



The Swift County Soil & Water Conservation District (SWCD) is a local government agency providing conservation and resource management services. In cooperation with federal, state and local agencies, the District provides technical assistance, cost-sharing and natural resource management information and education. Landowners, businesses, industry and agencies may request these services.



2020 Annual Report

Swift County Soil and Water
Conservation District



SWIFT SWCD BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

Chairman – Dale Schlieman
Vice Chairman – Mark Weimerskirch
Secretary – Carl Ahrndt
Treasurer – Orvin Gronseth
PR & I – Scott Olson

SWIFT SWCD STAFF

District Manager – Andy Albertsen
Conservation Technician – Dalton Herrboldt
Office Manager – Sheri Gades
Pheasants Forever Farm Bill Biologist – Gemma Kleinschmidt

NATURAL RESOURCES CONSERVATION SERVICE

District Conservationist – Melanie Dickman
Soil Conservationist – Thomas Tjepkes
Soil Conservation Technician – Rick Gronseth
Assistant State Conservationist – John Matz, Marshall
State Conservationist – Troy Daniell, St. Paul

BOARD OF WATER AND SOIL RESOURCES

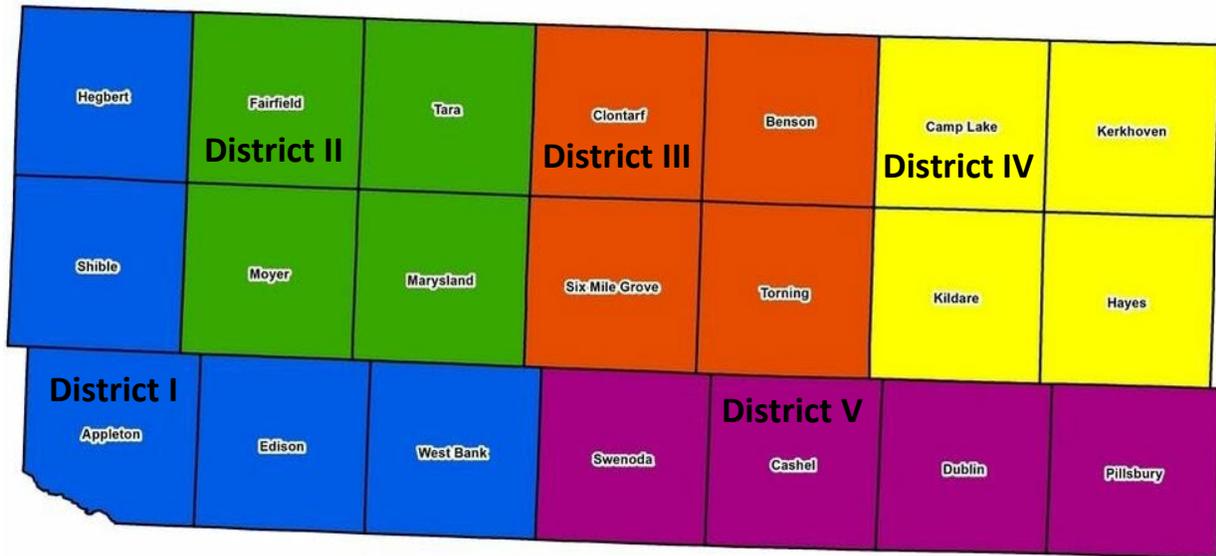
Executive Director – John Jaschke, St Paul
Board Conservationist – Jason Beckler, Marshall
Wetland Specialist – Lynda Ponting, St. Cloud
Clean Water Specialist – Brad Wozney, St. Cloud
Buffer and Soil Loss Specialist – Paul Erdmann, St. Paul



*Pictured L to R - (Front) Melanie Dickman, Sheri Gades, Gemma Kleinschmidt
(Back) Andy Albertsen, Rick Gronseth, Thomas Tjepkes, Dalton Herrboldt*



*Sitting (left to right): Carl Ahrndt, Mark Weimerskirch, Dale Schlieman
 Standing (left to right): Scott Olson, Orvin Gronseth*



**Scott Olson - Public Relations
 District I**

**Orvin Gronseth - Treasurer
 District IV**

**Dale Schlieman - Chairman
 District II**

**Mark Weimerskirch - Vice Chairman
 District V**

**Carl Ahrndt - Secretary
 District III**

What is a Soil and Water Conservation District?

A SWCD is a local unit of government that manages and directs natural resource management programs 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 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. These positions have been locally elected officials since SWCDs began to be formed in 1938. Dating back to 1971, these office positions have been available on the November ballot as a nonpartisan office.

One of the main areas SWCDs address is that of providing soil and water conservation services to owners of private lands. 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 restoration, 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. An example of this is the SWCD partnering with the Swift County Parks and Drainage to install side inlet structures on ditches.

Cost share funding available through each Soil and Water Conservation District is meant to be used for erosion or sediment control or



Wild Bergamot in a CRP Field

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. Examples include, rain gardens, cover crops, water and sediment control basins, grassed waterways, side inlets, alternative tile intakes, and many others. Call our office to find out if your project qualifies, or if there may be an alternative funding source.



Tree Planting in Camp Lake Twp.

Soil and Water Conservation District 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: tree planting, no-till drill rental (10' and 12' available), selling native grass and flower

seed mixes, designing cover crop seed mixes, 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, Educational and Outreach Events, and more!

Our work results in cleaner water, healthier wildlife habitat, better soil, and a collaborative relationship with the community. Soil and water are the basis for life, it is our goal to work with landowners to ensure the long-term sustainability of these vital resources. The Swift County Soil and Water Conservation District is committed to providing high quality technical, financial, and educational assistance to landowners and land managers of Swift County by promoting sound stewardship of our land and water resources.

SWCD Services and Programs

- Technical and financial assistance through state cost share for installation of conservation practices. Two water and sediment control basins, two wetland restorations, and one grassed waterway are scheduled to be installed in 2021.

2020 Conservation Practices					
Type	Number Installed	# of Contracts	Sediment Savings	Phosphorus Savings	SWCD Cost Share Provided
French Drain	30	6	30 T/yr.	45 lbs./yr.	\$25,237.50

- The SWCD sells native grass seed and assists landowners with seed mix selection. In 2020, the District had 20 sales for 236.5 acres, amounting to 1,171 pounds of pure live seed.
- Report financials into the eLink program for grant management as required by BWSR. The SWCD was able to close out the 2017 State Cost Share Grant, 2020 Conservation Delivery Grant, and 2019 Local Capacity Grant.
- Support NRCS with filing and customer assistance. The backbone of our organizations is excellent customer service.
- Tom Orr serves as County Ag Inspector for Swift County as contracted through the SWCD. Tom monitored county and township road ditches this year looking for new populations of Wild Parsnip and Leafy Spurge. He was able to talk the county into acquiring a spraying rig for controlling weeds in county ditches rather than mowing.
- Andy Albertsen works with the AgBMP loan program. One new loan was issued in 2020 in the amount of \$63,321 for conservation tillage equipment.
- Dalton maintained his pesticide applicator license and was able to do some late season spraying of wild parsnip on some township road ditches.
- Dalton Herrboldt works with the tree planning, planting, and fabric installation. 2020 resulted in one of our highest bareroot tree sales in the last several years.

2020 Tree Program				
SWCD Plantings	Bareroot Trees Sold	Potted Trees Sold	Tree Tubes Sold	Feet of Fabric Sold
15	6,230	916	435	18,535

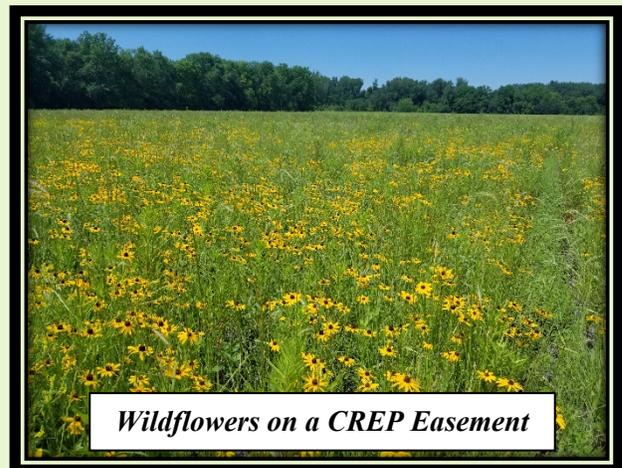
- Andy Albertsen is a member of the Technical Evaluation Panel for the Wetland Conservation Act. The TEP met on three wetland related issues in 2020.
- Andy Albertsen attends the Chippewa River Watershed Association and Pomme de Terre River Association Technical Advisory Committee meetings monthly and assists with cost share applications.
- Gemma Kleinschmidt provides Farm Bill assistance in cooperation with NRCS for CRP and WRP, promotes and manages the RIM/CREP programs for the county, and attends local MN Prairie Plan team meetings.



- Provide three native grass drills for conservation seeding. This year, Dalton fixed the old 10' DuraTech and got it up and running again. The District now has three no-till drills available for rent. 2020 was the first year the District has rented out our no-till drills to seed over 1,000 acres!

2020 No-Till Drill Program		
Seeder	Number of Users	Acres
10' DuraTech	1	9
10' Haybuster	25	429.83
12' Truax	32	741.56
ATV Seeding	2	3.12
Total	60	1,183.51

- Gemma worked with landowners to sign up for CRP and CREP. She wrote 165 CRP conservation plans in 2020, totaling 3,008 acres. No new CREP applications were submitted in 2020. Staff continue to work on the previous CREP applications to complete boundary posting and wetland restoration work.



- Dalton performed 52 site inspections on RIM/CREP easements.
- Pope-Swift Cooperative Weed Management Area helps identify invasive species in Pope and Swift Counties and provides invasive species control using biological and chemical methods through contracting with local partners. Remaining grant funds were used to purchase an ATV sprayer, a backpack sprayer, beetle collection nets, and additional chemical.
- Gemma assists MN DNR with promotion of the Walk-In-Access (WIA) program and helps enroll interested landowners. One WIA site was reenrolled this year, bringing the grand total to three sites equaling 395 acres in Swift County.
- Andy Albertsen administers the State Buffer Law in Swift County & assists landowners throughout the process. By the end of 2020 Swift County was 100% compliant on all buffers. Buffer inspections will ramp up in 2021 with a new flight to update countywide aerial imagery scheduled to occur in spring.
- DNR Observation Wells – The SWCD monitors 28 observation wells monthly for nine months. Readings are entered online and available to the public on the MN DNR Cooperative Groundwater Monitoring webpage.

- Rainfall Monitoring – Six sites in Swift County are used to monitor precipitation. Reports are submitted monthly to the Minnesota Climatology Network.
- Sheri Gades has been focusing efforts on identifying locations of water wells across the county. This is a critical and time-consuming component to the County Geologic Atlas, a massive project to be completed by the Minnesota Geologic Society and MNDNR. The end product will be a clearer representation of the state of groundwater in the county. Andy also assisted Barry Bowman with some feedlot inspections.

Education Activities

- Nature Day was cancelled this year due to COVID-19. We are hopeful that we can host Nature Day once again in 2021!
- Outstanding Conservationist Award – No recipient was chosen this year as the Annual MASWCD State Convention was virtual due to COVID-19. The SWCD Board didn't want to select someone if they wouldn't have the opportunity to be recognized at a statewide level. There is already a strong list of candidates for 2021.
- Arbor Day – Each 6th grade student in the KMS School received a conifer tree to plant, as well as children enrolled in an after-school program. This resulted in 123 trees donated.
- Newsletter – One newsletter was printed in partnership with Swift County Parks, Drainage, and Wetlands. They were mailed to every address located in Swift County. Approximately 5,600 copies were distributed for the mailing.
- Envirothon – Encouraged participation in the event, although no one participated from the local schools.
- Swift County Fair – The fair was cancelled this year due to COVID-19. We have to wait until next year to display our new tablecloths and pop up banner.
- The SWCD adopted a three mile stretch of Minnesota State Highway 9, from County Road 20 north to the sugar beet plant. The ditch was cleaned in the spring and fall. The spring yielded 15 bags of garbage while the fall yielded 8 bags. NRCS staff assisted with the fall cleanup.
- Swift SWCD partnered with Pope, Douglas, Kandiyohi, and Stearns SWCDs to host an Irrigator's Clinic in Pope County. Approximately 35 people attended.
- The District purchased flipbooks that were customized to Swift county. These educational books describe what an SWCD is and the services offered. The books will be made available at future events.



- The 2nd Annual Tree Open House was held, with cider, coffee, and cookies being served. A 10% discount was offered to anyone who ordered their trees during the open house. About 18 people attended the event and took advantage of the sale.
- Strip Till Expo – A soil health event was held near Barrett, MN consisting of cover crop plots, soil pits, farmer panel, and finally strip till equipment demonstrations from several companies. The event was well attended.
- Pomme de Terre Soil Health Team Meeting – The Soil Health Team met this summer at the Scott Olson Farm in Hegbert Township, Swift County. Scott and some neighbors had their strip till equipment on display. A soil pit was dug, and Jodi DeJong-Hughes from the University of Minnesota Extension talked about soils. A slake test demonstration was performed.



Agency Coordination

- Pomme de Terre River Association – The PDTRA has an approved Comprehensive Watershed Management Plan and are currently working on submitted a workplan for the ~\$717,000 the organization will receive over a 3-year timespan. The PDTRA also currently has a 2019 CWF Grant and a 2019 319 Grant from MPCA.
- Chippewa River Watershed Association – The CRWA now has SWCD Supervisors as voting members on the CRWA Joint Powers Board. This revision will set up the CRWA for a future One Watershed, One Plan, which it plans to apply for in 2021. The Technical Advisory Committee (SWCD and county staff) have developed a Public Participation Plan with MPCA that includes a summary of educational programs that SWCDs lead across the watershed, and a plan to create or bring back events like the Annual Meeting, Paddle Events, and a Pints, Pies, and Pollinators event. The plan also calls for website upgrades and an internal share drive for partners.
- Minnesota Department of Agriculture – The District works with the MDA in administering the MN Ag Water Quality Certification Program in Swift County. One additional producer was certified in 2020, and they received cost share through the MAWQCP to convert an open tile intake into a French Drain. The SWCD also partnered with MDA to collect water samples from Shakopee Creek twice per month, or after every significant rainfall. The samples taken are tested for pesticides.

- Minnesota Pollution Control Agency – The SWCD received a two-year Surface Water Assessment Grant (SWAG) from the MPCA. This grant provided funding to the SWCD for water quality monitoring. Seven streams sites around the county were monitored one to three times per month from April through September. Sampling parameters include temperature, dissolved oxygen, pH, conductance, secchi tube, hardness, E coli, chloride, chl-a, total phosphorus and total suspended sediment. 2020 was the second and final year of this grant.



Kayaking East Branch Chippewa River

- Natural Resources Conservation Service – The District works with NRCS to provide state matching funds when federal funds don't cover up to 75% of the total costs. The SWCD and NRCS work closely to ensure resource concerns in the county are addressed. Staff frequently review projects to identify the best funding path for a project.
- Pope SWCD – Pope and Swift SWCD's teamed up to apply for a Clean Water Fund Grant. The grant was selected for funding and will provide \$300,000 for erosion reduction projects in the East Branch Chippewa River Watershed. Many project sites have been identified and surveyed. Construction on some sites may begin in late 2021.

Other

- The District was gifted the island and buildings located on Lake Hassel in 1964 from Marie Hansen. There is a cabin on the island that Andy and Dalton went to visit last winter. The cabin was built, owned and used by a Dr. Charles L. Scofield. Since the 1960s, it has been used by the local boy scout troops. There were many egret nests on the island. The cabin was in fair condition, but Dalton said he wouldn't spend the night.



SWCD Island with Cabin



Tree Planting in Clontarf Twp.



Interseeding Cover Crops into Corn, West Bank Twp.



Pomme de Terre Soil Health Team Meeting



Filling in French Drain Inlet, Fairfield Twp.



Surveying Dike Blowout, Shible Twp.



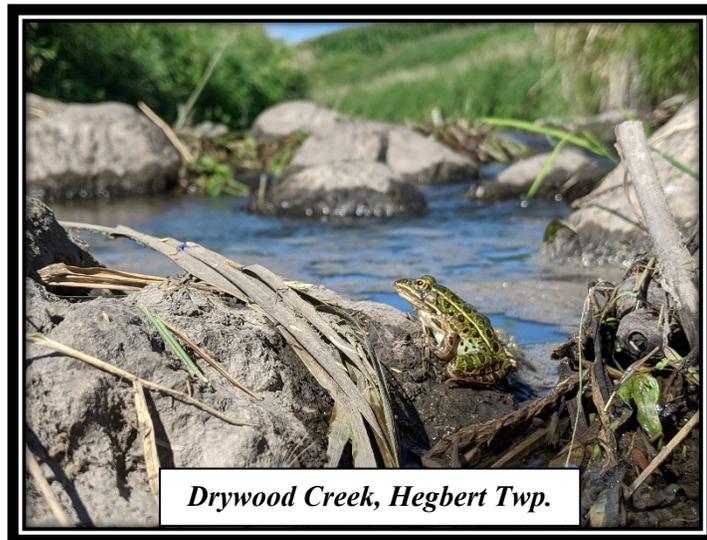
Kayaking East Branch Chippewa River



SWCD Cost Shared Cover Crops, Appleton Twp.



Wildlife Tree Planting, Fairfield Twp.



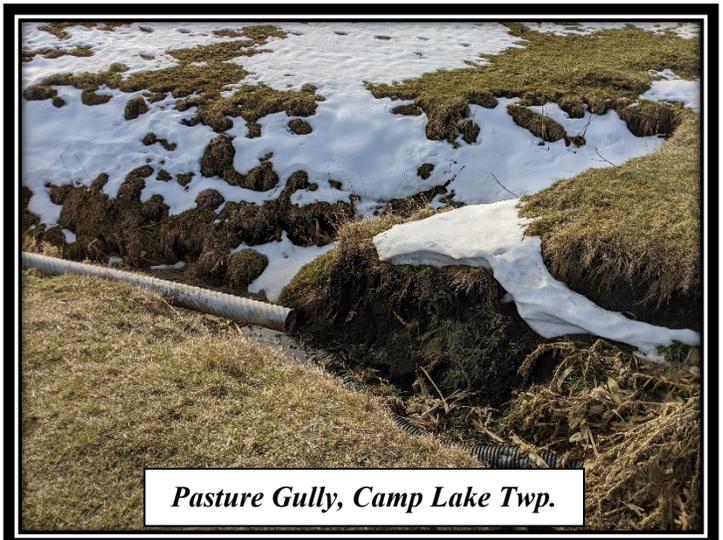
Drywood Creek, Hegbert Twp.



Prepping Trees for Arbor Day



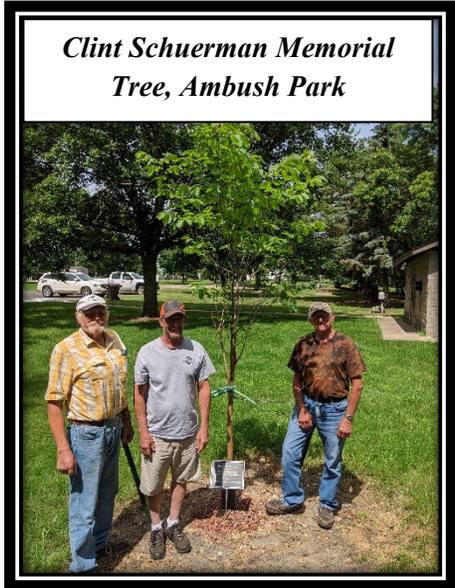
F-150 Tree Planting, Six Mile Grove Twp.



Pasture Gully, Camp Lake Twp.



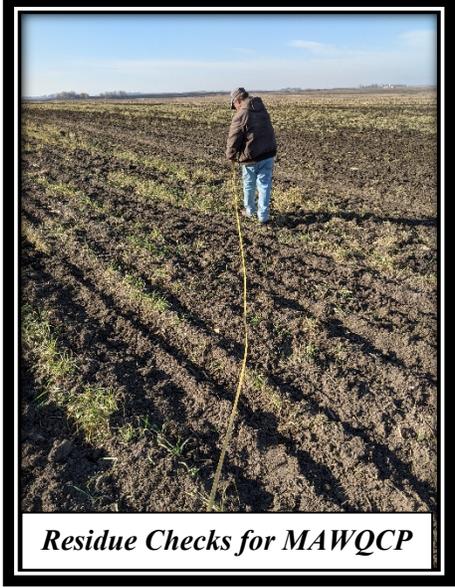
Bee on Aster



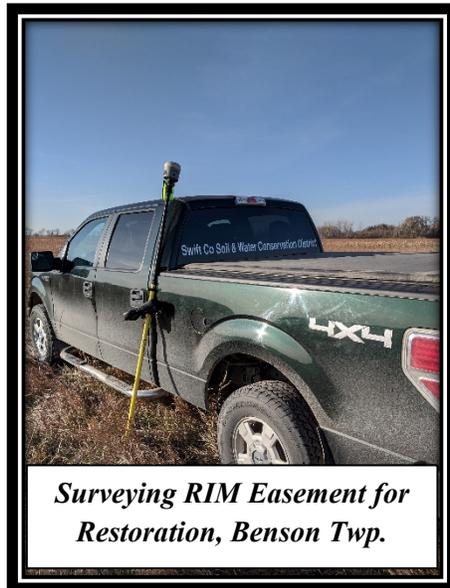
*Clint Schuerman Memorial
Tree, Ambush Park*



Boundary Posting CREP



Residue Checks for MAWQCP



*Surveying RIM Easement for
Restoration, Benson Twp.*