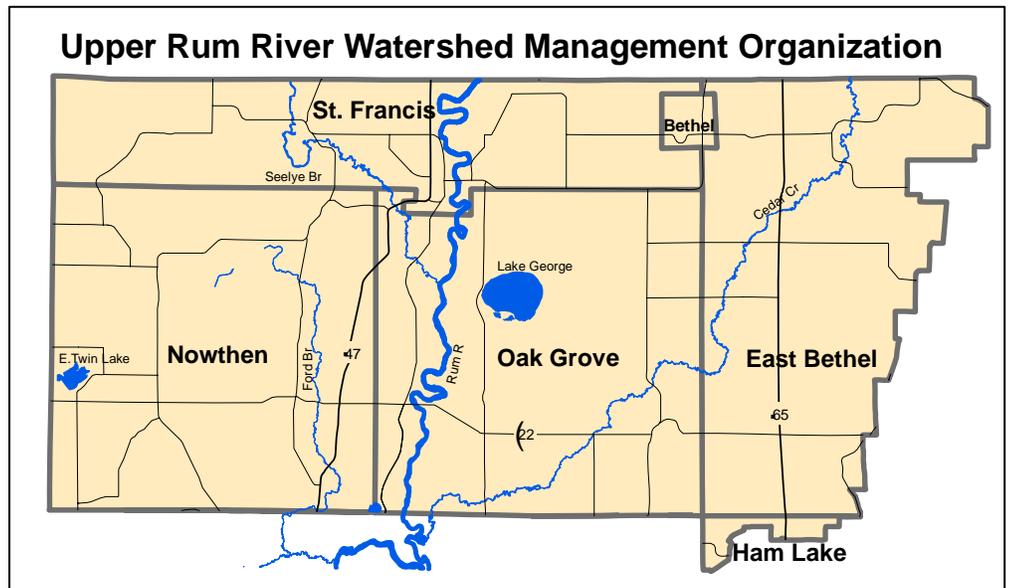# Local Government Helping Landowners Clean up Lakes, Streams, and the Rum River

Assistance, Grants offered

While state agencies like the DNR and Pollution Control Agencies do play a major role in managing our lakes and rivers, there is a lesser known local government agency that plays a role. The Upper Rum River Watershed Management Organization (URRWMO) is a special purpose unit of government formed jointly by the Cities of Bethel, East Bethel, Ham Lake, Nowthen, Oak Grove, and St. Francis. Made up of local officials, it serves as the most local level of government that is working to manage water quality in area lakes and rivers. Work includes monitoring, water quality improvement projects, and public outreach.

Upper Rum River Watershed Management Organization

St. Francis

Bethel

Seelye Br

Cedar Cr

Lake George

E. Twin Lake   Nowthen   Ford Br   47   Rum R   Oak Grove   East Bethel

65

22

Ham Lake

Grants to Residents for Water Quality
Water quality is, in many ways, the result of our activities on the land. What we do in our own yards impacts our lakes and streams. For waterfront properties the connection is obvious. But properties draining through curb-and-gutter stormwater systems, wetlands, or creeks have an impact too. The URRWMO, and its partner agency the Anoka Conservation District, offer friendly advice to homeowners on landscaping that will be beautiful and good for our lakes and streams. To encourage landscaping for water quality, grants are offered. The most common grant-funded project types are lakeshore restorations, rain gardens, and erosion correction.

Lakeshore restorations are buffers of native wildflowers and grasses that replace turf grass at the water's edge. Turf grass does a very poor job of holding the shoreline and filtering pollutants. The native plants stabilize the shoreline, preventing the loss of additional land. They also do a great job of filtering yard runoff before it goes into the lake. Given that the shore is so important for wildlife, it makes sense to use native

plants along much of the shoreline. Most lakeshore projects still leave traditional access to the water for boating, swimming, and fishing.

Rain gardens also filter runoff, but work differently. They are small basins. Usually, they are dry gardens. When it rains, water is directed into the garden, and it fills. The water soaks into the ground within 48 hours, a process that does a great job removing pollutants. An ideal place for a rain garden is next to the street's curb, just uphill from a storm drain. Anything that flows into a storm drain generally ends up in a river, wetland, or lake.

For people who live on a stream or river, bank erosion can be a serious issue. On one hand, it is a loss of property and unsightly. On the other hand, it is adding sediment to the river that hurts water quality. Some erosion occurs naturally, but more significant erosion demands attention. The Anoka Conservation District and URRWMO assist homeowners with correcting this streambank erosion.

The URRWMO competitive grants can cover 50-70% of materials for a project. The landowner is responsible for the remainder, plus the labor. Advice and design assistance is available through the Anoka Conservation District. A competitive grant application process is open as long as funds are available. More information and application materials are available at www.anokaswcd.org/fin_assist/acd_wq_share.htm or contact Jamie Schurbon at 763-434-2030 ext. 12.

To learn more about these types of projects, see the brochures at http://www.anokaswcd.org/acd/tech_assist/brochures/brochures.htm

A lakeshore restoration with native plants.

A rain garden during a rain storm.

Bank erosion along the Rum River.

URRWMO 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 2011 meetings are July 5, September 6, and November 1 at 7:00 p.m. at the Oak Grove City Hall (south entrance).