) is now accepting nominations for county committee members. Elections will occur in certain Local Administrative Areas (LAA) for members. LAAs are elective areas for FSA committees in a single county or multi-county jurisdiction. This may include LAAs that are focused on an urban or suburban area.

County committee members make important decisions about how Federal farm programs are administered locally. All nomination forms for the 2022 election must be postmarked or received in the local FSA office by Aug. 1, 2022.

Agricultural producers who participate or cooperate in a USDA program and reside in the LAA that is up for election this year, may be nominated for candidacy for the county committee. A cooperating producer is someone who has provided information about their farming or ranching operation to FSA, even if they have not applied or received program benefits. Individuals may nominate themselves or others, and qualifying organizations may also nominate candidates. USDA encourages minority producers, women, and beginning farmers or ranchers to nominate, vote, and hold office.

Nationwide, more than 7,700 dedicated members of the agricultural community serve on FSA county committees. The committees are made up of three to 11 members who serve three-year terms. Producers serving on FSA county committees play a critical role in the day-to-day operations of the agency. Committee members are vital to how FSA carries out disaster programs, as well as conservation, commodity and price support programs, county office employment, and other agricultural issues.

Producers should contact their local FSA office today to register and find out how to get involved in their county's election, including if their LAA is up for election this year. To be considered, a producer must be registered and sign an FSA-669A nomination form. Urban farmers should use an [FSA-669-A-3](#) for urban county committees. The form and other information about FSA county committee elections are available at [fsa.usda.gov/elections](https://fsa.usda.gov/elections). Election ballots will be mailed to eligible voters beginning Nov. 7, 2022. Producers can find their local USDA Service Center at [farmers.gov/service-locator](https://farmers.gov/service-locator).

# BUILD YOUR OWN RAIN BARREL!

Looking for a fun summer project? Rain barrels are used to capture water from a roof and hold it for later use such as watering lawns, gardens or indoor plants. Collecting roof runoff reduces the amount of water that leaves your property, and is a great way to conserve water you would normally get from a well or municipal source.

## How To Build Your Own Rain Barrel

### Tools

Drill  
Jig Saw  
1 ¼" Tap (This is expensive see if you can borrow one.)  
1" Hole Saw  
1 ½" Hole Saw  
Screwdriver

### Supplies

1. 55 Gallon Barrel
2. ¾" Faucet
3. 1 ¼" Straight or 90 Hose Barb
4. 1 ¼" Sump Hose with clamp
5. 4" X 7" Window Screen
6. 2 - 1/2" X 7" Plastic Strips
7. 2 - ½" X 4" Plastic Strips
8. 8 Self Tapping Screws
9. Silicone to seal faucet





## Helping Protect MN Waters from Aquatic Invasive Species

Shoreland owners can play a critical role in reducing the spread of aquatic invasive species (AIS). From early detection, to wrapping up a Summer at the lake by storing docks/equipment, all of which being critical moments of potential spread.

### Reporting Aquatic Invasive Species

Responding quickly to new AIS infestations is critical to help curb the spread into other waterbodies. If you find something you suspect is a zebra mussel, faucet snail, or other aquatic invasive species, note the exact location, take a photo, keep the specimen, and contact a local Minnesota DNR [AIS Specialist](#) or [fisheries office](#).

### Hiring Businesses to Install or Remove Water-Related Equipment

If you hire a business to install or remove your boat, dock, or lift, or other water-related equipment, make sure they have completed AIS training and are on the DNR's list of [Permitted Service Providers](#). Lake service providers that have completed DNR training and obtained their service provider permit will have a permit sticker in the lower driver's-side corner of their vehicle's windshield. They have attended training on AIS laws and many have experience identifying and removing invasive species.

### Moving Docks, Lifts, and Equipment to Another Waterbody

If you plan to move a dock, lift or other water equipment from one lake or river to another, all visible zebra mussels, faucet snails, and aquatic plants must be removed whether they are dead or alive. You may not transport equipment with prohibited invasive species or aquatic plants attached. The equipment must be out of the water for 21 days before it can be placed in another waterbody. Look on the posts, wheels, and underwater support bars of docks and lifts, as well as any parts of boats, pontoons, and rafts that may have been submerged in the water for an extended period of time. In newly infested waters, adult zebra mussels may not be abundant and you might notice only a few mussels on your equipment.

### Storing Lifts and Docks for Winter

You may remove water-related equipment from a waterbody – even if it has zebra mussels or other prohibited invasive species attached – and place it on the adjacent shoreline property without a permit. However, if you want to transport a dock or lift to another location for storage or repair, you may need a [permit to authorize transport of prohibited invasive species and aquatic plants](#).

### Transporting Watercraft for Storage

You may not transport any watercraft with zebra mussels, faucet snails, or other prohibited invasive species or aquatic plants attached away from a water access or other shoreland property, even if you intend to put it in storage for the winter. If you need to transport your watercraft at the end of the season, you may need a [permit to authorize transport of prohibited invasive species and aquatic plants](#).

### Transporting Aquatic Plants for Disposal

You may not transport aquatic plants from a shoreland property to a disposal location without a permit. Shoreland owners interested in transporting aquatic plants – including aquatic plants with prohibited invasive species attached – to a disposal location must complete and sign a [permit to authorize transport of aquatic plants and attached prohibited invasive species](#).



Photo Credit: West Central Tribune



## Do your part to stop the spread of Aquatic Invasive Species!

The 2022 open water season is upon us! Boaters are traveling far and wide to recreate on all the great water resources that Minnesota has to offer. This summer, Sibley Soil and Water Conservation District is asking that Sibley County residents do their part and take the pledge to stop the spread of aquatic invasive species in Minnesota. By signing and returning the form below, you are not only letting us know that you plan to take all necessary steps to stop the spread, but will also get entered into a drawing for 3 great prizes! Drawing will take place on August 12th and all winners will be notified!

**1<sup>st</sup> prize: Rod/Reel Combo**

**2<sup>nd</sup> prize: Tackle Box**

**3<sup>rd</sup> prize: \$25 Scheels gift card**



### Pledge to:

#### **CLEAN**

- Boats, trailers, and gear
- Remove all weeds, mud, and hitchhiking contaminants from axels, wheels, undercarriage, motor, prop, nets, and gear before leaving the boat landing

#### **DRAIN**

- Water from boat, bilge, motor, and livewell
- Remove drain plug and open all water draining devices
- Trash unused bait

#### **DRY**

- Everything for at least five days before going to other waters
- Decontaminate with high pressure water (120F or warmer)



Like the Sibley SWCD facebook page for 1 additional entry!

<https://www.facebook.com/SibleySWCD/>



## AIS Pledge



Name:

Address:

Phone Number or Email:

I am interested in providing input on the Sibley County AIS Prevention Plan (circle one):

YES

NO

Please cut this out and mail to:

Sibley SWCD  
Attn: AIS Pledge  
P.O. Box 161  
Gaylord, MN 55334

This form can also be completed at [www.sibleyswcd.org/aispledge](http://www.sibleyswcd.org/aispledge)

One entry per person



## Cutting The Lawn Out of Your Budget—Saving \$ with Pollinator Habitat

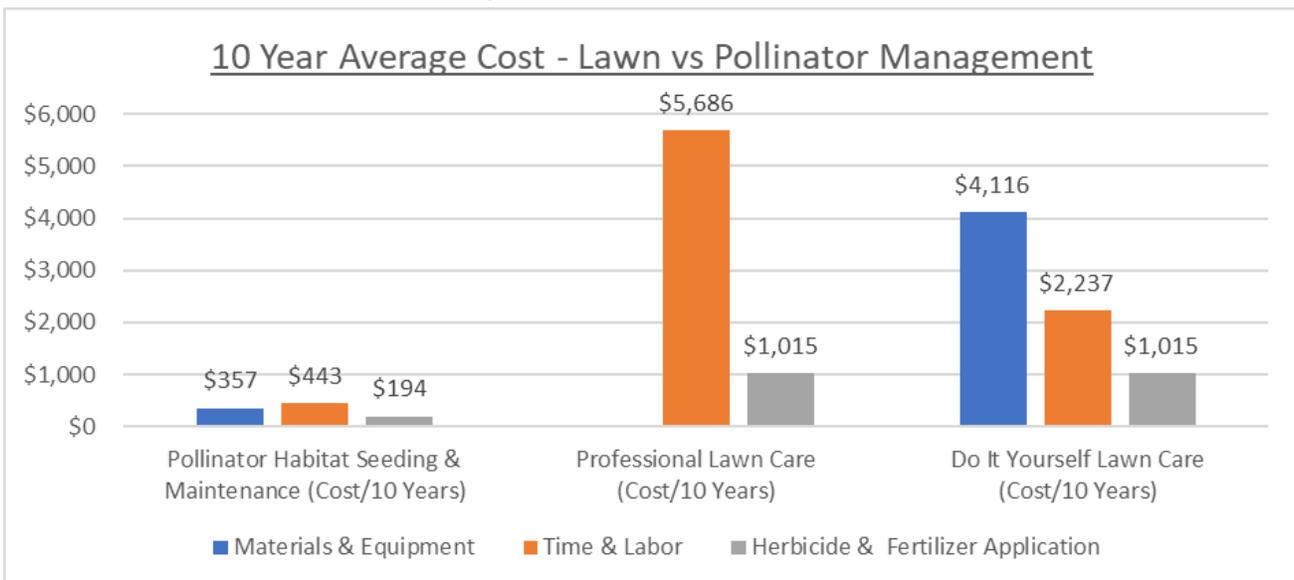
For most living in rural Minnesota, the warm months of spring, summer, and fall are some of the busiest times of the year. Between a variety of schedules, activities, and field work, lawn maintenance is a common chore shared between most landowners. With so much of rural Minnesota covered in lawn, an opportunity exists for some landowners to save time and money while providing critical habitat for our endangered pollinators.

Based on a 2021 study published in the Journal of Fish and Wildlife Management, an average midwestern lawn will be mowed about 26 times per year. This study also found that the average land manager will dedicate 14 hours/acre/year for standard lawn care if they complete the work themselves. That adds up to 5.8 days per acre over the next decade! If you factor in their time, fuel, fertilizer and a new lawn mower, landowners will spend an average of \$7,368 per acre over a 10-year period managing their lawn. If a landowner chooses to hire a commercial lawn service instead, they can expect save time but will ultimately spend



between \$6,701 to \$9,288 per acre over that same 10-year period. With these long-term time commitments and costs in mind, landowners could net big savings by converting undesirable areas into pollinator habitat.

The same study found that on average, establishing and maintaining pollinator habitat may only cost a total of \$994 per acre over an entire 10-year period. This means a potential cost reduction around 84-87% per acre when compared to traditional lawn care management systems over time. Beyond the long-term cost savings to landowners, areas of well-established diverse habitat will have tremendous benefits for pollinators, wildlife, and can even improve water quality. Pollinators are especially important as they facilitate the reproduction of over 80% of the worlds flowering plants and are responsible for helping to produce 1/3 of all the food that people eat each year. Today, bee and butterfly populations are on a steep decline due to a lack of suitable habitat and widespread pesticide use. As such, any landowner willing to establish pollinator habitat will have a direct impact on their dwindling populations.





## Continued from pg. 6

The first step for any landowner is to determine if there is any available area within their property that can be dedicated towards a habitat conversion. Grassed areas that are seldomly used for any activities such as road ditches, odd corners, boundaries, or areas that are difficult to access and maintain, are great places to consider. Although, there can be some challenges with eliminating the existing grasses for establishment, the long-term cost savings are well worth the effort. A good stand of pollinator habitat should include a diverse mixture of native grasses and flowers that bloom at different times throughout the entire growing season. It is also best to avoid placing pollinator habitat directly adjacent to areas with frequent or high pesticide use whenever possible.

For anyone looking to get started, be sure to contact your local USDA-NRCS and Soil and Water Conservation District. They can provide you with technical assistance for planning as well as guide you towards any available programs and/or cost share resources for your area. With a little effort, landowners could save some time and money while making a tremendous impact to our local pollinator populations.

### Sources:

<https://meridian.allenpress.com/jfwm/article/12/1/151/464075/Financial-Analysis-of-Converting-Rural-Lawns-to>  
<https://www.beeandbutterflyfund.org/>  
<https://bluethumb.org/>  
<https://extension.umn.edu/planting-and-growing-guides/lawn-care-calendar>

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## AIS Spotlight: Zebra Mussels

Zebra mussels are small freshwater mussels that are not native to Minnesota. They have spread throughout much of Europe and Asia over the past 200 years. They were likely brought to North America in the ballast water of ships and were discovered in Lake Erie in 1988. Zebra mussels in Minnesota were discovered in the Duluth harbor in 1989. The DNR has listed a total of 213 waterbodies as “infested” with zebra mussels, a regulatory classification which includes some waterbodies that are connected to waterbodies where zebra mussels have been found. One of these bodies of water is the MN River, which flows North along the eastern side of Sibley County. Zebra mussels are illegal to import, possess, buy, sell, transport, or introduce them into state waters.



Photo Credit: U of M

### Keys to ID:

- Stripes are generally zig-zag pattern
- Pattern is variable; some may even lack striping altogether
- Have flat edge and won't topple over when set on its side
- Shells form straight line when closed
- Range from 1/5 of an inch to 2 inches

### Where to look for them:

- Often found attached to submerged objects; boats, docks, plants, rocks, submerged logs
- May leave behind byssal threads when removed
- Newly settled mussels are usually in shallow areas; adults are common in depths of 10 to 20 ft

**Sibley SWCD**  
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PO Box 161  
Gaylord MN 55334

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