Birch Lake Association improves Birch Lake Roadside Park

Have you noticed anything different at the Birch Lake Roadside Park recently? Take a stroll down to the water’s edge to see Birch Lake Association’s recent shoreline greenbelt improvements. The Association partnered with Tip of the Mitt Watershed Council and the Michigan Department of Transportation’s (MDOT) Adopt-a-Landscape program to install nearly 100 feet of coir logs (coconut fiber logs that biodegrade after ten years) and native plants. The coir logs, each 16 inches in diameter, protect the shoreline from erosion caused by ice damage and boat wakes. The chosen native plants (boneset, blue vervain, swamp milkweed, and blue lobelia) will provide deep roots to hold soil in place. The plants will bloom in a showy display of white, blue, and pink, and provide habitat for native pollinators. Sixteen volunteers helped install the coir logs and plants on October 4. The volunteers left with the hands-on experience to protect their own shorelines. A “no-mow” strip along the shoreline will be set up to allow native plants to thrive and signage will be placed to educate visitors.

The project has been in the works for a year and began with a meeting between Birch Lake Association president Jim Muth and Watershed Council staff. Both organizations brainstormed about ways to work collaboratively. The need for Birch Lake to restore the shoreline aligned well with the Watershed Council’s Watershed Action Volunteer Experience (WAVE) program, which funds small volunteer-led watershed projects over the Watershed Council’s four-county service area. Finding the right place to install the project took a long time, and it was finally settled that the Birch Lake Roadside Park would be a good demonstration site, as it needed repair and thousands of visitors stop there annually. The Watershed Council applied for permits from MDOT and the Department of Environment, Energy, and Great Lakes in order to complete the project.

“Of all the WAVE projects, this one had the most pieces with two different permits and multiple vendors for the supplies. But it all came together in one day thanks to the many volunteers and sponsors supporting us” said Caroline Keson, water resource specialist at the Watershed Council.

Jim Muth noted the importance of shoreline protection as it relates to improving or maintaining a lake’s water quality. The relative ease and effectiveness of installing shoreline protection in this manner makes it a great lake association, neighborhood, or individual property owner’s project.

The WAVE program supplied $2500 for project costs through the Dole Family Foundation. Additional project supplies came from donations from Steur Excavating of Kewadin, North Shore Lawn Works of Harbor Springs, Hanes GEO Components Grand Rapids, Birch Lake Association’s “Restore the Shore” and Antrim Conservation District. Volunteers were powered by food donations from Roast and Toast and Plath’s Meats in Petoskey. Thank you to all of our sponsors!