

Douglas SWCD

“64 Years in Conservation”



2018

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 2018 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
900 Robert Street, Suite 102
Alexandria, MN 56308
(320)-763-3191 Ext. 3

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, audiotope, 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

2018 was a very productive 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 survey and design for erosion control practices and feedlot improvement projects, and construction of erosion control practices and feedlot projects. Buffer Law Implementation consumed a large amount of time. **There are many other different projects worked on through the Water Plan Completion Plan Amendment, water quality monitoring, Zebra Mussel Sampling, and of technical advice given.**

Education activities were also a big part of the districts accomplishments. Some of the educational activities completed this year include: Area II and State Envirothons, 25th Annual Kids' Groundwater Festival, Poster and Mural Contests, Essay Contest, Douglas County Fair booth, Viking Sportsman-Youth Outdoors Activities day, school programing, Boy Scout Merit Badge, Kids Fleet Farm Fishing Day, and multi-county outreach.

The Districts tree planting and matting program was again a huge success. Over 10,961 trees were planted and 30,380 feet of fabric was installed last year. The districts tree sales last year totaled over 35,560 trees, which will benefit wildlife in Douglas County for many years to come. Staff was busy this past fall with the installation of erosion control practices in the County. A total of 8 sediment blocks were installed. More erosion control structures were planned,; however late harvest and wet weather prevented construction of these conservation practices. 3 Ag Waste systems were installed in 2018. Wetland restoration construction was also busy with 14 wetland restorations completed. The District No-till drill program was extremely busy this year, planting over 1,200 acres of native grasses, soybeans and alfalfa. All of these conservation practices will benefit the soil productivity and water quality of Douglas County. A total of over \$630,000 in federal and state grant cost share funds were used to assist landowners in installing conservation practices

Two Clean Water Grants were started in 2018. The first is a feasibility study on reducing phosphorus inputs into Lake Ida from the Aquatic Management Area-County Ditch 23 inlet. The study will also identify other areas of excessive nutrient inputs within the Lake Ida watershed. The other clean water grant involves completing soil borings on unpermitted Ag Waste Pits to determine if the pits will need to be reconstructed to prevent contamination to groundwater.

The Ag BMP Loan Program was also used extensively by landowners in 2018. Loans included, septic updates and conservation tillage, planting, & spraying equipment. A total of over \$813,000 in loan funds were used in the 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 Easements (WRE), 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.

2018 Board of Supervisors



Douglas County Soil and Water Conservation District Board of Supervisors includes:

Back Row: (Left to Right) Mike Cleary, Bill Dropik Jr. and Ken Rutten

Front Row: (Left to Right) Gary Thoennes, and Paul Barsness

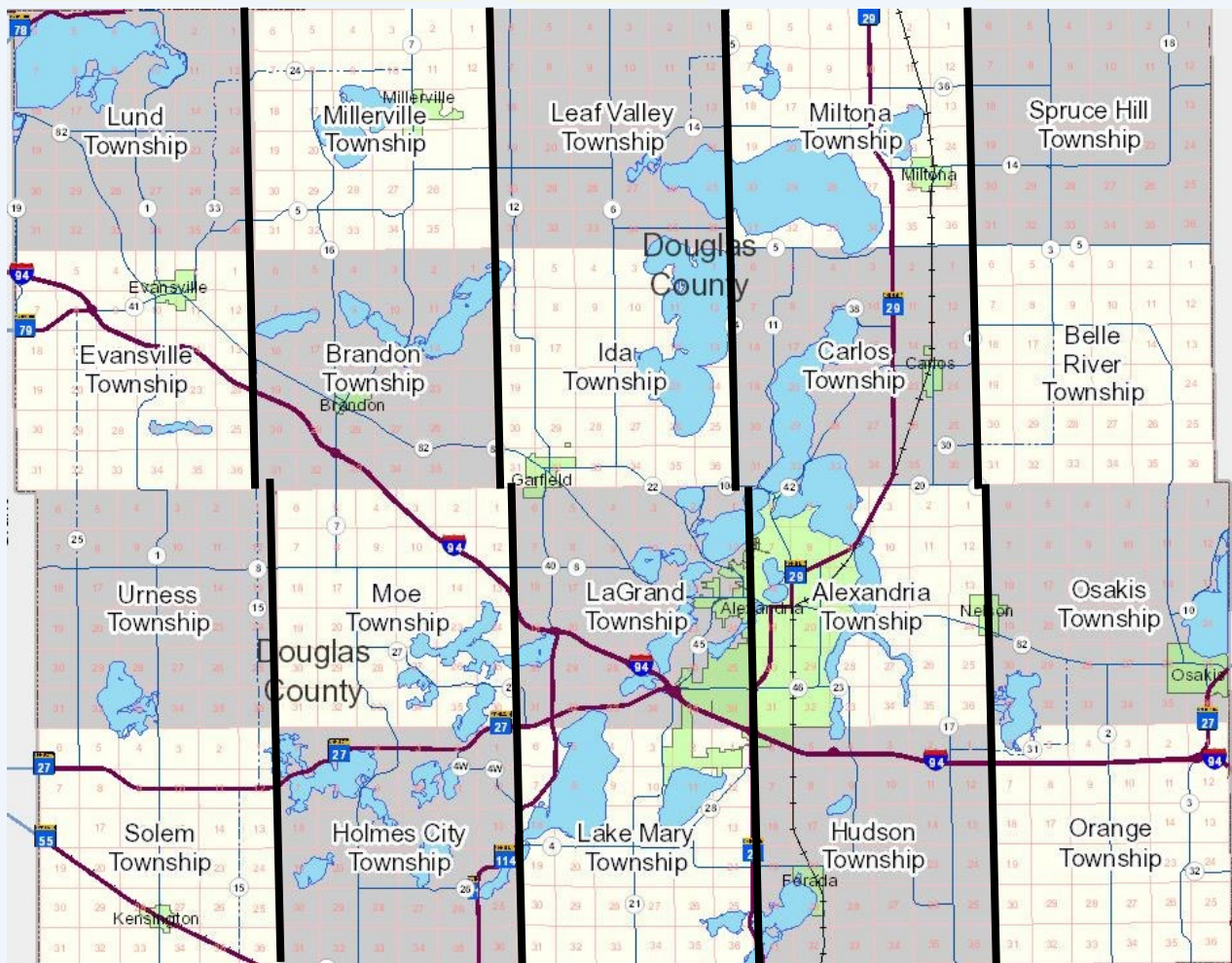
Paul Barsness
Area 1

Mike Cleary
Area 2

Gary Thoennes
Area 3

Bill Dropik
Area 4

Ken Rutten
Area 5



2018 Staff



Douglas County Soil and Water Conservation District Staff includes:
(Left to Right) Starla Arceneau, Andy Rice, Jerry Haggemiller, Jessica Albertsen,
Josh Meissner and Danielle Anderson

2018 Tree Planting Crew

Mike, Dan (pictured below) and Rigo (pictured right) helped this year with the tree plantings.



2018 Interns



Douglas County Soil and Water Conservation District Interns:

Left: Sarah Zellmar- Conservation Corps summer intern

Below: Hunter Mogler interning through the Alexandria Area High School



2018 Purchases

Douglas County Soil and Water Conservation District purchased a side by side and trailer to help with tree plantings and buffer checks.

The District also purchased a “new to us” F-250 pick up truck. (Not pictured).



2018 staff hard at work



Outstanding Conservationist



Kevin and Ellen Roers from Garfield, MN, were recognized as the 2018 Outstanding Conservationist for Douglas County. Currently they were one of eight state finalists in the 2018 Outstanding Conservationist Award Program. Kevin and Ellen was recognized at the December 11 luncheon at the MASWCD's 81st annual convention in Bloomington.

The Roers' have implemented many practices on their property, including: conservation tillage and cover crops used to reduce wind erosion. The Roers' have rotational grazing system on 101 acres of pasture for his cow calf beef operation. Constructing water lines and installing six watering locations in the pasture of seven paddocks. Kevin and Ellen use insect resistance varieties of corn to avoid corn borer problems as well as have a manure management plan that they use for both their beef and dairy cattle. They have installed buffers on all the areas required by the MN buffer Law, and also voluntarily on private ditches and wetlands to prevent runoff. Finally, last fall they installed four water and sediment control basins last fall to address gullies on a field, and hope to install five more this coming year. The Douglas SWCD is proud of Kevin and Ellen for what they have done for conservation and hopes it helps encourage others to follow in their footsteps.

Each year, the state's SWCDs recognize individuals, farm families, conservation organizations and other groups 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 Kevin and Ellen Roers!



Roers Farm- Construction for projects underway



Roers Farm- Construction finished



Above: District staff and supervisors with the 2018 conservation farmers from Douglas County.

Left: Ellen and Kevin Roers at the Minnesota Association for Soil and Water Conservation Districts (MASWCD) convention with their awards.



2018 Poster Contest Winners



Aubrie Johnson & Alexa Rohloff
Mural Winners and Overall Winners
St. Mary's Elementary

“Watershed: Our water, Our home” was the theme of the Douglas SWCD 2018 Poster and Mural Contest for 5th and 6th grade students throughout the County. Earlier this spring, Jessica Albertsen from the SWCD visited classrooms and gave presentations on the importance of our watersheds. The students then used that information to create posters and murals for the contest.

Once all posters were submitted SWCD staff and supervisors voted on the posters and notified the schools. The winning posters were displayed at the Douglas County Fair in the Soil and Water booth. The local paper also did an article featuring the students and their beautiful works of art!



Carver Larson & Kaitlyn Evjen
(Carver not pictured)
1st Place Poster Winner
St. Mary's Elementary



Victoria Hoyer
2nd Place Poster Winner
St. Agnes Elementary



Katherine Korynta & Maddison Schwartz
3rd Place Poster Winner
St. Mary's Elementary



Envirothon



The Douglas SWCD assisted with the organization of the 2018 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 Event Station, where the topic changes annually and requires students to give an oral presentation on the current topic. The 2018 topic was, "Grazing Lands 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 five students worked together to answer the questions presented in the tests.

Kids Groundwater Festival



The 25th Annual Kid's Groundwater Festival was held May 2, 2018, 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 school 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 2018 Kids' Groundwater Festival Committee included the following individuals: Danielle Anderson, Jessica Albertsen & Jerry Haggenmiller, 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 & Mark Koep, 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.



Fair Booth



The Douglas SWCD theme of the fair this year was “Soil Health”. There was a prize wheel, creepy critters to dig up in the soil, trivia questions, and door prizes.

Preserved samples of the aquatic invasive species found in the Douglas County waters were also on display for visitors to pick up, look at and learn more about. As well as a map color coded to show all the lakes infested in the county.

SWCD staff members and supervisors were available to answer questions about programs, trees, buffer law updates and cost share opportunities.

Overall there was roughly 4,100 individuals that stopped by the booth and just over 3,980 prizes were handed out from the prize wheel. The Douglas SWCD donated the door prizes for each day of the fair, which was a bundle of trees of the winner’s choice.

Next year the theme of the fair booth will be more focused on the water aspect of Soil and Water Conservation.



Eagle Scouts Projects



The Douglas SWCD loves to get involved with youth and outreach projects in the county. Nick Lundeen of Brandon recently made an outdoor classroom in the wooded natural area behind the football field of the Brandon School Campus for his Eagle Scout project. This outdoor classroom is a quick walk from the school, which will allow for many opportunities for future nature trails and other outdoor learning experiences. There are benches for the students to sit on and a cabinet that contains whiteboards and other teaching resources to help make the outdoor learning experience worthwhile. A total of over 200 volunteer hours went into this project, with support from many local businesses. Douglas SWCD donated all the fabric and staples to ensure that the weeds would not take over! Congratulations Nick!

Education and Outreach



Youth outdoors Activity Day 2018

Helping with the Swift County Water Festival



Glacial Hills day at Glacial lakes State Park

Helping with Pope/Stevens Conservation Day



District 206 Club/Compass and school programs



Aquatic Invasive Species Programs



25th Annual Kids Groundwater Festival



Cub Scouts of America - Merritt Badge, and Nature Exploration at the State Park



A Heartfelt Thank You!

This year Gerhard (Gary) Thoennes retired from his role as a SWCD supervisor on the SWCD Board. Gary has served as a board member since 1985, (thirty-three years) and has been very supportive of the Douglas SWCD, projects and staff. The District has been very fortunate to have Gary's expertise over the years in executing new conservation programs such as Reinvest in Minnesota (RIM), Wetland Conservation Act (WCA), Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP), and the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) to improve the natural resources within Douglas County.

Gary will be missed and we wish him the best of luck with his retirement.



News Releases

10+ press releases were sent out!

Topics included:

- Irrigator Clinic
- Nitrate Clinic
- Tree Open House
- Buffers
- Aquatic Invasive Species
- Outstanding Conservationist



Douglas SWCD Annual Tree Open House

Stop in and talk to SWCD Staff about:
Tree Plantings on your property
Cost Share Options

Wednesday, January 31, 2018
9:00am - 4:00pm

Cookies, Apple Cider, and Coffee will be provided!

900 Robert St.
Suite 102
Alexandria, MN 56308
Requested RSVP by January 19th
to the Douglas SWCD or call (320) 763-3191 Ext 3

Irrigator Clinic

Thursday, January 11th
8:30 AM – 2 PM
Forada Supper Club
(1380 County Road 4 SE, Alexandria, MN 56308)

Agenda

- 8:30 Registrations
- 9:00 Welcome Chemigation & Permitting Subsurface Drip Irrigation
- Lunch (meal included in registration cost)
- Reduced Irrigation Study – Rosholt Research Farm
- Bonanza Valley Groundwater Management Area Project

Pre-Registration is REQUIRED!
\$10 Registration Fee (Includes Meal)
Registration Deadline: Friday, January 5th
Make Checks payable to Pope SWCD
Mail Payment to
Pope SWCD Attn: Holly Kovarik
1680 Franklin Street North
Glenwood, MN 56334

Registration at the door is \$20
(Meal not guaranteed at door)

What's in your water?

Date: August 27, 2018
Time: 8:30am– 4 pm
Place: 900 Robert Street
Alexandria, MN 56308

How to collect Samples: To take your sample, run your cold tap for five to ten minutes then collect about one cup of water in a plastic baggie (double bag) or clean jar. Keep the water cool until arrival. You can collect the water anytime within one day of the nitrate analysis (if you are going to the local office right after work, you can collect the sample in the morning and keep it cool all day until you arrive).

For more information please contact the Douglas County Soil and Water conservation District
Website: <http://www.douglaswcd.com/>
Phone: 320-763-3191 Ext 3
Location: 900 Robert Street, Suite 102 Alexandria, MN 56308

Nitrate Well Testing

The Douglas SWCD held a free Nitrate Well Testing Clinic at the end of June, and again at the end of August. This was for community members, resort members and visitors to check the levels of nitrates in their well and drinking water. Between the two clinics there was over 55 samples ran and tested. If the results were high, SWCD staff provided resources and possible solutions to help address amount of nitrates in their water. These were the requirements in order to bring in a sample: To take your sample, run your cold tap for five to ten minutes before collecting about one cup of water in a double plastic baggie or a clean jar. The water needs to be collected within one day of the inspection and kept cool.

Aquatic Invasive Species



Zebra Mussels are a non-native aquatic invasive species (AIS) that were first confirmed in Douglas County by the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources (DNR) in the summer of 2009. As of November 2018, there are a total of 40 lakes and water bodies within the county listed as infested with Zebra Mussels. Some of those water bodies are unnamed lakes and rivers. The complete list can be found on the DNR website.

In cooperation with Douglas County Land and Resources Management and the Douglas County Water Patrol, RMB Environmental Laboratories and the Douglas SWCD, a zebra mussel veliger study was created to monitor 7 lakes. This study continued from the 2016 sampling efforts, with modified cations such as starting at an earlier date in the season and adding Lake Osakis to the list of sampled lakes. Samples were collected weekly from late May through August and bi-weekly in September from recently infested lakes (Miltona, Ida, Turtle, Osakis) and well-established

infested lakes (Le Homme Dieu, Darling, Irene). Volunteers monitored 6 additional lakes for zebra mussel veligers (Vermont, Rachel, Pocket, Smith, Aaron and Red Rock). The goals of the project were to determine if veligers could be detected in the recently infested lakes and if so, what density and patterns the veligers exhibited over time. In the lakes with established infestations, the goals were to also see what density and pattern the veligers exhibit as well as if the density patterns were similar to other northwest Minnesota lakes that have been studied.

The over results of all the lakes tested, indicated the large densities in high traffic areas; therefore risk for veliger transfer is during the months of Late June through July. In relation, this is also the time of year when Douglas County lakes see an increase of boating activities.

In 2017, Douglas County conducted 10,339 inspections on 20 lakes at 25 unique public water accesses by watercraft inspectors .

Education, public awareness, on-site prevention, and monitoring/management are all key components to slow the spread of AIS within Douglas County.



Water Testing

The Douglas SWCD through RMB labs in Detroit lakes MN offers water testing options. Water testing kits are available in the Soil and Water office and are collected daily at 11:00 am Monday through Thursday. The kits available are: Total coliform Bacteria, Nitrate, Arsenic, and Lead. Additional kits available upon request.

To collect a sample for RMB testing: run your cold tap water for at least ten minutes before collecting about one cup of water in the jar provided in the selected kit; keep the water cool until delivered to the SWCD Office before 11:00 AM. Please note that testing is completed the same day as sample collection.

No-Till Drill Available



Douglas SWCD has a 10' haybuster No-till Drill available to rent. This drill works well for seeding native grasses, alfalfa, soybeans, and small grain. The rental rate is \$9.00 per acre in Douglas County with a \$100.00 minimum mobility fee. 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.

There is 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 one 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 the winter season.

Native Grass and Forb Seed Mixes



The Douglas SWCD will have native grass and forb (flowers) seed mixes available to landowners for conservation practices. We will work with landowners on what type of seed mix is required for the practice they are enrolling into. Typically we have set mixes for the different practices, but we can work with landowners on custom mixes if desired. Native grass and forb plantings provide optimum habitat for wildlife and their deep root systems make them effective for erosion control.

Tree Planting & Fabric Mulch



The Douglas SWCD provides services that include tree planting, fabric mulch installation and tree 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 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.

Conservation Trees

The Douglas SWCD is now taking orders for trees for the spring of 2019 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.

In 2018 Douglas SWCD sold 35,560 Trees, and planted 10,961 of the ones sold. There was 30,380 feet of fabric installed, and a total of 15 tree/fabric installation sites 12 of them being mechanical plantings and 3 were hand planting sites with fabric squares.

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. There are federal and state programs that provide cost-share to cover the costs associated with a tree planting. Contact the Douglas SWCD for your tree planting needs and get growing!



MN Buffer Law



Buffers have been a hot topic in the news ever since the Buffer and Soil Loss Statute was signed into law in June 2015 by Governor Mark Dayton. However, regulations pertaining to maintaining perennial vegetation (buffers) adjacent to watercourses and water bodies have existed since the 1970s & 1980s when counties adopted local shoreland ordinances requiring 50' buffers on DNR Public Waters. Ditch Law 103E also has required one rod (16.5') buffers along ditches that have undergone the redetermination of benefits process. So while this "Buffer Law" is new, the buffer requirements have been around for decades.

In Douglas County, the buffer requirement is 50' along DNR public waters and 16.5' along public drainage systems (county ditches). The deadline for establishing buffers along public waters was **Nov. 1, 2017**. The deadline to establish buffers along county ditches was **Nov. 1, 2018**. There is a MNDNR webpage dedicated to buffer information that contains frequently asked questions and a link to the buffer map. It is available at www.dnr.state.mn.us/buffers/index.html.



The SWCD staff is available to assist landowners/operators when determining the buffer width required and where a buffer needs to be added. The law requires the buffer on a public water to be measured from the top or crown of the bank. Where there is no defined bank, measurement will be from the edge of the normal water level. Buffers along public drainage systems shall be measured in the same manner as for measuring the vegetated grass strip under Minnesota Statute 103E.021, subd 6. SWCD staff is available to complete field evaluations to check buffer widths and/or flag buffers (at no charge) if needed.



Overall, Douglas County is sitting at 93% compliant on all bodies of water requiring a buffer, which is also where the State is at for buffer compliance. The majority of sites still needing a buffer already have some buffer established. Getting these sites to compliance typically requires adding small areas to the existing buffer. Douglas SWCD will continue to work with landowners throughout the winter on buffer compliance. If you have any questions or concerns, please stop into the Douglas SWCD office for assistance.

CRP Options

CRP is a program that pays yearly rental payments in exchange for farmers removing environmentally sensitive land from agricultural production and planting perennial species that will improve the environmental quality, positively impact your landscape, prevent soil erosion, and increase wildlife habitat. Landowners enter into these contracts that last between 10-15 years.



The 2019 Sign up for CRP is dependent on the pending 2018 Farm Bill. If you are interested or have questions, stop in to the Douglas SWCD office and talk to Josh Meissner (Farm Bill Biologist).

In the past, these were the CRP options for enrollment;

Duck Nesting Habitat

Farmable Wetland Programs

Field windbreaks

Filter strips

Living snow fences

Riparian Forest

Buffers Shelterbelts

Wetland Restorations

If you plan to crop your expiring acres, be aware that HEL fields require an approved conservation compliance plan that can be written by local NRCS office staff in Alexandria. If you are unsure of a fields NHEL/HEL status, feel free to contact our office for further assistance.

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Walk In Access

The Walk In Access Program targets land that's 40 acres or more, is 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 does not, recreational use laws provide extra liability protection for WIA access under the 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.

If you have any questions about the program or if you are interested in enrolling your conservation land into the program, please stop by or call the Douglas SWCD office.



Minnesota Agricultural Water Quality Certification Program (MAWQCP)

The Minnesota Agricultural Water Quality Certification Program is a completely voluntary program that helps landowners and farmers do everything they can to keep protecting our state's streams, lakes, and rivers. Farmers are the original stewards of our soil and water. They can use MAWQCP to gauge their progress in protecting water quality and preserving it for generations to come.

Certification gives the public and farmers a greater certainty about regularity standards, ultimately protecting Minnesota's water resources.

To become certified: the first step, application, is a self-verification by landowners that they are meeting state laws and regulations regarding water quality. The next step, assessment, takes it further by examining each field for its physical characteristics, management of nutrients, tillage, pests, irrigation and tile drainage, and current conservation practices. On a 10-point scale, each field must score a water quality index of 8.5 or higher to be eligible for certification. The lower the number, the more the field poses a risk to water quality. If a field scores below 8.5 the certifier begins working with the landowner or operator to identify areas of potential improvement to achieve a certifying score. Certification includes an on-site field-by-field assessment.

The program has been available statewide since the summer of 2016.

The benefits of being a water quality certified farm includes "regulatory certainty", which means they are automatically deemed compliant with any new water quality rules or laws for ten years from certification which gives certified producers a longer period of time to plan for and comply with new regulations.

Another benefit comes in the form of recognition; certified farms can use their status as a way to promote their business as water quality conscious. Producers working toward certification also receive priority for technical and financial assistance to implement practices that promote water quality. Certified producers also have access to exclusive funding pools. If interested in programs like these, or how to become Ag. Quality Certified, please visit Douglas SWCD office, or visit the MAWQCP website: <http://www.mda.state.mn.us/awqcp>



Ditch 23/Lake Ida Grant

The wetland along County Ditch 23 is off loading a significant amount of phosphorous directly into Lake Ida, increasing the risk of algae in the lake. Douglas SWCD secured a grant in 2017 to investigate what is happening in the wetland and upstream in CD 23.

Sampling in the ditch and wetland have been completed. A total of 24 sampling events were completed by the SWCD between May and October of this year, along with multiple soil core samples in the wetland by Widseth Smith Nolting and Barr Engineering. Barr Engineering is analyzing all the data collected and working on recommendations to address the problem.

Barr Engineering has also completed a culvert study and surface water flow modeling for the Lake Ida Watershed to identify other potential pollutant sources. We anticipate having a complete report with recommendations in early 2019.



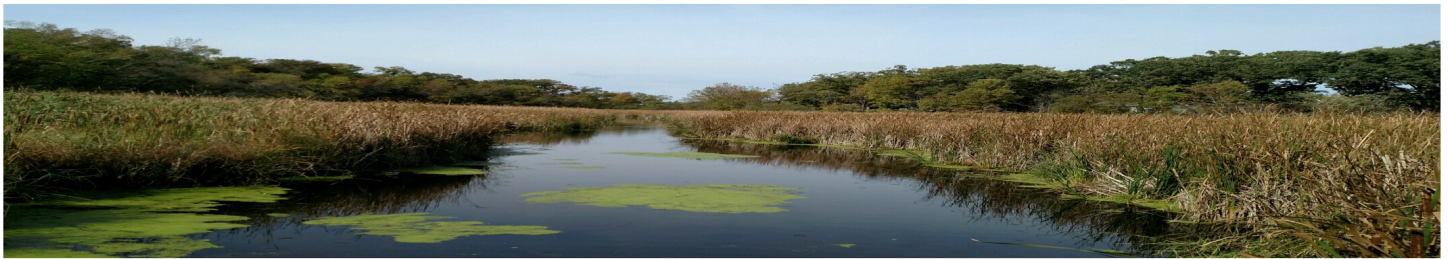
Soil Investigation Grant

Douglas SWCD applied for a soil investigation grant through Board of Soil and Resources (BWSR) and was awarded \$93,000. This project seeks to inventory twenty registered feedlots identified as having an Unpermitted Liquid Manure Storage Area (LMSA). Specifically, this inventory would include offering cost-share for soils investigations. Soils investigations are required for farmers to demonstrate resource concern to access needed cost-share for LMSA upgrades, bringing the structure up to a permitted status per MPCA standards. Soils investigations for LMSAs have not been supported with cost-share within Douglas County previously, and it has been only sporadically available from other TSA's. These feedlots are located in three townships and have also been identified as having groundwater that is vulnerable to nutrient pollution, necessitating a need for nitrate testing per MN Department of Agriculture. These townships also house the vast majority of remaining unpermitted LMSAs in the County.

Wetland Conservation Act (WCA)

Landowners are encouraged to check with the SWCD before beginning any project that may impact a wetland(s). The State of MN has wetland laws regulating the draining, filling, or excavation within wetlands. Although similar in many ways, the laws are different. Do not assume because you meet federal law requirements, you will also meet MN State law requirements.

In recent years there has been a dramatic increase in the installation of/or additions/upgrades to drain tile systems. These activities need to be reviewed by our staff to prevent wetland violations. It is also a good idea to check with our office before cleaning drainage ditches as such activities may impact wetlands. Some drainageways are classified as Protected Waters by the MN Department of Natural Resources (MN DNR) and require permitting through that agency as well. One issue that occurs periodically is impacts to what are classified as Type 1 and or Type 2 wetlands. The MN DNR has a good website (www.dnr.state.mn.us/wetlands/regulations.html) with images, describing the different wetland types. Just because the area does not have standing water and cattails does not mean it is not a wetland. We encourage you to visit the website or contact our office if you are unsure if an area is a potential wetland.



Ag BMP Loans

Ag. BMP Loans Programs is a water quality program that provides low-interest loans to rural landowners, agriculture supply businesses and farmers. This program is designed to encourage best management practices in agriculture while preventing runoff and erosion from farm fields, feed lots and other problems identified in the Douglas County water plan.

The borrower proposes a project to the local county. If the borrower meets state eligibility requirements and the project addresses local water quality priorities, the county approves the project and assists them in locating a cooperating banker. The local government manages the project (Which is the Douglas SWCD).

The local banker evaluates the financial aspects of the project, and the with the approval, the project is implemented. Once the project is complete, funds are sent from the Minnesota Department of Agriculture to the local bank and the loan is drawn up between the local bank and the borrower. Funds come from the Clean Water Fund. Contact the Douglas SWCD for more information!

Cost Share- Erosion Control

The Erosion Control and Water Management Program provides grants to SWCDs so they can help landowners offset the cost of installing conservation practices that improve water quality by reducing soil erosion, sedimentation, and pollution.

Landowners or operators can apply for up to 75% cost share for their project. Once approved by the local SWCD Board, work can begin. These funds help the local SWCD implement state-approved conservation practices. Some of the practices include: rain gardens, streambank and shoreline protection, and restoration, water and sediment control structures, and side inlets. Most practices have a life span of 10 years, which means that they must be maintained for that length of time.

If you would like more information please contact the Douglas SWCD office.

Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP)

CREP is a program that has been growing in popularity statewide due to the program incentives that were introduced during the summer of 2018. CREP targets high-priority conservation concerns, in exchange for removing environmentally sensitive land from production and establishing permanent resource conserving plant species. Farmers are paid an annual rental rate for 5-10 years. Participation is voluntary and a contracts are perpetual.

We welcome all questions and enjoy sitting down with our local landowners to discuss their expectations and programs available. Currently the CREP signup is waiting on the pending 2018 Farm Bill, but the Douglas SWCD office can still answer questions you might have about what the program offers.



Thank you

Although the Douglas SWCD does a lot of projects, community outreach, grants and offers services on its own, we could not have been as successful without our local partnerships and such a great community to be part of.

Special thanks goes out to some of the local entities: Land and Resources (LRM), Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), Farm Service Agency (FSA), Rural Development (RD), Public Works (PW), Board of Soil and Water Resources (BWSR), Pheasants Forever (PF), and the list goes on.

The Douglas SWCD will continue to serve the county. Our goals for 2019 include:

- Increase public awareness
- Promote programs
- Sell 1,500 more trees
- Apply for more grants to assist with cost share
- Increase press releases to 24 for the year
- Increase awareness and sell more seed for Native seed and Food plot mixes
- Hire part time drill movers for the summer months
- Hold 2 FREE Community Nitrate clinics
- Multi-County Outreach Programs

Financial Statements

- 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