



# Protecting one lake at a time in Crow Wing County

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*Barrick talks with a Crow Wing County resident at the annual plant sale in May 2011.*

Crow Wing County is home to 416 lakes and Melissa Barrick believes all of them need to be protected, some sooner rather than later.

Barrick has worked at the Crow Wing Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD) for five years, and has served for the last two as the district manager. She came to the SWCD after working in educational positions at the Minnehaha Creek Watershed District and various youth camps. A Janesville, Wisconsin native, Barrick has a bachelor's degree in natural resources environmental education and interpretation from the University of Wisconsin Stevens Point.

Barrick said water is a very important resource that many Minnesotans take for granted. "Water quality and quantity will continue to be a problem all over the USA," she said, adding she got into this line of work because, "Local government units are a great way to provide public involvement and education about water resource protection."

Established in 1956, the Crow Wing SWCD provides local expertise on water quality, erosion control and natural resource issues. As the SWCD manager, Barrick said she likes helping people solve their water and soil problems. "I really enjoy being part of the community and collaborating with local governments, lake associations, nonprofits, and federal and state agencies," she said.

Recently, Barrick and Crow Wing SWCD staff has been busy implementing projects on area water bodies that were targeted in a 2008 study of lakes more than 1,000 acres. Through this study, Crow Wing SWCD, the Minnesota Board of Water and Soil Resources, Aitkin and Cass Counties and SWCDs identified lakes with declining water clarity trends; lakes that need additional water quality data, and lakes that have a high ratio of impervious areas. Since then, the district has utilized data and information to leverage more than \$300,000 of Clean Water Funds to complete water quality projects. Additionally, the study's results were utilized by the Crow Wing County during their recent shoreline ordinance updates, incorporated into the County Water Plan, and the County continued this study on smaller lakes.

One project carried out as a result of the 2008 study is called *Project Recharge!* It aims to restore natural hydrology to urban communities in the county by intercepting, infiltrating and treating stormwater runoff. With 13 project partners, the project has prevented more than two tons of sediment, 16 pounds of phosphorus, and six million gallons of annual runoff from entering Pelican, Serpent, Crosslake, Rush, East and West Fox Lakes.

Barrick says SWCDs can have a big impact at the local level on land use, water resource protection and overall community health. "I enjoy the flexibility, creativity, efficiency, and great people I get to work with," she said.

*Melissa Barrick is one of five SWCD staff members that the Minnesota Board of Water and Soil Resources is profiling as a part of the 2013 Soil and Water Stewardship week. To learn more, follow [@MNBWSR](#) or like us at [www.facebook.com/MNBWSR](http://www.facebook.com/MNBWSR).*