

Upper Souris Watershed Association & Natural Edge Shoreline Protection at Nickle Lake Regional Park



The Upper Souris Watershed Association (USWA) and the Nickle Lake Regional Park partnered together to participate in the Natural Edge Shoreline Protection program supported by Watersheds Canada. The program funding was made available through financial support from Department of Fisheries and Oceans (DFO), as applied for by Saskatchewan Association of Watersheds (SAW).

The Natural Edge program was developed to help protect waterbodies by increasing the amount of native vegetation within the riparian zones of waterbodies to minimize erosion, and establish or maintain a healthy vibrant shoreline. This can lead to cleaner waters, resilient shorelines and an increase in wildlife habitat of both aquatic and terrestrial species that depend on this crucial area.

The program involves landowners adjacent to waterbodies that have shorelines that may be vulnerable to erosion and are willing to partner with USWA to establish and maintain the vegetation on their property. USWA will develop the planting plan in partnership with the landowner, then based on the plan, select and acquire the appropriate native vegetation and planting materials.

USWA began searching for a suitable site in the summer of 2017 with a plan to complete a fall 2017 planting. A suitable site was selected at the Nickle Lake Regional Park along the shoreline west of the established camping and park facilities. The area involved an embankment that was identified as vulnerable to erosion, especially during spring runoff or high precipitation events.

Native plants were selected based on the identified conditions and ability to establish and survive the varying seasonal conditions without extensive maintenance. Based on that criteria, 400 native tree and shrub seedlings, including: shrub willow, chokecherry, red-osier dogwood, green ash, Manitoba maple and trembling aspen were acquired from local greenhouses. The planting of the vegetation was successfully completed in mid-October, just prior to the seasonal temperature decline. The naturalized area extended for approximately 75 metres in length, and consisted of up to six rows of trees and shrubs.

Once fully established, the protected area will provide an excellent habitat for terrestrial species and will contribute to a healthier waterbody at Nickle Lake by stabilizing the shoreline, and reducing erosion into Nickle Lake.

The program is available for all residents and landowners along major waterbodies with suitable projects. The projects can be on a much smaller scale than this, such as personal cottage owners. For further information on this project, or future projects, please contact USWA at (306)634-7074.