Carlton County Receives 2019 County Conservation Award

(St. Paul, MN)—The Association of Minnesota Counties (AMC) and the Board of Water & Soil Resources (BWSR) have selected Carlton County’s Right-Sizing Culverts for Infrastructure & Environmental Benefits project to receive the 2019 AMC-BWSR County Conservation Award. The award was presented by 2019 AMC President and Anoka County Commissioner Scott Schulte and BWSR Executive Director John Jaschke.

The Carlton County Highway Department, encouraged by Permit and Right-of-Way Technician Will Bomier, have developed a new vision for managing stream crossing culverts for fish passage, streambank stability and resilience to large rain events. After a series of intense damaging rainfall events beginning with the 2012 mega-storm that dropped approximately 14 inches of rain on Carlton County and the surrounding area, the highway department began looking at their infrastructure and leveraged FEMA disaster funds and other outside funding sources to design and install right-sized culverts that carry flows from extreme events and protect existing roads. Sizing replacement culverts to the floodplain of streams has had demonstrable environmental and economic benefits. Old undersized or misaligned culverts had become blocked trout migration and increased erosion by destabilizing streambanks at road crossings. The highway department was able to demonstrate cost savings of doing it right rather than doing it over and at the same time prevent thousands of cubic yards of gravel and road material from washing into Carlton County’s trout streams.

“Carlton County leveraged resources at all levels to protect and improve infrastructure to prevent future flood damage while simultaneously creating environmental benefits,” BWSR Executive Director John Jaschke said. “We commend their efforts to protect their communities while furthering conservation efforts.”

AMC is a voluntary statewide organization that assists the state’s 87 counties in providing effective county governance to the people of Minnesota. It is the mission of the Association to assist in the provision of effective county governance for the people of Minnesota. The association works closely with the legislative and administrative branches of government in seeing that legislation and policies favorable to counties are enacted. In addition, the Association provides educational programs, training, research and communications for county officials.

BWSR is the state soil and water conservation agency, and it administers programs that prevent sediment and nutrients from entering our lakes, rivers, and streams; enhance fish and wildlife habitat; and protect wetlands. The 20-member board consists of representatives of local and state government agencies and citizens.

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