

Douglas Soil & Water Conservation District



2012 Annual Report

PREFACE

Minnesota Status Chapter 40, enacted in 1937, created the Minnesota Soil and Water Conservation Board. It was created to help solve serious erosion problems that were plaguing the nation in the 1930's. Chapter 40 authorized the Board to create Soil and Water Conservation Districts and to provide the Districts with State level administration. The Douglas Soil and Water Conservation District was formed in 1954 through the efforts of many concerned Douglas County residents. The District is governed by five locally elected officials.

Our mission as District Supervisors is to promote, guide and direct an action program that will result in efficient conservation of soil and water. Our goal is to encourage use of all Douglas County land within its capabilities and to treat each acre according to its need.

The District cooperates with the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service under a Memorandum of Understanding whereby full-time technical assistance on engineering, agronomy, biology, woodland conservation and administration is furnished to the District by the Natural Resources Conservation Service Area and State offices. Under the Memorandum of Understanding, the District uses the Natural Resources Conservation Service office in Alexandria as their headquarters.

The Douglas Soil and Water Conservation District prepares this report for farmers, agricultural agencies, businesses and all tax paying citizens interested in the conservation and preservation of soil, water, plants and wildlife resources. We present this record of our 2012 accomplishments and invite you to avail yourselves of the assistance provided by the Douglas Soil and Water Conservation District and its cooperating agencies.

Board of Supervisors
Douglas Soil and Water Conservation District

The Douglas SWCD and the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service prohibits discrimination in its programs and activities on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, religion, age, disability, political beliefs, sexual orientation and marital or family status. (Not all prohibited bases apply to all programs). Persons with disabilities who require alternative means for communication of program information (Braille, large print, audiotape, etc.) should contact the USDA's TARGET Center at (202) 720-2600 (voice and TDD). The Douglas SWCD and the Natural Resources Conservation Service are equal opportunity providers and employers.

BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

Paul Barsness

Jon Schneider

Dave Wolf

Gerhard Thoennes

Doug Rutten-Deceased



DISTRICT STAFF

Josh Meissner

Starla Arceneau

Elwood L. Anderson

Steve Henry

Jerome Haggemiller

Ben Branson



NRCS STAFF

Lisa Gentele

Chuck Rose

Mike Yrjo

Rich Geving

Mark Dybdal



2012 continued to be busy year for the Douglas Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD). The year started with tree sales, and moved on to the following activities, tree planting, tree matting, tube installation, no-till planting, Wetland Conservation Act work load, survey and design for erosion control practices and feedlot improvement project, and construction of erosion control practices and feedlot projects. Different projects worked on through the water plan included rain gardens workshop and construction, lakescaping plantings, water quality monitoring, Douglas County Day of the Lakes, lake management plans, and lots of technical advice given.

Education activities were also a big part of the districts activities. Some of the educational activities completed this year include, Envirothon, 19th annual Kids' Groundwater Festival, Soil Stewardship Program, Poster and Mural Contests, Essay Contest, Douglas County Fair booth, and Douglas County eco fair.

The Districts tree planting and matting program was again a huge success. Over 12 miles of fabric was installed last year. The districts tree sales last year totaled over 28,875 trees, which will benefit wildlife in Douglas County for many years to come. The Staff was busy this past fall with the installation of erosion control practices (Sediment Blocks and Terraces) in the County. A total of 9 sediment blocks were installed last year. Wetland restoration construction was also busy with 7 wetland restorations completed. The District No-till drill program was extremely busy this year in planting native grasses, soybeans, and alfalfa. All of these conservation practices will benefit the soil productivity and water quality of Douglas County.

The SWCD works closely with the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) on federal program offered to county landowners. These programs include, Environmental Quality Incentive Program (EQIP), Wetland Reserve Program (WRP), and the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP). The district now has a fulltime Pheasants Forever Biologist putting proposals together for landowners whose lands qualify for the CRP Buffers Program.

The Douglas SWCD is in the second year of funding for conservation easements through the Wetland Reserve Enhancement Program for water quality improvement in the Lake Osakis Watershed specifically the Crooked Lake area. This project was rolled out to landowners in the beginning of 2011. The SWCD also received a Surface Water Assessment Grant from the MPCA for monitoring 5 different inlets and outlets of 3 lakes in Douglas County for the next year.

Change was also part of 2012; Emily Siira Douglas SWCD Water Planner left the SWCD after 5 plus years in May to continue her career with the MN DNR Waters. Steve Henry joined the staff to replace Emily. The Douglas SWCD was saddened with the passing of Supervisor Doug Rutten in December. Doug was a supervisor for over 30 years and will be greatly missed.

2013 should be another great year for conservation in Douglas County as tree sales are off to a good start and landowners inquiries about conservation programs and erosion control projects are already starting.



Reece, Mary, Kirby, and Steph Lund were recently honored as outstanding conservationists at the annual meeting of the Minnesota Association of Soil and Water Conservation Districts, December 2-4, 2012 in Bloomington, Minn. They were selected by the Douglas Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD) for the award.

Each year, the state's SWCDs recognize individuals and organizations for outstanding accomplishments in implementing conservation practices and improving Minnesota's natural resources. The award program is conducted with support from The Farmer magazine, and the award ceremony receives sponsorship from the Minnesota Corn Growers Association.

According to Jerome Haggemiller, District Coordinator, Reece, Mary, Kirby, and Steph were recognized for a variety of reasons. Following is a summary of some of the reasons why The Lund's were chosen:

The Lund's started with ridge till in the early 1990's and has now switched to strip-till to prevent erosion on their cropland. The Lund's both soil test and plant tissue test to determine crop nutrient needs. Application of fertilizer is completed by combination of banding and split application to ensure over application of fertilizer does not occur.



"We're really proud of the Lund's and what they have done for conservation in Douglas County," said Jerome Haggemiller. "The Lund's provide a wonderful example of farmers by using conservation practices to keep the soil on the land and to apply fertilizer for the crops needs."





Chandler Suchy and Christine Roers
Mural Winners and Overall Winners
Brandon Elementary



Alexis Nelson

Poster Winner

Evansville Elementary



Rachel Bitzen

Poster Winner

Woodland Elementary



Shaffron Fletcher

Poster Winner

Evansville Elementary

"Soil to Spoon" was the theme of the Douglas SWCD 2012 Poster and Mural Contest for 5th and 6th grade students throughout the County. Earlier this spring, Elwood Anderson from the SWCD visited classrooms and gave presentations about the value of protecting our natural resources. The students then used that information to create posters and murals for the contest. Winners were recently announced and they are as follows: Each of the winners will receive a monetary prize from the Douglas SWCD and the Water Wisdom Education Project through the Douglas County Lakes Association. The school of the Overall Winner (Brandon Elementary) will receive a \$500 Science Prize through the Water Wisdom Education Project of the Douglas County Lakes Association. The winning posters and mural will go on to Area II Competition in June 2012. Congratulations to all the winners!



The Water Plan work in Douglas County is driven by available funding provided through various grants and guided by the four priority concerns listed in the Comprehensive Local Water Management Plan. These priority concerns are 1) Development Pressures and Land Use, 2) Natural Habitat Destruction, 3) Waste and Stormwater Management, and 4) Water Quality. The Water Plan Technician works towards meeting the goals and objectives outlined in the Comprehensive Local Water Management Plan the following is a brief report on 2012's activity.

Work continued on several grants awarded to the SWCD by the State:

A Surface Water Assessment Grant (MPCA) to collect data on four stream sites and one lake site struggled with the drought. Several sites were unable to sample in August and September. A big thank you to our dedicated crew of volunteers who met out on the streams by 8AM.

As part of the Central Sands Groundwater Monitoring project 26 Douglas County homeowners were visited to obtain well water samples, evaluate surrounding land use, and obtain well location and construction data. This information will be used by the Department of Agriculture to determine if our groundwater is at risk of contamination.

Clean Water Legacy funds awarded last spring were used to fix two feedlots by installing new manure storage facilities. A gully repair at Smokey Timbers Camp has been designed and will be constructed the summer of 2013. An imminent health threat septic system was upgraded for a low income household using Clean Water Legacy funding eliminating nutrient and bacterial pollution.

The Lake Protection Challenge Grant (BWSR) compiled lake information and water quality trends to develop protection strategies for Carlos, Chippewa, Darling, Geneva and Ida Lake. These reports were delivered in draft form in 2012. In December the SWCD used these draft plans and several projects developed by lake residents to apply for Clean Water Legacy funding. The grant application was approved for \$57,000 supporting projects on Lake Carlos, Lake Chippewa, Lake Ida, and Lake Cowdry.

A major focus of the Water Plan is public outreach and education.

Programs delivered in 2012 include:

Kids' Groundwater Festival

Environmental Essay Scholarship contest

Environmental Poster Contest

Community Eco Fair

Douglas County Fair Booth and Demonstrations

Nitrate Testing Clinic

The Chippewa, Darling, and
Cowdry lake association
meetings.



As a member of the Alexandria Wellhead Protection Plan committee Steve has been working on a re-write of the Plan. This helps keep clean water flowing from our taps and develops alternate supplies for our future.



The MN Wetland Conservation Act (WCA) primarily deals with development issues and not much on the agricultural side of wetland impacts. Agricultural wetland regulations for most landowners are through the USDA Swampbuster program. Questions dealing with wetlands continue to be a large workload for the SWCD. Even with continued slow development in Douglas County this past years WCA activities remained high. In 2012 780 landowner contacts were made for wetland

questions dealing with wetland boundaries, wetland regulations, wetland enhancements, or just general wetland questions. A total of 766 of these contact ended in avoidance of wetlands.

For projects involving wetland impacts the Wetland Conservation Act looks at avoiding wetlands first, changing the lay out of the project to minimize the wetland impact and lastly replacing the wetland being filled. Some wetland impacts fall under exemptions in the law and are not required to be replaced. This amounted to less than .13 acre over the year in Douglas County.

In 2012 3 landowners applied for filling wetlands through the WCA replacement plan application process and 2 were approved for filling a wetland through the replacement plan application process. The total impact to wetlands through approved replacement plans was .29 acre. These impacts were replaced with .58 acre of wetland bank credits purchase from wetland banks in Douglas County.

There has continued to be steady interest in wetland banking in 2012. We are currently working with 3 landowners to establish wetland credits on previously drained wetlands and also with the State Board of Water and Soil Resources (BWSR) on a proposed 65 acres wetland banking site. This site is on private land that the BWSR is working with the landowner to do a wetland restoration and easement for wetland



*The next
Envirothon
is scheduled for
April 24th., 2013*

High school students from a 12 County area demonstrated their knowledge of Minnesota's natural resources at the annual Area II Envirothon, held on Wednesday, April 26, 2012, at the Prairie Woods Environmental Learning Center near Spicer. It was a beautiful day and the view at Prairie Woods was spectacular! The Douglas SWCD assisted with the organization of the Envirothon.



The Area 2 Envirothon is a hands-on outdoor competition day for high school students. Students attended four learning stations covering Soils, Wetlands/Aquatics, Wildlife and Forestry, along with a Current Event Station where the topic changes annually and also requires students to give an oral presentation on the current topic. The 2012 topic was "Non Point Source Pollution/Low impact Development". Natural Resource professionals from the SWCD, DNR, Prairie Woods Environmental Center and NRCS gave presentations at each station and used the outdoors to test the students' knowledge of the natural world. Each team of 5 students worked together to answer the questions presented in the tests. Scores were tallied and the three highest scoring teams advanced to the State Envirothon held on May 17th, at McColl Pond, Savage, MN.

Area 2 Jr. Envirothon Team Winners were: 1st place Team #26 Sartell Middle School, 2nd Team# 25 Sartell Middle School, 3rd Team # 18 South Jr. High, 4th Team #22 Sartell Middle School, 5th Team # 28 Sauke Rapid Rice Middle School.

Area 2 Sr. Envirothon Team Winners were: 1st Place – Team# 4, St. John's Prep; 2nd Place – Team #5, St. Johns Prep; 3rd Place – Team#11, Morris Area.

Oral Presentation Winners were: 1st Place – Team #4, St. John's Prep; 2nd Place – Team #5 St. Johns Prep; 3rd Place – Team #11, Morris Area ; 4th Place – Team #6, St. Johns Prep; and 5th Place – Team#3, Albany.



State Envirothon Winners – May 17 th were: 1st Place –NorthTrek; 2nd Place –Hopkins HS; and 3rd Place – St. Johns Prep.

The 1st Place Team TrekNorth advanced to the National Canon Envirothon that was held on July 22-27 at Jamestown, Pennsylvania. At the National competition, St. Johns Prep came in 17th Place out of 53 teams. – Congratulations to all!

The 20th Annual Kids' Ground - Water Festival is scheduled for May 1st. 2013

The 19th annual Kid's Groundwater Festival was held May 2th, 2012, at the Runestone Community Center in Alexandria. Again the Festival was a huge success, with over 525 fourth grade students participating. All schools within Douglas County and one from Grant and Ottertail Counties were in attendance.

Featured at the Kids' Groundwater Festival were 17 different learning stations. Each of the fourth grade students were scheduled at intervals to take part in seven different learning stations. The Stations cover all aspects of the water cycle. Students attend sessions on surface water problems, aquifers and wells, wetlands, and water treatment. Games are also played such as "Water Pictionary", "Water Trivial Pursuit" and creating giant bubbles at the "Bubbleology Station" to learn about changing the properties of water. All of the students attend a session in "Water" presented by the Science Museum of Minnesota.

The 2012 Kids' Groundwater Festival Committee, included the following individuals, Emily Siira & Jerry Haggemiller, Douglas Soil and Water Conservation District; Ruth Turner, District 206 Volunteer Coordinator; Marilyn Bayerl, Bayerl Water Resources; Lisa Pikop, Principle District 206; Vicki Gesell, Alexandria Light and Power; Lynn Boysen, MN Dept. of Health, Kayla Fisher, Douglas Pope Solid Waste, and Andy Siira, Douglas County Land and Resources Management. This committee organized the festival with help from many volunteers. Funding for the festival was made possible from the many donations from Douglas County service groups, fire departments, and private business owners.



**T-Shirt Design
Contest Winner**

**Congratulation!
Eric Klimek**





Trees are a vital part of our environment and they play an important role in conserving our resources. Trees reduce our energy consumption, improve air, water and soil qualities and provide improved environment for humans, livestock and wildlife. These are some of the reasons that the Douglas SWCD continues to promote tree planting in Douglas County.

In 2012, the Douglas SWCD provided 28,875 trees and shrubs to 279 county residents. Douglas SWCD provides high quality trees and shrubs plus assistance for site selection and layout, soils information and species selection, planting service and tree care and maintenance. We also work to provide State and/or Federal Cost-share assistance where applicable.

In Douglas County, much of our efforts goes towards planting farmstead & feedlot shelterbelts. These multi-row plantings improve living standards during winter and summer for humans and livestock, reduce heating and cooling energy consumption by up to 30%, reduce livestock feed demands with improved weight gains and displace snow drifts where they can be managed. They also attract wildlife to residences and improve aesthetics. During 2012, Douglas SWCD staff installed 10 new shelterbelts containing 3,420 trees and shrubs on 13 acres to protect 41 acres of farmstead.



Six new field windbreaks/living snowfences were installed in Douglas County in 2012. These plantings are designed to protect cropland from wind erosion and reduce blowing snow on our roadways and conserve water for crop production. These plantings also provide travel corridors for wildlife and birds. These 2450 trees and shrubs were planted on 8.2 acres to protect 129 acres of cropland.



Wildlife Plantations and Riparian Forest Buffer tree plantings are multiple-row plantings, usually 10 or more rows designed to improve water quality and provide wildlife habitat. In 2012, four new plantings were completed on 9.1 acres using 1,750 trees and shrubs.

Again in 2012, Douglas SWCD provided tree maintenance and tree growth assistance to residents in the form of tree tubes and fabric mulch (a 6 ft. wide fabric strip that eliminates weed competition and provides moisture retention). In 2012, SWCD Staff installed 35,696 ft. of fabric on 19 sites and 732 tree tubes on 5 sites.

NO-TILL CROPS PLANTED IN 2012

Alfalfa	156 Acres	CRP	480 Acres
Pasture	154 Acres	Grasses	22 Acres
Indian Grass	3 Acres	Beans	115 Acres
Clover	21 Acres	Sorgham	20 Acres
Wheat	44 Acres		

Total Acres seeded in 2012 - 1015

Total Owners/Operators Renting the Drill - 40



The Douglas Soil and Water Conservation District has been promoting no-till drills for many years. They have continually upgraded their no-till drills to provide the cooperators with equipment that works without breakdowns.

The Douglas SWCD has a Haybuster 10 ft. drill available for rent in the spring of 2013.

The District will deliver, calibrate and assist landowners throughout the planting process. Each year the acres and crops planted will vary due to the weather and the government programs being offered. Landowners continue to see the great benefits of using a no-till drill.



LAKESHORE RESTORATIONS



LAKE MONITORING



CRP GRASSES & WILDFLOWERS



ROTATIONAL GRAZING



FABRIC MULCH INSTALLATION



SHELTERBELT



WETLAND RESTORATIONS



STREAM MONITORING



RAIN GARDENS



EDUCATION



TREE PLANTING



SEDIMENT CONTROL STRUCTURES



Environmental Quality Incentive Program (EQIP) sign-ups were underway at the start of 2012 and Douglas County applicants fared well with the different funding pools. A total of 19 applications were received and NRCS accepted 17 applications for contracts for a total obligation of \$610,000. Appropriations for EQIP were made early enough to get contracts written and started by spring. The Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP) was announced again in the spring for applications. The office took 8 applications of which 4 were accepted. The spring started out ok for planting season but as the summer got going it became very dry. Soybean fields and some late planted corn fields looked like they would be failures but a timely rain in July gave them the boost they needed. Although we did not receive any more rain during the growing season and drought made soil moisture conditions the driest we have had in many years, the crops gave up tremendous yields.

Construction activities began in July as some participants took advantage of EQIP's Temporary Cover for Construction Sites. Several construction projects were completed which included Wetland Restorations, Water & Sediment Control Basins, Terraces, Ag. Waste Facility, and Ag Waste Pit Closures. Contractors were busy this year as tile was more available and dry conditions allowed for work to begin earlier.

The FSA announced a general CRP signup and 82 applications were accepted. This generated more Continuous CRP applications also with 41 applications taken. The workload for planning the general CRP and Continuous CRP was done by Josh Meissner, Pheasants Forever Biologist. The Pheasants Forever Biologist position was created by a joint effort from Local Sportsman groups, the Douglas SWCD, NRCS, and Pheasants Forever. Contract development included field checking the sites and completing the Conservation Plan of Operations for the contracts.

Continuous Conservation Reserve Program and General CRP applicants had tough decisions as high commodity crop prices made cropping a more profitable option. CRP rates are not high enough to compete with these high grain prices however there are still applicants that want CRP/CCRP for conservation cover and wildlife habitat or to have USDA as a dedicated, reliable "renter" for 10 – 15 years.

Conservation Easement Programs such as the Wetland Reserve Program (WRP) Re-Invest in Minnesota/Wetland Reserve Program (RIM/WRP), and the Wetland Reserve Enhancement Program (WREP) as part of the Mississippi River Basin Initiative (MRBI) had significant activity in 2011. Another 191.8 acres have been signed up in the MRBI Crooked Lake project area which was funded in 2012. Many thanks to the Jerry Haggemiller of the Douglas SWCD for his help on the MRBI applications. An arrangement to utilize local Survey, Title and Closing companies is being done to try to speed up the closing process.

The NRCS staff in Alexandria for 2012 had an addition as a Contracted Administrative Assistant was brought on in November. Ben Branson was hired through a Temp. Agency for this position. Ben had been working for the Douglas SWCD as their No-Till/Native Grass Drill operator. Area engineering staff added Mike Yrjo as a Civil Engineering Technician in Dec. 2011 located in the Alexandria Field Office. We have been grateful to have Mike assist the Field Office with several engineering projects this past year.

Wetland drainage activities have increase substantially in 2012 due to dryer conditions and better availability of tile. Since all 1026 requests now require a certified determination we have had a big added workload in accomplishing this task. A wetland team has been helpful as has the addition of Area Wetland Biologists to keep the process moving as timely as possible.

Some of the Conservation activities applied for the year included:

7 - Water & Sediment Control Basins with Tile Outlets (Tile installation on another 10 WASCOD's was completed).

2376 ft. - Terraces

1270 ft. – Pipeline system for a Prescribed Grazing Contract

4145 ft – Fence

1 – Comprehensive Nutrient Management Plan

3 – Closure of Waste Impoundments

43.5 - Forage & Biomass Planting

104 ac – Forage Harvest Management

43.7 ac – Prescribed Grazing System

347.5 ac. – No-Till

203 ac. – Restoration of Rare and Declining Habitat

2 – Seasonal High Tunnel

111 ac. - Wetland Restoration

4,853 ft – Windbreak/Shelterbelt Establishment

174.2 ac – Nutrient Management

- Breakdown of County Revenue
- Deferred Revenue Breakdown
- Statement of Activities and Governmental Fund Revenues, Expenditures and Changes in Fund Balance
- Statement of Net Assets and Governmental Fund Balance Sheet
- Budget and Actual General Fund
- Notes to the Financial Statements
- Management Discussion and Analysis