

Shoreland Buffer Project at Elks Camp on Pelican Lake

Pelican Lake Property Owners Association (PLPOA) and the **Minnesota Elks** partnered to restore the border shoreline of the Minnesota Elks Camp – 150 feet on each side – to a depth of 30 feet. The restoration will compliment the existing natural landscape of the camp and serve as a very important demonstration site on the lake.

Pelican Lake is a premier vacation lake in the Brainerd Lakes area in Crow Wing County. The sugar sand beaches are a wonderful asset to the lake as well as a recreational attraction. Unfortunately, many of the lake residents till or otherwise maintain a sandy shoreline up to manicured lawn. The lake association has actively promoted shoreline restoration with limited success to the homeowners on the lake. The Elks Camp site will provide a very visible example of a quality shoreline restoration project and demonstrate how native plants can create a nice buffer around a sandy beach area.

The Elks Camp is a member of the lake association and owner of 270 acres and approximately 1000 feet of beautiful sandy shoreline on Pelican Lake. The camp has been in operation since the 1950's and sponsors over 600 disadvantaged children to experience camp at the lake each summer. The Elks work with the DNR to manage their forests and have done an excellent job as stewards of the land. The shoreline restoration project will be an addition to their property as well as a topic in their science classes.

This project restored the native plant community in a large, visible area on our lakeshore. The native shoreline will help keep the water clean, provide habitat for birds and insects, and add beauty and diversity to the shoreline. It will serve as an example site and provide education to children at the camp, lake residents, and the community.

The planting occurred during the Elks spring cleanup weekend on May 16 and 17 of 2009. Many volunteers assisted during the planting session...volunteers from the Elks camp and members of the Pelican Lakes Property Owners association. The instruction for the planting was provided by Bonnie Hiniker of Sunshine Gardens, Eleanor Burkett and Jackie Froemming from the University of Minnesota Extension office and Crow Wing County Master Gardeners.

This project is very unique because it is truly a native planting using very local seeds. The source for the seeds and plants is Sunshine Gardens in Pine River. Last October, Bonnie Hiniker and Jodi Eberhardt harvested native plant seeds from other areas of the Elks camp property. Bonnie incubated the seeds over the winter and will have 6,000 seedlings ready to plant in the 9,000 square foot space.

Following the planting, the University of Minnesota Extension office will be working with the camp science director to develop training materials for the kids. We will be asking the kids to look for different species of animals, insects, and birds that visit the plants and monitor the growth of plants at the site. On an annual basis, the project will monitor the site to document successful and unsuccessful plant species. This will result in a proven plant list to share with other projects on Pelican Lake.

This project was funded by Minnesota Waters, the Department of Natural Resources, and Thirty Lakes Watershed District. Mulch was donated by Crow Wing Power. Additional assistance has been provided by the University of Minnesota Extension office, Crow Wing Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD), the Elks, and Pelican Lake Property Owners Association.