



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.

2022 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
Non-Supervisory District Conservationist – Brett Carlson
Civil Engineering Technician – Rick Gronseth
Assistant State Conservationist – John Matz, Marshall
State Conservationist – Troy Daniell, St. Paul

Board Of Water and Soil Resources

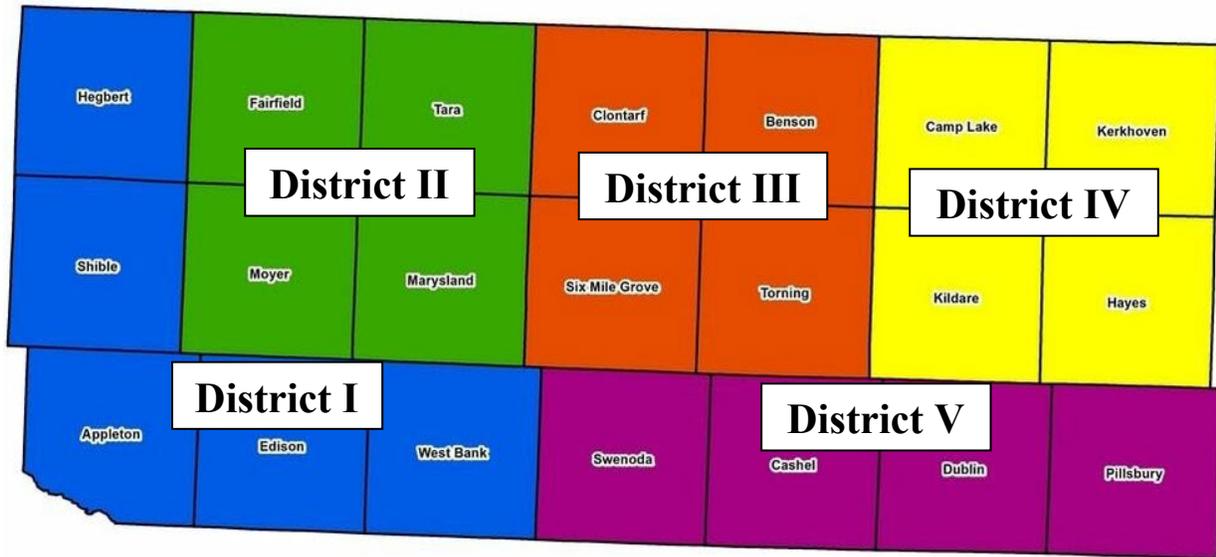
Executive Director – John Jaschke, St Paul
Board Conservationist – Jason Weinerman, Waite Park
Wetland Specialist – Cade Steffenson, Waite Park
Clean Water Specialist – Brad Wozney, Waite Park
Buffer and Soil Loss Specialist – Kevin Roth, St. Paul



Pictured L to R - Melanie Dickman, Sheri Gades, Gemma Kleinschmidt, Brett Carlson, Rick Gronseth, Andy Albertsen, 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**

2022: A Brief Review

In 2022, the SWCD found their footing coming out of COVID restrictions and hit the ground running. We got off to a quick start by offering a Cover Crops 101 Workshop in Benson. We had a good number of attendees with presentations from Dorian Gatchell, a crop consultant with Minnesota Agricultural Services, and Liz Stahl, an Extension Educator with the University of Minnesota. Also in March, we assisted Swift County in hosting a feedlot & grazing workshop. Ross Reiffenberger, West Central Technical Service Area Engineer, and Morgan Kauth, NRCS Grazing Specialist, presented to the large group about common conservation practices and how they apply to feedlot and grazing operations. Both workshops yielded great feedback!

We were able to hold our Tree Open House in February at the Benson Fire Hall. Attendance was up from the previous year and resulted in more SWCD plantings. Tree season got off to a snowy start, as we were unloading trees in the snow, but the cool temps helped the trees remain dormant through pickup day and into planting time. We only got stuck once this year, check out the photos below for proof, and yes, I was driving.

Dalton transitioned into the role as the Pomme de Terre River Association Technical Advisory Committee representative from Swift SWCD. As a part of this he also has been getting more involved in the cost share process. The Chippewa River Watershed and Upper Minnesota River Watershed are well underway with One Watershed, One Plan planning. There's lots of meetings, but the carrot is well worth the effort! Both plans are scheduled to be wrapped up in 2023, with full adoption in early 2024.

It was a great year for getting some BIG projects knocked out. A dike repair and wetland restoration project in Shible Township got wrapped up in late 2022. The landowner first reached out in 2018, so it was a long process, but everyone was happy to get across the finish line and the end result should last for several decades and provide fabulous wildlife habitat and flood storage. There were also two large projects were with the same landowner that occurred on the same section of land in Camp Lake Township. The first was a 2,100' grassed waterway and the second was a series of four water and sediment control basins. Both projects outlet very close to the East Branch of the Chippewa River. Projects were made possible with funding from a Clean Water Fund Grant received by Pope and Swift SWCD's from the Board of Water and Soil Resources.

Nature Day was back at Ambush Park and hosted over 220 Benson and KMS 5th and 6th Grade students. This year, we partnered with several, local, state, and federal agencies to offer 16 fun and educational lessons and activities covering a variety of outdoor topics. Topics included macroinvertebrates, groundwater, prairie, forestry, glaciers, critter crate, and more!

We can't wait to pick up where we left off and continue forging ahead for what will be a huge year in 2023 for Swift SWCD and the natural resources of Swift County!

Andy Albertsen, District Manager

What is a Soil and Water Conservation District?

An 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 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.



Chippewa River Annual Meeting

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



*10' Haybuster
No-Till Drill...Oops*



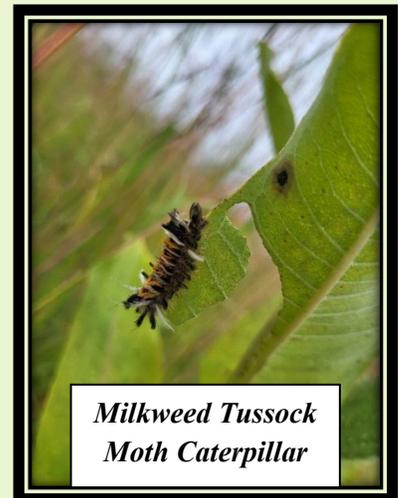
Wildlife Science Center at Nature Day

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 2022. For 2023, rock inlets, dense pattern tile open intake replacements, cover crops, three streambank stabilizations, one rain garden, and eight water and sediment control basins are scheduled to be installed.

2022 Conservation Practices					
Type	Number Installed	# of Contracts	Sediment Savings	Phosphorus Savings	SWCD Cost Share Provided
Cover Crops	52ac	1	48.0 T/yr	12.0 lbs./yr	\$1,560.00
Grassed Waterway	1	1	35.70 T/yr	35.70 lbs./yr	\$35,959.50
WASCOB	4	1	26.68 T/yr	26.68 lbs./yr	\$23,839.20
Grade Stabilization/ Wetland Restoration	2	1	55.00 T/yr	16.36 lbs./yr	\$45,553.50
Totals	7 + 52ac	4	165.38 T/yr	90.74 lbs./yr	\$106,912.20

- The SWCD sells native grass and flower seed and assists landowners with seed mix selection. In 2022, the District had 15 sales for 129.2 acres, amounting to 855.53 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 several state grants.
- Supported NRCS with filing and customer assistance. The backbone of our organizations is excellent customer service. The office was down to one NRCS employee for most of the year, requiring the SWCD to step up to a higher level with assisting customers.
- 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. **Met with county highway staff to discuss prioritizing locations for spraying wild parsnip. The county was receptive to this idea as it will save costs and be more effective.** Currently, the county sprays 1/3 of all county highways each year.
- Andy works with the AgBMP loan program. One new loan was issued in 2022 for \$33,250 towards manure handling equipment. There is over \$200,000 available in the revolving loan fund for Swift County landowners looking to purchase



reduced tillage equipment, planters to handle cover crop residue, and almost anything that would lead to a water quality benefit.

- Dalton works with the tree planning, planting, and fabric installation. 2022 resulted in another solid year of tree sales.

2022 Tree Program				
SWCD Plantings	Bareroot Trees Sold	Potted Trees Sold	Tree Tubes Sold	Feet of Fabric Sold
9	6,075	1,267	148	11,226 (2.1 miles)

- Andy is a member of the Technical Evaluation Panel for the Wetland Conservation Act. The TEP met on seven wetland related issues in 2022. One site was the old Fibromin/Xcel Energy site west of Benson. There are plans to construct a biogas facility on the grounds in 2023.



Tree Pickup Day at the Office

- Andy attended the Chippewa River Watershed Association and Upper Minnesota River Watershed Steering Committee meetings monthly and assisted with cost share applications.

- 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.

2022 No-Till Drill Program		
Seeder	Number of Users	Acres
10' DuraTech	6	147.92
10' Haybuster	14	221.25
12' Truax	13	258.79
ATV Seeding	1	1.0
Total	34	597.16



Lost a wheel on the 12' Truax Drill

- Gemma worked with landowners to sign up for CRP and CREP. **She wrote 137 CRP conservation plans in 2022, totaling 3,067.41 acres.** No new CREP applications were submitted in 2022. **BWSR started a RIM Wetlands sign up again this year, Gemma submitted two applications for 160.3 acres. Both applications were approved!**



Flagging Buffers

- Dalton performed 54 site inspections on RIM/CREP easements and boundary posted where needed.
- 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. The partnership didn't receive any grant funding in 2022 but will reassess for 2023 and pursue additional funding.

➤ Gemma assisted the MN DNR with promotion of the Walk-In-Access (WIA) program. There were no new WIA contracts enrolled in 2022. The grand total remains three sites equaling 395 acres in Swift County.

- Andy administered the State Buffer Law in Swift County & assisted landowners throughout the process. By the end of 2022 Swift County was 99+% compliant on all buffers. 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. Overall, groundwater levels decreased during the dry summer months, but rebounded in the fall back to near-normal levels.
- Rainfall Monitoring – Six sites in Swift County were used to monitor precipitation. Reports are submitted monthly to the Minnesota Climatology Network.
- **We mailed 57 postcards to landowners in Appleton and Moyer Townships targeting dryland crop fields for cover crop adoption. It yielded one contract and several conversations.**



Surveying Erosion in Fairfield Twp.

- **We applied for our very first Clean Water Fund grant from BWSR. It was under the Soil Health category for protecting public drinking supplies. Our application for \$285,000 was selected for funding in**

December! Funding will be used for cost sharing cover crops, no-till and strip till, incentives for CRP and MAWQCP, planning various soil health events and meeting with local agronomist's and crop consultants. This is a huge step in advancing soil health in our area! Projects will be focused around the communities of Benson and Appleton.

Education Activities



➤ Nature Day was firing on all cylinders again this year. **We were able to play host to over 220 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.

➤ 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 125 trees donated. We plan on expanding this effort to Benson and Appleton in 2023.**

➤ Newsletters – Two newsletters were printed in partnership with Swift County Parks, Drainage, and Wetlands. They were

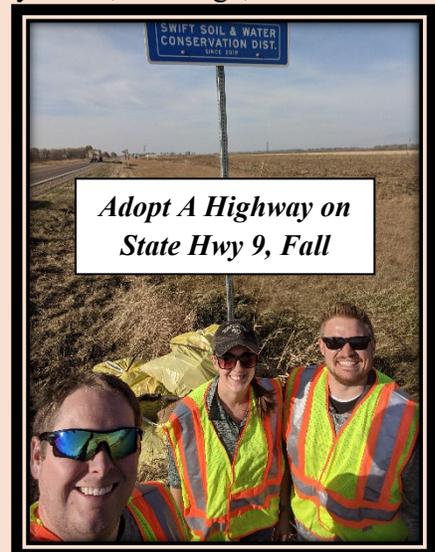
mailed to every address located in Swift County. **Over 5,700 copies were distributed for each mailing.**

Copies of the newsletters are available on our website.

➤ We participated in the Swift County Fair again, holding a special drawing for free trees, either one bundle of bareroot or five potted trees. Five winners were selected from our tree tube sign-up display. Staff sat at the fair and gave out promo items and answered questions.

➤ Swift SWCD hosted the 2022 annual Irrigator Clinic at McKinney's in Benson. Swift SWCD partners with Pope, Douglas, Kandiyohi, and Stearns SWCDs to host this event. We had presentations from the U of MN Extension, MN Ag Water Quality Certification Program, MN State Climatology Office, and a research update from the Rosholt Research Farm in Westport, MN.

➤ The SWCD continues to participate in the Adopt-A-Highway program by maintaining a three mile stretch of MN 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 10 bags. NRCS staff assisted with one of the cleanups.

- The Tree Open House was back and better than ever in 2022. The USDA building was still closed to the public at the time, so the event was held at the Benson Fire Hall. Cider, coffee, and cookies were served. A 10% discount was offered to anyone who ordered their trees during the open house. There were ~25 orders submitted.
- Pomme de Terre Soil Health Team Meetings – A spring meeting was held at the Old No.



1 in Morris. About 40 people attended. Matt Tiffany, a farmer near Redwood Falls and member of the MN Soil Health Coalition, gave a fantastic presentation on his soil health journey. Discussion also took place on how to advance soil health practices across the region.

- **Minnesota Office of Soil health – The SWCD received a tabletop rainfall simulator from the MOSH and made it available for use by surrounding SWCDs as well. It was a great addition to our existing soil health demonstration materials!**

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 in 2021.
 - The PDTRA also applied for and received their second round of Watershed Based Implementation Funding, the same amount as before.
 - Technical Advisory Committee meetings are held monthly. **Dalton transitioned into the main TAC representative for the SWCD. He is learning quickly from the knowledgeable group.**



- Chippewa River Watershed Association – Work continued on the Comprehensive Watershed Management Plan. A lot of ground was covered in 2022, as issue statements were identified, goals set, and beginning conversations on implementation took place. A



Chippewa River Watershed Bus Tour

Kick-Off Bus Tour was held to familiarize TAC and Joint Powers Board members with the watershed.

- The Technical Advisory Committee (SWCD and county staff) continues to move forward implementing a Public Participation Plan with MPCA. An annual meeting was held in conjunction with a 1W1P kick off meeting. A SharePoint site was created and housed through Douglas County. Work also began on revising and updating the CRWA website. The structure of the website was established, with content being added in 2023.

- Upper Minnesota River Watershed District – The UMRWD also received a 1W1P Planning grant from BWSR and began work on development of the plan. The two planning efforts are following the same timeline, with much of the work being completed at the same time.
- Minnesota Department of Agriculture – The District works with the MDA in administering the MN Ag Water Quality Certification Program in Swift County. There were no new applications for the program in 2022. 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. **With funding from the PDTRA, we worked with the MDA to purchase components for a Weather Station that was constructed in Moyer Township. Andy met with MDA in the field to select a suitable location. The station was installed in the fall and will have the capability to report various weather statistics useful to farmers and available 24/7/365 via a website.**
- 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 who attended.**



Grassed Waterway, Camp Lake Twp.

- 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. Several projects were completed in 2022, in both counties, with one additional project planned for 2023.
- Irrigation RCPP – Swift was one of twenty SWCD’s and several other partners across central Minnesota to 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. The first sign up was held in June, we mailed 168 letters to irrigator owners, with eight applications submitted from Swift County producers. Unfortunately, none were funded. A new sign up was announced for early 2023.

Other

- Andy worked with a Benson High School class at Swift Falls Park for the second year to measure stream velocity and search for macroinvertebrates. The work was completed in between snow showers by the cold-hardened students from Mr. Larson’s class.
- The District drafted two resolutions, both of which were approved at the State Association meeting in December. The first was requesting additional funding for state cost share and revising the allocation formula. The second would allow incentive payments as an eligible expense for state cost share and local capacity funds.
- Applied for a grant from the Minnesota Association of Conservation District Employees to purchase a GoPro and various accessories. The purpose would be to record and post videos that would be useful to both SWCD employees and the public. One video was taken and posted in 2022. Time will be spent learning more about the video editing process over the winter, with hopes of posting more videos in 2023!
- We worked with NRCS to purchase a new sign for the USDA Service Center as the old one was no longer readable. Check it out in the photo section!
- **Jack Byrne was selected as the Swift County recipient of the MASWCD/Pheasants Forever Wildlife Habitat Steward Award for his dedication to creating suitable wildlife habitat and immaculately maintaining his properties. The SWCD Board presented Jack with a sign to show their gratitude for his efforts.**



*Searching for Macroinvertebrates,
Swift Falls Park*

- **Carl Ahrndt retired from the SWCD Board, with December being his last meeting. Carl brought a calm presence to the Board, with keen insight into wildlife habitat. He very rarely missed a board meeting, having perfect attendance most years. We wish Carl bountiful harvests from his garden and freezers full of taxidermy work!**

Now...more pictures!





Grassed Waterway, Camp Lake Twp.



2022 Tree Open House



Cover Crops, Appleton Twp.



Cover Crop Workshop, McKinney's



Stay Off The Grass! Hegbert Twp.



Soil Health Team Meeting, Morris



Nature Day Rockstars, Ambush Park



Dike Repair & Wetland Restoration, Shible Twp.



Year Two of Selling Bareroot Apple Trees



Presenting at Irrigation Workshop, near Clontarf



Tree Planting, Tara Twp.



Surveying Erosion, Fairfield Twp.



Bee



Critter Crate at Nature Day



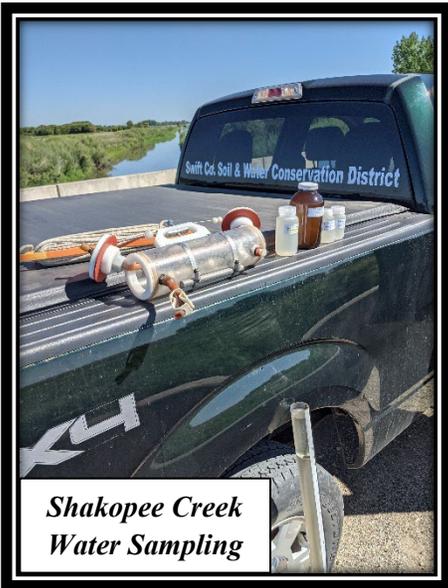
Evergreen Trees For Sale



*Poster Contest
Winners, KMS*



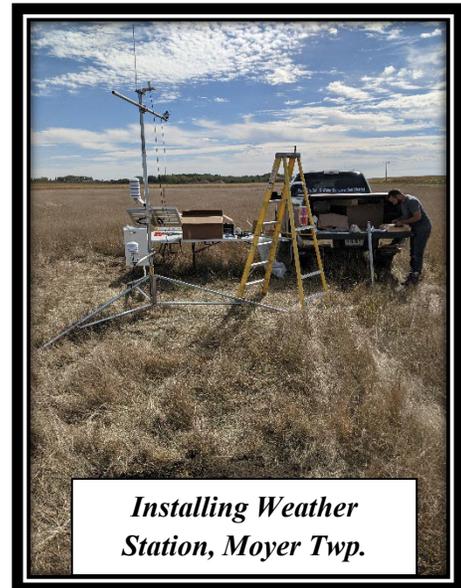
*New USDA Service
Center Sign*



*Shakopee Creek
Water Sampling*



Local Work Group Breakfast



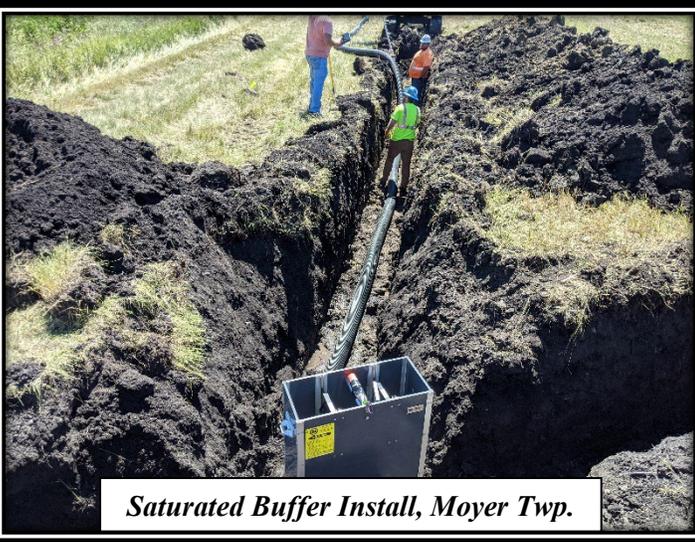
*Installing Weather
Station, Moyer Twp.*



Flooded RIM Easement, Cashel Twp.



Nitrate Testing Clinic, Appleton



Saturated Buffer Install, Moyer Twp.



Hart Lake Outlet Blowout, Shible Twp.



USDA Service Center Staff, Flannelized



Grazing & Feedlot Workshop, Benson



Shakopee Creek joining the Chippewa River, Swenoda Twp.



Celebrating Carl Ahrndt's 10 Years of Service



Double Duty with the Super Duty