



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.

2021 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
Public Relations & Information – 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/Area Team Lead – 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

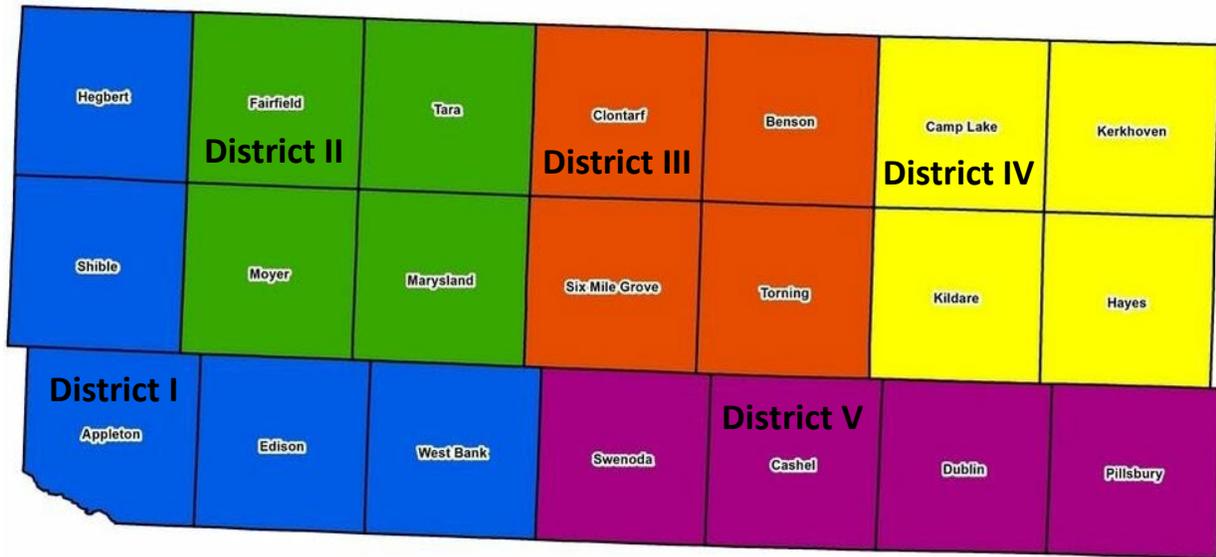
Executive Director – John Jaschke, St Paul
Board Conservationist – Jason Beckler, Marshall
Wetland Specialist – Lynda Ponting, St. Cloud
Clean Water Specialist – Brad Wozney, St. Cloud
Buffer and Soil Loss Specialist – Paul Erdmann, St. Paul



*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**

2021: Review at a Glance

The Swift SWCD was active again in 2021, starting off with one of our best years in tree sales over the past several years. With many people quarantining and working from home, they had plenty of time to look out the window and decide that they could use a few more trees in their life. We also offered bareroot apple trees for the first time, which went over well. Early reports are that they made it through the dry summer!

SWCD staff were able to work with engineers from the West Central Technical Service Area to survey several sites across the county for erosion control practices. The light snow cover in January (2021) allowed us to get an early start on surveying for 2021 projects. Surveying and design work carried over into the summer, with the wrapping up of designs for some water and sediment control basins (WASCOB's), wetland restoration, alternative tile intakes, and a streambank stabilization. Supply chain issues didn't prevent us from completing projects, as we were able to knock out a rain garden in Benson (big thanks to Stevens SWCD for their assistance), an open tile intake conversion to a rock inlet, and two different WASCOB projects along the Pomme de Terre River.

Dalton and Andy both completed training and became certified drone pilots (we have the FAA cards to prove it!). The drone proved to be a very useful tool for many different aspects of our work and will continue to be used moving forward for all sorts of projects. Other upgrades included a new ATV that we use for native grass and forb seeding and for site inspections.

It was another respectable year for no-till drill rentals, as the older 10' DuraTech (Haybuster) that Dalton repaired in 2020 got a healthy workout. The repairs throughout the season were minimal, just some hydraulic hose work and spring replacements. The SWCD Board also updated the equipment rental policy, waiving the per acre fee for the first 30 acres, then charging ½ rate per acre over 30 acres for individuals seeding cover crops. This was meant to keep input costs low for producers. The SWCD Board recognized the importance and value of cover crops, and in addition to offering cost share, thought a reduction in rental fees was justified to help get more cover crops on the landscape.

SWCD staff embarked on an employee retreat in the fall, venturing up to the Brainerd area. Time was spent at the Central Lakes College Ag & Energy Center in Staples, where staff met with the farm manager and workers and talked about their research and use of irrigation and cover crops. SWCD staff then had a brainstorming session, tackling some heavy hitting topics like what the SWCD looks like five years from now, job duty review, and marketing and outreach areas for growth. The retreat ended with a stop at the Redhead Creamery near Brooten, where staff got a firsthand look at a dairy farm and creamery operation.

We are looking forward to a busy 2022 and can't wait to get rolling with some new projects and ideas that will help the soil and water resources of Swift County.

Andy Albertsen, District Manager

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 water quality improvement projects/practices that are designed to protect and improve soil and water resources. There are



*Aerially seeded rye
in standing corn*

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.



Surveying Rock Inlets, Fairfield 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.

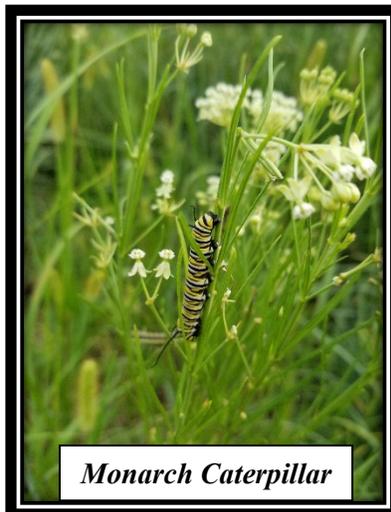
Some of the programs the Swift SWCD and their partners offer include: tree planting, no-till drill rental (10' and 12' available), selling native grass and flower seed

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 (AgBMP) Loan Program, Nitrate Testing Clinics, Educational and Outreach Events, and more!

Our work results in cleaner water, improved wildlife habitat, healthier 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.



Soil Health Team Meeting



Monarch Caterpillar



Water Quality Session at Nature Day

SWCD Services and Programs

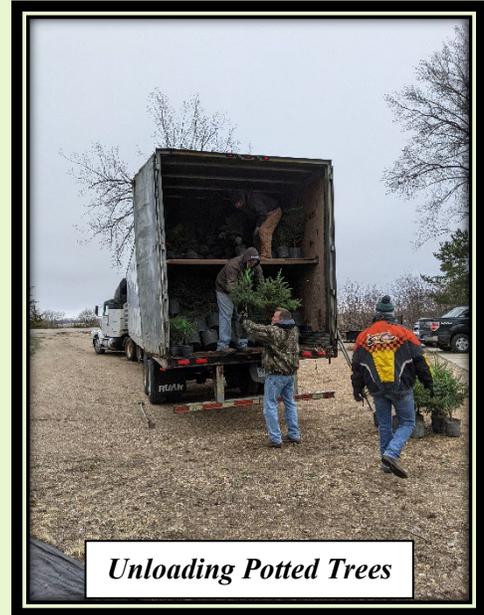
- Technical and financial assistance through local cost share for installation of conservation practices. The table below outlines projects that were installed in 2021. For 2022, rock inlets, dense pattern tile open intake replacements, two wetland restorations, two grade stabilizations, one streambank stabilization, and five water and sediment control basins are scheduled to be installed.

2021 Conservation Practices					
Type	Number Installed	# of Contracts	Sediment Savings	Phosphorus Savings	SWCD Cost Share Provided
French Drain	1	1	1.0 T/yr	1.5 lbs./yr	\$375.00
Rain Garden	1	1	0.01 T/yr	0.08 lbs./yr	\$1,574.94
WASCOB	5	2	114.44 T/yr	63.71 lbs./yr	\$35,304.04
Totals	7	4	115.45 T/yr	65.29 lbs./yr	\$37,253.98

- The SWCD sells native grass seed and assists landowners with seed mix selection. In 2021, the District had 15 sales for 110.0 acres, amounting to 555.17 pounds of pure live seed.
- Reported financials into the eLink program for grant management as required by BWSR. The SWCD was able to close out the 2019 State Cost Share Grant, 2021 Conservation Delivery Grant, and 2020 Buffer Law Grant.
- Supported NRCS with filing and customer assistance. The backbone of our organizations is excellent customer service.
- Tom Orr served 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.
- Andy works with the AgBMP loan program. No new loans were issued in 2021. There are over \$200,000 available in the revolving loan fund for Swift County landowners.
- Dalton maintained his pesticide applicator license and was able to do some late season spraying of wild parsnip in some township road ditches.
- Dalton works with the tree planning, planting, and fabric installation. 2021 resulted in one of our highest tree sales in the last several years.

2021 Tree Program				
SWCD Plantings	Bareroot Trees Sold	Potted Trees Sold	Tree Tubes Sold	Feet of Fabric Sold
9	6,630	1,861	129	17,549 (3.3 miles)

- Andy is a member of the Technical Evaluation Panel for the Wetland Conservation Act. The TEP met on three wetland related issues in 2021.
- Andy attended the Chippewa River Watershed Association and Pomme de Terre River Association Technical Advisory Committee meetings monthly and assisted with cost share applications. Andy was CRWA TAC Chair.
- Gemma Kleinschmidt provided Farm Bill assistance in cooperation with NRCS for CRP and WRP, promoted and managed the RIM/CREP programs for the county, and attended local MN Prairie Plan team meetings.
- Provided three native grass drills for conservation seeding. A breakdown of the drill rental program is below.



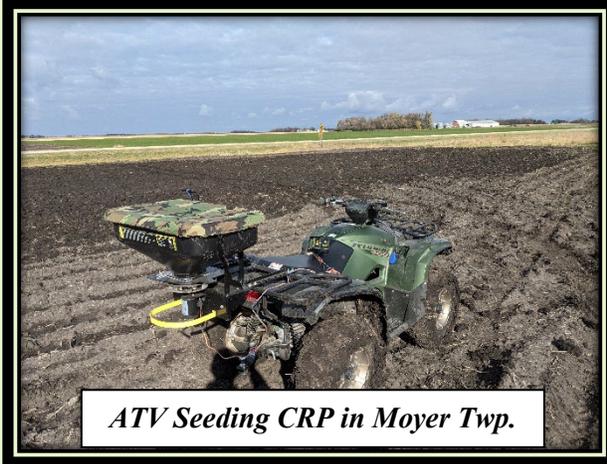
Unloading Potted Trees

2021 No-Till Drill Program		
Seeder	Number of Users	Acres
10' DuraTech	14	292.46
10' Haybuster	10	103.48
12' Truax	16	220.65
ATV Seeding	3	2.0
Total	43	1,183.51

- Gemma worked with landowners to sign up for CRP and CREP. She wrote 153 CRP conservation plans in 2021, totaling 2,615.6 acres. No new CREP applications were submitted in 2021. **Outreach letters were mailed to 48 landowners.**
- Dalton performed 82 site inspections on RIM/CREP easements and boundary posted six 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. A \$5,000 grant was received



10' Haybuster No-Till Drill



ATV Seeding CRP in Moyer Twp.

from the Minnesota Department of Agriculture that lead to several miles of township road ditches being sprayed to control wild parsnip.

➤ Gemma assisted MN DNR with promotion of the Walk-In-Access (WIA) program and helped enroll interested landowners. One WIA site was reenrolled this year, bringing the grand total to three sites equaling 395 acres in Swift County. Outreach postcards were mailed to 31 landowners.

➤ Andy administered the State Buffer Law in Swift County & assisted landowners

throughout the process. By the end of 2021 Swift County was 99+% compliant on all buffers. Buffer inspections ramped up in 2021 with a new aerial imagery flight. All buffer parcels were reviewed for compliance. For buffer compliance that couldn't be determined by aerial imagery, road checks were performed. For buffers not verified from the road, field visits were conducted with landowner permission. Kody Fossum from Swift County PD&W assisted with some site checks. Flagging was performed where necessary.

- 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 were used to monitor precipitation. Reports are submitted monthly to the Minnesota Climatology Network.
- Sheri Gades had been focusing efforts on identifying locations of water wells across the county. This was 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 assisted Barry Bowman with some feedlot inspections.
- A saturated buffer effort was undertaken to match a relatively new CRP practice with landowners looking to enroll their CRP filter strips. A large list was whittled down to a select few that were interested in having a design completed. Ecosystem Services

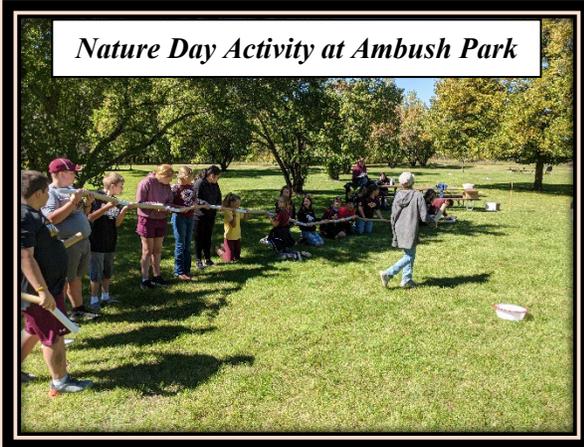
Exchange, through NRCS, provided the technical services. **Ultimately one landowner signed up, with construction of the saturated buffer scheduled for 2022.**



Drone Seeding Cover Crop in Appleton Twp.

Education Activities

- Nature Day was back this year! **We were able to play host to nearly 200 5th and 6th grade students from Benson and KMS schools.** The event was once again held at Ambush Park in Benson. The Swift SWCD partnered with local and state entities to offer fun and educational lessons and activities covering a variety of outdoor topics. Topics



included fisheries, prairie management, plant ID, forestry, glaciers, bubbleology, and more! This year, our Nature Day had 15 stations with presenters from Swift and Douglas SWCDs, Upper MN Watershed District, NRCS, Pheasants Forever, Native Resource Preservation, Minnesota Department of Natural Resources, Minnesota Pollution Control Agency, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Moore Engineering, University of Minnesota-Extension, and the Science Museum of Minnesota.

- Outstanding Conservationist Award – The 2021 recipient was Matt and Kristi Mesenbrink. A write up about what Matt and Kristi do is available on the Swift SWCD website. The same write up was included in the SWCD newsletter that was mailed out to several thousand addresses in January 2022.
- 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 105 trees donated.**
- Newsletters – Two newsletters were 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 each mailing.** Copies of the newsletters are available on our website.
- Envirothon – Encouraged participation in the event, however no one participated locally in the virtual event.
- Swift County Fair – The fair was back on this year! We held a special sign up for free trees, either one bundle of bareroot or five potted trees. Three winners were selected from our tree tube sign up display.
- **The District purchased flipbooks that were customized to Swift county.** These educational booklets describe what an SWCD is and the services we offer. The booklets will be made available at future events.



- The annual irrigator clinic was cancelled for 2021. Swift SWCD partners with Pope, Douglas, Kandiyohi, and Stearns SWCDs to host this event. Swift is scheduled to host the event in March 2022.
- 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 and a 32” tube TV while the fall yielded 12 bags. NRCS staff assisted with the cleanups.



Wind Erosion Demo

from Wyndemere, ND came and gave a presentation about strip till equipment. Group discussion was had. Andy Albertsen gave a demonstration using a wind erosion simulator.

- The Tree Open House was cancelled for 2021. However, one is scheduled for February 1, 2022 at the Benson Fire Hall. Cider, coffee, and cookies will be served. A 10% discount will be offered to anyone who orders their trees during the open house.
- Pomme de Terre Soil Health Team Meetings – The Soil Health Team met this summer at the Greg Fynboh Farm near Donnelly in Stevens County. Greg and some neighbors had their strip till equipment on display. Carson Klosterman

Partner Coordination

- Pomme de Terre River Association –
 - The PDTRA has an approved **Comprehensive Watershed Management Plan (CWMP)** and are currently working on implementing the plan using **~\$717,000 the organization received from BWSR.**
 - The PDTRA also currently has a 2019 CWF Grant and a 2019 319 Grant from MPCA that will be expiring in 2022.
 - Technical Advisory Committee meetings are held monthly. Andy serves on two subcommittees, one for reviewing the ranking and tracking spreadsheet to be used



Surveying Gully in Fairfield Twp.

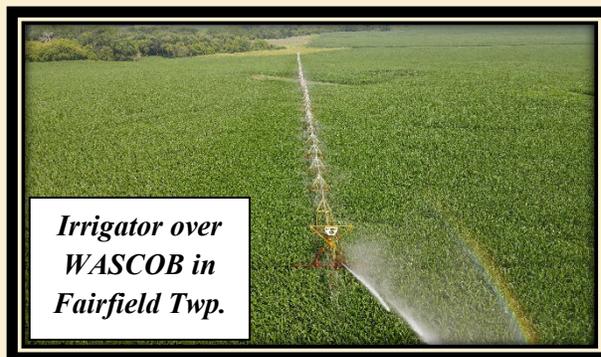
for the next CWMP funding and one for the soil health team planning.

- An Annual Meeting was held in Morris in late November at the Old No. 1. A water quality update was provided by Paul Wymar, MPCA and Steve Rosenzweig gave a presentation on General Mills' involvement in regenerative agricultural practices.

- Chippewa River Watershed Association – This year the CRWA received a One Watershed, One Plan Planning Grant from BWSR. Much time was spent developing a workplan, budget, and timeline for the planning effort, which will begin in 2022. 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 Pollinator's 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. Six additional producers were certified in 2021.** 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 analyzed for pesticides.
- 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. **A Pancakes in the Park event was held at Ambush Park with area producers invited to share their thoughts on the environmental concerns in the county. Swift SWCD and NRCS staff made a pancake, sausage, and egg breakfast for those that attended.**
- Pope SWCD – Pope and Swift SWCD's are in the process of implementing projects laid out within the workplan for the East Branch Chippewa Watershed grant that was received. One project was funded and constructed in Pope county in 2021. Several other projects are designed and ready for install in 2022.
- Irrigation RCPP – Swift was one of twenty SWCD's and several other partners across central Minnesota to apply and be



awarded a Regional Conservation Partnership Program grant. This grant will allow for landowners within the 20-county area to apply for irrigation improvements that improve soil and water health. The grant also includes funding to train SWCD and NRCS staff on the Irrigation Water Management practice.

- Swift County Parks, Drainage & Wetlands – **The SWCD offered a photo contest that resulted in over 150 photos submitted spanning 17 weeks.** Photos had to show a water-related scene from Swift county. Participants were encouraged to get outside and explore! Weekly prizes were awarded to the best photo, and all entries were eligible for the grand prizes of a stand-up paddleboard and sit-in kayak.

Other

- Swift SWCD purchased a drone, with both Andy and Dalton getting licensed to operate it. The drone was used for RIM inspections, buffer inspections, project inspections, project investigation, tree planting, and project installation. It has proved to be a useful tool for various work components.
- A smart TV and supporting wireless technology were purchased and installed in the USDA Service Center conference room. USDA and SWCD staff have used the devices frequently for trainings and conference calls.
- Andy and Dalton worked with a Benson High School class at Swift Falls Park to measure stream velocity and search for macroinvertebrates.



Now...more pictures!





Tree Planting, Moyer Twp.



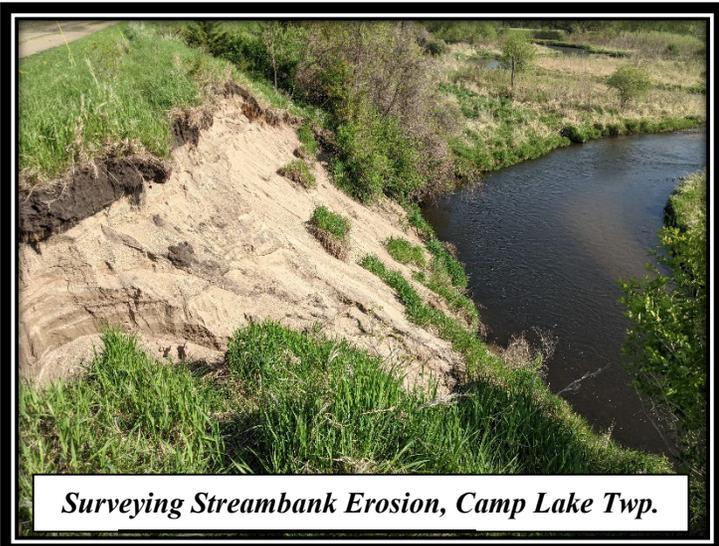
Strip-till Field, Hayes Twp.



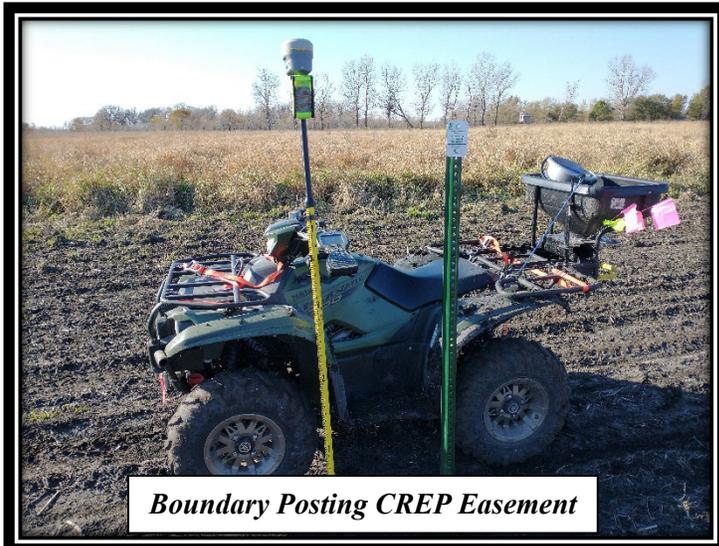
Rain Garden, Before, Torning Twp.



Rain Garden, After, Torning Twp.



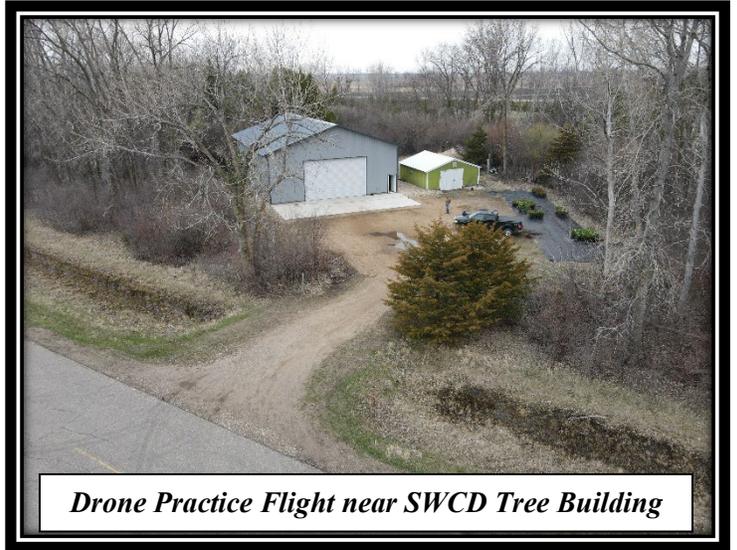
Surveying Streambank Erosion, Camp Lake Twp.



Boundary Posting CREP Easement



Outstanding Conservationists & Staff at State Convention



Drone Practice Flight near SWCD Tree Building



RIM Easement Check w/ Drone, Monson Lake



Surveying for Wetland Restoration, Fairfield Twp.



Swift County Fair Booth



Measuring Stream Velocity at Swift Falls Park



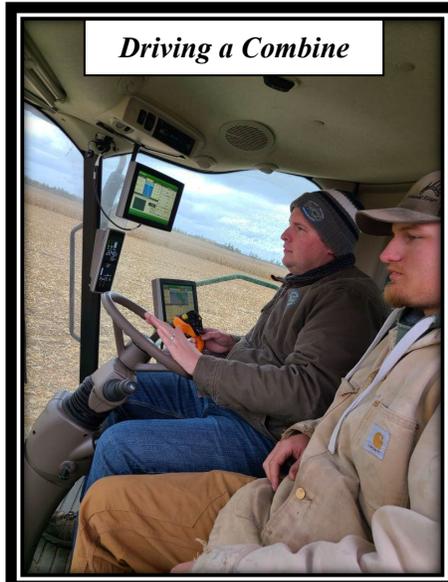
Bottle Gentian



WASCOB in Fairfield Twp.



Ditch Cleaning, Fall



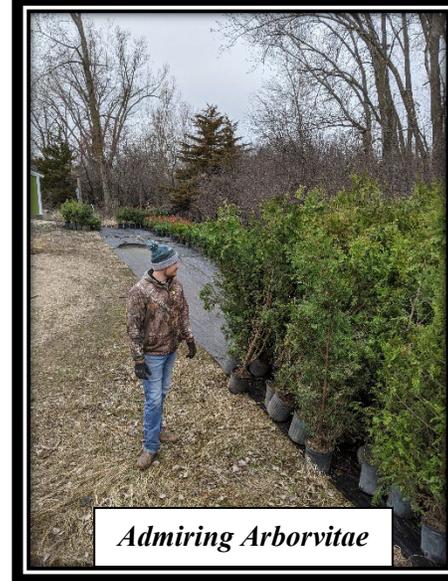
Driving a Combine



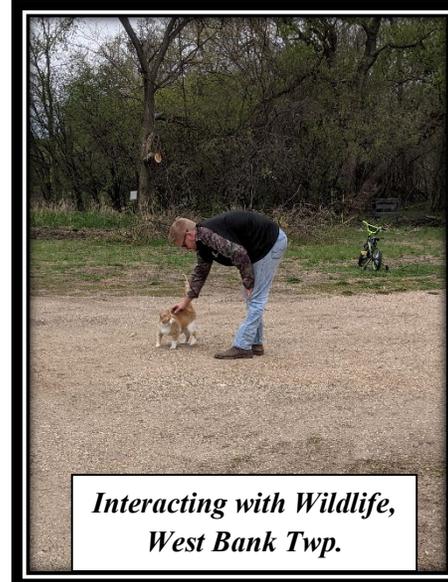
Swamp Milkweed



Wind Erosion Demo Results

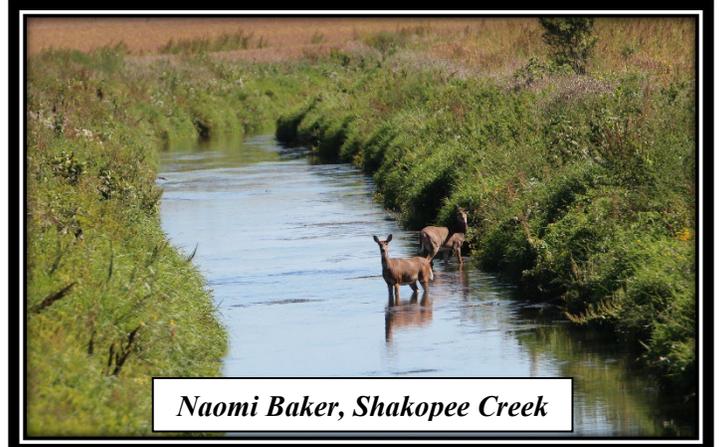
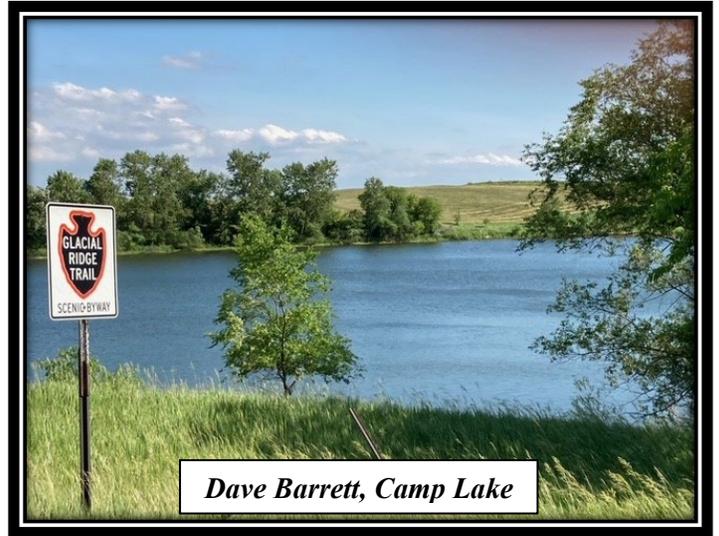


Admiring Arborvitae



*Interacting with Wildlife,
West Bank Twp.*

Selected 2021 Photo Contest Entries



Selected 2021 Photo Contest Entries

