

Goodhue County Land Use Management

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TO: Goodhue County Board of Commissioners
FROM: Lisa M. Hanni, LUM Director / County Surveyor / County Recorder
DATE: February 7, 2023 County Board meeting
RE: County Riparian Aid Funds (Buffers) -- FYI

Goodhue County and Soil and Water staff have been working with landowners to ensure the statutory riparian strips are established and maintained throughout the County. The Riparian Aid funds are dedicated for the enforcement of the buffer program, they are not levied dollars, nor included in the County's general fund. These funds have been used for the highly accurate aerial photography every two years, Lidar projects, and staffing costs associated with enforcement.

We have noticed that since we have been reviewing the parcels (2018, 2020, 2022 aerial photography) that although the landowners have been diligent establishing and keeping vegetative buffers, there are numerous areas along some of the public waters that are seeing extensive erosion along the bends and turns of the water course. This may cause landowners to come out of compliance and either have to move their buffer back and/or stabilize the erosion.

We spoke with BWSR, who is our resource for the administration of the program, to see if we could use a portion of the Riparian Aid funds to assist landowners in a cost-share program related to help stabilize some of the erosion and thereby accomplish the water quality improvement goal.

We are proposing to use some of the funds to assist landowners who are affected by the riparian buffer law, to re-establish buffers affected by stream erosion or expand their buffer to remain in compliance. The SWCD would be available to provide technical assistance with vegetative buffer standards, streambank stabilization design and offer cost-share dollars to implement the practice(s). The cost-share amount would be limited to a percentage of the total cost with a maximum payment identified prior to executing a contract with a landowner. These funds would be available on a first come first serve basis. The SWCD would request reimbursement from the County Riparian Aid fund for this initiative.

We anticipate that by our annual meeting with SWCD we will report on the progress of the program.