

Communication and Outreach Project: Lawn Watering Wisdom and Landscaping for Clean Water Marketing Campaign

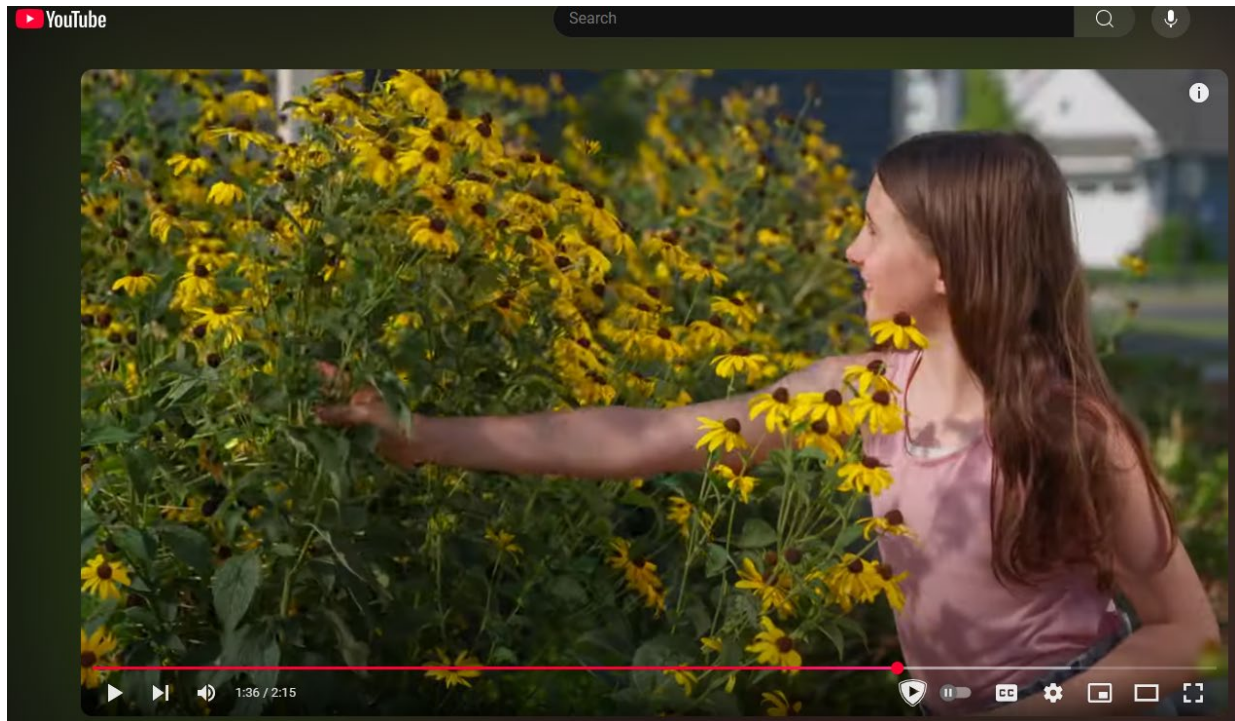


Figure 1. Screenshot of the campaign video promoting Landscaping for Clean Water on YouTube.

In 2021, the first of three consecutive years of drought, Dakota County used nearly 10 billion more gallons of water than in 2019. Data from local government units found that the amount of water pumped during landscape irrigation months (May-September) was as much as four times the amount pumped during all other months. Though the Vermillion River Watershed Joint Powers Organization (VRWJPO), County, cities, and the Dakota County Soil and Water Conservation District (DCSWCD) offer assistance for water-efficient irrigation practices and landscaping, public awareness of these tools is lacking. Due to how social media platforms prioritize paid advertisements, messages broadcast from local government organizations often are viewed by limited audiences.

To close the awareness gap, Dakota County, DCSWCD, and four watershed management organizations (WMOs) in the County partnered to run a paid video marketing campaign through Facebook, Instagram, and YouTube, promoting irrigation water conservation best practices and the DCSWCD's Landscaping for Clean Water (LCW) program. Partners were inspired by a humorous video series from Central Utah Water Conservancy District in 2021, which led to a **769% increase** in participants in that district's landscaping course. The VRWJPO received a Groundwater Protection Accelerated Implementation Grant from the Minnesota Department of Health for the campaign.

Partners hired a local integrated communications and marketing agency to create targeted paid advertisements for Dakota County. The agency worked with a local video production firm to shoot two professional-grade two-minute videos, leveraging humor to inform residents on ways to conserve groundwater. The videos were edited into shorter versions for Facebook and Instagram, while the full versions can be seen on YouTube.

[The first targeted video](#), focused on LCW, began showing on social media in February 2025, coinciding with the start of LCW classes. As of February 24, the video has been viewed more than 67,500 times on YouTube, reaching an audience of 17,443 people. Partners plan to launch the irrigation efficiency video, Lawn Watering Wisdom, in spring 2025 along with a call to action for viewers to sign a Water Conservation Pledge focused on optimizing irrigation water efficiency.

Campaign timeline:

- 2025

Contributors:

- Dakota County: \$10,000
- Dakota County SWCD: \$7,500
- VRWJPO: \$10,000
- Black Dog WMO: \$7,500
- Eagan-Inver Grove Heights WMO: \$7,500
- Lower Mississippi River WMO: \$7,500
- Minnesota Department of Health: \$50,000 Clean Water Fund Accelerated Implementation Grant

Benefits:

- Greater participation in LCW will lead to more native plants in the ground, which require less watering than non-natives once the plants are well-established. They can also reduce stormwater runoff pollution and provide pollinator habitat.
- The VRWJPO's Urban Water Conservation Program (2018-2023) showed many irrigation systems are not properly installed or maintained, leading to significant water waste. Regular irrigation system inspection, maintenance and weather-based technologies can result in significant water and cost savings.



Figure 2. Logos of LCW and all partners in the marketing campaign.

A grant from the Clean Water Fund, one of four funds established by the Clean Water, Land & Legacy Amendment, supports this project. [Clean Water Stories](#) can be found on the Minnesota Board of Water and Soil Resources website.



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