

DOUGLAS SWCD

“67 Years in Conservation”



2021

Annual Report

Preface

Minnesota Statutes 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 2021 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, 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



2021 was a very unique year for the Douglas Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD). The year started with the building still being closed to the public, and only being able to assist landowners in the parking lot or onsite thanks to COVID-19 and the global pandemic still lingering around. Events and activities were hit and miss this year, and looked a bit different with having to social distance, cancel events, reschedule events many times, and wear masks to protect our staff and customers.

Much of the field work included tree sales, tree planting, tree matting, tube installation, no-till planting, Wetland Conservation Act work, survey and design for erosion control practices, feedlot improvement projects, and construction of erosion control practices. Buffer Law implementation also consumed a large amount of time. Staff also completed and coordinated water quality monitoring efforts and provided technical advice in the office and in the field.

Education activities were done as much as possible in person, some held virtually, and the rest put-on hold. Lots of time was spent on Zoom meetings, and getting a game plan for the up coming year with adapting to the new “norm”. Staff were not able to get into the schools much, but tried to maximize the efforts and use the beautiful weather in their favor to hold events outside as much as possible. Some of the educational activities this year included: Area II and State Envirothon, county fair booth, poster contests, Youth Outdoor Activity Day, career fairs for area high schoolers, aquatic invasive species sessions, 4-H pollinator activities, water festivals (small scale), and multi county outreach. Events that were canceled this year included: Douglas Annual Kids’ Groundwater Festival, Boy Scout Merit Badge, Kids Fleet Farm Fishing Day, Art in the Park, and Big Ole SUP-a-than.

Promotional items ordered for this district this year included a new poly-metal sign for the tree shed, Razor flags to help direct traffic for SWCD events, and brochure handouts which highlight all the programs, practices and services offered through the district. The sign was a huge improvement to the building as it helped people know where to go for tree pick up day, and the nitrate clinic, as well as delivery drivers when they were dropping off orders for the building. The Razor flags are used to draw in the traffic for events, and direct them to the right building/location. The brochures have been a huge success for vendors, contractors and the public that had not really heard of or know what the district does.

Trainings and continuing education usually allow for plenty of in-person hands on trainings throughout the year. Typically, there are trainings on wetlands, GIS programs, buffers, stormwater management, shoreline restorations, and education and outreach. This year, the majority of them were held virtually including Board of Water and Soil Resources (BWSR) Academy. It was such a breath of fresh air to have the Annual Minnesota Association of Soil and Water Conservation Districts (MASWCD) state convention in person in mid December. It was great for staff to socialize and network with some of their peers and colleagues from other parts of the state.

The conservation farmer family was the same for 2021 as it was for 2020, being that the family was not recognized at the state convention, and staff wanted to allow them the same praise and support as the previous winners. The article and their story can be read later on in this report.

The Districts tree open house was canceled this year, but staff were still available to help landowners to come up with the best possible plan and types of trees for their soil types and growing conditions. Overall,

the tree planting and matting program was again a huge success. There were more than 33,000 trees sold, of that, 21,605 trees were planted by district staff in 32 plantings; there were 240 tree orders for the 2021 year. Staff installed 828 tree shelter tubes, and installed 17,950 feet of fabric mulch. Staff were busy this past fall with the installation of erosion control practices in the County. Three agriculture waste systems were installed in 2021. Wetland restoration construction was also busy with eight wetland restorations completed. Staff were also able to complete four low income septic upgrades. There were three new entities/ farms/ families certified in the Minnesota Ag. Water Quality Certification Program (MAWQCP), one of which qualified for three of the available endorsements with the program. We co-hosted and held a few workshops with other agencies, including: “Our Farms... Our Future...”, cover crops, and soil health workshop with the local Farm Business Management (FBM) program at Alexandria Technical and Community College. There was also a series of workshops co-hosted with Land Stewardship Program that covered “owning it out right” and focused on non-operating landowners (NoLo), women in agriculture, and unconventional or historically underserved landowners/operators. District staff met with hundreds of landowners on site.

The District no-till drill program was extremely busy this year, planting over 1,905 acres of native grasses, soybeans and alfalfa on 102 sites. All of these conservation practices will benefit the soil productivity and water quality of Douglas County. A total of over \$50,000 in federal and state grant cost share funds were used to assist landowners in installing conservation practices.

Three Clean Water Grants were continued in 2021. The first one was the Upper Chippewa River Watershed Groundwater Protection Grant. This grant is a follow up on the soil boring grant that identified existing ag waste systems that are not in compliance because of lack of adequate soils to protect groundwater. In 2021 the Douglas SWCD assisted two landowners to close their Ag Waste pits and 2 landowners to upgrade their Ag Waste storage structure to be in compliance with groundwater standards. A total of \$260,200.00 in cost share was provided to the 4 landowners. The second one Lake Ida HUC 12 Projects grant. This grant provides cost share to landowners for installing Best Management Practices on their property. In 2021 one landowner completed a lakeshore restoration project to solve an existing erosion problem and one landowner completed an Ag Waste System to solve a water quality problem with feedlot runoff. A total of \$73,300.00 in cost share was provided to the 2 landowners. The third one Lake Ida Targeted Phosphorus Reduction project. This grant is a follow up on from the County Ditch 23 study which identified phosphorus loading to Lake Ida. In 2021 Douglas SWCD has been working with Barr Engineering to complete the design for re-routing part of County Ditch 23 to reduce phosphorus loading to Lake Ida.

The Ag BMP loan program was used by two landowners in 2021. One septic was upgraded and one well was replaced to provide safe drinking water to a family.

E-Link reporting was completed on 36 different state grants that the Douglas SWCD was working on in 2021.

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 CRP and other conservation programs.

The hope for next year is to be back in full swing, boots on the ground, and having staff as busy and productive as ever! The Douglas SWCD staff and supervisors would really like to thank the community for supporting our conservation efforts and ensuring what we have left of this earth is around for future generations to enjoy just like we all have. Staff and supervisors want to thank everyone for their patience and understanding as our building has been closed to the public, and the ways to work with landowner have become more unorthodox than traditional.

2021 Board of Supervisors



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

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

Front Row: (Left to Right) Paul Barsness, Ken Rutten

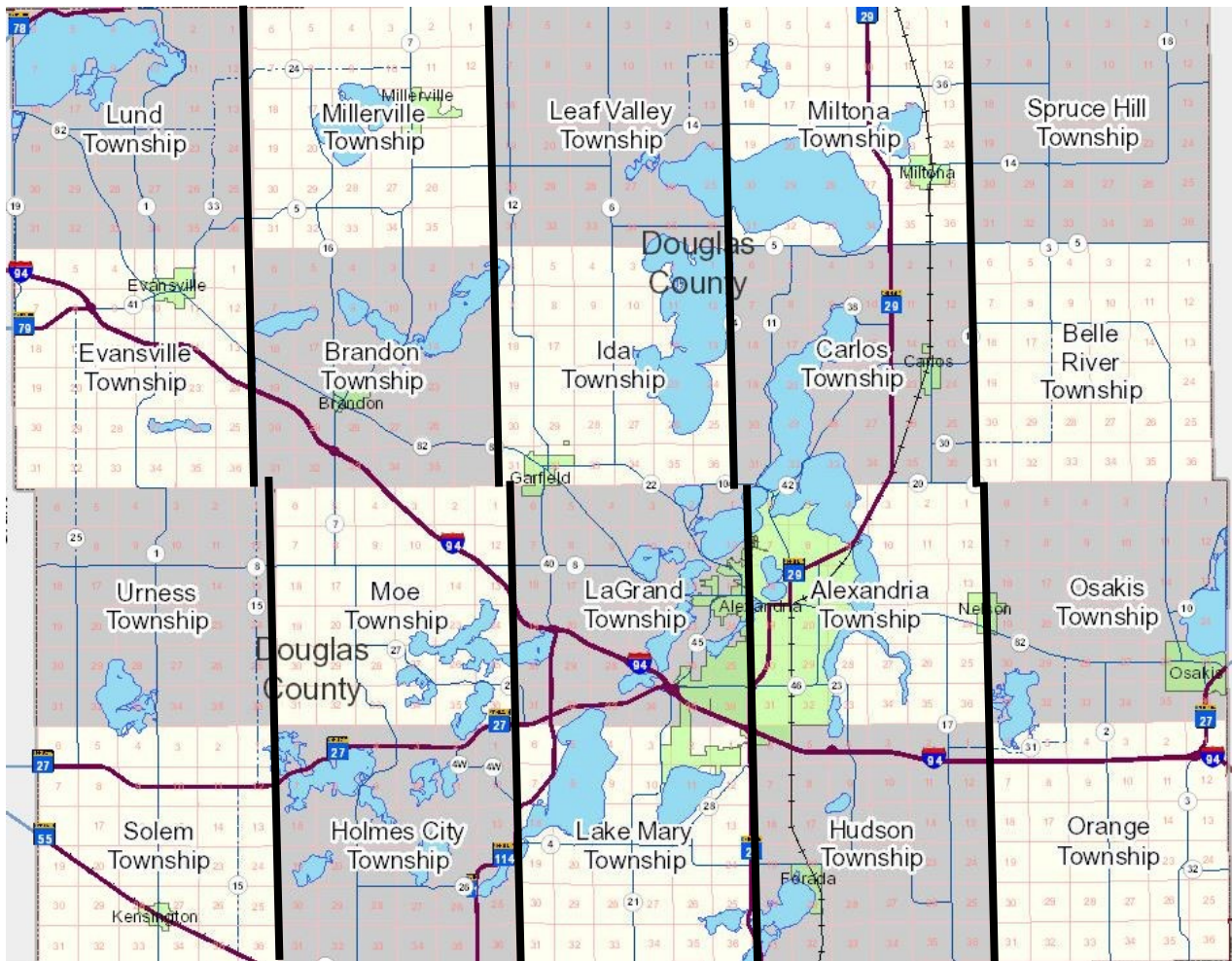
Paul Barsness
Area 1

Mike Cleary
Area 2

Rod Froeming
Area 3

Bill Dropik
Area 4

Ken Rutten
Area 5



2021 Staff



Douglas County Soil and Water Conservation District Staff includes:
Back (Left to Right) Jessica Albertsen, Starla Arceneau, Danielle Anderson and Kasey Jenc
Front (Left to Right) Jerry Haggemiller, Ian Olson and Andy Rice

2021 Tree Planting Crew



Staff with Minnesota Conservation Corps of Iowa/Minnesota for a tree planting

Dan helped this year with the tree plantings.



Preventing your Onsite Septic System From Freezing



Depending on your system, location, and water use, you may never have a freezing problem. However, there are several steps that you can take to prevent onsite systems from freezing. Pick and choose based on your situation:

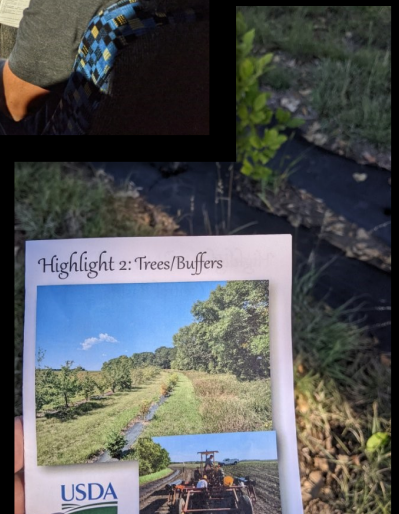
1. To provide extra insulation, place a layer of mulch (8-12 inches) over the pipes, tank and soil treatment system (ie. straw, leaves, hay or any other loose material that will not compact and stay in place). This is particularly important if you have had a new system installed late in the year and no vegetative cover has been established. If your system is currently frozen ignore this step, as it will delay thawing come spring.
2. Let the grass or lawn get a little longer in the late summer/fall over the tank and soil treatment area. This will provide extra insulation and help hold any snow that may fall.
3. Use warm/hot water if you feel the system is starting to freeze. The Onsite Sewage Treatment Program is usually an advocate of water conservation, but if freezing is a concern, increasing low use to a normal water use can help the system.(ie. doing one warm/hot load of laundry per day, using your dishwasher, or taking a hot bath. DO NOT leave water running continuously, this will hydraulically overload the system.
4. If gone for an extended period from home or a cabin with a septic system, plan accordingly. Have someone use sufficient quantities of water in the home regularly or pumping out your tank before leaving. If there is a high water table, only pump out the tank if the tank was designed for high water table conditions. If a shallow tank is left full for several winter months, the sewage can freeze.
5. Fix leaky plumbing fixtures or appliances in your home.This will help prevent freezing problems and help your system work better year round.
6. If appliances generate very low flows such as high efficiency furnaces, put a heat tape in the pipe, and while away, have someone come and run warm water for a while. Alternately, install a small condensate pump that holds and discharges 2 gallons per cycle.
7. Keep all types of vehicles and high traffic people activities off of the system.This is a good rule to follow year round.
8. All risers; inspections pipes and manholes should have covers on them. Sealing them and adding insulation is a good idea. Insulation may be added particularly if the top of the septic tank is within 2 feet or the surface.
9. Keep an eye on your system. If seeping or ponding occurs contact an onsite professional to determine the problem.
10. Add more insulation to your system. This could include replacing pipe with insulated pipe, adding styrofoam over septic tanks or adding more soil cover.

Weed Watch

The Minnesota Department of Agriculture (MDA) has updated the identified list of noxious weeds. On the top of the list is still Palmer Amaranth, Oriental Bittersweet and Common Tansy which have been confirmed in Douglas County. Please do your part by helping to control or eradicate noxious weeds to help control the spread. Contact Tom Anderson the county weed inspector with any questions or suspected weeds. Call 320-762-2999



2021 Staff hard at work



Getting Boots on the Ground, & projects done for conservation!

Shoreline Project- Before



Shoreline Project - After



Ag. Waste Pit 1 - Before



Ag. Waste Pit 1 - After



Ag. Waste Pit 2 - Before



Ag. Waste Pit 2 - After





Hand Planting Trees



Tree rows with Tree Tubes



Fabric Machine



Tree Planting

Fabric Mulch and Tree Rows



Outstanding Conservationist



The Douglas SWCD wants to recognize and nominate Lakeside Jerseys - Kevin and Steph Krohnfeldt, along with their children Kelsey and Cole as this years Outstanding Conservation Farmer. Being the Minnesota Association for Soil and Water Conservation Districts (MASWCD) was canceled in 2020, and proper recognition was not given, this family will be our conservation farmer for two years in a row.

Lakeside Jerseys farm 350 acres and milk 75 Jersey cows on the southwest side of Lake Miltona in Miltona and Leaf Valley Townships. Kevin started farming in 2009 but quit his full-time

job and started full time farming in 2015 when he took over the farm from his parents Burnell and Loretta Krohnfeldt. The Krohnfeldt's switched to 100% no-till in 2019/2020 to cut down on expenses and conserve moisture on the sandy soils they farm. They use a variable rate planter on the corn and soybeans to optimize yields, and plant a rotation of corn, soybeans, small grain and alfalfa on their farm.

A manure storage facility was installed on the farm in 2013 to control runoff from the feedlot area and eliminate daily hauling of manure from the dairy cows. Manure is tested annually as well as soil testing on the fields to ensure manure is applied for the crops need. A manure management plan is followed to apply manure at agronomic rates and to avoid spreading near sensitive areas. Manure is typically applied to the small grain acres and cover crops are then planted on these acres. Cover crops of oats, annual rye, and field peas are planted on the acres where the manure is spread,



to tie up the nutrients in the manure to ensure they will be available for the next years crops. Some years depending on the growth of the cover crops they are harvested in the spring for livestock feed. In 2020 a water and sediment control basin was installed with the assistance of State Cost Share and EQIP funding to solve an erosion problem on one of the fields they farm. Pollinator Habitat and field border has been established with the assistance of the EQIP program.



The Krohnfeldt's annually host Zion School kindergarten class and parents to visit the farm to educate students on soil conservation, dairy farming, crop farming and preservation of the land. They see this to

keep family's informed on how milk and food are produced and what farmers are doing to protect the soil and natural resources.

Kevin is always open to new ideas and willing to make changes to his farming operations which may include no-till modifications, refining cover crop mixes, and seeding rates. The Krohnfeldt's attend conservation tillage conferences, cover crop seminars, and field days always trying to gain new information to improve yields and reduce input costs.

As quoted by Kevin and Steph. "I'd like to say that people like Benet Glanzer (our Agronomist), Stu Olson (our Ag Zyme Rep), our extended Krohnfeldt family who lend a hand with the field planting and harvesting, Mark Boesl (our excavator for the terraces and buffer strips), Mark Koep (our Feedlot Rep), the folks at NRCS office, Jerry Haggemiller (our Soil and Water Conservation Coordinator), and Brian Zimmermann at Ag Country, plus the many holistic farm classes and conservation classes we go to play a huge part in our efforts to keep our footprint small on the earth!! These people deserve a ton of credit as well, for helping us with the right resources and tools to make it possible to keep our environment and waters clean and keep our soil healthy in a more natural way!!"

In December, the Krohnfeldt family was finally recognized for their conservation efforts as the Douglas SWCD Conservation Farm family of the Year(s).

On behalf of the Douglas SWCD Staff, Supervisors and NRCS Staff, Congratulations Krohnfeldt family!



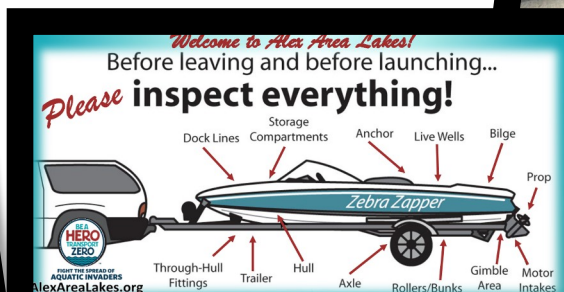
Be a hero... Transport zero!

Aquatic Invasive Species (AIS) have been part of our lakes ecosystem for many years now, but what exactly is it? Aquatic (water-dwelling) invasive species are non-native plants, animals, and other organisms that have invaded our natural ecosystems beyond their natural, historic range. Currently in Douglas County, there is Zebra Mussels, Eurasian Watermilfoil, Carp, Curly-leaf Pondweed, and Flowering Rush. Please help the county by doing your part and being a hero, by transporting zero! Clean, Drain and Dry all water related equipment after each use according to the state laws. If you suspect any new invasive species, please reach out to the office.

Over the years, various aquatic invasive species have shown up and spread throughout the Douglas County waters. This year alone there were two new zebra mussel lake infestations on Moses and Aaron. The first CD3 (A waterless way to Clean, Drain, Dry, Dispose of unwanted invasive species) Station was purchased and is ready to install on Lake Osakis. There were also three Aqua Weed Stick and Bait disposal areas purchased which will be placed at lakes around the county to help prevent the spread of aquatic invasive species.

Please report any suspicions of AIS to Minnesota Department of Natural Resources. In most cases, live specimens or samples will need to be collected as well as the exact location it was found.

For more information on AIS, water quality or lake information for Douglas County check out the website: www.AlexAreaLakes.org



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 specifically related to our water resources - wetlands, lakes, rivers, and wellhead protection areas – and establishes permanent vegetation. Farmers are paid a one-time RIM payment in addition to an annual CRP rental payment for 14-15 years. Participation is voluntary and contracts are perpetual.



We welcome all questions and enjoy sitting down with our local landowners to discuss their expectations and programs available. The Douglas SWCD office can answer questions you might have about what the program offers.

Cost Share-Erosion Control

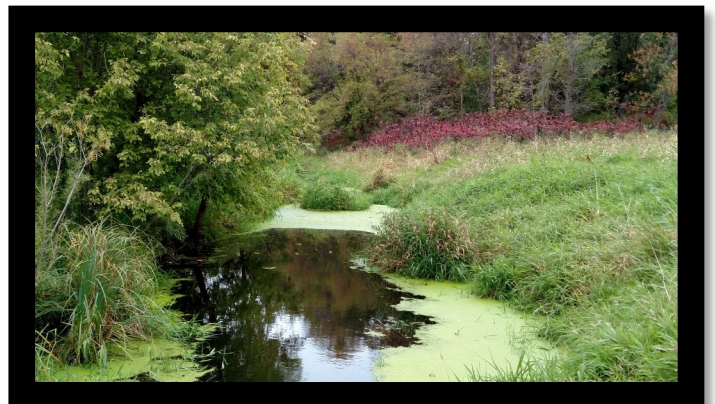
The Erosion Control and Water Management Program provides grants to SWCDs so they can help landowners offset the cost of installing conservation practices that improve water quality by reducing soil erosion, sedimentation and pollution.

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, 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.

Wetland Conservation Act (WCA)

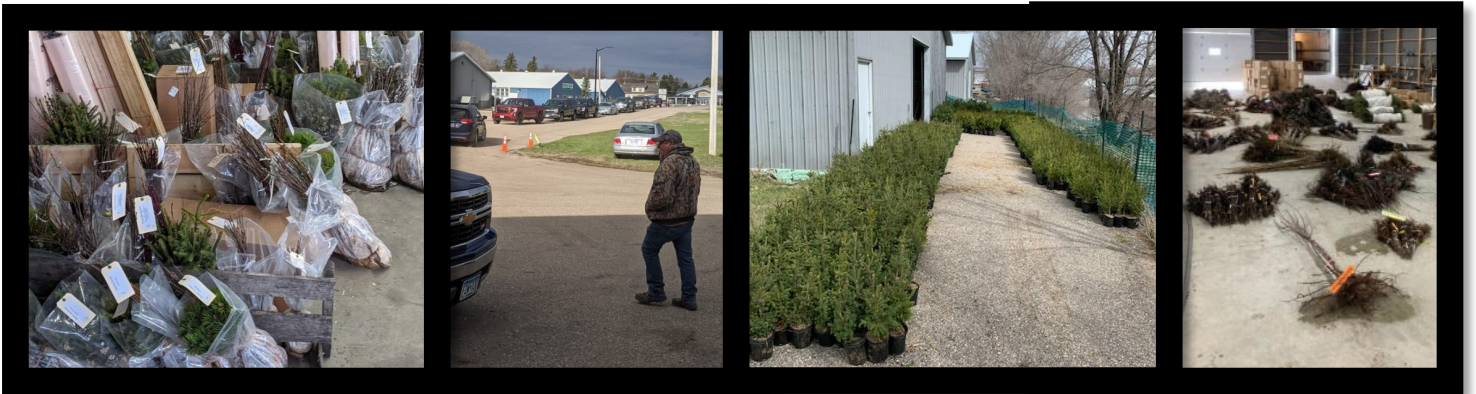
Landowners are encouraged to check with the SWCD before beginning any project that may impact a wetland(s). The State of MN has wetland laws regulating the draining, filling, or excavation within wetlands. Federal law requirements and state law requirements vary, so check both to ensure all laws are being followed.

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 land can still be considered a wetland regardless if there is standing water or cattails are not present. We encourage you to contact our office if you are unsure if an area is a potential wetland.



Tree Pickup Day

This year Douglas SWCD sold over 33,000 bareroot and potted trees. It took staff about a week to bag up and label the 240 orders. The annual tree pick up days were on April 30 from 8:30 AM - 4:30 PM and May 1 from 8 AM - 12 PM. With COVID restrictions still in place, staffed asked everyone to stay in their vehicles while staff got the names on the orders and brought them out. The overall event was a huge success! People were very excited to get their trees picked up and in the ground. By 8:30 on Friday there was a line of over 30 cars long. On Saturday, the rest of the orders were picked up, which was wonderful tree planting weather although a bit hot, still a nice day to get some trees in the ground!



Reinvest in Minnesota (RIM)

Starting in 1986 the RIM Resources Act was enacted to help restore certain marginal and environmental sensitive land to protect and reduce soil erosion and improve water quality while supporting fish and wildlife habitat. To date, across Minnesota, over \$200 million in state money has been used to establish over 6,000 RIM easements on 250,000 acres. RIM is a critical component of the state's efforts to improve water quality by reducing soil erosion, phosphorus and nitrogen loading while improving wildlife habitat and food attenuation on private lands. RIM compensates landowners for granting conservation easements and establishing native vegetation habitat on economically marginal, flood-prone, environmentally sensitive or highly erodible lands. This program helps to conserve, preserve and protect the state's soil and water resources by permanently restoring wetlands, adjacent native grassland, wildlife habitat complexes and permanent riparian buffers.

How does it work:

The MN Board of Water and Soil Resources (BWSR) acquires on behalf of the state, conservation easements to permanently protect, restore and manage critical natural resources without owning the land outright. The landowners still own the land and are responsible for paying applicable real estate taxes and assessments along with general maintenance.

Who is involved?

This program partners with private and public landowners, state, federal and local government entities, non-profit organizations and citizens of Minnesota. BWSR provides statewide program coordination, administration and implementation at the local level through the Douglas SWCD to help get projects completed.

Education & Outreach

The education and outreach activities the district staff hosts were a little differently this year. Some were canceled, some were rescheduled many times, and others were held virtually due to school restrictions, and what the executive orders in effect were. Here is a brief year in review of what events and activities we were able to have throughout the year. With the hopes that next year will return back to normal, and allow more in person events, or other events to not be canceled and rescheduled so many times.

January -

- Douglas SWCD helped sponsor Take a Kid Ice Fishing to promote family time and outdoor adventures.
- There was also a Virtual Career Fair with the area middle and high schools. Finally.
- Non-Operating Land Owners (NOLO) seminar with Land Stewardship Program (LSP).

February-

- Virtual School sessions.
- Starting Poster Contest.
- AIS Task force meeting to prep and plan for the new year.
- 4-H Pollinator Group sessions.

March/April -

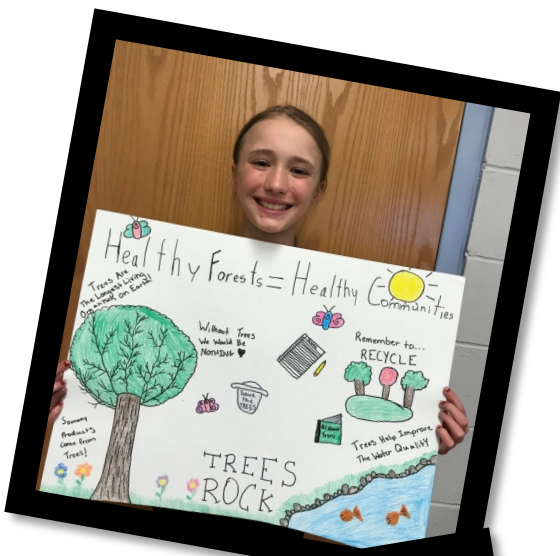
- Virtual Envirothon (March 1-31 Virtual studying, presentations, and prepping for the tests. April 1-9 was testing. Awards to follow after).
- Tree Delivery and sorting/bagging also took place.
- Ordered Event Banners/ Program signs and a building sign to promote events and activities Douglas SWCD is hosting.

May-

- Tree Plantings took place.
- Main Kids Groundwater Festival was canceled. Make shift/small school by school water festivals were held in their place.

June/July -

- Outdoor school sessions weekly.
- Kids Poster contest winners announced.



August -

- Our Farms... Our Future... Partnership with Alexandria Technical and Community College.
- Douglas County Fair.
- Youth Outdoor Activity Day
- Starry Trek.

September -

- Nitrate Clinic.
- Conservation Practices Bus Tour.
- Virtual School sessions.
- Three multi county outreach - water festivals/nature days and conservation days.

October -

- Virtual Education and Outreach meetings/Trainings.
- BWSR academy.

November -

- Virtual planning meetings for the next year.

December -

- AIS task force meeting in person.
- MASWCD State convention in person.
- Composting School Sessions - Multi County Outreach.
- Virtual school sessions/planning for the new year.



Rain Gardens



A rain garden is an outdoor space designed to collect run off that can cause erosion. Rain gardens are typically made up of native shrubs, grasses and flowering perennials that are planted in a small depression, which is generally formed on a natural slope. It is designed to temporarily hold and soak in rain water runoff that flows from rooftops, driveways, patios, lawns or other impervious structures. Rain gardens are unique, cost effective, low maintenance and a colorful way to showcase a conservation practice of filtering runoff and reducing erosion on your property. Douglas SWCD has been designing and helping landowners around the county put in rain gardens.

Environmental Quality Incentive

Program (EQIP)



An EQIP conservation investment helps improve environmental health and the economy of Minnesota's communities. EQIP can help provide financial assistance for a variety of conservation activities, such as: Pollinator Habitat, Farm Energy Improvement, No-Till, Cover Crops, Water & Sediment Control Basins, Terraces, Rotational Grazing Systems, Nutrient Management, Ag Waste systems and many more.

NRCS ranks EQIP applications to help producers improve water and air quality, build healthier soil, improve grazing and forest lands, conserve energy, enhance organic operations, and achieve other environmental benefits. For 2022 EQIP contracts awarded, that will take place after March 4, 2022.

To participate in EQIP, applicant must be an individual, entity or joint operation that meets EQIP eligibility criteria. Contact the Douglas NRCS office about questions related to EQIP.

Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP)

Through CSP, NRCS has provided financial and technical assistance to eligible producers to conserve and enhance soil, water, air and related natural resources on their land. Eligible lands include cropland, grassland, prairie land, improved pastureland, rangeland, nonindustrial private forest lands, agricultural land under the jurisdiction of an Indian tribe, and other private agricultural land (including cropped woodland, marshes, and agricultural land used for the protection of livestock) on which resource concerns related to agricultural production could be addressed. Participation in this program is completely voluntary for a 5 year period. Deadline for 2022 applications is Feb. 4th.

CSP has encouraged land stewards to improve their conservation performance by installing and adopting additional activities, and improving, maintaining, and managing existing activities on agricultural land and nonindustrial private forest land. NRCS staff will conduct an evaluation of the land offered to determine basic information about CSP eligibility requirement, stewardship threshold requirements and payment types.

For the evaluation or complete activities list, and to learn more about CSP, visit the Douglas NRCS Office today.

Chippewa Watershed Planning Initiative Grant Accomplishments

Since December of 2018 the Watershed Conservation Planner Initiative (WCPI) has been working to assist landowners and operators in the Chippewa River Watershed (parts of Douglas, Pope, Chippewa, Kandiyohi, Grant, Stevens, West Ottertail and Swift counties) to write and implement conservation plans for their operations.

Through numerous efforts of hosting webinars, soil health chats, mailers and partnering with other organizations the Watershed Conservation Planner Initiative position was able to establish some local connections meet with landowners and determine interest in developing conservation plans.

From start to finish, these plans can become time consuming, but the information presented to the landowner will hopefully implement conservation practices which will in return will help preserve the land for future generations to enjoy while protecting water quality and improving soil health. There is a nine step process that goes into writing or developing a plan:

1. Initial meeting to determine problems, address concerns and suggest opportunities to increase water quality.
2. Determine realistic goals and objectives-how to solve the problems in a timely cost effective manner.
3. Inventory resources-what are other areas impacted?
4. Analyze resource data-what are the problems and what are the usual way of correcting them?
5. Formulas alternatives-write a plan.
6. Evaluate-meet with producer to see what they like/dislike about the plan, will it fit their current operation.
7. Make Decisions-like plan move to step 8, dislike go back to 5.
8. Implementing-getting the conservation on the ground.
9. Evaluate the plan-did it meet the producers expectations? Were the goals and objectives met? Does the plan seem feasible and cost effective? Will the plan be carried through and seen till the end?

Since the beginning of 2019, 48 Plans have been written with a total of 23,639 acres being planned on with various conservation practices. The completed plans if implemented could reduce sediment erosion by an estimated 42.29 tons of sediment per year from sheet and rill erosion. (Weight wise, that is comparable to 18.4 Black Rhino's every year in sediment)

This WCPI program officially ended on December 31, 2021. The Douglas SWCD hired this person on full time to continue the good work with developing conservation practices and implementing plans. Just another way we can expand our services available and get boots on the ground for conservation!



Farm Service Agency (FSA)

2022 ARC/PLC Elections and Enrollment

Producers can elect coverage and enroll in crop-by-crop ARC-County or PLC, or ARC-Individual for the entire farm, for the 2022 crop year. Although election changes for 2022 are optional, enrollment (signed contract) is required for each year of the program. If a producer has a multi-year contract on the farm and makes an election change for 2022, it will be necessary to sign a new contract.

If an election is not submitted by the deadline of March 15, 2022, the election defaults to the current election for crops on the farm from the prior crop year.

For crop years 2022 and 2023, producers will have an opportunity to make new elections during those signups. Farm owners cannot enroll in either program unless they have a share interest in the farm.

Disaster Assistance Available for Livestock Losses

The Livestock Indemnity Program (LIP) provides assistance to you for livestock deaths in excess of normal mortality caused by adverse weather, disease and attacks by animals reintroduced into the wild by the federal government or protected by federal law.

For disease losses, FSA county committees can accept veterinarian certifications that livestock deaths were directly related to adverse weather and unpreventable through good animal husbandry and management.

For 2021-2022 livestock losses, you must file a notice within 30 calendar days of when the loss is first apparent. You then must provide the following supporting documentation to your local FSA office no later than 60 calendar days after the end of the calendar year in which the eligible loss condition occurred.

- * Proof of death documentation
- * Copy of grower's contracts
- * Proof of normal mortality documentation

USDA has established normal mortality rates for each type and weight range of eligible livestock, i.e. Adult Beef Cow = 1.5% and Non-Adult Beef Cattle (less than 250 pounds) = 3%. These established percentages reflect losses that are considered expected or typical under "normal" conditions.

In addition to filing a notice of loss, you must also submit an application no more than 60 days after the calendar year.



County Ditch 23/Lake Ida Wetland

On the Southwest side of Lake Ida, shortly before County Ditch 23 reaches the lake, it runs through a 40-acre wetland. Through intensive sampling, it was discovered that the wetland is outputting phosphorus to Lake Ida during the summer months. Excessive phosphorus can lead to unsightly algae and excessive plant growth in a lake. Once the phosphorus is in the water it is difficult to remove it, so it is best to avoid it reaching a waterbody. To

address the phosphorus leaving the wetland, Douglas SWCD obtained two grants, the first grant was to fund the sampling and a feasibility study. This study identified multiple ways to address the problem and helped guide our decision on what to do. The second grant is to complete the recommend project identified through the feasibility study.

The recommend project is to construct an open channel along the North end of the wetland to

carry low flows around the wetland. This will prevent upstream water from picking up the phosphorus the wetland is outputting and carrying it into Ida. The preliminary plans for the project have been completed. Our next step is applying for the necessary permits to complete the work. We hope to begin construction in 2022. If you have any questions, please call the Douglas SWCD office.



**CLEAN
WATER
LAND &
LEGACY
AMENDMENT**

The Clean Water and Land Legacy Logo

The Legacy Logo identifies projects funded by the Clean Water, Land, and Legacy Amendment. BWSR grants funded through the Amendment require the logo to be posted where practicable, per the grant agreement. The Clean Water Fund Grant Programs include: Accelerated Implementation, Community Partners, Multiple Drainage Management, Projects and Practices, Soil Erosion and Drainage Law Compliance Program, One Watershed One Planning Grant, Targeted Watersheds, Technical Training Acceleration, Watershed-based Implementation Funding Program and Well Sealing.

Lake Ida Project Summary

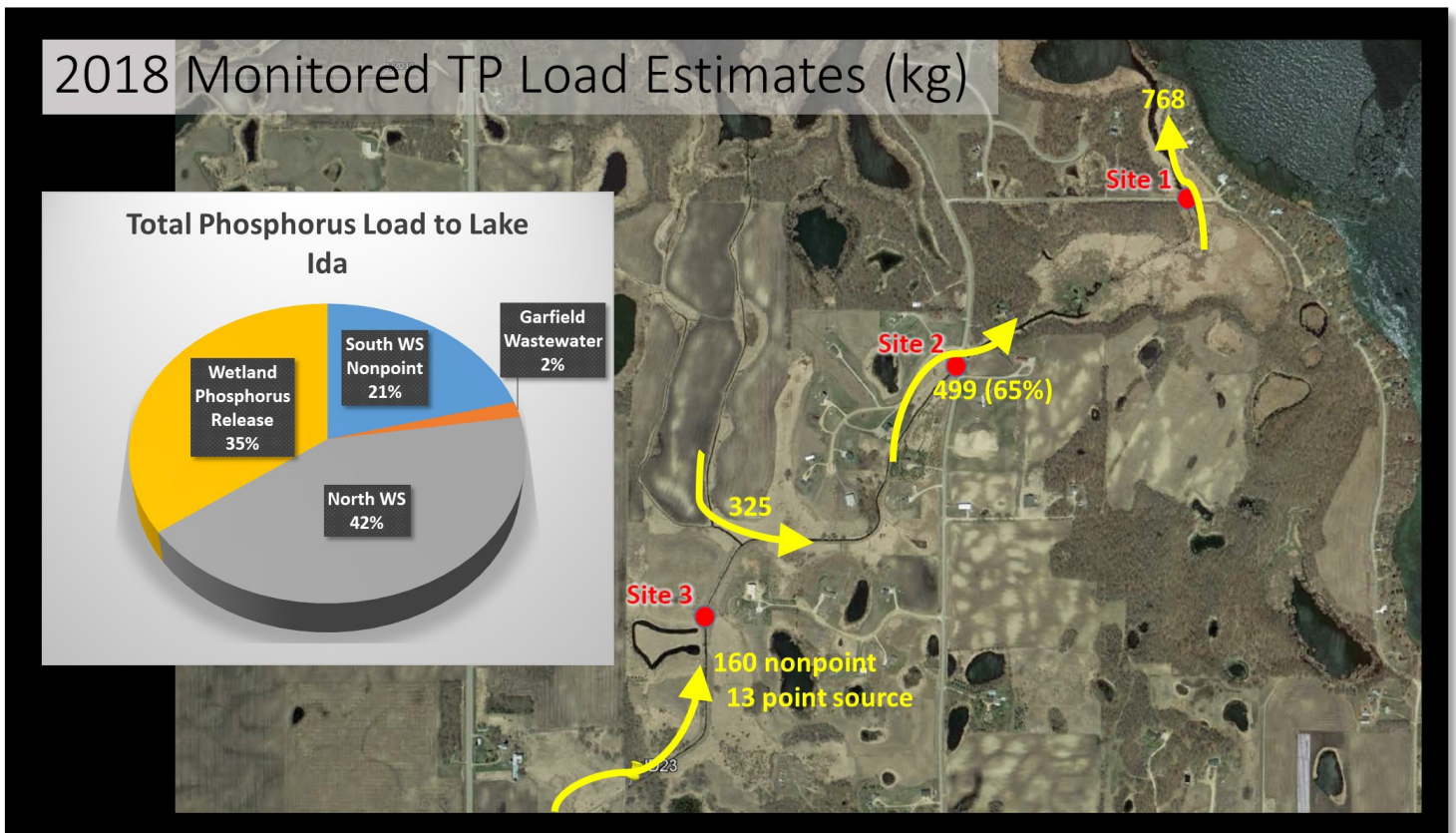
This grant is a follow up to our Lake Ida FY18-19 AIG that has been used to complete a subwatershed assessment for the Lake Ida HUC 12 to identify areas of concentrated flow and potential erosion. This assessment has been used to target areas of nonpoint pollution for practice implementation through this grant application. Implementation practices proposed will reduce sediment runoff to Lake Ida by 577.31 tons/year, phosphorus by 434.62 lbs./year, and nitrogen by 238.40 lbs./year.



Implementation activities will include: gully fixes, water and Sediment Control Basins projects, terrace project, shoreline stabilizations/ restorations, rain gardens, manure storage BMPs, and of cover crops. Technical assistance and engineering will be provided through this grant to design and implement BMPs.

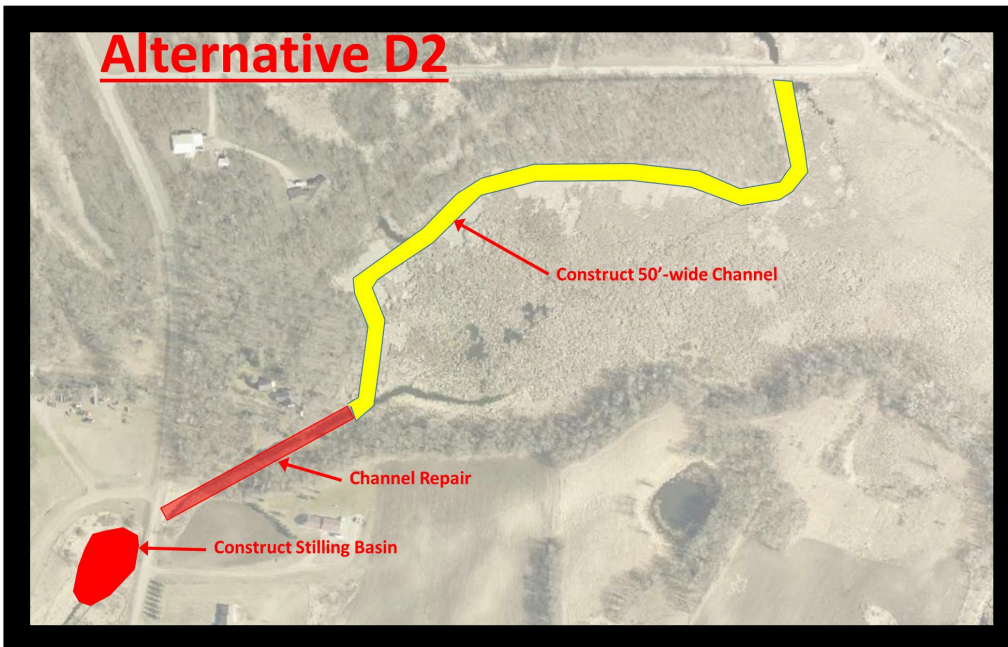
Awareness of Lake Ida and its quality will be increased through staff efforts and project implementation. Douglas SWCD has a strong social media presence that is used to share information about projects and activities completed by staff and partners. This grant will help strengthen partnerships between the SWCD, Douglas County, Ida Township, Lake Ida Association, and Douglas County Lakes Association (DCLA). Several landowners have been waiting several years for funding to complete their projects, without this funding these projects will not be completed, most of the landowners do not qualify for other funding sources such as EQIP or they don't have high match dollars.

Projects are funded on a first come, first served basis and funding is limited. People interested in completing a conservation practice should contact Douglas SWCD.



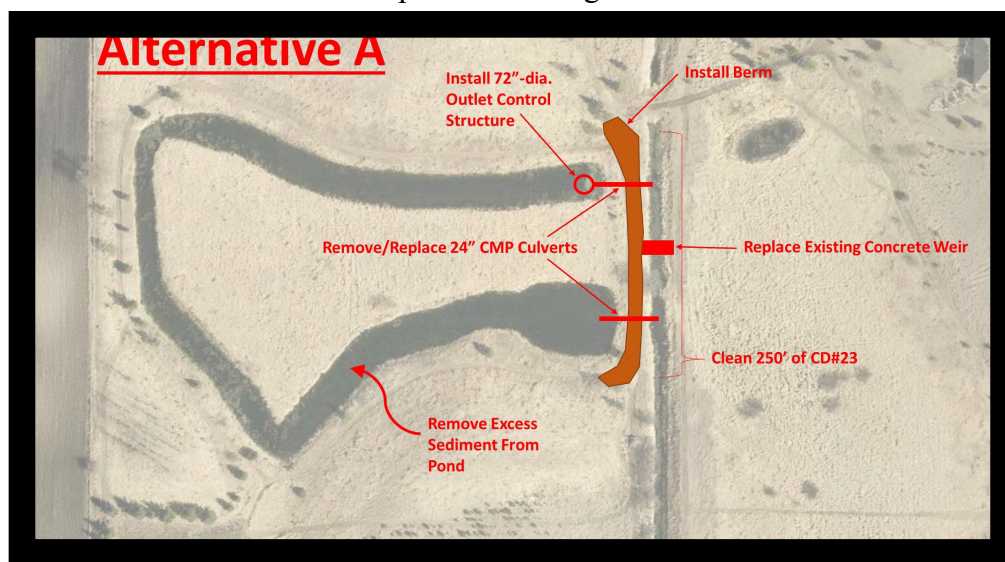
Longitudinal monitoring conducted during the 2018 growing season confirmed, similar to historical grab sampling, that the wetland sediment is releasing large amounts of phosphorus (approximately 590 pounds in 2018) that becomes entrained in the watercourse flow that is carried immediately downstream to Lake Ida, which is nearly impaired for excess phosphorus.

Several improvement options that primarily involved upstream treatment or minimizing sediment phosphorus release were evaluated as a part of the feasibility study. The most promising improvement options were compared for feasibility, cost-effectiveness and permit considerations. The following options were specifically recommended for project implementation based on their cost-benefit and good potential to minimize long-term maintenance costs.



Alternative D2 involves the construction of a new channel around the north and west edges of the wetland that is intended to minimize contact between most of the flow and the wetland sediments that are currently releasing phosphorus. This option has the added benefit of providing more assurance that the long-term channel integrity can be maintained, including maintenance access, while minimizing contact with ponded wetland water on both sides of the channel. It will also

convey all of the low flows and minimize the risk of settling that would otherwise happen with a channel cut through the middle of the wetland. It is expected that implementation of this option will reduce the phosphorus load to Lake Ida by at least 200 pounds, based on the 2018 monitoring conditions. The existing ditch channel will remain unaltered and still provide drainage.

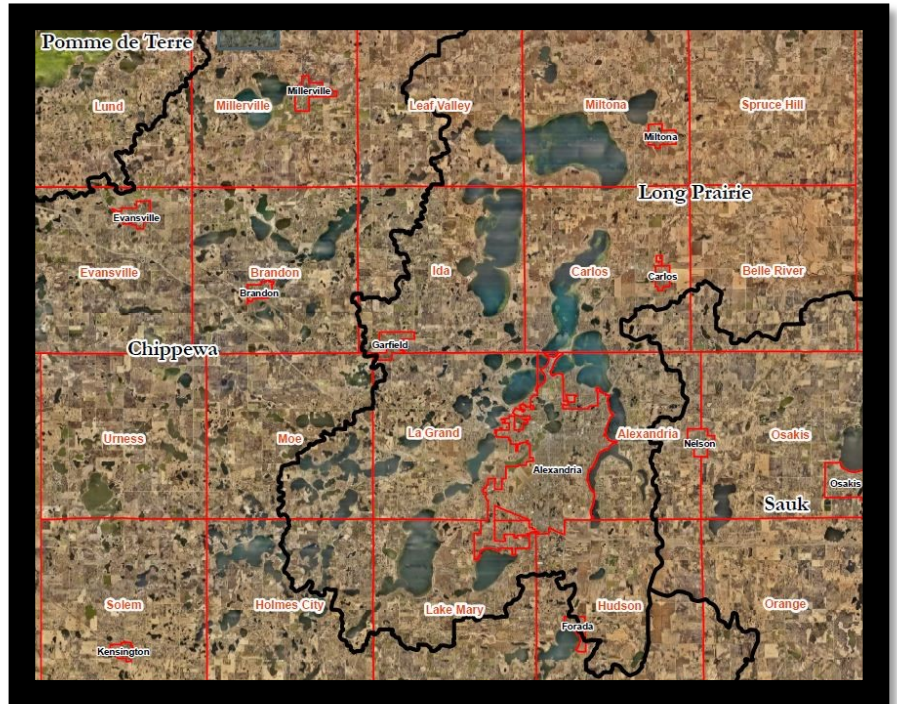


Alternative A involves the retrofit of an off-line pond a short distance upstream of the wetland. It is recommended for implementation because it restores a project that was previously implement-ed, but is not functioning due to a diversion weir that is in disrepair. This option has the added benefit of reducing peak flows in the CD#23 sys-tem. It is expected that implementation of this option

will reduce the downstream phosphorus load by 40 pounds, based on the 2018 monitoring conditions.

Douglas County One Watershed One Plan (1W1P) Updates

Water doesn't follow county boundaries and neither should the water management plan. The One Watershed, One Plan (1W1P) program offers planning resources and staff support for groups working together to develop comprehensive watershed management plans (CWMP). These plans are developed by local partners under the Board of Water and Soil Resources (BWSR). They break the traditional planning boundaries (county lines) to follow the water – from the watersheds headwaters to its outlet. This program encourages strong working relationships across county borders and has representatives from each of the counties involved within the watershed. Local SWCDs work together with the county staff and watershed districts or associations to develop a watershed-wide plan that meets all the needs and goals of the watershed.



This process takes a long time, and some of the watershed plans have been in the works for four plus years. Once the plans are approved, the 1W1P partners can start implementing the activities described within the plan. Funding from BWSR will implement these plans over the next ten years and improve water quality throughout the watersheds in many ways. Cost share funding will be available to landowners implementing various Best Management Practices (BMP)

A completed, approved plan is a source of non-competitive funding for SWCD's to implement projects in prioritized areas. Douglas County has 5 watersheds and is participating in 4 plans (we opted out of the Red Eye Watershed plan due to its small amount of acreage within Douglas). Douglas is at the top of 4 of the watersheds, meaning all the water here flows out of the county. The Pomme de Terre and Chippewa rivers flow south to the Minnesota River while the Long Prairie, Red Eye, and Sauk rivers all flow towards the Mississippi River.

Pomme de Terre Watershed – In August, the Pomme de Terre River Association's (PDTRA) CWMP was approved by BWSR. The CWMP for the Pomme de Terre lays out strategies for watershed management for the next ten years. Watershed priorities include: drinking water protection, groundwater conservation, altered hydrology, poor and high quality lakes, protection and restoration of personal cover and shallow basins, excess pollutants, loss of in-stream habitat, aquatic invasive species, watershed outreach and lakeshore owner education.

With the CWMP approved, the PDTRA and its partners can begin implementing the activities described within the plan. There will be cost-share available for landowners to implement various best management practices. The plan can be viewed online from the PDTRA website at: www.pdtriver.org/projects/one-watershed-one-plan/

Sauk Watershed – The plan was approved by the state in August, a bit more groundwork needs to be completed before project funding is available. The goal is to have project funding for prioritized areas available early 2022.

Long Prairie Watershed – In August, BWSR awarded the Long Prairie partnership with a planning grant. This grant will cover the cost of writing the Long Prairie Comprehensive Water Management Plan. It will take the group approximately two years to complete the plan and public input will be requested during the process.

Chippewa Watershed – Over the last year, the Chippewa watershed group has been busy reorganizing and strengthening its intercounty relationships. This is in preparation for an anticipated One Watershed One Plan planning grant that the group will apply for summer of 2021.

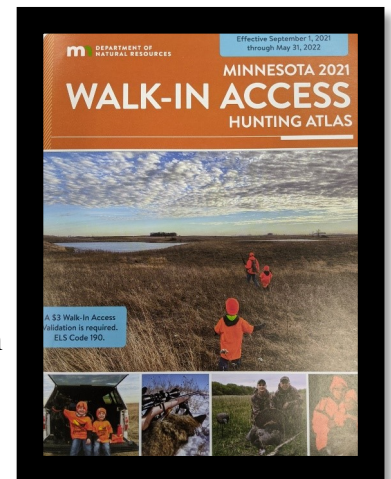
Red Eye- Due to the small amount of the Red Eye Watershed in Douglas County (roughly 65 acres) Douglas County opted out of participating in the 1W1P planning process. It has been approved by BWSR, and priority work will begin.

Walk-In Access Program (WIA)

The WIA program targets private land that is at least 40 acres and may be a non-crop area or currently enrolled in a conservation program. Most landowners choose to enroll their property for two or three years in this voluntary program. Landowners are paid \$10 per acre to allow walk-in hunting access and may add up to \$3 per acre if within ½ mile of existing state or federal hunting land, 140-acre area, and a multiyear contract is signed.

Enrolled lands are covered under the Minnesota recreational use laws that limit landowner's liability. 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.



Nitrate Clinic

Douglas SWCD once again held a FREE nitrate water testing clinic on September 2, 2021 from 9 am - 4 pm. This year due to COVID-19 and our building being closed to the public, the nitrate clinic was held out at the Douglas SWCD Tree Shed. Instead of holding two nitrate clinics during the summer, staff decided to switch it up and hold one in the late summer, and another during the late fall/winter months. There was a total of 70 samples ran for nitrates.



Conservation Reserve Program (CRP)

Landowners interested in restoring farmland to native grasses, wetlands, or trees may voluntarily enroll their land in CRP. Options vary within the program depending on the field features and your conservation goals, whether focused on water, soil, or wildlife. Continuous CRP has an ongoing signup where farmers and landowners may enroll on a rolling basis. Other options include General CRP with the next signup coming this winter followed by the signup for CRP Grasslands. Both the General and Grasslands signups are competitive and all three programs, including Continuous CRP, provide annual rental payments during a 10-15 year contract for land devoted to conservation cover.

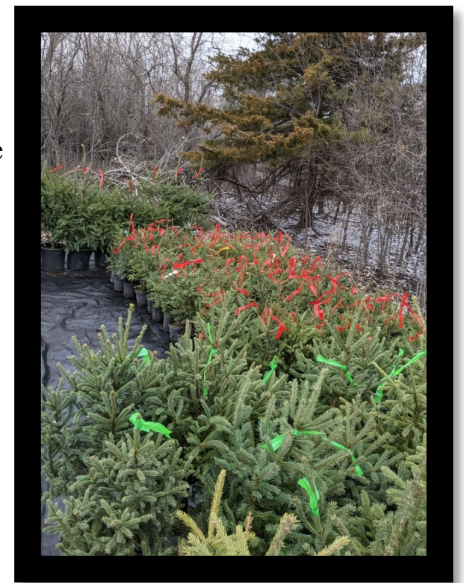


Who can enroll and what are the benefits? Farmers and ranchers who enroll in CRP receive a yearly rental payment for voluntarily establishing long term, resource-conserving plant species such as approved native grasses or trees to help control soil erosion, improve water quality, and enhance wildlife habitat on cropland. Currently, there are nearly 22.9 million acres enrolled, but with the passing of the 2018 Farm Bill there is room for further enrollment up to 25.5 million acres in FY 2022. If you are interested in enrolling or have questions, call or stop by the Douglas SWCD office and talk to Kasey Jenc, Pheasants Forever Farm Bill Biologist.

Arbor Day

Arbor Day is a celebration that is internationally recognized. Just like most dates on the calendar, it has changed over the course of time, but how and why it started is a mystery to some. Arbor day first started in Nebraska in the 19th Century as Americans were moving and settling into the Great Plains. This “new” environment was unlike anything they had encountered out East.

Around 1854 a couple by the names of J. Sterline and Caroline Morton, started planting trees and plants and preaching about the values of trees. Their opinion was contagious and within a short period of time, they were convincing their neighbors to be good stewards of the land. Pretty soon, farmers, ranchers, and landowners all over were planting trees. Trees help hold the soil in place, preventing dust storms, and retain moisture for



the soil. They also serve as shade for crops from the scorching rays of the sun, and cut down wind.

In 1872, Morton proposed a day dedicated to planting trees every year and the State Board of Agriculture approved it! April 10th was named Arbor Day for Nebraska. By 1920, 45 states had adopted Arbor Day as a State Holiday. The date was eventually changed to April 22nd (Present day Earth Day) which was Morton’s birthday. Today, all 50 states and Puerto Rico celebrate Earth Day on the last Friday of April. Arbor Day is for planting trees with the goal of conservation and forestation. Trees and leaves have motivated people for years to travel hundreds of miles, camera (phone) in tow to embark in their beauty. Let’s hope it continues that way!



Rural Development (RD)

USDA Rural Development has funding available for very low- and low-income individuals and families seeking to purchase or repair a home in a rural area.

USDA's Direct 502 Home Loan Program offers financing to qualified very-low and low-income applicants that are unable to qualify for traditional financing. No down payment is required, and the interest rate could be as low as one percent with a subsidy. Applicants must meet income and credit guidelines and demonstrate repayment ability. Generally, rural areas with a population less than 35,000 are eligible.

The USDA Section 504 Home Improvement program offers loans and grants to very-low income homeowners for various repairs and accessibility needs. The maximum loan amount is \$20,000 at a fixed one percent interest rate, with a repayment term up to 20 years. Loans may be used for a wide variety of repairs including siding, windows, doors, and other updating needs to the dwelling.

Grants up to \$7,500 are available to homeowners 62 and older and must be used to remove health and/or safety hazards. No repayment is required on the grant if the homeowner remains in their home for 3 years. Examples of grant eligible repairs include fixing a leaking roof, replacing a failing septic system or drilled well, installing a ramp or remodeling a bathroom for accessibility needs, and replacing a furnace.

Contact the Alexandria, USDA Rural Development office today to see if you qualify. For more information please contact USDA Rural Development at 320-763-3191 x 4, or check out the website at: www.rd.usda.gov/mn.

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 and types of tests available upon request. The kits are free, but each sample ran has a fee associated with it. Depending on the test, the prices can range from \$20-\$35 per sample.

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. RMB is just one of many labs that offers these services, others might vary slightly in types of tests available and price per test.

The Minnesota Department of Health (MDH) recommends getting your well water tested frequently (See the chart to the right for suggestions on how frequently to test), especially if a taste, smell, or color not normal is present.



Protect your health!

Test your well water for:



- Coliform Bacteria**
(Every year)
- Nitrate**
(Every other year)
- Arsenic**
(At least once)
- Lead**
(At least once)
- Manganese**
(Before a baby drinks the water)

Testing is even more important if young children drink the water.

Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education (SARE) Grant

Douglas SWCD applied for and received a educational grant to revamp and improve some of the educational events we host and co-host. This will allow us to provide hands on demonstrations at conservation field days, along with outreach and education opportunities to learn about sustainable agriculture practices which covers all aspects of the environment. Attendees of these events will be educated on the best management practices and concepts for soil health, water quality, erosion control, and benefits of sustainable agriculture.

To accommodate all the youth in attendance, these concepts and practices will be taught to multiple learning styles with hands on activities and visual aids. Overall, it will cover the three concepts of sustainable agriculture by highlighting economy impact, career opportunities and importance of community involvement and environmental impact. The take home message is to intensify and embrace long term stewardship of our nations land, air, water, natural resources and renewable energies.

The Project Objectives behind this grant that are:

1. Share project results in education and outreach section of annual neIncrease youth knowledge on career opportunities and best management practices related to sustainable agriculture.
2. Provide students with skills that allow them to continue learning and expand their horizons outside of the classroom setting with sustainable agriculture resources.
3. Demonstrate and encourage hands on learning opportunities related to sustainable agriculture, and all the aspects of the water cycle.
4. Increase awareness related to environmental learning and sustainable agriculture.
5. Maximize the amount of information to include a wide variety of presenters.
6. Share project results in education and outreach section of annual newsletter, public meetings, school and county websites and social media.



Sustainable Agriculture
Research and Education

Flyers, Handouts & Fact Sheets



Garden Seed Bombs!

What you need:

- Native flower seeds assorted (1 large package will work)
- 6 pieces colored construction paper
- Food processor/blender
- Scissors
- Water
- Wax paper/Sheet pan

Directions:

1. Cut the construction paper into small 1 inch squares. Place like colored squares in a small dish. Fill each dish with water just to cover the paper.
2. Let sit for 20-30 minutes.
3. Take one bowl of colored papers, wring out about 1/2 of the water.
4. Place paper in blender (one batch per color). Pulse or blend till a thick pulp.
5. Repeat till all colors are completed.
6. Remove paper pulp from blender/food processor and place back in bowl.
7. Sprinkle some seeds in each paper pulp blob.
8. Press seeds firmly in paper pulp. If Pulp is a little dry, sprinkle a few more drops of water to moisten.
9. Place on a sheet pan or wax paper to dry overnight.
10. Plant in the garden and watch the flowers grow!

Renting it Out Right Workshops 2021

FREE

and Stewardship Project is partnering with Kandiyohi, Swift and Douglas Soil and Water Conservation Districts to offer a virtual series of workshops.

We are looking for farmers or landowners (future, retired or current) who are looking to invest in soil building on rented land. All workshops will be on a ZOOM platform and open to the public. There will be a special Women Only workshop to discuss the obstacles that women face in the agricultural world.

Workshop Features:

- * Local Support
- * State and Federal Program Opportunities
- * Communication Tips
- * Minnesota Tax Credit Information
- * Virtual "toolkit" of Resources

Jan. 12 *Swift SWCD* 12:30-300 PM

Jan. 20 *Kandiyohi SWCD* 5:30-8:30 PM

Jan. 29 *Douglas SWCD (Women Only)* 1:30- 4:00 PM

All three workshops cover the same material and feature the local SWCD and offer a panel discussion. Call Robin Moore at 320.321.6244 or visit www.douglaswaterandsoil.com

How to Register

PLEASE STAY IN LINE AND IN YOUR CAR!

THANK YOU!




2021 Poster Contest & Stewardship Week

HEALTHY FORESTS
HEALTHY COMMUNITIES



DOUGLAS SOIL AND WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICT

TREE PICK UP DAY!



Douglas Soil and Water Conservation District Conservation Practices Bus Tour

What is a Conservation Practices Bus Tour?

Come join the Douglas SWCD Staff as they celebrate their 67th year in conservation on a guided bus tour around Douglas County. This tour is open to anyone and will include many stops highlighting a variety of successful conservation practices along the way!

Date: September 8, 2021
Time: Bus is leaving from the SWCD office at 9 AM and returning around 3:00 PM
Address: 900 Robert St. Suite 102, Alexandria MN, 56308

Reserve your spot today! (Space is limited)
To Reserve your spot on the bus call 320-763-3191 X3
For more information:
Website: www.DouglasSWCD.com
Find us on Facebook: [DouglasSWCD](https://www.facebook.com/DouglasSWCD)

FREE Bus Tour with lunch Provided!

Locally Implemented Conservation Practices highlighted on the tour:

- Ag. Waste
- Conservation Tree Planting
- Grazing
- Lake Shore Restoration
- No Till/Strip Till Practices
- Pollinator Plantings
- Streambank Restoration
- Terraces
- Water & Sediment Control Basins
- Wetland Restorations




Long Prairie River One Watershed One Plan Kick-off Meeting

Since when did Watershed Planning become a Family, Fun-Filled, Stay-at-Home Event?

Open to all residents who live and work in the Long Prairie River Watershed area to join us in learning about the river's historical and ecological nuances and current state of health.

Keynote Speaker and nationally renowned Comedian, Author and Charles Marshall. His keynote, *Real Heroes Don't Wear Spandex*, brings laugh out loud humor and thought provoking commentary.

MARCH 18 - 6:00 PM

PLEASE JOIN US BY ZOOM
<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/83491731433?pwd=VUNzWDJlOWVlVWFGR0xPb2NlYkxvUT09>

CALL IN OPTION:
+1 312 626 6799 (Chicago)
Meeting ID: 834 9173 1433

BOARD OF WATER AND SOIL RESOURCES



SENTURION CITY STATE INVITES YOU

Trees for Tomorrow

A tree planting activity for World Environment Day

June 5, 2019
8 AM to 3 PM
Dullroon Park

Call 323-666-7980 for details.



A MESSAGE FROM DOUGLAS SWCD

IT'S TIME TO GO GREEN!

HAPPY EARTH DAY!

MAY THE FOREST BE WITH YOU!

IT'S TIME TO GO GREEN!



DOUGLAS SOIL & WATER SWCD CONSERVATION DISTRICT

320-763-3191 ext. 3 DOUGLASSWCD.COM



Let's plant a tree today
And save the planet one seed at a time.

- Douglas SWCD



THE FLOWER DOESN'T Dream of The BEE. IT Blossoms And the Bee COMES



News Releases

Press releases were sent out!

Topics included:

- Arbor Day
- Aquatic Invasive Species
- Nitrate Clinic
- Arbor Day
- Buffers
- Conservation Practices
- Cost-Share opportunities
- Grants
- History of an SWCD
- Nitrate Clinic
- Outstanding Conservationist
- Pheasants Forever
- Rain Gardens
- Soil Health
- Tree Pick up
- History of an SWCD



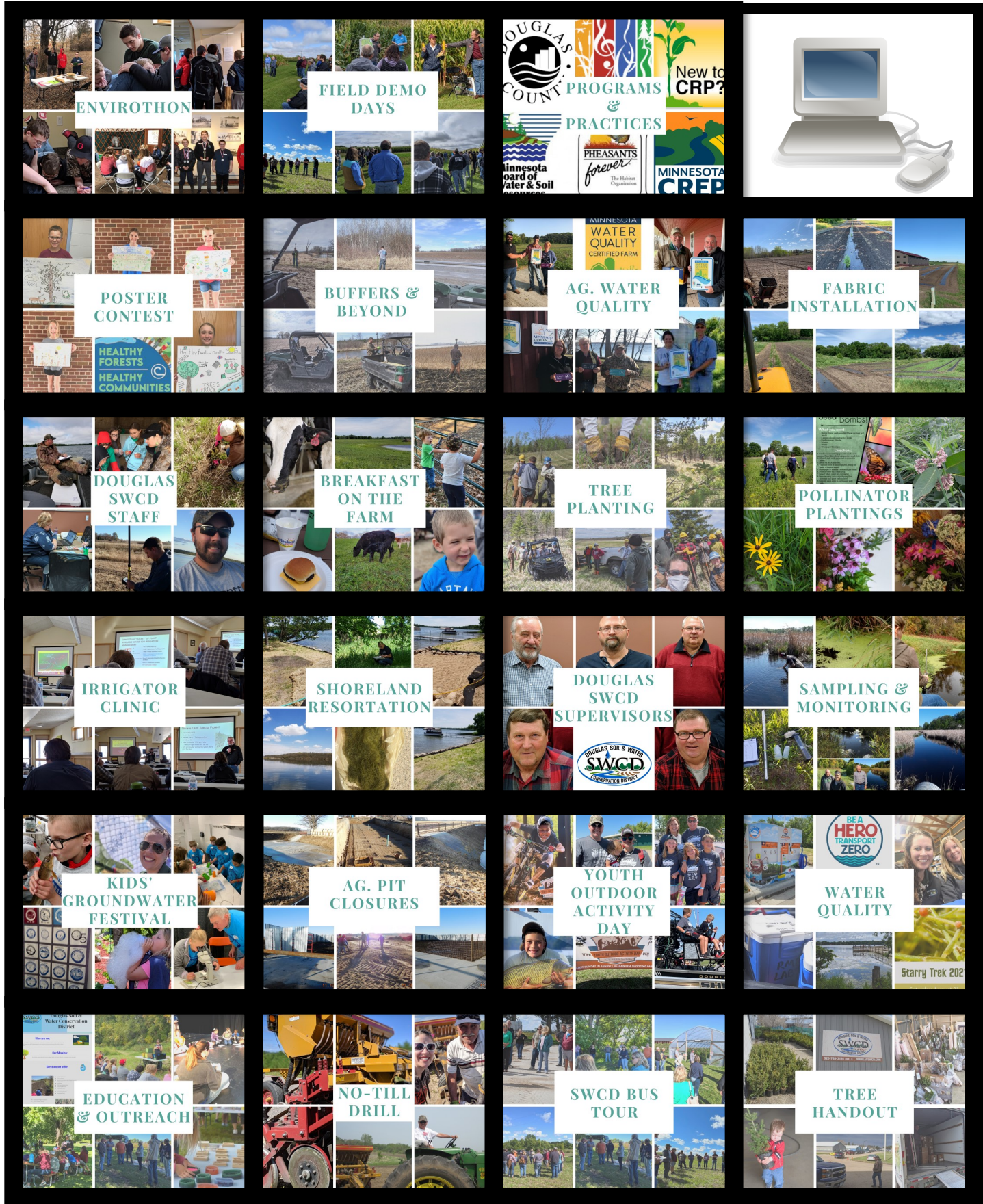
Social Media Topics

- Arbor Day
- Aquatic Invasive Species Prevention
- Buffers and Beyond
- Building Closed Updates
- Cost-Share Opportunities
- County Fair
- Earth Day
- Events
- Funny Farmers - Jokes of the week
- Grants
- Nitrate Clinic
- Non-Operating Landowner (NOLO) Webinars
- Our Farms... Our Future...
- One Watershed One Plan (1W1P) Information
- Pheasants Forever Information
- Pollinator Friendly Information
- Projects Completed
- Save the Stubble - Cover Crops
- Tree Ordering
- Tree Open House - Canceled
- Tree Pick up
- Water Safety
- Youth Outdoor Activity Day



Like us on Facebook: DouglasSWCD

Social Media Program Photos



Conservation Practices

BUS TOUR 2021

On September 8th, Douglas SWCD hosted a guided conservation bus tour around the county. There were 30 participants throughout the day who took part in the bus tour which included SWCD, NRCS, County staff, commissioners and community members. The tour was free and open to anyone willing to give up some time and learn about conservation practices. The tour included many stops highlighting a variety of successful conservation practices and county trivia questions. Some of the locally implemented conservation practices highlighted on this tour included:

- Ag. Waste
- Feedlots
- Conservation Tree Plantings
- Grazing
- Lake Shore Restoration
- Pollinator Plantings
- Terraces
- Water and Sediment Control Basins
- Cover Crops
- Minnesota Ag. Water Quality Certification
- Buffers
- Conservation Reserve Program (CRP)
- Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP)
- Reinvest in Minnesota (RIM)
- Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP)
- Wetland Restorations

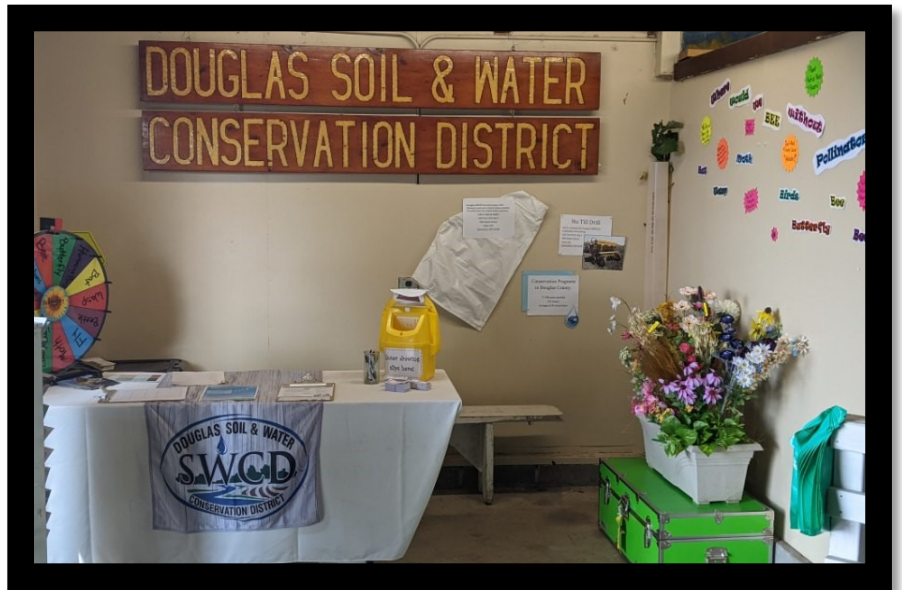
Breakfast and lunch were also provided as part of the tour. Lunch was served at Chippewa Park.

Douglas SWCD wants to thank everyone that took part in helping to make our Conservation Bus Tour a huge success! Be on the lookout for up and coming Conservation Bus Tours, we try and plan them every other year, unless there are lots of projects that have been completed we would like to showcase. If there are other suggestions or topics of interest, please reach out to the Douglas SWCD office today!



Where would we “bee” without pollinators?

The 2021 Douglas County Fair was back in person. Douglas SWCD had a pollinator friendly booth and the theme was “Where would we “bee” without pollinators. On display there were some native and invasive plants and flowers fair goers could look at to see if they could identify them. There was a daily bundle of tree give away for the adults (a whopping 289 names in the bucket) and over 450 prizes a day to give away with the spin to win prize wheel! Every person (mostly kids) that spun the wheel got asked a trivia question related to pollinators in Minnesota. If they got the question correct, they got to pick one of the many prizes! (Hot/cold ice packs, fishing/Hunting license holders, bobbers, bookmarks, notebooks, frisbees, can coozies, sunglasses, stress balls, color changing cups and more!)

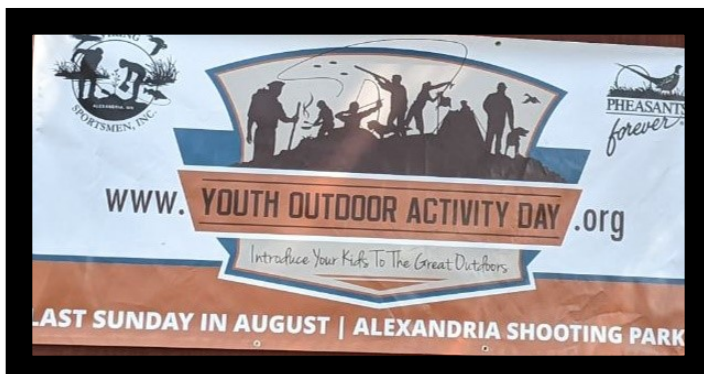


Youth Outdoor Activity Day

This is a free family-friendly event intended to provide youth a fun environment in which to learn about all concepts of outdoor recreation and create the next generation of outdoor enthusiasts. Activities include trap shooting, hunting, angling, aquatic invasive species, recreational vehicle driving (UTV and ATV), rock climbing, camping, cooking with coals, animal habitat, wildlife management and many other related skills. Over 40 hands-on activities and demonstrations were planned. This public event is made possible through a consortium of participating volunteer organizations, businesses,

individuals, and donors. Hosted and organized by the Viking Sportsmen (VS) and Douglas County Pheasants

Forever (PF), the annual event takes place at the Alexandria Shooting Park the last Sunday of August.



Earth Day

In the 1960's environmental laws were limited especially when it came to protecting our water and air. Most people were coming to terms that polluted or dirty air and water were the new norm. The Vietnam war was raging and causing many protests. Thankfully there were a few in the crowd that were protesting for the good of the environment. Among them was Gaylord Nelson who later was named the "Father of Earth Day".



In 1962 Nelson left his position as the Governor of Wisconsin and was elected into the U.S. Senate and quickly earned the title of "The Conservation Governor". Nelson was intrigued by how successful the anti war "teach-ins" were and decided to start a campaign for a "national teach-in on the environment day." Finally on April 22, 1970, the national office served to promote the grassroots activity and make it an official calendar holiday. There was an estimated 20 million people from 10,000 elementary and high schools, 2,000 colleges and over 1,000 different communities that took part, in their own way, to celebrate Earth Day! April 22 was chosen because it fell between colleges' spring breaks and final exams. Not only was the first Earth Day a huge success, it also brought a unusual demographic of people together for a common goal of saving the earth! What is even more of a shocker, this entire event was organized in a time period where there was no such thing as email, cell phones, internet or fax machines.

No-Till Drill

Douglas SWCD has purchased a second 10' Haybuster no-till drill to rent out. These drills work well for seeding native grasses, pasture mixes, hay mixes, alfalfa, soybeans, and small grain. The rental rate is \$9.00 per acre (\$100 minimum) in Douglas County, and \$11 per acre (\$150 minimum plus an additional \$150 delivery fee) out of county. The SWCD will deliver the drill, calibrate it for your seed and pick it up when you are finished. Call the Douglas SWCD to reserve one of the drills.



Food Plot, Native Grass & Forb Mixes

The Douglas SWCD has 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 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 food for wildlife throughout the winter.

Native grass and forb (flowers) seed mixes are available to landowners for conservation practices. SWCD Staff 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 with erosion control.



Roots down & boots on the ground!

This year Douglas SWCD got right to work and started planting trees as soon as possible! We had a few sites to kick off the tree season that were all hands on deck. With just about 14,000 bare root red pines and white spruce that needed to be hand planted, we were very fortunate to have the two different Conservation Corps Minnesota and Iowa (CC) crews from Duluth to assist with some of the first few days of planting.

The weather was beautiful and perfect for planting! Part of the requirement to have the CC help is to have an education component for every project they work on. Douglas SWCD staff were able to fulfill that requirement by teaching the proper way to plant a bareroot seedling tree, use a tree spade, and answer questions as they arose during the week about what programs, practices and projects we work on and accomplish in the office. The most asked question we get in the office is how to you plant and care for the trees. The best way to ensure survival is plant the seedlings roots down, pack in the soil and gently step around the tree, and keep it watered!



Stewardship Week

For 80+ years, Minnesota's Soil and Water Conservation Districts (SWCDs) have been hard at work protecting our natural resources by working with landowners on conservation related programs, implementing best management practices and providing technical support. The Douglas SWCD honors and celebrates that work as part of Soil and Water Stewardship Week, which is April 25– May 2, 2021. This year's theme is "Healthy Forests—Healthy Communities."

Trees are the biggest plant on the planet. They are vital in absorbing carbon from the atmosphere, retaining and stabilizing soil, filtering water, providing healthy habitat for wildlife and so much more!

Douglas SWCD staff are the boots on the ground in local conservation . Our staff understand local issues and challenges that come up and are willing and able to assist landowners with projects that meet their needs and help improve natural resources in Douglas County.

This annual Soil and Water Stewardship week is organized by the Douglas SWCD in partnership with the National Association of Conservation Districts (NACD) to promote preservation and natural resource conservation across the country.

Douglas SWCD takes Stewardship week as a outreach opportunity. Each year, we host a poster and mural contest, to all the local 5th and 6th grade students. This year, the classroom presentations have been virtual, to school restrictions. Top posters are displayed at the County Fair booth! For more information about Stewardship Week, or ways to get involved, contact the office today!



Buffers & Beyond

The Board of Soil and Water Resources (BSWR) is introducing a series of factsheets called “Building Better Buffers”. The factsheets are to provide information and to help provide landowners in the area option to improve and maintain existing buffers. These factsheets will include information on: “Buffers for Clean Water”, “Buffers for Wildlife”, “Forested Buffers”, “Alternative Practices”, and “Buffer Maintenance”. For more information contact the office or check out the BWSR website: <https://bwsr.state.mn.us/building-better-buffers>. Overall, the compliance for buffers on public waters in the state is estimated at 99% and the public ditches is right behind at 98%. Douglas SWCD staff is still checking around the county to ensure everyone is in compliance before enforcement takes place. For other questions related to buffers, give the office a call!



Agricultural Best Management Practices (BMP) Loan Program

The Ag. BMP Loan Program is a water quality program that provides low interest loans to rural landowners, farmers, ranchers, and agricultural supply businesses. The goal of this program is to encourage landowners to implement BMP's which can prevent and/or reduce runoff from feedlots, farm fields, and other sources identified by the county's water plan or the watershed's One Watershed One Plan (1W1P). Practices include: septic updates, conservation tillage equipment, variable rate planters, sprayers and manure spreaders.

There are three different roles of the Ag. BMP loan program: the borrower, local government, and lender.

The role of the borrower is to propose projects to the local SWCD approves applications. If the borrower is able to meet the state eligibility requirements and can successfully demonstrate how it addresses local water quality priorities, the county will approve the project and assist in locating a cooperating banker.

Local government (this is where the Douglas SWCD comes into play): the SWCD's role is to manage the projects and see them through.

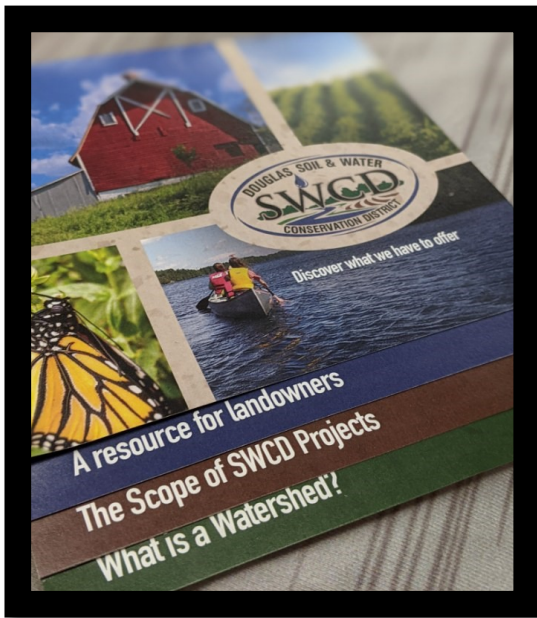
The lender is a local banker who evaluates the financial aspects of the project. With approval of the county and local bank, the project is implemented. Once completed, funds are sent from the Minnesota Department of Agriculture (MDA) to the local bank and the loan is drawn up between the bank and the borrower. For more information please call the office or visit mda.state.mn.us/agbmploan.



Did you know...



The astronauts on Apollo 14 carried tree seeds into space with them. Once back on Earth, the seeds sprouted and grew. The young trees were given away to various state forestry services from 1975-1976, as part of the nation's bicentennial celebration. These trees are referred to as "Moon trees". One of which can be found on the University of Minnesota, Crookston Campus!



Programs, Practices & Services offered

Douglas SWCD has put together this handy guide to communicate with landowners what we are all about! Information included inside is a great resource for landowners which briefly covers the history of the Douglas SWCD. It also provides a scope of SWCD programs, practices, services, and technical support for landowners throughout Douglas County. Lastly, it highlights what a watershed is and provides information on where each one is in the county. If interested in one of these brochures, or have questions on programs, services and practices please call the office!

Our Farms... Our Future...

On August 4, Douglas SWCD partnered with Alexandria Technical and Community College - Farm Business Management (FBM) to co-host a free workshop to local farmers, operators, and landowners. Our Farms... Our Future... Managing and Maintaining the Farm with Best Management Practices was the theme of the workshop. Discussion and presentation topics covered: Cost-share, federal programs, state programs, and other conservation practices that could be implemented on land with technical assistance.



Minnesota Agricultural Water Quality Certification Program



The Minnesota Agricultural Water Quality Certification Program (MAWQCP) 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.

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, 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 potential 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. Since then over 1,141 farms certified on over 800,000 acres now certified statewide.

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.

In 2021 Douglas SWCD certified 3 farmers: Ben Wagner, Christian Nelson, and David and Polly Christianson with Le'toile du Nord Vineyard LLC.

Ben operates a 300-acre certified organic farm which includes a 35- head organic dairy herd that has been certified organic since the mid-1990's. He is in the process of selling his herd to a young, local beginning farmer whom he is working closely with to mentor and help establish a successful dairy operation. Ben uses a 7-year rotation on all cropland acres. The pasture is set up as a rotational paddock design developed in cooperation with NRCS.



The rotational grazing plan works to promote pasture health and feed values. Manure is the primary source of nutrients applied for crops. No insecticides are used on the farm to control pests. Wetland areas are buffered with grass borders. He plans on continuing his practice of evaluating different practices that improve weed control, animal, and soil health.

Christian and his five siblings recently decided to take over operation of the family farm. Over the past several years, Christian noticed a general degrading of the soils due to excessive erosion from row crops on the hilly terrain. His concern led him, and his brother Lars, to decide to take over operation of the farm to control the erosion, improve the soil condition and restore the productivity and health of the land. To achieve this goal, they decided to convert the cropland to pasture and build a cow/calf herd to utilize the new pasture resource. The initial step led Christian to the local NRCS/SWCD office in 2020 to develop a plan for installing pipeline and watering facilities that would support a rotational grazing system using multiple paddocks. Cost share funding through the EQIP program helped with installation of the water system, fencing and the seeding. Christian and his brother also have interests in protecting and maintaining land for wildlife. Several wetlands will be maintained and animal access limited. A wooded area on the farm will be excluded from grazing to maintain the woodland habitat. The Nelson farm will be quite the showcase for how to manage a challenging landscape that both protects and enhances the land but also benefits the landowner.



David and Polly Christianson owners of Le'toile du Nord Vineyard LLC were awarded three MAWQCP Endorsements which provide additional recognition to certified producers who are going above and beyond. David and Polly Implemented the Integrated Pest Management (IPM) Endorsement which recognizes an intentional, proactive, and multi-faceted approach to pest management. The other two are Soil Health Endorsement recognizing the five core principles of soil health, and finally Climate Smart Farm Endorsement which recognizes practices that reduce greenhouse gas emissions and sequester carbon.

More information on these certifications is located on the Douglas SWCD website. If Interested in becoming certified in the program, or for more general information, please reach out to the Douglas SWCD today!



Thank you

Although the Douglas SWCD does a lot of projects, community outreach, grants and offers services on its own, we could not be 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 2021 include:

- Increase public awareness
- Promote programs
- Sell 25,000 trees
- Apply for more grants to assist with cost share
- Increase press releases 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 1-2 FREE Community Nitrate clinics
- Multi-County Outreach Programs
- Get back to normal—in person meetings and trainings
- Work with the county to start and establish a demonstration plot

