



4646 Dakota St. S.E.
Prior Lake, MN 55372

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Contact: Michael Peterson, Communications Coordinator
952-447-9804, mtpeterson@cityofpriorlake.com

Prior Lake Water Reuse Project to Save Resources and Environment

The City of Prior Lake's Ponds Park Surface Water Reuse System is an innovative irrigation project designed to save money and help protect natural resources.

The Scott Watershed Management Organization (SWMO) awarded the City of Prior Lake a grant of \$31,993 for construction and initial study of a water reuse system at the City's Ponds Park Athletic Complex. The proposed system would disconnect the irrigation system for three of the 10 fields, reducing use of the municipal water supply by around 900,000 gallons per year. In its place, a system would be created to use near surface groundwater, and surface water from a nearby wetland to irrigate the three fields. The Ponds Park Athletic Complex has six lighted, heavily-used softball fields and four soccer fields.

Surface water reuse is a relatively new technology for municipalities, but it is used extensively in the golf course industry and overseas. The Ponds Park project will be paired with a risk assessment process and grant study to assist City staff in implementing the project in a way that minimizes potential risks and quantifies the environmental benefit. The study will include cost and benefit analysis.

The grant project also includes innovative uses of existing technology. The irrigation system will have a peak pump rate dampening cistern and two different filtered water sources. One of the filtered water sources products comes from Midwest Floating Islands LLC, and is described in greater detail in an appendix. Midwest Floating Islands has also offered to donate 75% of their product cost, equating to a donation with a value of \$3,930.00. The grant project includes a second, informal donation as well; as part of a risk assessment and management process. Staff will invite a variety of technical and regulatory experts to sit on a technical advisory group that will review the work of, and inform the project, as the risk assessment and benefit studies progress.

In 2009, more than three million gallons of irrigation water was used at Ponds Park alone. While irrigation is essential to maintain the turf level of service, using the municipal water supply to irrigate fields has potentially serious environmental and fiscal tradeoffs including: Municipal water production and distribution system costs, pumping and treatment operation costs and drawdown of the groundwater aquifer. Using the municipal water supply for irrigation also presents similar water quality and quantity risks associated with urban development; with increase water and pollutant loading flowing to downstream wetlands, lakes and rivers.

Runoff from the Ponds Park area and nearby neighborhoods flows into a chain of created stormwater ponds and natural wetland, flows to Cleary Lake (which is impaired by excess nutrients), on to the sensitive Credit River system, and on to the Minnesota River. While

flowing to the Credit River, runoff from the Ponds Park and nearby neighborhoods also flows into and through the City of Prior Lake Wellhead protection area where pollutants associated with runoff create risk to the water supply.

Source controls for the wide variety of urban pollutants that can cause risk to health, safety, property or the environment is often the best and cheapest way to reduce risks, well informed operation of physical infrastructure is also an important tool.

Other metro communities experimenting with water reuse systems to irrigate public right of ways, road boulevards and public parks include the Village of St. Anthony, Roseville and Lakeville.