

2014 WATER SUCCESS STORY

Bureau of Water Quality



Healthy Lakes Grant Program Launched

By Jennifer Sereno and Pamela Toshner, Wisconsin DNR



New Grant Program Funding

A new DNR [grant program](#) was launched in November 2014 to encourage simple lakeshore projects to boost healthy lakes. The "Healthy Lakes" initiative is an effort of the [Wisconsin Lakes Partnership](#) supported by the DNR, the UW-Extension Lakes Program, Wisconsin Lakes, counties and the many lake groups and citizens who work to protect, improve and restore Wisconsin lakes.

The grant program aims to fund local projects around the state that focus on simple ways to improve fish habitat, integrate native plantings, divert and clean runoff water and promote natural beauty. With \$200,000 in funding available statewide, the Healthy Lakes project provides up to \$1,000 in state grant dollars for each "best practice" identified in a proposal. Grant awards to eligible sponsors such as lake groups, waterfront organizations and communities will be capped at \$25,000. Goals include increasing single-property participation in Healthy Lakes best practices by 100 percent from 2015 to 2017.

Do-it-yourself Projects Encouraged

"Wisconsin's lakes help define our communities while providing valuable habitat and supporting our economy," said DNR Secretary Cathy Stepp. "Our research tells us that lakes with good habitat tend to have better water quality, which translates into more recreational opportunities and sustainable property values. By encouraging participation from lake groups, counties and private property owners, we hope to see simple practices implemented that encourage additional 'do-it-yourself' projects."

Examples of Healthy Lakes Best Practices

Lake groups and other partners may identify their own habitat and water quality goals through local planning and public participation opportunities. Following are examples of simple projects, each capped at \$1,000 in state funding, that are included among the Healthy Lakes best practices:

Installation of native planting packages

Native planting packages include plan designs and lists of suitable plants for areas at least 10 feet wide and covering a contiguous 350 square feet. Lakeshore property owner preferences and site features will determine which packages - such as those developed to attract birds and butterflies or those for woodland plantings - would be most appropriate. When adopted by multiple homeowners, the plantings improve habitat, slow runoff and promote natural beauty. For a 350 square foot area, installed costs total about \$1,000.

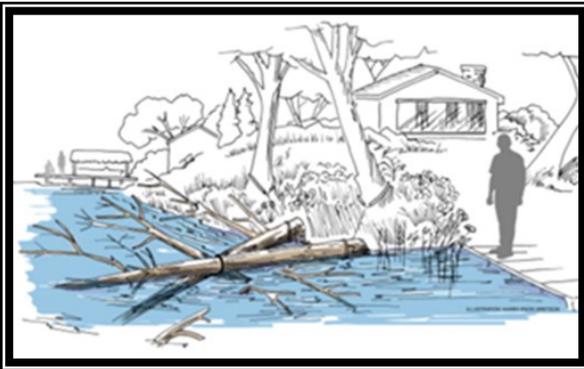


Shoreline vegetation helps improve water quality and provide habitat for wildlife. Photo by Lisa Reas.

Healthy Lakes Grant Program (Continued)

Deployment of "fish sticks"

These include whole downed trees stacked in a cluster and anchored to the shore either fully or partially submerged. Use of fish sticks prevents shoreline erosion while improving fish and wildlife habitat. On average, fish stick projects cost about \$500 for a cluster of three to five downed trees.



FISH STICK HABITAT BMP

Diversion of runoff water

By building small berms or shallow "dips," homeowners can capture runoff from roads or paths and divert the water into an area where it can be absorbed. On average, diversion practices cost about \$200 installed.

Placement of rock infiltration pits or trenches

Rock infiltration projects capture, store and allow runoff water to soak into the ground where it cleans itself instead of streaming directly to the lake. Installed costs average \$3,800.

Installation of upland rain gardens

Rain gardens improve wildlife habitat while diverting and cleaning runoff water. When placed in upland areas near homes, rain gardens can collect roof, road and driveway runoff and prevent it from reaching a lake. While costs vary greatly depending on size and plantings, rain gardens average about \$2,500 installed.



Rain gardens collect storm water runoff and help prevent erosion. Photo by Brent Edlin.

Check with Local Zoning Ordinances First

The Healthy Lakes funding is not intended for large, complex sites with substantial runoff or erosion problems where engineering design is more appropriate. Before undertaking any major projects, lake associations and homeowners are encouraged to consult local zoning ordinances. The Healthy Lakes initiative is an effort of the Wisconsin Lakes Partnership supported by DNR, the UW-Extension Lakes Program, Wisconsin Lakes, counties and the many lake groups and citizens who work to protect, improve and restore Wisconsin lakes.

Small Changes Add Up

Carroll Schaal, DNR Lakes and Rivers Section Chief in the Bureau of Water Quality, said the benefits of simple projects increase cumulatively as more property owners participate. "When adopted by many property owners, the small changes add up," Schaal said. "Positive incremental steps ultimately help protect and enhance our lakes for everyone. While lake groups, counties or other sponsors may adopt the Healthy Lakes Implementation Plan in its entirety to be eligible for grant funding, we have included enough technical information that individual lakeshore owners may choose to take on a do-it-yourself project without grant funding." See the Healthy Lakes Implementation Plan for more information on management practices at: <http://tinyurl.com/healthylakes>.

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