



Life on the Brink

January 2014 Snapshots



County ditch prior to project

After nearly five years of planning and cooperation, the restoration of Brink Lake, located about six miles southwest of Detroit Lakes in Becker County, is finally becoming a reality. The planning for the project began in 2008 when a group of 5 landowners started looking for ways to restore the drained lakebed. With the assistance of the local Soil and Water Conservation District, the Natural Resources Conservation Service, and representatives of Ducks Unlimited and the Minnesota Waterfowl Association, these landowners eventually submitted applications and were approved for enrollment into the Reinvest in Minnesota – Wetlands Reserve (RIM-WRP) program. The RIM-WRP program has since secured perpetual conservation easements on the properties and has provided technical and financial support to aide in the restoration of the lake and surround uplands.

Brink Lake was first impacted in 1915 when a county ditch was constructed through the lake to drain it. In order for the lake to be restored, the ditch needed to be legally abandoned. The landowners worked closely with the RIM-WRP program staff and the Becker County Board of Commissioners and were successful with their request to abandon the ditch.

While there has been great support for the restoration of the Brink Lake from everyone involved, there were concerns raised with regard to potential maintenance issues at the lake's outlet. Floating debris and beaver dams could potentially block the new outlet and cause unintentional flooding of the lake and surrounding properties. To address these concerns, engineering staff at the Board of Water and Soil Resources (BWSR) prepared a unique design for the lake's outlet. A large, multi-purpose aggregate infiltration system was designed at the project's outlet.

"This unique approach to design for the lake's outlet will allow base flows from the lake to pass into the downstream drainage ditch without worries of the structure being plugged by debris or beavers. This design also prevents the movement of rough fish from downstream areas into the restored lake" Tom Wenzel - Project Engineer with BWSR.



Partnership was key to the success of the restoration



Erosion & sediment control applied during snowstorm as project nears completion.

Construction on the project was essentially completed late into the fall of 2013. Some minor grading and stabilization work remains for the spring of 2014. Brink Lake is expected to fill completely with water in 2014. When restored, Brink Lake will be about 200 acres in size with an average depth of less than 5 feet. Also in 2014, native prairie will be planted and additional seasonal pothole wetlands will be restored on easement lands that are adjacent to Brink Lake.

Phil Doll, RIM WRP Planner with Ducks Unlimited has been working long and hard to make sure this project materialized. According to Doll, “There were lots of hurdles along the way for a project of this size and complexity, but the end result is going to be a great example of what RIM-WRP and all the Partners can accomplish.” The Brink Lake restoration project is the largest project Doll has ever worked on. “Besides this

wetland project being so big, what’s made it so fun is that all of the landowners are truly excited to see the lake restored.”

In addition to the aesthetic value the wetland restoration will create, the landowners involved are also looking forward to seeing improvements in wildlife habitat, hunting and recreational opportunities, as well as water quality and ground water recharge.

“A project of this size in combination with the many other projects really has a huge impact on wildlife and water quality in Minnesota” John Voz RIM Easement Specialist. The RIM-WRP program acquires and restores easements on private lands in Minnesota. The program is implemented through a partnership between the Minnesota Board of Water and Soil Resources, the Natural Resource Conservation Service, and local Soil and Water Conservation Districts.