

# **DOUGLAS SOIL AND WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICT**



**2013  
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 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**

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**Paul Barsness**

**Jon Schneider**

**Ken Rutten**

**Dave Wolf**



## **DISTRICT STAFF**

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**Ben Branson**

**Mike Yrjo**

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**Lisa Gentele**

**Mark Dybdal**



# ***YEAR IN REVIEW***

**2013 continued to be a 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. Different projects worked on through the water plan included rain gardens workshop and construction, lakescaping plantings, water quality monitoring, 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, 20th annual Kids' Groundwater Festival, 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 8 miles of fabric was installed last year. The districts tree sales last year totaled over 16724 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 4 sediment blocks were installed last year. Wetland restoration construction was also busy with 5 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 programs offered to county landowners. These programs include Environmental Quality Incentive Program (EQIP), Wetland Reserve Program (WRP), and the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP). The district also has a fulltime Pheasants Forever Biologist putting proposals together for landowners whose lands qualify for the CRP Buffers Program and other conservation programs.**



# ***2013 OUTSTANDING CONSERVATIONIST***

**John and Pat Lindquist were recently honored as Outstanding Conservationist at the annual meeting of the Minnesota Association of Soil and Water Conservation District held December 1-3, 2013 in Bloomington, Minn. They were selected by the Douglas Soil 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, John and Pat Lindquist were recognized for a variety of reasons. Following is a summary of some of the reasons why the Lindquist's were chosen: John's involvement**

**with Lake Christina, Ina and Anka Lake Association; Enrollment of 22.8 acres into the RIM/WRP (a permanent conservation easement), seeding cropland to native grasses, ag land and wetlands into a Ducks Unlimited Conservation Easement work with MN DNR to create a 76 Acre forest Management plan for removal of invasive species, European Buckthorn, Prickly Ash and Ironwood for forest stand improvements.**



# ***WETLAND CONSERVATION ACT***



**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 2013, 826 landowner contacts were made for wetland questions dealing with wetland boundaries, wetland regulations, wetland enhancements, or just general wetland questions. A total of 808 of these contacts 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 1.7 acres over the year in Douglas County.**

**In 2013 landowners applied for filling wetlands through the WCA replacement plan application process and 1 was approved for filling a wetland through the replacement plan application process. The total impact to wetlands through approved replacement plans was 6691 square feet. These impacts were replaced with 13,382 square feet of wetland bank credits purchase from wetland banks in Douglas County.**

**There has continued to be steady interest in wetland banking in 2013. We are currently working with 2 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**





# ***ENVIROTHON***



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 24, 2013, 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 2013 topic was "Grazing Management in Minnesota". 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 20th, at St. Johns University, Collegeville, MN.



**Area 2 Jr. Envirothon Team Winners were:** 1st place Team #22 Sartell Middle School, 2nd Team# 20 Sartell Middle School, 3rd Team # 18 South Jr. High, 4th Team #21 Sartell Middle School, 5th Team # 5 Glacial Hills and South Jr. HS School.

**Area 2 Sr. Envirothon Team Winners were:** 1st Place – Team# 9, Morris Area; 2nd Place – Team #5, St. Johns Prep; 3rd Place – Team#14, Litchfield.

**Oral Presentation Winners were:** 1st Place – Team #9, Morris Area; 2nd Place – Team #5 St. Johns Prep; 3rd Place – Team #4, St. Johns ; 4th Place – Team #8, Morris Area; and 5th Place – Team#15, Sartell.

**State Envirothon Winners – May 20th were:** 1st Place –North Trek; 2nd Place –Kittson Central; and 3rd Place –Hopkins HS.





# ***GROUND WATER FESTIVAL***

**The 20th annual Kid's Groundwater Festival was held May 1st, 2013, at the Runestone Community Center in Alexandria. Again the Festival was a huge success with over 515 fourth grade students participating. All schools within Douglas County and one from Grant and Ottertail Counties were in attendance.**

**As part of the 20th anniversary, presenters, teachers, and sponsors were recognized for 20 years of support at an awards program held during lunch. Presenters involved in 20 years of the Douglas County Kids' Groundwater Festival were Richard Thron, Barb Liukkonen, and Gloria Stevenson. Teachers participating for 20 years were Theresa Serum and Tim Schulstad. Sponsors participating for 20 years were Miltona Fire Department and Viking Sportsman Club. Planning Committee member Jerry Hagenmiller has also been involved in planning the festival for the past 20 years.**



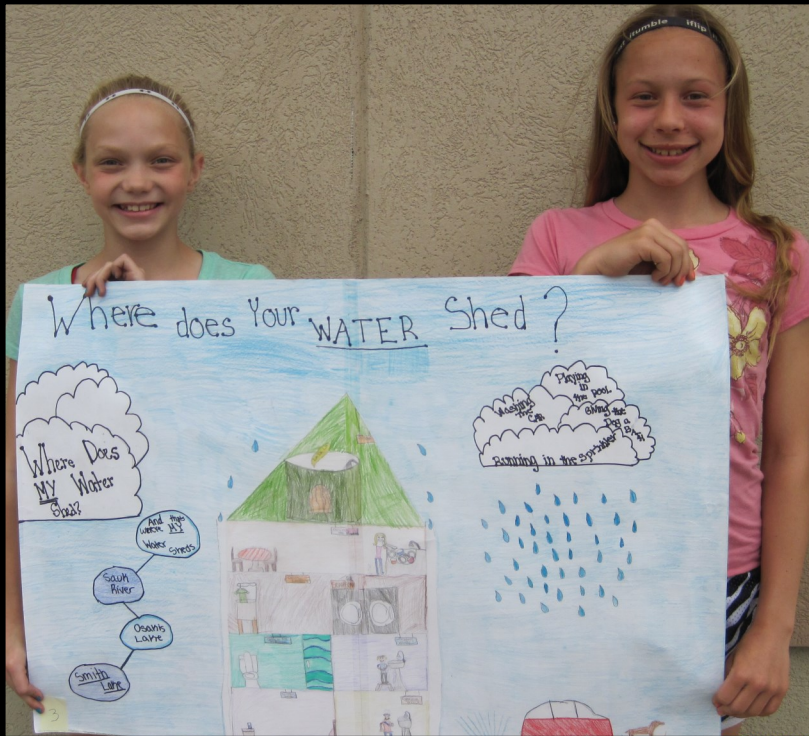
**Featured at the Kids' Groundwater Festival were 17 different learning stations. Each of the fourth grade students were scheduled at intervals to take part in seven different learning stations. The Stations cover all aspects of the water cycle. Students attend sessions on surface water problems, aquifers 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 2013 Kids' Groundwater Festival Committee included the following individuals; Steve Henry & Jerry Hagenmiller, 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; Nathan Reinhold, Douglas Pope Solid Waste, and Rebecca Sternquist & Deja Anton, 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.**



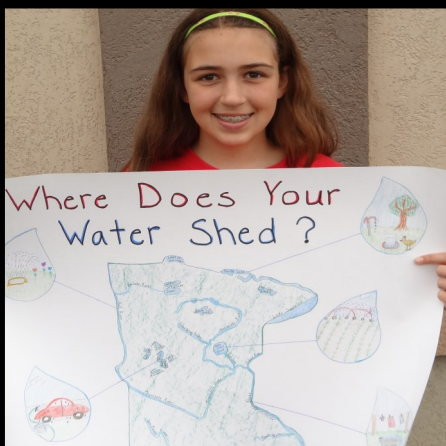


# ***POSTER CONTEST WINNERS***



**Megan Fletcher  
and  
Christiana Drown  
Overall Mural Winners  
Woodland Elementary**

**"WHERE DOES YOUR WATER SHED?" was the theme of the Douglas SWCD 2013 Poster and Mural Contest for 5th and 6th grade students throughout the County. Earlier this spring, Steve Henry from the SWCD visited classrooms and gave presentations on. The students then used that information to create posters and murals for the contest. 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 (Woodland Elementary) will receive a \$500 Science Prize through the Water Wisdom Education Project of the Douglas County Lakes Association. The winning posters and mural went on to Area II Competition in June 2013. Kodi Bundermann- Lincoln Elementary tied for 3rd Place. Congratulations to all the winners!**



**Kodi Bundermann  
Lincoln Elementary  
Tied for 3rd Place at State**



**Abby Blank  
Woodland Elementary  
Poster Winner**



**Stacy Nohl  
Lincoln Elementary  
Poster Winner**

# ***WATER PLAN REPORT***

**The Water Plan work in Douglas County is driven by grant funding 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 2013's activity.**

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

**The Long Prairie Watershed Restoration and Protection Project is a partnership of Todd, Morrison, Otter Tail, and Douglas Counties that is funded and guided by the MPCA. This project has identified several impaired lakes and streams in our area and informational meetings were held in 2013.**

**\$54,735 in Community Partners funding is being used to assist local organizations and their members with identifying, developing, and installing water quality protection projects. A total of five projects were installed in 2013 with another four scheduled for 2014. This funding is from the Clean Water Land and Legacy Amendment.**

**The Pomme de Terre watershed continued to install projects funded through the Clean Water Land and Legacy Amendment including a football field length shoreland restoration designed by the Douglas County Water Planner. For 2014 the Pomme de Terre watershed was awarded \$274,816 to continue working to restore the water quality of the area.**

**A major focus of the Water Plan is public outreach and education. Programs delivered in 2013 include:**

- Kids' Groundwater Festival
- Environmental Essay Scholarship contest
- Environmental Poster Contest
- Community Eco Fair
- Douglas County Fair Booth and Demonstrations
- The Lobster, Ida, and Irene lake association meetings.





# ***TREE PLANTING***



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 2013, the Douglas SWCD provided 22,300 trees and shrubs to 252 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 2013 Douglas SWCD staff installed 10 new shelterbelts containing 3,420 trees and shrubs on 12 acres to protect 31 acres of farmstead.

Two new field windbreaks/living snowfences were installed in Douglas County in 2013. 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 1800 trees and shrubs were planted on 7.5 acres to protect 68 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 2013, five new plantings were completed on 31 acres using 1,453 trees and shrubs.

Again in 2013, 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 2013 SWCD Staff installed 39,701 ft. of fabric on 12 sites and 1375 tree tubes on 6 sites.



# ***NO-TILL DRILL***



**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 2014**

**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.**



## **NO-TILL CROPS PLANTED IN 2013**

<b>Alfalfa</b>	<b>72 Acres</b>	<b>CRP</b>	<b>52 Acres</b>
<b>Grasses</b>	<b>37 Acres</b>	<b>Clover</b>	<b>7 Acres</b>
<b>Native Grass</b>	<b>430 Acres</b>	<b>Beans</b>	<b>178 Acres</b>

**Total Acres seeded in 2013 - 775**

**Total Owners/Operators Renting the Drill - 41**



# ***NRCS YEAR IN REVIEW***

**Environmental Quality Incentive Program (EQIP) sign-ups were underway at the start of 2013 and Douglas County applicants fared well with the different funding pools. NRCS accepted 21 applications for contracts for a total obligation of \$660,000. 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 1 application and it was funded. 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.**

**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. A Conservation Cover Crop Tour took place in Douglas county late summer, we are trying to promote soil health by using cover to prevent erosion and engage the soils biotic activity.**

**The FSA announced a general CRP signup and 22 applications were accepted. This generated more Continuous CRP applications also with 28 contracts created. The workload for planning the general CRP and Continuous CRP was done by Josh Melssner, 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 2013. More acres have been signed up in the MRBI Crooked Lake project area which was funded in 2012. Many thanks to the Jerry Haggenmiller 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.**

**Wetland drainage activities have increase substantially in 2013 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 total of 70 1026 requests came through the office in 2013. 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:**

<b>12 - Water &amp; Sediment Control Basins with Tile Outlets</b>	<b>706.7 ac – No Till</b>
<b>9930 ft. – Pipeline system for a Prescribed Grazing Contract</b>	<b>61.1 – Conservation Crop Rotation</b>
<b>12003 ft – Fence</b>	<b>1 – Comprehensive Nutrient Management Plan</b>
<b>1 – Closure of Waste Impoundments</b>	<b>35 - Forage &amp; Biomass Planting</b>
<b>43.2 ac – Forage Harvest Management</b>	<b>120.1 – Prescribed Grazing System</b>
<b>131.6 ac. – Cover Crop</b>	<b>1240.2 ac – Nutrient Management</b>

## LAKESHORE RESTORATIONS



## LAKE MONITORING



## CRP GRASSES & WILDFLOWERS



## ROTATIONAL GRAZING



## FABRIC MULCH INSTALLATION



## SHELTERBELT



## WETLAND RESTORATIONS



## STREAM MONITORING



## RAIN GARDENS



## WALK-IN ACCESS HUNTING



## TREE PLANTING



## SEDIMENT CONTROL STRUCTURES





- 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