



UP STREAM

Swift County Soil & Water Conservation District Newsletter

Summer 2022

1430 Utah Ave
Benson, MN 56215
320-842-7201 x3
www.SwiftSWCD.org

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Grant Money to Help Farmers Implement Climate Smart Conservation Measures

Minnesota Department of Agriculture Press Release

The Minnesota Department of Agriculture (MDA) has received a \$100,000 grant from the McKnight Foundation to help farmers develop climate-smart farming practices that can mitigate climate change, build farm resiliency, and may provide them with a new income stream. The money will be used for the new Climate Smart Farms Project, part of the Minnesota Agricultural Water Quality Certification Program (MAWQCP).

“Because of our changing climate, farmers are experiencing more frequent bouts of drought, heavier rain events, extreme temperature swings, and more invasive pests and plants,” said MDA Commissioner Thom Petersen. “Through this new Climate Smart Farms Project and the Minnesota Agriculture Water Quality Certification Program, farmers can implement proven practices that build soil health, protect water resources, and increase farm profitability. Farmers are at the frontlines of climate change impact and can play a pivotal role in combatting those impacts. We’re grateful to McKnight Foundation for this grant.”

The Climate Smart Farms Project supports farmers who are currently enrolled in MAWQCP and would like to seek, or already have, a Climate Smart Endorsement for their operation. They can receive a minimum of \$1,000 a year for up to five years to assess and apply climate-focused conservation practices to their operation. Examples of practices include managing nitrogen fertilizer and manure to minimize greenhouse gas emissions or minimizing tillage, grazing livestock, and planting perennial crops to sequester carbon. Options to enroll in new carbon market programs have been multiplying in the agricultural community. In response, the MDA created the Climate Smart Farms Project, centering farmers’ needs and their leadership on science-based farming practices. The unique project provides growers one-to-one technical assistance to assess their operations and develop climate-smart management options that will best align with private market tools or voluntary public programs. The annual financial assistance serves as a bridge payment for growers while they develop their climate-smart systems and learn how to scale climate-smart practices.

“Farmers in Minnesota are digging in and taking the lead on agricultural climate solutions,” said Tenzin Dolkar, McKnight Foundation Midwest Climate & Energy Program Officer. “The Climate Smart Farms Project will allow more farmers to adopt and be recognized for proven practices that benefit their operation, the environment, and the climate.”

The MAWQCP has a proven track record of putting farmers in touch with local conservation district experts to identify and mitigate any risks their farm poses to water quality. Producers going through the certification process have priority access to financial assistance. After being certified, each farm is deemed in compliance with new water quality laws and regulations for 10 years.

The new Climate Smart Endorsement is now one of five endorsements available to MAWQCP producers. The other four certifications are soil health, integrated pest management, wildlife, and irrigation. These endorsements celebrate those who are going above and beyond to implement conservation efforts on their land.



Grant Money for Climate Smart Practices (continued)

There are now more than 1,225 producers and 855,000 acres enrolled in MAWQCP. Governor Tim Walz has announced a goal of enrolling one million acres by the end of 2022. To date, Minnesota Agricultural Water Quality certified farms have added over 2,460 new conservation practices. Those new practices have kept over 42,000 tons of sediment out of Minnesota rivers while saving approximately 124,000 tons of soil and 54,000 pounds of phosphorous on farms each year. The conservation practices have also reduced nitrogen loss up to 49% and cut greenhouse gas emissions by more than 47,000 metric tons per year. Farmers and landowners interested in the Climate Smart Farms Project or becoming water quality certified can contact their local Soil and Water Conservation District or visit MyLandMyLegacy.com.

About the Minnesota Agricultural Water Quality Certification Program

The Minnesota Agricultural Water Quality Certification Program is a voluntary opportunity for farmers and agricultural landowners to take the lead in implementing conservation practices that protect our water. Those who implement and maintain approved farm management practices will be certified and in turn obtain regulatory certainty for a period of ten years. The program is available to farmers and landowners statewide.

About McKnight Foundation

The McKnight Foundation Midwest Climate and Energy Program focuses bold climate action to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, at scale, as quickly as possible in the Midwest. McKnight's working lands strategy centers on farmers as the leaders of climate solutions in creating climate-resilient and just food systems.



Order your Trees EARLY!

We are expecting high demand and low inventory on trees for the 2023 tree season. Contact us soon to set up a site visit or place an order!





NO-TILL DRILLS

AVAILABLE FOR RENT!



RATES:

10' Haybuster Drill—\$100 Mobilization + \$10 per acre

12' Truax Drill—\$100 Mobilization + \$12 per acre

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



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Cost Share Programs Available for Multiple Land Uses

Brett Carlson, NRCS District Conservationist

Swift County landowners and operators often ask what program can I put this land into to generate income and not farm it anymore? It often comes down to which program can be used in which circumstance.

Through the Conservation Stewardship program (CSP), agricultural producers and forest landowners earn payments for actively managing, maintaining, and expanding conservation activities like cover crops, ecologically-based pest management, buffer strips, and pollinator and beneficial insect habitat – all while maintaining active agriculture production on their land. CSP also encourages the adoption of cutting-edge technologies and new management techniques such as precision agriculture applications, on-site carbon storage and planting for a high carbon sequestration rate, and new soil amendments to improve water quality. Some of these benefits of CSP include:

- Improved cattle gains per acre;
- Increased crop yields;
- Decreased inputs;
- Wildlife population improvements; and
- Better resilience to weather extremes.

The Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) is designed to address concerns on the land that often can be solved with a single practice. EQIP offers incentives along with some of the practices to help offset the learning curve or the potential short-term impacts on yields or time to monitor the results of the practice. There are numerous practices that are eligible for EQIP; some examples are water & sediment control basins, waterways, rotational grazing systems, well sealing, cover crops, no-till conversion, ponds, nutrient management, roof runoff structures for feedlots, brush management, irrigation conversion to low pressure, high tunnels, and upland wildlife habitat. Practices like no-till, cover crops, nutrient management and irrigation water management are management practices that you can apply for up to three consecutive years.

There has been a lot of interest in pollinator plantings to boost habitat for monarch butterflies and honeybees. The Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) is offering higher rental rates than most of the other federal programs currently. If you are interested in pollinator plantings, you should consider getting a quote for the areas of the field you are interested in enrolling through CRP.



2022 Poster Contest

Congratulations to this year's poster contest winners from Swift County! The theme for this year was Healthy Soil Healthy Life. Many of Mrs. Poegel's 5th grade students at KMS Elementary participated in the contest. While there were many great posters, these three came out on top! Congratulations!

1st Place: Samantha Ramirez (middle)

2nd Place: Freddy Haase (left)

3rd Place: Miyosiw Beaver (right)





Take the Pledge to Prevent Aquatic Invasive Species Spread

Minnesota Department of Natural Resources

Heading into the summer recreation season, the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources is rolling out a new online pledge to help prevent the spread of aquatic invasive species. Anyone 18 or older can go to the new Pledge to Protect Minnesota Waters page of the DNR website to take the pledge and upload a photo, if desired. The pledge affirms that participants will follow Minnesota's "Clean, Drain, Dispose" laws and will encourage others to do so. "The pledge allows people to demonstrate their commitment to protect Minnesota waters," said Tina Fitzgerald, aquatic invasive species prevention planner. "Aquatic invasive species, such as zebra mussels, starry stonewort and Eurasian watermilfoil, are spread by people, which means people can prevent their spread." Visitors to the page can also see other public pledges and share the page with friends. Regardless of the activity—boating, paddling, fishing, moving shoreline equipment, using recreational gear on the water, or caring for aquarium pets or water gardens—everyone can pledge to do their part and take several simple actions to prevent the spread of aquatic invasive species.

Be sure to follow Minnesota laws:

- **Clean** watercraft, trailers and equipment to remove aquatic plants and prohibited invasive species.
- **Drain** all water and leave drain plugs out during transport.
- **Dispose** of unwanted bait in the trash.
- **Never release** bait, plants or aquarium pets into Minnesota waters.
- **Dry docks, lifts and rafts for 21 days** before moving them from one water body to another.

And take these additional steps to reduce the risk of spreading aquatic invasive species:

- **Decontaminate** watercraft and equipment – find free stations on the Courtesy decontamination webpage
- **Spray** with high-pressure water or **rinse** with very hot water (120 degrees for at least two minutes or 140 degrees for at least 10 seconds).
- **Dry** watercraft and equipment for at least five days before using in another water body.



Site Prep – An Important Aspect of Native Prairie Restoration

Gemma Kleinschmidt, Pheasants Forever Farm Bill Biologist

When trying to establish a native grass and flower planting, there are many important steps in the process, with site prep being one step that should not be overlooked. Most native seeds are very small and only need to be planted at a depth of 1/4" – 1/2" when using a no-till drill. To avoid seeds from being planted too deep, the soil should be packed or rolled (firm but not compacted).

When planting into crop fields, minimal soil disturbance is needed, unless crop residue is heavy enough to interfere with seeding. The less residue in the field, the better seed to soil contact there will be. Fields that were previously planted to soybeans are ideal for restorations because there is minimal residue and should not require any tillage. If the previous crop was corn, mow or bale stalks and lightly disk the site to incorporate residue into the soil. Disking should be avoided if not necessary for the site conditions, as it could cause weed problems during the establishment phase. Cultipack or roll the site to create a firm seedbed. At the time of planting, there should be no weeds actively growing. They can be controlled with herbicide before or just after planting.

When you have an existing non-native grass stand (such as brome or Kentucky bluegrass) that needs to be completely converted to native species, it is imperative that a good kill of the non-native grasses be achieved **BEFORE** planting. Non-native grasses are aggressive and will overtake native species if not managed before planting. If planting will be occurring in the spring, it is recommended to start prepping the site in the summer/fall prior to give enough time to kill off the existing vegetation. One method is to remove as much residue as possible, then complete tillage of site in the summer to level it and incorporate residue into the soil. Spray in fall with a contact herbicide while non-native cool season grass is still actively growing. Spray again in the spring to catch any vegetation that regrows.





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Conservation District Newsletter**

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Benson, MN 56215
Phone: 320-842-7201 ext. 3**

www.SwiftSWCD.org

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Nitrate Testing Clinics



FREE

Appleton
Civic Center
323 W. Schlieman Ave.

August 23rd, 2022
8:30am-4:00pm

Swift SWCD
Office
1430 Utah Ave., Benson

August 24th, 2022
8:30am-4:00pm

Kerkhoven
Civic Center
208 10th St.

August 25th, 2022
8:30am-4:00pm

How to collect samples: Run your cold tap for 5-10 minutes, then collect 1 cup of water in a clean, leak-proof container. Keep water sample refrigerated. Sample should be collected within 24 hours of testing. Testing will take about 5 minutes. For questions, call Swift SWCD at 320-842-7201 ext. 3.