

UPPER RUM RIVER WATERSHED MANAGEMENT ORGANIZATION

monitors water quality, offers grants to residents

Lakes, streams, and the Rum River are the focus of the Upper Rum River Watershed Management Organization (URRWMO). This special purpose unit of government is formed jointly by the cities of Bethel, East Bethel, Ham Lake, Nowthen, Oak Grove, and St. Francis. The URRWMO area has several high quality waterbodies, including East Twin Lake, Lake George, and the Rum River. But there are concerns too, including water quality in Crooked Brook and Rogers Lake. The URRWMO works to protect high water quality and improve it where necessary. They especially concentrate on water-related issues that cross municipal boundaries, requiring multi-city coordination.

Upper Rum River Watershed Management Organization



Rum River Erosion and Water Quality

The Rum River is arguably our most notable waterbody. Locally, the Rum River is designated as a state Scenic and Recreational Waterway, is a great fishery, and is thought to have good water quality. To assess the river's current condition, the URRWMO has begun systematic monitoring of the river's water quality. Additionally, in 2010 the river was surveyed to identify erosion and other issues which affect water quality.

Water quality monitoring of the river is occurring at both the north and south ends of the URRWMO area. This allows detection of any changes that may occur along this stretch of the river. To date, they've observed little change in water quality from St. Francis to the northern boarder of Ramsey. However, there is a low-level increase in chlorides from upstream to downstream, which is likely due to road deicing salts. The chloride increase exists throughout the year, because these salts have infiltrated into the shallow groundwater that feeds the river during dry conditions. During summer storms the chlorides are diluted, further evidence that groundwater is an important source. The highest salt concentrations would likely occur during spring melt, but this has not yet been monitored. Road salts are a widespread water quality concern, especially downstream where road densities are higher due to urbanization.

This spring the URRWMO mapped erosion and other possible impacts to the river, such as violations of State scenic river rules. Riverbank erosion can threaten water quality, fish habitat, and properties through decreased shoreline stability. Overall, this stretch of the river is beautiful, but some problem areas were identified. The URRWMO will be contacting property owners and offering assistance to those interested in improving their property.

Grants

How we manage our own properties can have significant impacts on lakes and rivers, both positive and negative. Understanding the public benefits of high water quality, the URRWMO offers grants to encourage water quality improvement projects on private property. Cost-share grants are available to landowners for projects such as erosion control, stormwater runoff treatment, and/or native vegetation restoration adjacent to lakes and streams. Applications are accepted at any time on a first-come, first-serve basis. The grants are competitive, and the highest ranking projects will be those that will most directly benefit a public waterbody.

Grants typically cover 50-70% of project materials. Remaining costs and labor are the landowner's responsibility. The Anoka Conservation District (ACD) offers free on-site consultations and can assist with project design. The grants are administered through the ACD, and interested landowners should contact Jamie Schurbon at 763-434-2030 extension 12.

Meetings and Contacts

More information about the URRWMO can be found on their website at www.AnokaNaturalResources.com/urrwmo. Citizens are welcome and encouraged to attend URRWMO meetings. Remaining 2010 meetings are July 6, September 7, and November 9 at 7:00 p.m. at the Oak Grove City Hall (south entrance).

Become an Upper Rum River WMO Board Member

There are currently vacant URRWMO board member positions for the cities of Ham Lake, Oak Grove, and St. Francis. If you live in one of those communities and would like to serve, please contact the city. URRWMO board members are appointed by the city.



Example of erosion along the Rum River identified during a spring 2010 field survey.