

Press Release

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Heron Lake Watershed District Wins Project of the Year Award

The Heron Lake Watershed District was awarded the Minnesota Association of Watershed District's (MAWD) Project of the Year Award for the *Grassroots Effort to Bring Back Fulda Lakes*. The award was given during the annual meeting held at the Arrowwood Resort in Alexandria.

The MAWD annually honors innovative programs and projects that have achieved project partnerships, public benefit, use of creative solutions, innovative project financing and management, project success at meeting goals, and address a clearly defined project.

Awards nominations were accepted in early August. Nominations were submitted by 11 watershed districts across the state. HLWD was notified that they were a finalist in the Project of the Year category in late August. A complete detailed project description was submitted in early October. Nominations were reviewed by a committee of eight managers and staff representing watershed districts throughout the State of Minnesota.

This grassroots endeavor started on behalf of Fulda townspeople noticing the degradation of First and Second Fulda Lakes, located within city limits. Through strong partnerships, the grassroots ideas turned to reality. The HLWD was able to apply for funds based on the needs described by local landowners. Partnerships were essential in utilizing the best resources available and maximizing the cost effectiveness of any project or education event. Partners included the Department of Natural Resources, Murray County, US Fish and Wildlife Service, Fulda Game and Fish Club, State of Minnesota, Landowners, Murray Soil and Water Conservation District, and the HLWD. Fulda Lakes are seeing improvement as a result of collaboration that made the drawdown, reclamation, and restoration projects possible.

What the Committee said:

"This looks like it was a huge undertaking and coordination effort as well as all the grant writing and developing the funding package. The results are fantastic! Tremendous Team effort by all! Great Job! I'm impressed!"

"A highly successful effort to restore Fulda Lakes. This is a great example of cooperation for water quality improvement and a very cost-effective project."

"Lake Woebegon has nothing on the citizens of Fulda; they dreamt big and now can reap the rewards of such an ambitious project".

The annual MAWD Awards were held at the Radisson Arrowwood in Alexandria, Minnesota on Friday, December 6, 2013. Three finalist projects were honored: Green Line Green Infrastructure – Capitol Region Watershed District; Reach 20 Restoration – Minnehaha Creek Watershed District; and Grassroots Effort to Bring Back Fulda Lakes – HLWD. There were 250 people in attendance at the event.

