



News Release

BWSR announces 2019 Outstanding Watershed District Employee

December 6, 2019

St. Paul, Minn.—Minnesota Board of Water and Soil Resources (BWSR) Executive Director John Jaschke presented the 2019 Outstanding Watershed District Employee award on Friday, Dec. 6 to Rice Creek Watershed District (RCWD) Lake and Stream Specialist Matt Kocian. The recognition ceremony took place during the Minnesota Association of Watershed Districts' (MAWD) annual conference in Alexandria.

“Local conservation staff are the driving force behind successful water quality improvement projects,” Jaschke said. “Matt Kocian’s dedication to preserving our water resources is commendable, and we appreciate all he does to protect and improve water quality in the RCWD.”

Kocian has been the RCWD Lake and Stream Specialist for the past 12 years. During this time, he has led high-profile district initiatives and maintains a strong working relationship with area news outlets by using humor, storytelling, research and science to inform and change behaviors in the watershed. He consistently applies his expertise to assist lake associations, stakeholder groups, conservation professionals and the public.

Watershed initiatives where Kocian has demonstrated outstanding work include:

- **RCWD Carp management plan:** Kocian provides regional and statewide leadership for an enterprising carp management plan that has resulted in a shrinking carp population in the watershed. The program involves radio tagging carp to monitor behavior for management and removal, plus use of innovative low-voltage electric barriers that block migration and guide migrating fish into traps for removal; 40,000 pounds of carp were removed in the program’s first year. Read BWSR’s Clean Water Fund article on the project [here](#).
- **Middle Rice Creek meander restoration project:** Kocian led an effort completed in 2016 to return a segment of Middle Rice Creek once straightened to support agriculture to its natural state. This effort included restoring the creek’s historic meanders, stabilizing streambanks and improving habitat. The restored segment provides an enhanced

recreational paddling route in addition to water quality benefits. Read BWSR's Clean Water Fund article on the project [here](#).

- **Bald Eagle Lake TMDL implementation project:** Kocian implemented Minnesota's largest aluminum sulfate treatment on Bald Eagle Lake from 2012-2016, one of three projects to improve water quality. The lake began meeting state water quality standards shortly after completion of the three-part TMDL implementation project.

Each year, BWSR celebrates the excellent work accomplished by local government staff to advance conservation efforts across the state. An award for Outstanding Soil and Water Conservation District Employee will be presented Dec. 9 at the Minnesota Association of Soil and Water Conservation Districts' annual conference in Minneapolis.



Photo Caption: Rice Creek Watershed District Lake and Stream Specialist Matt Kocian was named Watershed District Employee of the Year. Minnesota Board of Water and Soil Resources Executive Director John Jaschke presented the award Dec. 6 during the Minnesota Association of Watershed Districts' annual conference at the Arrowwood Conference Center in Alexandria. **Photo credit:** Ann Wessel, BWSR