



# Bringing wetland restoration to life through local outreach in southwestern Minnesota

May 2014 Snapshots

A restored wetland serves many purposes: it provides water quality benefits, it offers improved wildlife habitat, and it can help reduce the threat of floodwaters. BWSR's Wetland Banking program is one way that wetland restoration happens in Minnesota. The agency oversees banking through the Wetland Conservation Act. The Krohn Bank in southwestern Minnesota's Watonwan County is one such example of a wetland established to mitigate impacts from a road construction project. Formerly an agriculture site, the wetland near the City of Madelia has a fair amount of open water that plays host to nesting ducks and geese, sometimes by the hundreds. During the spring and fall, migrating waterfowl use the wetlands as a place to stop and rest on their journey.



*The Krohn Wetland Bank site, top, before restoration work started, and bottom, the wetland is host to a diverse array of plant, insect and wildlife.*

One of the more underrepresented benefits of wetland restoration is the public education opportunity that wetlands provide. The Krohn Bank has been a popular resource in the community for environmental education. When Madelia Elementary's 5<sup>th</sup> grade science teacher, Mrs. Nelson, got to the wetlands portion of her lesson plan, she stumbled upon a happy coincidence. The father of one of her students was BWSR's Jeremy Maul, one of the southern region's Wetland Specialists. Maul jumped at the chance to talk about the importance of wetlands with the class, and decided to use the Krohn site as a case study for the students to demonstrate why conservation matters.

The Krohn wetlands are within walking distance of the school. With work on the project just recently completed, students could remember the site as an agricultural field and therefore really appreciate the environment after wetland restoration was done. One of the lessons the children learned was that these projects can be challenging, and sometimes things don't go according to plan. In this particular case, an inadequate outlet on the site led to flooding that impacted attempts to establish native vegetation.

During their tour of the wetland, the science students were provided with Virginia Wild Rye and Fowl Bluegrass seed. Using cups and bottles, the sixty-five students spread native grass seed over two acres on the south side of the wetland basin that were particularly in need of help. The students got a chance to interact with the wetlands on a very personal level, observing and experiencing the wildlife and vegetation and, over

time, watched how their own contributions as the native grasses grew. Other school groups and 4-H clubs have toured the site, learning through first-hand experience the positive effects of wetland restorations in their community. The Krohn Road Replacement Bank is just one example of how wetland restoration not only improves the physical environment, but can also be an effective public education and outreach tool for engaging the broader community.