

Upper Rum River Watershed Management Organization

MEDIA RELEASE

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Local Watershed Organization Tackles Riverbank Erosion

Riverbank erosion causes problems for both property owners and the river's health. A recent inventory of river conditions found 80 stretches of eroding Rum Riverbank in Anoka County. The Upper Rum River Watershed Management Organization (URRWMO) and its partners will soon begin work to correct a number of those eroding riverbanks.

Riverbank erosion varies in size and type of solution. Amongst locally eroding riverbanks, some are 30-foot tall banks of bare, collapsing sand. These, often on the outside bends of the river, may require re-grading, rock or other robust engineering to fix. Other eroding riverbanks are just a few feet tall. These can be corrected with "softer" materials such as armoring with cut cedar trees and planting for long-term stability. In either case, work is done with an eye toward improving habitat.

Three grants are being pursued, each for a different approach to fixing erosion. The grants are from the MN DNR, the MN Board of Water and Soil Resources and the Lessard-Sams Outdoor Heritage Council. The first two of these grant sources will make funding decisions in winter 2019-2020. The latter has already favorably reviewed the project and is recommending that the State legislature fund it at \$822,000. All of these funding sources get money from the Clean Land, Water and Legacy Amendment passed by voters in 2008.

The projects will be done through a partnership of organizations interested in the Rum River's health. Each of the following are providing matching funds for the grants: the Upper Rum River WMO, Lower Rum River WMO, The Nature Conservancy and Anoka County Parks. The Anoka Conservation District is providing staff time to coordinate the grant applications and river work.

Stabilizing even just 10 eroding riverbanks will decrease sediment entering the river by over 750 tons. That sediment makes the water brown, carries nutrients and other pollutants, and smothers fish spawning habitat. Every project will include habitat improvements in and next to the water. Work will begin in 2020.

The Upper Rum River Watershed Management Organization is a special purpose unit of government made up of six cities: Bethel, East Bethel, Ham Lake, Nowthen, Oak Grove, and St. Francis. Its purpose is to manage the area's waters, particularly those that flow across city boundaries. More information is at www.URRWMO.org.

For more information about this project or the URRWMO, contact Jamie Schurbon at 763-434-2030 ext. 21 or jamie.schurbon@anokaswcd.org.

Photos below are also provided as separate image files.

Example eroding and restored riverbank.



Example riverbank erosion and a similar site after restoration.

