

## 2017 Outstanding Conservationist

This year we recognize the Plum Creek Neighborhood Network (PCNN). The PCNN is comprised of 24 landowners and the Lynden Township Board whose mission is to determine the source of Escherichia Coli (E. coli) contamination of Plum Creek and get the stream removed from the MN Pollution Control Agency (MPCA) impaired list for bacteria. PCNN member Jerry Finch has done intensive sampling of the stream and enlisted the help of the Stearns County SWCD, MPCA, Mn Dept. of Transportation, Stearns County Public Works, Stearns County Parks Board, University of Minnesota, St. John's University, and the United States Dept. Agriculture to identify the source of the E. coli. The data collected by PCNN suggests that the E. coli impairment in Plum Creek is likely related to naturalized E. coli residing in the sediment that has been the subject of multiple academic papers, including those from Dr. Michael Sadowsky from the University of Minnesota published in 2008-2015 and whose DNA does not match poultry, pig, cattle or human. Increased water turbulence likely leads to elevated levels of E. coli with no apparent contributions from surface water runoff. Jerry feels another accomplishment of the PCNN thus far is facilitating conversations between MPCA and academia concerning methods used to determine and measure bacterial impairment. This communication may lead to more accurate and practical ways to measure bacterial E coli impairments.

