



UP STREAM

Swift County Soil & Water Conservation District

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PF Farm Bill Biologist

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Melanie Dickman
Acting District
Conservationist
Rick Gronseth
Soil Conservation Technician



What is a Soil & Water Conservation District?

Andy Albertsen, Swift SWCD District Manager

Cost Share for Streambank Project



restoration, in which SWCD staff worked with the Pomme de Terre River Association, Department of Natural Resources and the Board of Water and Soil Resources to remove a dam structure that had failed and restore the stream channel back to its historic state. The district has also worked with the Fairfield Township Board on a streambank stabilization project in which the Pomme de Terre river was threatening to erode a township road. The district has been involved in other water

Cost Share for Rain Gardens



speaking, he went to the windows just as a giant dust storm approached and blanketed the city in soil. Bennet used this event to demonstrate the need for soil and water conservation, which Congress supported immediately, and the idea of Soil and Water Conservation Districts were born. The first official SWCD in Minnesota was created in 1938 and was called the Burns-Homer-Pleasant District, and later renamed the Winona SWCD.

Soil and Water Conservation Districts are political subdivisions of the State. Supervisors serve for four-year staggered terms; generally, two or three of an SWCDs five board supervisors are up for election every two years. *cont.*

Our District is grateful for the opportunity to work with members of the community to facilitate voluntary initiatives to conserve soil, water, forests and wildlife in our area. We are one of 89 Soil and Water Conservation Districts (SWCDs) across the state – and nearly 3,000 across the nation – that provide a neighborly presence to help preserve and protect the natural resources that we all love and depend on.

The Swift SWCD was formed in 1950. Recent highlights of our work include the

Cost Share for Alternative Tile Intakes



quality and erosion control practices as well, by providing technical assistance and cost share.

So, what exactly is a Soil and Water Conservation District? A SWCD is a local unit of government that provides technical and financial resources for natural resource management at the local level. SWCDs work in both rural and urban settings, and assist private landowners and other entities of government to carry out various programs related to conservation, land use, and improvement of soil, water and related resources.

Soil Conservationist Hugh Hammond Bennet was testifying in Washington D.C. on April 2nd, 1935. As he was

Tree Sales for Conservation





What is a Conservation District (cont.)

ATV Broadcast Seeding Services



These positions have been locally elected officials since SWCDs began in 1938. Dating back to 1971, these supervisor positions have been available on the November ballot as a nonpartisan office. The overall election has always been at-large within the district. In the year 1974 “Supervisor Nomination Districts” were mandated to ensure some measure of geographic distribution of elected supervisors across each SWCD. The theory behind this was to cover more of the county in representation, which in turn allows for better geographic scope of the soil and water issues within the county.

One of the main areas SWCDs address is that of providing soil and water conservation services to private landowners. Privately owned land currently makes up about 78% of the land in Minnesota. The process of managing these private lands, whether agriculture, forest, lake, or urban, is key to protecting Minnesota’s quality of life for all residents. SWCDs work with a variety of individuals, from landowners to homeowners, crop consultants to bankers, producers to township officials, and

everyone in between. Working with these individuals, the SWCD can address a broad area of resource concerns including: erosion control, flood prevention, wetland management, groundwater management, water quality and quantity, wildlife habitat, community education, and more. All across Minnesota, SWCDs are trusted to provide the needed technology, funding opportunities, cost share and educational services because they are well established in each community, governed by local leaders and focused on conservation of local soil and water resources. SWCDs work with a variety of individuals on a variety of projects across diverse landscapes. While initially created to assist with conservation on agricultural lands, SWCDs have expanded their roles to meet the needs of their respective counties. This includes forested land, lakes, and urban areas. This diverse work means that SWCDs are partnering with cities, townships, and watershed districts to put conservation of all shapes and sizes on the landscape.

No-till Drills Available for Rent



Cost share funding available through each Soil and Water Conservation District is meant to be used for erosion or sedimentation control or water quality improvement projects/practices that are designed to protect and improve soil and water resources. There are many projects and practices that fall under this requirement. Call our office to find out if your project qualifies, or if there is an alternative funding source available.

SWCD staff and supervisors build partnerships with public and private, local, state and federal entities to develop locally-driven solutions to natural resource concerns. We work with landowners every step of the way from planning to implementation.

Some of the programs the Swift SWCD and their partners offer include: cost share opportunities, technical expertise in natural resource management, tree planting and sales, no-till drill rental (10’ and 12’ available), ATV broadcast seeding, native grass and flower seed sales, Walk In Access program (WIA), Conservation Reserve Program (CRP), Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP), Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP), Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP), Minnesota Ag Water Quality Certification Program (MAWQCP), Ag Best Management Practice Loan program (AgBMP), nitrate testing clinics, Kid’s Nature Day, field days and workshops, observation well reading, water quality monitoring and more!

**NO-TILL DRILLS
AVAILABLE FOR RENT!**

RATES:

10 ft. Drill—\$100 Mobilization + \$10 per acre

12 ft. Drill—\$100 Mobilization + \$12 per acre

ATV Seeding—\$50 Mobilization + \$100/hour

No-till drills work great for:

CRP/CREP Plantings

Alfalfa

Cover Crops

Wildlife Food Plots

and more!

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Conservation Practice Spotlight: Grassed Waterway

From the Agricultural BMP Handbook for Minnesota, 2nd Edition:

Grassed waterways are broad, shallow and typically saucer-shaped channels designed to move surface water across farmland without causing soil erosion. The vegetative cover in the waterway slows the water flow and protects the channel surface from the eroding forces of runoff water. Left alone, runoff and snowmelt water will drain toward a field's natural draws or drainage ways. It is in these areas that grassed waterways are often established.

If properly sized and constructed, grassed waterways safely transport water down natural draws through fields. Waterways also provide outlet channels for constructed terrace systems, contour cropping layouts and diversion channels. Grassed waterways are a good solution to the erosion caused by concentrated water flows when the watershed area generating the runoff water is relatively large.

The main advantages of a grassed waterway are as follows:

- the waterway will carry large flows, making it suited to safely carry runoff from large upstream watersheds
- farm machinery can cross it
- once vegetation is established, maintenance is low

A grassed waterway also has disadvantages, including:

- working around the waterway with farm equipment can be difficult
- the waterway lacks the depth necessary to serve as a tile drainage outlet
- establishing vegetation may be difficult

Before



After



New Aquatic Invasive Species Coordinator

Danny Tuckett, Aquatic Invasive Species (AIS) Coordinator, Big Stone and Swift Counties

Hello! I am Danny Tuckett and I'm the new Aquatic Invasive Species (AIS) Coordinator for Swift County, in partnership with Big Stone County. I grew up in Madison, MN and graduated from Lac qui Parle Valley High School in 2013. I then went to North Dakota State College of Science in Wahpeton, ND for two years then went onto Bemidji State University for another two years. In 2017 I graduated from BSU with a Bachelor's Degree in Aquatic Biology with an emphasis in Fisheries. Throughout college I had internships with the MNDNR Fisheries Department in Ortonville, so I am very familiar with the area. In February 2018 I was hired to be the Environmental Technician for Big Stone County. In this position I am the Big Stone County Water Planner, Feedlot Officer, and AIS Coordinator. Earlier this year Swift County decided to partner with Big Stone County so that I can help develop the AIS Program in Swift County. In 2014 the Minnesota Legislature passed a county tax bill to help prevent the spread of Aquatic Invasive Species. Each year, \$10 million is split amongst all Minnesota counties based off of the number of public boat accesses and the number of parking spots at each access.

My job is to help Swift County determine the best way to utilize the funds they receive each year.

This may come in the form of:

- Education
 - ◊ Kid's Days, commercials, advertising
- Inspections
 - ◊ Checking watercrafts entering and exiting waters in the county
- Detection
 - ◊ Collecting samples & checking public accesses for signs of AIS
- Prevention
 - ◊ Collection of things listed above

I am very excited to work with Swift County and help with the fight against AIS. If you have any questions you can e-mail me at danny.tuckett@co.big-stone.mn.us



FIGHT THE SPREAD OF
AQUATIC INVADERS

TRANSPORTZERO.ORG

Life in the Pits: A look at soil management and crop health

University of Minnesota Extension

September 10, 2019

9:00 a.m. to 3:30 p.m.

American Legion - 60 6th Ave, Granite Falls, MN 56241

University of Minnesota Extension, Swift, Renville and Yellow Medicine SWCD's, and Hawk Creek Watershed invites farmers and crop consultants to an upcoming field day to learn about soil health on September 10th in Granite Falls, Minnesota.

This is a unique, small-group field day which will equip participants with the ability to identify different levels of soil structure and help them understand management strategies to improve the soil. Most importantly, participants will be able to connect the visual and physical impacts belowground to how it is treated aboveground. At the end of the field day, attendees will be able to take a shovel to any part of their field and have a better understanding of what they are seeing.

Field day activities will include opportunities for attendees to learn how to determine soil texture and the benefits and challenges of various soils management practices. Presenters will discuss soil structure, the benefits of aggregated soils, and the habitat earthworms and microbes need to thrive. Participants will learn the basics of soil sample analysis and by digging in soil pits, will understand soil compaction and how to avoid or remedy the situation on their land.

The day's events will start with a welcome and overview about soil health, then participants will be divided into groups to view three unique stations to further their understanding about soil structure and management techniques. Presenters include soil specialists from Minnesota, North Dakota, and Manitoba. Lunch is provided.

Space is limited. Sign up now to ensure a spot at z.umn.edu/SHday or call Mary Jo at 320-235-0726 x2001.



MN Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (MN CREP)

Gemma Kleinschmidt, Pheasants Forever Farm Bill Biologist

MN CREP is a voluntary state-federal program designed to improve water quality and habitat through permanent conservation easements. MN CREP's program goal is to protect and restore up to 60,000 acres of marginal cropland across 54 southern and western Minnesota counties using buffer strips, wetland restoration, and drinking water wellhead area protection. Native plantings on those acres will filter water, prevent erosion and provide critical habitat for grassland dependent species.

Here's how it works:

- Landowners enroll in the federally-funded Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) for 14-15 years. CRP is administered by the USDA-Farm Service Agency (FSA). Land must have cropping history to be eligible.
- The same land is also enrolled into a state-funded perpetual conservation easement through the Reinvest in Minnesota (RIM) Reserve program, administered by the Minnesota Board of Water and Soil Resources (BWSR).
- Private ownership continues and the land is permanently restored and enhanced for conservation benefits.

MN CREP focuses on four main Conservation Practices (CPs) that have been identified through the federal CRP:

1. Grass Filter Strips (CRP CP 21)
2. Wetland Restoration - Non Floodplain (CRP CP 23a)
3. Wetland Restoration – Floodplain (CRP CP 23)
4. Wellhead Protection Areas (CRP CP 2)

To learn more about the program or find out if you qualify, call or stop by the Swift SWCD office. We can provide additional details about MN CREP, provide payment information, and work with you on an application.

More information can also be found at: www.bwsr.state.mn.us/mn-crep-landowners





USDA Reopens Continuous CRP (CCRP) Signup

USDA has announced that they will accept CCRP offers for signup 52 beginning June 3, 2019 through August 23, 2019. CRP (Conservation Reserve Program), administered by USDA Farm Service Agency (FSA), is a voluntary program that contracts with landowners so that environmentally sensitive land is used for conservation benefits. Participants enroll in 10-15 year contracts and establish long-term vegetation to address resource concerns such as soil erosion, water quality, and wildlife habitat. In return, participants receive annual rental payments and cost-share assistance for site establishment and mid-contract management.

Under continuous CRP signup, environmentally sensitive land devoted to certain conservation practices can be enrolled in CRP at any time. Offers are automatically accepted provided the land and producer meet certain eligibility requirements and the enrollment levels do not exceed the statutory cap. Unlike CRP enrollments under general CRP signups or CRP Grasslands, offers for continuous enrollment are not subject to competitive bidding during specific periods. Conservation practices available at this time include:

- Wetland Restoration on Floodplain and Non-floodplain
- Farmable Wetlands and Farmable Wetland Buffer
- Marginal Pastureland Wetland Buffer
- Grass Waterway
- Shallow Water Area for Wildlife
- Filter Strip

To be eligible for CRP, offered land must be owned for at least one year and have cropping history four of the six crop years from 2012 to 2017. Annual payments are based on soil rental rates. Cost-share of up to 50 percent of the reimbursable expenses is available for installing the conservation practice. To find out if your land qualifies for any of the available conservation practices, stop in to our SWCD office, 1430 Utah Ave., Benson, MN.

Buffer Update

Andy Albertsen, Swift SWCD District Manager

The implementation of buffer strips across the county has been going steady since the state buffer requirements were first introduced in 2016. Initial compliance for the county was about 65%, with increasing compliance in each month thereafter. By winter of 2017, the county was about 72% compliant, and by this last winter compliance was about 90%. Currently, Swift county is at 94% compliance on all buffers, with 98% compliance on public waters (November 1, 2017 deadline) and 90% compliance for public ditches (November 1, 2018 deadline). The remaining parcels needing to plant buffers are planned to be installed during 2019.

The fall of 2018 certainly didn't help matters, as little time remained after harvest for buffers to be planted and many field conditions being unsuitable for seeding. This spring proved to be more of the same, with above average rainfall making many fields impossible to seed successfully. The Swift SWCD office has been in contact with landowners still needing to seed their buffer strips this year. Follow up phone calls will be made late summer and early fall to check if buffers were seeded.

There were various bills introduced during the 2019 Legislative session aimed at providing tax breaks or payments for parcels requiring buffer strips. However, none of the proposed bills were included the Omnibus bills that were passed by the legislature and signed into law by Governor Walz.

Swift SWCD will continue to work with landowners still needing to become compliant with the buffer law. As we are now past the buffer installation deadlines, the SWCD will transition to monitoring buffer areas to ensure continued compliance. The SWCD will utilize a Buffer Monitoring Plan that will include checking 1/3 of all parcels requiring buffer strips every year, with a three year rotation. Each year will also include random spot checks of the other 2/3 of parcels.

Finally, I would like to thank the landowners and operators of Swift county for their patience and cooperation in implementing the state buffer law over the past three years. I appreciate their continued dedication.





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SWIFT COUNTY SOIL & WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICT

2019 SUMMER NEWSLETTER

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Pope-Swift Cooperative Weed Management Area (CWMA)

Cost-Share Assistance

The Pope-Swift CWMA program has funding available to assist landowners that have a plumeless thistle stand on their pasture ground.

Eligible landowners enter into a contract with the Pope SWCD for 75% reimbursement, not to exceed \$500, to offset the cost of herbicide and labor in treatment of plumeless thistle on the pasture.

Q: How do I begin?

A: Stop into the Pope or Swift SWCD office to fill out an application.

Q: What all is involved with the contract?

A: A bid estimate is required for the cost of the herbicide and labor along with a map of the area to be treated. It is a one year contract. The work can be contracted out or completed by you.

Q: What is my share of the project?

A: Landowners are required to provide 25% of the actual project cost. Landowners are responsible for paying the contractor and will receive the 75% cost-share as a reimbursement.

Q: How long is funding available?

A: Funding is available on a first-come, first serve basis. Limited funds are available.