

**Describe your project and your community (100 words max) \***

In 2016 Oxford Township decided to take a proactive approach to manage and protect health of the townships' seven shallow water lakes. This effort required the township to do something that few have; we contracted with the Isanti Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD). The SWCD developed a 10 year monitoring plan that includes surface water data collection, vegetation and shoreline surveys. The information will be used to plan for inevitable development and as input for the following:

- Inventorying current environmental conditions.
- Insight into why these natural resources are the way they are.
- Tracking trends.

**What makes your project innovative? (250 words max) \***

Our current town board has always been forward thinking and environmentally conscious. Even before the "Improving Water Quality 25% by 2025" initiative by the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency was announced, Oxford township had taken steps to work with Isanti County SWCD to protect the health of our water resources.

This project is uniquely innovative in the following ways:

- 1) We have taken a proactive approach to protect the health of our water resources. Our lakes are currently healthy and the land surrounding them is minimally developed. We know that development is inevitable. Increased development will ultimately impact our lakes health and our quality of life. More often than not, resource managers focus on the restoration of degraded water health. It is generally more cost-effective to prevent water quality degradation than to restore it after it has been degraded. Restoring water systems once they have become severely impaired is often a lengthy and costly process, we want to avoid this!
- 2) The Township-SWCD relationship is unique. SWCDs do not have a reliable source of funding that would allow for long-term water monitoring and resource assessment.
- 3) Furthermore, to the best of our knowledge no other township has taken the initiative to track the long-term health of all of its lakes

**What specific outcomes and impact has your innovation achieved? (150 words max)**

While this project is in the early stages, the following impacts have already been realized.

- Swamp Loosestrife, a MN Species of Special Concern, has been identified on both West and East Twin Lakes. The MN DNR has now documented the plants and sent specimens to the U of M herbarium.
- Aquatic vegetation surveys have found no aquatic invasive species (AIS). Interestingly, there are no public boat accesses and there is minimal development around the lakes. As such, this information can be used to educate others on the importance of human transportation of AIS.

We feel that the main impact will be seen in future years as this work will help understand the current state of our water systems, enable us to develop programs to reverse any damage seen, and allow us to protect water quality for future generations.

**How sustainable is your innovation? Could it be replicated in other jurisdictions? (150 words max)**

This innovation is very sustainable- we have entered into a long term partnership with Isanti County SWCD, and foresee that the water testing will continue for as long as necessary. We have specified our objectives, scope of the project, and work responsibilities in the agreement, so the project could be easily replicated in other jurisdictions that would like to monitor and improve water quality.

**How - if at all - has your innovation involved cross organization or cross-sector collaborations or input? (150 words max) \***

Oxford township's innovation relies on partnership with the Isanti County SWCD. Personnel from the Isanti's SWCD are collecting water samples, studying vegetation present, and working with Oxford supervisors to understand how to protect our water systems.

Additionally, water quality information collected on the Typo Lake inlet is being utilized by our downstream partners, the Anoka SWCD. The Anoka SWCD plans to use the information in order to inform management of Typo Lake which is largely situated in Anoka County.