

Winona County SWCD
2012 Outstanding Conservationist:
Win-Cres Chapter of Trout Unlimited

The Winona County Soil and Water Conservation District is pleased to announce the Win-Cres Chapter of Trout Unlimited as our 2012 Outstanding Conservationist. Win-Cres was honored with state recognition at the annual meeting of the Minnesota Association of Soil and Water Conservation Districts, December 2-4, 2012 in Minneapolis, Minnesota.



Each year, the state's SWCDs recognize individuals and organizations for outstanding accomplishments in implementing conservation practices and improving Minnesota's natural resources. The award program is conducted with support from *The Farmer* magazine, and the award ceremony receives sponsorship from the Minnesota Corn Growers Association.

The Win-Cres Chapter of Trout Unlimited has worked effortlessly to improve the Big Trout Creek, Pine Creek, Rush Creek, Garvin Brook, and Trout Run Creek through water monitoring stations, habitat improvements, clean-up coordination, and education.



Win-Cres has successfully been funded two grant proposals from the Lessard-Sams Outdoor Heritage Council for stream restoration efforts on the Garvin Brook. The intense flood of August 2007 significantly impaired large portions of the Garvin Brook. In addition to destroying in-stream habitat, the flood tore vegetation from the flood plain, leaving bare areas with invasive species such as garlic mustard, wild parsnip, and buckthorn quickly colonized, posing threats to terrestrial wildlife utilizing the county and state forest lands. This project will increase the health and resilience of the fishery and watershed by improving the in-stream habitat and surrounding forest habitat. The Minnesota DNR intends to modify a concrete spillway to create a barrier to upstream movement by brown trout and through electro-fishing remove all brown trout to below this barrier. The upper portion of the Garvin Brook and its tributaries will be managed for native brook trout only. The third grant application (funding not approved yet) will be used to enhance habitat for native brook trout and help create a robust brook trout through removal of accumulated sediment, re-slope and stabilize stream banks, and install overhead cover for naturally reproducing trout. Volunteers from the Win-Cres Chapter of Trout Unlimited work closely with the Minnesota DNR Forestry and Fisheries, local Minnesota Conservation Corps crews, other Trout Unlimited Chapters, Winona County SWCD, NRCS, Winona State University – Water Resources Center, St. Mary's University – Biology Department, and various other sports groups and volunteers.

Win-Cres frequently holds clean-up days along the Garvin Brook. Their largest effort solicited help from high school students from Winona Senior High School, Rushford-Peterson High School, and the Lewiston High School to pick-up trash, pull garlic mustard, and remove woody debris.



For over 3 years, they have coordinated the removal of garlic mustard throughout Farmer's Park and along the Lewiston-Altura High School forest area. Each year in conjunction with the school's Earth Day observance, Win-Cres teaches a small crew from the school about garlic mustard; its characteristics, threats of trees and wildflowers, and proper removal skills.



Win-Cres is always willing to assist other Trout Unlimited Chapters in streambank restoration efforts. In 2010 and 2011, Win-Cres assisted the Hiawatha Chapter with the Big Trout Creek restoration effort near Pickwick. This project was a featured stop for the TU-DARE (Driftless Area Restoration Effort) bus tour of stream habitat work in Southeast Minnesota and Southwestern Wisconsin. It was also the site of the trout fishing day by Congressman Walz.

Whether it is on their own, working with the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources, or working with the Winona County Soil and Water Conservation District and Natural Resources Conservation Service, the Win-Cres Chapter of Trout Unlimited has been instrumental to improving the stream habitat of Big Trout Creek, Pine Creek, Rush Creek, Garvin Brook, and Trout Run Creeks. They use their work as a chance to showcase the importance of education in the life of a stream through events such as the Veterans Family Picnic and Fly-fishing Extravaganza, high school clean-up days along the stream, kids fishing events at the Whitewater State Park, and invasive removal days. More information on projects and activities by the Win-Cres Trout Unlimited visit their website: www.wincrestu.org