

DOUGLAS SWCD

“62 Years in Conservation”



2016

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 2014 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

Douglas SWCD

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.

YEAR IN REVIEW

2016 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, and construction of erosion control practices and feedlot projects. Buffer Law Implementation consumed a large amount of time. Different projects worked on through the water plan completion Plan Amendment, water quality monitoring, Zebra Mussel Sampling, 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, 23rd Annual Kids' Groundwater Festival, Poster and Mural Contests, Essay Contest, Douglas County Fair booth, and Boy Scout Merit Badge.

The Districts tree planting and matting program was again a huge success. Over 10,100 feet of fabric was installed last year. The districts tree sales last year totaled 20,359 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 8 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.

2016 Board of Supervisors



Douglas County Soil and Water Conservation District Board of Supervisors includes (left to right)
Dave Wolf, Jon Schneider, Paul Barsness, Ken Rutten and Gary Thoennes

2016 Staff



Douglas County Soil and Water Conservation District Staff includes (left to right)
Josh Meissner, Andy Rice, Danica Derks, Starla Arceneau, and Jerome Haggemiller,

2016 Outstanding Conservationist

Craig and Julie Haseman were recently honored as outstanding conservationists at the annual meeting of the Minnesota Association of Soil and Water Conservation Districts, December 4-6, 2016 in Bloomington, Minnesota. 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*.

Congratulations Craig and Julie Haseman!



2016 Poster Contest Winners

"WE ALL NEED TREES" was the theme of the Douglas SWCD 2016 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 on the importance of trees. The students then used that information to create posters and murals for the contest.

Each of the winners received 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 (Voyager Elementary) will receive a \$500 Science Prize through the Water Wisdom Education Project of the Douglas County Lakes Association.

Congratulations to all the winners!



MURAL & OVERALL WINNER
Aisling O'Connor
Voyager School



1ST PLACE POSTER WINNER
Allie Trombley
Voyager School



2nd PLACE POSTER WINNER
Alexis Pazdernik and
Kaliey Behrens
Lincoln School



3RD PLACE POSTER WINNER
Jasmine Wendt
Parkers Prairie School

ENVIROTHON

The Douglas SWCD assisted with the organization of the 2016 Envirothon in which high school students from a 12-county area demonstrated their knowledge of Minnesota's natural resources. The annual area 2 Envirothon was held on Wednesday April 23rd at the Prairie Woods Environmental Learning Center near Spicer.

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, and a Current Vent Station, where the topic changes annually and requires students to give an oral presentation on the current topic. The 2016 topic was, "**Invasive Species: A Challenge to the Environment**". 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 five students worked together to answer the questions presented in the tests. Scores were tallied and the three highest scoring teams advance to the State Envirothon held on May 18 at Cloquet Forestry Center, Cloquet, MN.



KIDS GROUND WATER FESTIVAL

The 23rd Annual Kid's Groundwater Festival was held May 3, 2016, at the Runestone Community Center in Alexandria. Again the Festival was a huge success with over 520 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.



NO-TILL DRILL-AVAILABLE



NO-TILL DRILL AVAILABLE

In 2016 the Douglas SWCD purchased a new 10' Haybuster No-till Drill that they will have for rent. This drill works well for seeding native grasses, alfalfa, soybeans, and small grain. The drill rents for \$9.00 per acre with a \$100.00 minimum. The SWCD will deliver the drill, calibrate it for your seed and pick it up when you are finished. Call the SWCD to reserve the drill.

FOOD PLOT MIXES

The Douglas SWCD will once again have food plot seed available for landowners. Two different deer mixes are available, a perennial mix and an annual mix. The perennial mix includes Alsike Clover, Lanino Clover, Medium Red Clover, White Dutch Clover, and Chicory. The annual mix includes Forage Peas, Radish, Turnips, and Haybet Barley. The SWCD also has a Pheasant/Turkey mix containing Wildlife Sunflower, Wildlife Grain Sorghum, FSG Pearl Millet, and Sugar Graze II Sorghum Sudangrass. Each mix is packaged in 1 acre bags. Food plots are important to retain wildlife in your area after crops are harvested in the fall and to provide feed to wildlife throughout winter season.

CONSERVATION TREES

The Douglas SWCD is now taking orders for trees for the spring of 2017 plantings. Whether you are looking at planting a hedge, shelterbelt, living snow fence, field windbreak or wildlife habitat, we have the right shrubs and trees for all your needs. We offer a variety of small shrubs, large shrubs/small trees, deciduous trees and conifers (see page 9 for trees varieties).

Not only do we provide trees for your selection, we provide services from planning to planting. Our staff will gladly work with you on finding the right tree for your site. We can provide design assistance for farmstead shelterbelt, field windbreak, living snow fence and wildlife habitat plantings.

If you are looking at completing a tree planting, you might be eligible for cost-share to help pay for the planting. There are federal and state programs that provide cost-share to help pay for the costs associated with a tree planting. Contact the Douglas SWCD for your tree planting needs and get growing!



TREE PLANTING AND FABRIC MULCH



The Douglas SWCD provides services that include tree planting, fabric mulch installation and tube installation. Fabric mulch will improve the survival rate of your trees by providing moisture retention and protection from weed competition. With the fabric mulch, post-planting maintenance is virtually eliminated. Tree tubes will protect your trees from rodents and deer, encourage straight sturdy trees and act as mini-greenhouses reusing the moisture from the trees. Cost-Share is available for eligible practices. Contact the SWCD office to learn more.

MN BUFFER LAW: Buffers Required on Public Waters by November 1st 2017

Douglas SWCD wants to remind landowners about the MN Buffer Law that requires perennial vegetative buffers along public waters and public drainage systems. A 50 ft buffer of perennial vegetation is required along public waters by November 1st of 2017. A 16.5 ft buffer of perennial vegetation (vegetation that will not impede future maintenance) is required along public drainage systems by November 1st of 2018. Areas requiring buffers can be found on the DNR website at www.dnr.state.mn.us/buffers or you can stop in to the Douglas SWCD office to look at the buffer map with our staff.



Douglas SWCD is available to provide technical assistance with the requirements of the MN Buffer Law. Many landowners have come in to discuss buffer requirements and how it affects them. We encourage everyone with cropland adjacent to public waters or public drainage systems to come in to our office and go over buffer requirements. Our staff recently completed a parcel review of all areas impacted by the MN Buffer Law based on aerial imagery and will be sending out letters this winter to landowners who are impacted by the law.

Currently there are programs available that would pay landowners to enroll these areas into perennial vegetation. Programs such as CRP, CREP and the Hayed Buffer Program (this program is only for land in the Sauk River Watershed) will pay an annual rental payment and provide cost-share to help pay for site prep, seed, and seeding. With CREP you would also receive a one-time easement payment. If you are interested in enrolling into a conservation program such as one of these, we recommend that you stop in soon because available acres for these programs could run out.

Winter is going by fast and soon everyone will be busy with spring planting. This does not leave much time for areas requiring a buffer to be planted. Douglas SWCD staff is available to help landowners with technical assistance related to the buffer law, so please stop in if you have any questions.

CRP OPTIONS

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We have new land and re-enrollment options for the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) available.

You have options! NRCS in conjunction with FSA is offering choices for those that have land coming out of CRP this year, approximately 5,000 acres throughout Douglas County. If you are not currently enrolled in the CRP program, this would be a great opportunity to sign up. There are practices available that could benefit your current farm management and positively impact your landscape and environment, for example;

Duck Nesting Habitat

Farmable Wetland Programs

Field windbreaks

Filter strips

Living snow fences

Riparian Forest Buffers

Shelterbelts

Wetland Restorations

If you are interested in CRP options for your land, please contact Josh Meissner (Farm Bill Biologist) at 320-763-3191 Ext. 3 to setup an appointment.

WALK IN ACCESS

The Walk In Access program targets 40 acres or more that are already in Conservation Programs or non crop areas and the program is entirely voluntary for landowners. Most landowners choose to enroll their property for two or three years. Landowners are paid \$10 per acre to allow hunting access. Up to \$3 per acre are added if within 1/2 mile of existing state or federal hunting land, or if a multiyear contract is signed.

Enrolled lands are covered under the Minnesota recreational use laws that limit landowner's liability. Where private leases do not, recreational use laws provide extra liability protection for WIA acres under MN State Statute 604A.20 to 604A.27. WIA land is for hunting only. No motorized vehicles are allowed on WIA areas and parking is along roads or in designated parking area. No target practice, trapping, dog training, camping, horseback riding or fires are allowed in WIA areas. DNR conservation officers handle any WIA violations as well as any hunting violations.

Minnesota Ag Water Quality Certification Program



The Minnesota Agricultural Water Quality Certification Program (MAWQCP) has surpassed 300 certified farms, marking a year of strong growth. This voluntary program works with farmers and landowners to identify and mitigate risks to water quality on a field by field basis. The Minnesota Agricultural Water Quality Certification Program has certified 323 farms over 176,862 acres representing virtually every kind of agricultural production from all across the state.

The 300th farm certified is the Twin Eagle Dairy operated by Pat and Jody Lunemann in Todd County. "We wanted to get certified to demonstrate that we are doing the best job we can to make sure we have clean water," said Pat Lunemann. "Initially, we didn't know what to expect with the program, but as we worked with our local certification specialists we found solutions that worked for our farm and protected the water."

After being certified, each farm is deemed to be in compliance with new water quality laws and regulations for 10 years. Certification is also an approved practice farmers can use to comply with the new state buffer law. Certified farmers and landowners can use their certification status to promote their businesses as protective of water quality. Those interested in the program can contact the Douglas County SWCD office and visit MyLandMyLegacy.com.

- **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**