



Projects aim to improve water quality of Dobbins Creek

CRWD efforts focused on protecting streambanks from erosion during flash floods

AUSTIN, Minn. – Tuesday, Sept. 25 – Dobbins Creek, the local waterway that gently flows through Austin’s nature center but is prone to flash flooding, is getting more help from the Cedar River Watershed District as part of an ongoing effort to improve water quality.

Two projects, funded by state Clean Water Legacy funds, will aim this week to stabilize sensitive streambanks, saving an estimated 59 tons of sediment from entering Dobbins Creek, which forms East Side Lake in Austin before entering the Cedar River.

Under one project, CRWD staff along with a Conservation Corps of Minnesota crew this week are doing tree revetment work in the Jay C. Hormel Nature Center as well as just downstream on residential property near the 21st Street Northeast bridge. Through this work, tree material is stacked together and anchored into the stream banks to hold and “heal” the banks in an effort to prevent further soil erosion.

Further upstream, the CRWD also has teamed up with Red Rock Township to fix a streambank along Dobbins Creek where soil erosion has been threatening 580th Avenue, a township road about four miles northeast of Austin. Without corrective action, the road could be in jeopardy of washing out, said Justin Hanson, CRWD resource specialist.

“These projects are part of a long-term commitment to cleaning up Dobbins Creek, which will improve East Side Lake and the Cedar River downstream from it,” Hanson said. “Flooding events bring property damage and economic hardship to the community. But they also have a significant effect on our local water resources.”

Dobbins Creek, which has south and north branches converging at the nature center before it becomes East Side Lake, is prone to flash flooding and has been shown to contribute greatly to flooding in Austin.

In 2010, the CRWD funded a study on Dobbins Creek and its watershed to identify water-quality issues as well as propose solutions to those problems. It identified the north branch of Dobbins as a target area for seeking funds for best-management practices, and revealed that Dobbins Creek is exceeding the state’s water-quality standards for turbidity (dirty water) in five out of 10 months analyzed during the study.

“Streambank stabilization was one of the solutions identified to reduce sediment entering the stream and clean it up,” Hanson said.

These types of projects help hold soil in place during major flooding events, Hanson said. The CRWD also uses non-conventional, “green” treatment to address streambank stabilization issues, providing long-term water quality benefits as well as promoting local habitat by using natural resources as a vehicle to treat the degraded streams, he said.

Under the tree revetment project at the nature center, the CRWD was awarded a Clean Water Funds grant to contract with a Conservation Corps of Minnesota crew to help implement such a project along Dobbins Creek. The CRWD and the crew now are fixing sensitive streambank in the nature center and along a residential property owned by Dr. Mark Reeves, who has lost a substantial amount of his property through recent floods.

For the Red Rock Township project, the CRWD and the township worked together to obtain grant funding to fix the streambank along 580th Avenue. That rehabilitation work will begin later this week.

In 2010, Red Rock Township officials also made significant progress in improving water quality in the Dobbins Creek watershed when they broke ground on major project mostly funded by grants to construct a new sewage treatment system for the small town of Nicolville, east of Austin. The project eliminated a straight-pipe sewage system used by homes there for decades, affecting the creek’s water quality.

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PHOTO/VIDEO OPPORTUNITY

Who: Cedar River Watershed District and the Conservation Corps of Minnesota.

What: Anchoring tree material into sensitive streambank areas of Dobbins Creek.

Where: Near the 21st Street Northeast bridge over Dobbins Creek in Austin, near entrance to Jay C. Hormel Nature Center.

When: All day today (Tuesday).

Why: These two areas – one in the nature and one on residential property – have soil-erosion issues during flood events. These projects will protect the banks and improve water quality.

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