



# Comfort Lake - Forest Lake Watershed District 2025 Education and Outreach Summary



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Prepared by Adam Hjelm

## **TABLE OF CONTENTS**

Program Background

Community Education Partnership Program

Events and Tours

Technology Platforms; Website and Social Media

Social Marketing; Constant Contact

Summary

## **Overview of Program Background, Planning, and Implementation**

Background: The Comfort Lake- Forest Lake Watershed District 2022-2031 Watershed Management Plan identifies the need and opportunity for the District to build the knowledge and understanding of local water resources for District residents, local governments, and District staff through the development and application of a robust education and outreach program. This includes, but is not limited to, the awareness of water quality connections to land use, upland land resources, and water resource connections.

The Watershed Management Plan also identifies the initial steps and processes for developing a focused and relevant education and outreach program. The three key areas identified in the program description include: Ongoing Initiatives, Standard Project Signage, and Local Student Engagement. Through these three key areas, two main program goals were characterized.

*Goal 1: Increase public knowledge of and appreciation for human impacts to surface water, groundwater and natural resources to increase target audiences' behaviors that positively impact water resources.*

*Goal 2: Communicate District programs, projects and other initiatives to the public in a clear, consistent and equitable manner.*



## Education & Outreach Guiding Documents

### Watershed Management Plan



10-year

- Provides general areas of focus
- Dictates program goals

### Comprehensive Education/Outreach



5-year

- Provides strategies
- Identifies program strengths & areas of improvement

### Education/Outreach Implementation Plan



1-year

- Provides specific actions & activities
- Tracks program metrics

The District's education and outreach plans also emphasize working with all other areas/departments by providing strategy, consistency, branding, support, and implementation in promotion of the District projects, programs, and priority activities. Through the Comprehensive Education/Outreach Plan these efforts were further focused into three themes:

- Increasing knowledge on specific water-related topics (including District activities) to create behavior change and adoption of environmental practices by target audiences (this can include collaborative efforts with partners and resources provided to other organizations for their use).
- Promoting the *general* activities of the District to increase understanding of and support for the District.
- Promote *specific* activities of the District to increase understanding of and support for the District

The District's outreach methods were categorized using standard approaches to deliver communication, outreach, and education and drive engagement. These methods also balance and utilize Adaptive Management as necessary to make purposeful and informed improvements to processes and actions.

These methods identified and utilized include:

- Community education workshops and classes
- Events and Tours
- Technology platforms; website and social media
- Social Marketing (Constant Contact)

### **Community Education Partnership Program**

2025 marked the second year of significant focus on community education workshops and classes for the District. In 2024, 228 people participated in 18 workshops and classes hosted by CLFLWD. In 2025, 492 people participated in 28 workshops and classes. These events and engagements would not have been possible without the support and great partnerships from Hardwood Creek Library, Chisago Lakes Community Education, and Forest Lake Community Education.

<b>Community Education Event</b>	<b>Attendance #</b>	<b>Partner Entity</b>
Rain Barrels	10	Forest Lake Community Education
Backyard Habitat	10	Hardwood Library
Pocket Planting	15	Hardwood Library
Pocket Planting	18	Chisago Lakes Community Education
Natives for Containers	14	Hardwood Library
Pollinator Plan and Plant	8	Forest Lake Community Education
Storytime – (Frogs) (youth event)	20	Hardwood Library
Spring Lawn Care	18	Chisago Lake Community Education
Native for Lousy Soil	12	Hardwood Library
Spring Lawn Care	8	Chisago Lake Community Education
Native Fruit Trees and Shrubs	20	Hardwood Library
Rain Barrels	20	Hardwood Library
Living Fencelines	12	Chisago Lake Community Education
Composts and Mulches	14	Hardwood Library
Many MN Milkweeds	6	Forest Lake Community Education
Natives for Shade and Woodland	6	Forest Lake Community Education
Native Plant Walk and Talk	26	Hardwood Library
Hardwood Storytime (Wetlands) (youth event)	20	Hardwood Library
BYO Lures (family event)	30	Hardwood Library
BYO Lures (family event)	30	Chisago Lake Community Education

BYO Bee Houses (family event)	34	Hardwood Library
Aquatic Insects (family event)	30	Hardwood Library
Native Plant Seed Saving	8	Hardwood Library
BYO Lures (family event)	6	Hardwood Library
BYO Lures (family event)	50	Forest Lake Community Education
Buckthorn 101	27	Hardwood Library
BYO Bee Houses (family event)	20	Forest Lake Community Education
BYO Lures (family event)	30	Chisago Lake Community Education
BYO Bee Houses (family event)	20	Forest Lake Community Education

In 2025, the CLFLWD was one of three finalists for the MN Watershed Program of the Year Award for the Community Education Partnership Program. This is a great honor and reinforces the program focus on in-person outreach and education efforts within the CLFLWD community.

## Events and Tours

The District also marked a year of significant focus on large events and tours. These events and tours were a combination of District sponsored events and participation in partner events.

The District presented and hosted an information booth at the three major lake association’s annual meetings.

The District participated in the Forest Lake Art in the Park with an information booth each Tuesday in June, July, and August.

The District hosted two natural shoreline tours this year: North Shore Park Open House and Bone Lake Pontoon Tour.

The District hosted two Floodplain Resiliency events: Community Open House and Local Governmental Unit Open House.

The District presented two sessions at the annual Chisago County Master Garden Expo, Many Minnesota Milkweeds and Landscaping Septic Systems.

The District hosted an information booth at the annual Lakes Area Expo.

The District hosted the Bixby Park neighborhood meeting.

The District presented an information station at the Chisago WaterFest focused on shoreline and native plant habitat.

The District’s lecture series, Watershed Connections, hosted four events.

The District hosted the Ice Ridge Information Workshop, attended by 261 community members.

The District hosted two fall alum treatment events for Forest Lake, an informational meeting and an on-site open house.

### **Technology Platforms; Website and Social Media**

In August of 2024 the website was fully remodeled to make it more user-friendly and more functional for the District. In 2025, the website had several major updates. These 2025 updates included: increasing security, modernizing the Document Library, and revising the cost-share pages to reflect the increased focus on natural shorelines.

The District had limited ability to track analytics and general site data prior to August 2024. The August 2024 renovation allowed the District the opportunity to gain more useful insight into the amount of traffic and users visiting the website.

Most of the views on the website in 2025 were across the platform for general information, not necessarily focused on one page or area. Following that, secondary view numbers were for board meeting materials, events, and staff/board contact information. The website is accessed 75% of the time from desktop computers on average and 25% of the time through the mobile version of the site.

	Total Users	Views	Engagement Rate
2024 Average Monthly Analytics*	503	2330	57%
2025 Average Monthly Analytics	928	3368	55%

\* 2024 data is for Sept-Dec only

The District had several months in 2025 with above average monthly traffic and engagement rates. In March, there was a 60% increase in visitors, and that appears to correlate with interest in the Ice Ridge Informational Workshop. In October, there was a 30% increase in visitors, and that appears to correlate with interest in board packet material and budget information.

## Social Media

The District focused a substantial amount of staff time on engaging and reengaging social media audiences in 2025. The District generated a large selection of posts and materials internally but also put a large emphasis on sharing relevant partner posts. The most viewed and liked District generated posts were Native Plant Tuesdays and Wildlife Wednesday infographic posts.

The District utilized Meta Analytics for tracking Facebook.

	Views	Content Interactions	Link Clicks	Total Followers for the Year
2024 Average Monthly Analytics*	2100	58	18	503
2025 Average Monthly Analytics	2845	21	19	528*

\*24% are in Forest Lake zip code

In March, there was a 30% increase in Facebook page visitors, and that appears to correlate with interest in the Ice Ridge Informational Workshop materials and information.

## Social Marketing

The District utilized Constant Contact for digital and email marketing in 2025. The largest use of this tool was distributing the board meeting materials. In 2025, 292 unique email events were sent with a total of 11,612 sends. Out of the 11,612 sends, 4,998 of those emails were opened, and 483 clicks were made on the content. 84% of the opens and clicks were from a desktop versus 16% from a mobile device (as of Dec 1, 2025).

2025 substantially increased from 2024, which had 128 unique email events sent with a total of 4,772 sends. Out of the 4,772 sends, 2,149 of those emails were opened, and 462 clicks were made on the content in 2024.

Board Meeting Materials	
Open Rate	50%
Clicks	12%

Events and News	
Open Rate	55%
Clicks	21%

The District’s Constant Contact email marketing lists contain 378 total unique subscribed contacts, which is up from 261 in 2024. This includes three separate email lists: Natural Shoreline News, General News and Events, and Board Meeting Materials. In 2025, there was a 10% growth of organically subscribed contacts.

### **Summary**

The District’s Education and Outreach Program provides opportunities for District residents, local governments, and District staff to build their knowledge and understanding of local water resources. The Program engages residents and stakeholders through a variety of methods which will evolve and adapt to fit audiences’ needs. In 2025, the Education and Outreach Program shows upward trends on almost all metrics.

Education and outreach are dynamic; they are constantly changing and adapting to new needs, technologies, and audiences. The Program uses adaptive management to be interactive, responsive, and evolve to address challenges and make learning relevant and impactful with the District.