

ANNUAL PLAN OF WORK FOR THE
SWIFT COUNTY SOIL AND WATER
CONSERVATION DISTRICT
JANUARY 1, 2021 TO DECEMBER 31, 2021

SWIFT SWCD BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

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VICE CHAIRMAN – MARK WEIMERSKIRCH
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SWIFT SWCD STAFF

DISTRICT MANAGER - ANDY ALBERTSEN
OFFICE MANAGER – SHERI GADES
CONSERVATION TECHNICIAN – DALTON HERRBOLDT

PHEASANTS FOREVER FARM BILL BIOLOGIST - GEMMA KLEINSCHMIDT

COUNTY AG INSPECTOR - TOM ORR (contracted through the SWCD)

NATURAL RESOURCES CONSERVATION SERVICE

DISTRICT CONSERVATIONIST – MELANIE DICKMAN
SOIL CONSERVATIONIST – THOMAS TJEPKES
SOIL CONSERVATION TECHNICIAN – RICK GRONSETH

AREA CONSERVATIONIST- JOHN MATZ
STATE CONSERVATIONIST – TROY DANIELL

MINNESOTA 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

The District cooperates with the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) under a Memorandum of Understanding and Operational Agreement whereby technical assistance on soil survey, engineering, agronomy, biology, woodland conservation and administration is furnished to the District by the NRCS office at Benson, Minnesota as their headquarters.

The NRCS and SWCD prohibits discrimination in its programs and activities on the basis of race, color, national origin, gender, religion, age, disability, political beliefs, sexual orientation, and marital or familial status.

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SWIFT COUNTY SOIL AND WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICT
1430 UTAH AVE
BENSON, MINNESOTA 56215

I. INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this Annual Plan is to identify resource problems within our Soil and Water Conservation District. In addition to identifying these resource problems, the Plan outlines and specifies objectives to be accomplished in solving these resource problems. The Annual Plan breaks down the goals and objectives identified in the Comprehensive Plan with specific actions to be taken in the year 2021.

The Swift County Soil and Water Conservation District Board of Supervisors and Staff will review this plan three times in 2021 at our May, August and December meetings.

This plan will be used in conjunction with the Swift County Local Water Management Plan to provide guidance on goals and objectives for the SWCD to pursue. The priority areas defined in the LWMP also apply to this SWCD Annual Plan.

THE OBJECTIVES OF THE SWIFT COUNTY SOIL AND WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICT ARE AS FOLLOWS:

- A. Water Quality Degradation
- B. Soil Erosion and Soil Quality
- C. Provide Education and Information
- D. Improve Public Relations

II. OBJECTIVES AND ACTIONS:

Objective A. WATER QUALITY DEGRADATION

- ❖ Promote the CRP practice sign-up by encouraging landowners to establish/re-establish quality CRP areas, including wetlands and filter strips, by use of the District newsletter and media. **Goal - 500 acres enrolled/re-enrolled.**
- ❖ Continue to work on high priority animal waste systems. NRCS/SWCD will assist with technical assistance and cost share dollars and with technical engineering. **Goal – two landowner contracts/assistance.**
- ❖ Treatment for sedimentation and pollution within priority watersheds using terraces, sediment basins, grade stabilization structures, grassed waterways, and filter strips. **Goal - 200 acres treated.**
- ❖ Promote shelterbelts and renovations. Promote wildlife practices such as ponds and tree plantings.
- ❖ Pomme de Terre River Association
 - One Supervisor and one County Commissioner serve on the PdT Joint Powers Board. One SWCD staff and the Swift County Environmental Service Director serve on the Technical Advisory Committee along with representatives from five other counties in the Pomme de Terre River watershed.
 - The Pomme de Terre River Association has received a MPCA 319 grant to implement conservation projects in the watershed that address sediment reduction within priority areas. **Goal – two landowner contracts.**
 - The local watershed work group has listed various conservation practices, including water and sediment control basins, rain gardens, grade stabilization structures, and others as priority practices to be addressed through a FY19 CWF grant with funding incentives attached to designated top 25% sediment producing practices that qualify and are approved. **Goal – two landowner contracts.**
 - Actively participate in implementing the PdT Comprehensive Watershed Management Plan. A work plan has been developed and implementation work will begin in 2021.
 - Utilize PTMapp for the watershed to assist with targeting and prioritization of projects and practices.
 - Meet with landowners, lake shore property owners and city representatives to determine what priorities should be addressed and indicate what programs are available.
 - Assist the Pomme de Terre coordinator in promoting practices to reduce fecal coliform and turbidity impairments in the watershed. Practices include sediment basins, alternative tile intakes, livestock exclusions, wetland restorations, grassed waterways and rain gardens.

- ❖ Be an active member with the Area II West Central Technical Service Area (WCTSA) to deliver engineering assistance to land users in Swift County for practices such as shoreline restorations, alternative tile intakes, sediment control basins, streambank stabilizations and other projects as necessary.
- ❖ Irrigation water management
 - Promote conversion to low pressure nozzles.
 - Promote the tracking of water usage. This will include corresponding with others who have successfully implemented irrigation water management tracking software. **Goal – program establishment.**
 - Participate in or host an Irrigator Water Management clinic. **Goal – one event.**
 - Send mailing to all irrigator owners in the county eliciting a workshop or conversion opportunities through cost share.
- ❖ Administer and inform county residents about the AgBMP Loan Program. **Goal – one application.**
- ❖ Assist Swift County with implementation of the Minnesota Wetland Conservation Act.
 - Assist with wetland determination processing and be an active member of the technical evaluation panel participation.
 - When needed, assist with restoration and/or replacement plans.
 - Act as clearinghouse for information as it pertains to WCA and wetland banking.
- ❖ The District will continue to have a Pheasants Forever Farm Bill Biologist to assist with implementing Farm Bill conservation programs. (see Goal under Soil Erosion & Soil Quality objective)
 - Work with landowners who wish to sign up for general and continuous CRP.
 - Promote state, federal, and local programs through newspaper articles, media and District meetings.
 - Promote and sign up landowners interested in the DNR Walk-In Access program.
 - Assist with annual RIM site inspections.
- ❖ Continue utilizing the Cooperative Weed Management Program with Pope SWCD to identify and manage the spread of terrestrial invasive species.
 - Apply for funding sources that allow for the continuation of services provided under the PSCWMA.
 - Post Weed of the Week articles in local print media.
 - Track the spread of various terrestrial invasive species.
 - Consider using GPS to map location and size of invasive species sites.
 - Address questions that pertain to weed control.
 - Use chemical or biological methods, as time and funds allow, to control the spread of weeds.
- ❖ Administer the State Buffer Law.

- Maintain a county buffer database and update compliance status using the state BuffCAT system.
 - Work with landowners to become compliant.
 - Provide technical assistance for installing buffer strips.
 - Promote voluntary buffer strips on areas not requiring a buffer.
 - **Goal – 100% compliance countywide**
- ❖ Partner with Swift County Environmental Services and Parks, Drainage, and Wetlands.
 - Work with county staff on areas identified as needing improvements, specifically feedlots that are out of compliance and side inlet structures in need of repair along county ditches.
 - ❖ Assist the Swift County Board of Commissioners and Water Planning Staff with the implementation of the water planning activities in the county.
 - One Supervisor and the District Technician will continue to serve on the local water plan task force.
 - District will promote well sealing through the EQIP and local cost share programs.
 - Identify locations for rain gardens. **Goal – two rain gardens.**
 - ❖ Review DNR water permit applications and respond appropriately.

OBJECTIVE B: SOIL EROSION & SOIL QUALITY

- ❖ Protect cropland from water and wind erosion by bringing the soil loss within tolerable limits by implementing conservation practices that utilize various state and federal cost share and land retirement programs.
 - Continue to implement and encourage the WRE (Wetland Reserve Easement), RIM, CRP, and CREP programs.
 - Promote wetland restorations.
 - Promote riparian land sign-ups.
 - Promote marginal ag land sign-ups
 - **Goal – 1,000 acres enrolled**
 - Farm Bill Biologist will work with landowners to enroll marginal cropland into CRP and CREP and assist with developing plans to help landowners manage their vegetative cover.
 - Promote RIM sign-up and assist with establishment of vegetative cover on these acres.
 - Complete RIM/CREP site inspection/maintenance reviews.
 - Promote and enroll landowners in CREP III. **Goal – three approved applications.**
 - Stay actively aware and promote funding available to help enhance privately protected land.
 - Concentrate our efforts in high priority watersheds and along ditch systems, as well as identify potential sites for side inlet structure.

- Host a CRP Establishment Workshop targeting new CRP contract holders and their landowners and operators. Invite vendors to attend.
- ❖ Soil Health Initiative
 - District staff will work with producers to promote incorporation of cover crops into their rotation.
 - Incorporation of a Non-structural Land Management Policy that will allow the District to use its funds to provide cost share for cover crops. **Goal – 100 acres.**
- ❖ Continue District tree planting program. Provide technical assistance for farmstead shelterbelts and field windbreaks and wildlife plantings. Inform the public of the availability of the tree planter and fabric weed barrier machine.
 - Provide tree matting fabric service.
 - **Goal – 3,000 trees planted, 6,000 trees sold**
 - **Goal – one mile of field windbreaks and three farmstead shelterbelts**
 - Promote tree planting on appropriate CRP practices. On CRP Forestry practices, and DNR Forester will assist with plans.
 - Establish wildlife habitat plantings.
- ❖ No-till drill program
 - Promote the no-till drill program by renting out our two drills. **Goal – 900 acres.**
 - Promote the use of our ATV broadcast seeder. **Goal – five acres.**
- ❖ Sell native seed mixes throughout the District.
 - Provide information to potential clients on how to create a successful stand of grasses/forbs.
- ❖ Promote the Minnesota Ag Water Quality Certification Program available through MDA. **Goal – two producers enrolled.**

OBJECTIVE C: EDUCATION AND INFORMATION

- ❖ Develop new interest in the cost-share and land retirement programs. These programs include State Cost-Share, Watershed Grant Funding, EQIP, CSP, RIM/CREP, CRP and Walk-In Access program.
- ❖ Individual farm contacts are to be made by a District staff to promote all cost share and land retirement programs. **Goal – 30 contacts.**
- ❖ Inform the public through informational meetings, District newsletters, radio, and personal contacts. **Goal – two newsletters.**
- ❖ District will continue to function as a clearinghouse for the existing conservation programs available.

- ❖ Continue to promote conservation tillage practices in Swift County.
- ❖ Partner with a landowner to develop a Soil health Demonstration Site
 - Plots will include strip till, no till and conventional till
 - Plots will include cover crop vs. no cover crop
 - Work with local partners and host an annual field day to show findings
- ❖ Supervisors will attend Area/State meetings. **Goal – perfect attendance at all meetings.**
- ❖ The SWCD will work with other groups and agencies in the continued maintenance of the outdoor learning area at Ambush Park.
- ❖ Conduct a county bus tour of local projects to showcase SWCD efforts. Invite county commissioners, county administrator, local officials, and partnering agencies/staff.
- ❖ Work with area schools to teach conservation practices and learn of the benefits associated with it through the local Water Festival.
 - Host one environmental presentation for elementary students discussing the benefits of trees in conjunction with Arbor Day.
 - Host a water festival for area 5th and/or 6th graders at the Outdoor Learning Center.
 - Promote participation in the Envirothon.
- ❖ Host a Cover Crops field day. **Goal – one field day.**
- ❖ Host a Rain Garden Workshop. **Goal – one workshop.**
- ❖ Provide well water testing for nitrates. **Goal – two clinics.**
- ❖ Educate the landowners and operators in the Shakopee Creek watershed of the sedimentation and pollution problems and solutions in the sub watershed.
- ❖ Inform citizens of yearly rain fall utilizing the data collected through the six monitors in the county. **Goal – recruit two new monitors.**
- ❖ Publish updated information on the District website. Utilize email listserv option on website to help spread the word on district events and opportunities.
- ❖ Promote conservation practices and programs by use of District newsletter. This will be published annually. Work with FSA to possibly utilize their newsletter.
- ❖ Improve the Districts overall education and information efforts in schools, churches and other establishments.
 - Soil Stewardship materials will be provided to schools during Soil Stewardship Week.

- Promote and participate in the State Envirothon.
 - Hand out evergreen tree seedlings to KMS sixth grade students for Arbor Day.
- ❖ Continue to monitor 28 observation wells throughout the county.

OBJECTIVE D: IMPROVE PUBLIC RELATIONS

- ❖ Board will attend county commissioner meetings quarterly to update them on the summary of SWCD activities.
- ❖ SWCD will invite one county commissioner to each monthly Board meeting.
- ❖ Set up a booth at the Swift County Fair.
- ❖ Publish news articles in area papers highlighting the District and future events/projects. Publish articles that promote various conservation practices and good land stewardship. **Goal – six articles.**
- ❖ The District will utilize their Facebook account to provide another means of engaging with the community. **Goal – one post per week.**

III: COST-SHARE PROGRAM REQUIREMENTS

A: HIGH PRIORITY WIND AND SOIL EROSION PROBLEMS

High priority erosion problems mean areas where erosion from wind or water is occurring equal to, or more than, 2 tons per acres per year or is occurring on any area that exhibits active erosion or is identified as high priority in the comprehensive local water plan or the conservation District's comprehensive plan or is classified as being Highly Erodible (HEL) or Potentially Highly Erodible (PHEL).

State cost-share funds will be used to install critical area stabilization, diversions, field windbreaks, grassed waterways, agricultural waste management, water and sediment control basins, erosion or water control structures, streambank stabilizations, shore land and roadside protection, rain gardens, and terraces.

B. HIGH PRIORITY WATER QUALITY

High priority water quality problems mean areas where sediment, nutrients, chemicals, or other pollutants discharge to Department of Natural Resources designated public waters or to any high priority waters as identified in a comprehensive local water plan or the conservation District's comprehensive plan, or discharged to groundwater. The pollutant delivery rate to the water source is in amounts that will impair the quality or usefulness of the water resource.

IV: 2021 PROPOSED BUDGET

Available on the Swift SWCD website, located under the District Business heading. Budget can be found in the Annual Financial Report and Budget section.

V: STAFFING NEEDS WORKLOAD ANALYSIS WORKSHEET

Our staff consists of a District Manager, Office Manager, Conservation Technician and a Farm Bill Biologist contracted through Pheasants Forever.

2021 STAFF OBJECTIVES:

A: WATER QUALITY IMPROVEMENT:

Improve surface water and water quality land treatments, execute the 2018 Farm Bill, well water monitoring. Help implement Swift County Water Plan, RIM Program, Soil Health Initiative, and Watershed programs.

B: SOIL EROSION CONTROL:

Promote State-Cost Share Program through farm contacts and information campaigns. Control soil erosion on vulnerable land, tree planting, living snow fences and grass drill program.

C: EDUCATION AND INFORMATION:

Work with special promotions and conservation tillage. Implement education and outreach information, soil stewardship material, Workshops, radio and newspapers, schools.

D: IMPROVE PUBLIC RELATIONS:

Staff will work to establish a line of communication with county officials, create content for social and print media, and attend various events to professionally represent the District.

Total staff time for 2021

	Dist. Mgr.	Office Mgr.	FB Biologist	Cons. Tech
	.35	.25	.70	.20
	.35	.25	.10	.40
	.15	.25	.10	.20
	.15	.25	.10	.20
	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00

TOTAL FTE: 4.00*

*This total does not include the NRCS District Conservationist or NRCS Soil Conservation Technician.