

Douglas SWCD

“68 Years in
Conservation”



2022
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, 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



2022 was a getting back in the swing of it kind of year for the Douglas Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD). Events and activities were hit and miss this year, most went off without a problem being that the community was ready to get back to normal.

Once sprint sprung, staff was anxious to get back outside and boots on the ground. 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. Water sampling , educational events and 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, while some still had to be held virtually. Lots of time was spent planning and organizing events for them to possibly not even happen. 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, water festivals, and multi county outreach. Events that were canceled this year included: Kids Fleet Farm Fishing Day, Art in the Park, and Big Ole SUP-a-thon.

Promotional items ordered for this district this year was used to handout at events and activities to promote both the district and aquatic invasive species prevention included bobbers, key chains, pens, fly swatters, dish scrubbers and travel silverware.

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 but some including Board of Water and Soil Resources (BWSR) Academy in October, and Annual Minnesota Association of Soil and Water Conservation Districts (MASWCD) state convention were back 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 for 2022 was chosen with high recommendations, although they were not able to attend the annual convention to be recognized for their achievements, the article written about them was sent out in the winter newsletter and can also be found later on in this report or on our SWCD website.

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 29,000 trees sold, of that, 11,262 trees were planted by district staff in 28 plantings; there were over 250 tree orders for the 2022 year. Staff installed 240 tree shelter tubes, and installed 29,285 feet of fabric mulch. Staff were busy this past fall with the installation of erosion control practices in the County. One agriculture waste system was installed in 2022. Staff were also able to complete two low income septic upgrades and 1 conservation Tillage implement. There was one new entity/ farm/family certified in the Minnesota Ag. Water Quality Certification Program (MAWQCP), We co-hosted and held a few workshops with other agencies, including:

irrigation clinic, cover crops, rain gardens, and soil health and watershed bus tours.

District staff met with hundreds of landowners on site for various wetland questions, flagging and delineations during the year.

The District no-till drill program was extremely busy this year, planting over 1,712.6 acres of native grasses, soybeans and alfalfa on 82 sites. 40 of the acres planted with the no-till drill were just cover crops, and another two acres were planted to Kernza ® for a project through the local high school. 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 2022. 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 2022 the Douglas SWCD assisted one landowner to close their Ag Waste pit. This grant provides \$306,000.00 in cost share was provided to the 11 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 2022 two landowners completed a lakeshore restoration project to solve an existing erosion problem and two landowners completed a Gully Fixes to solve water quality problem with Soil Erosion. A total of \$24,3682.00 in cost share was provided to the five landowners for cover crop practices. 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 2022 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.

319 Grants were a big help to get boots on the ground and projects done. The Douglas SWCD was awarded a 319 Lake Carlos Grant. With the help of this grant we were able to complete three Lakeshore restoration projects, three gully fixes, and one cover crop planting. The total cost share provided through the grant was \$107,857.00

Staff were putting their native planting skills to the test and getting shovels dirty with the help and restoration of 7 shoreland and improvement projects throughout the county. One alone was over 1,000 plants!

The Ag BMP loan program was used by three landowners in 2022. Two were variations of septic upgrades and replacements and other for Conservation Tillage Equipment.

E-Link reporting was completed on four different state grants that the Douglas SWCD was working on in 2022.

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.

2022 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

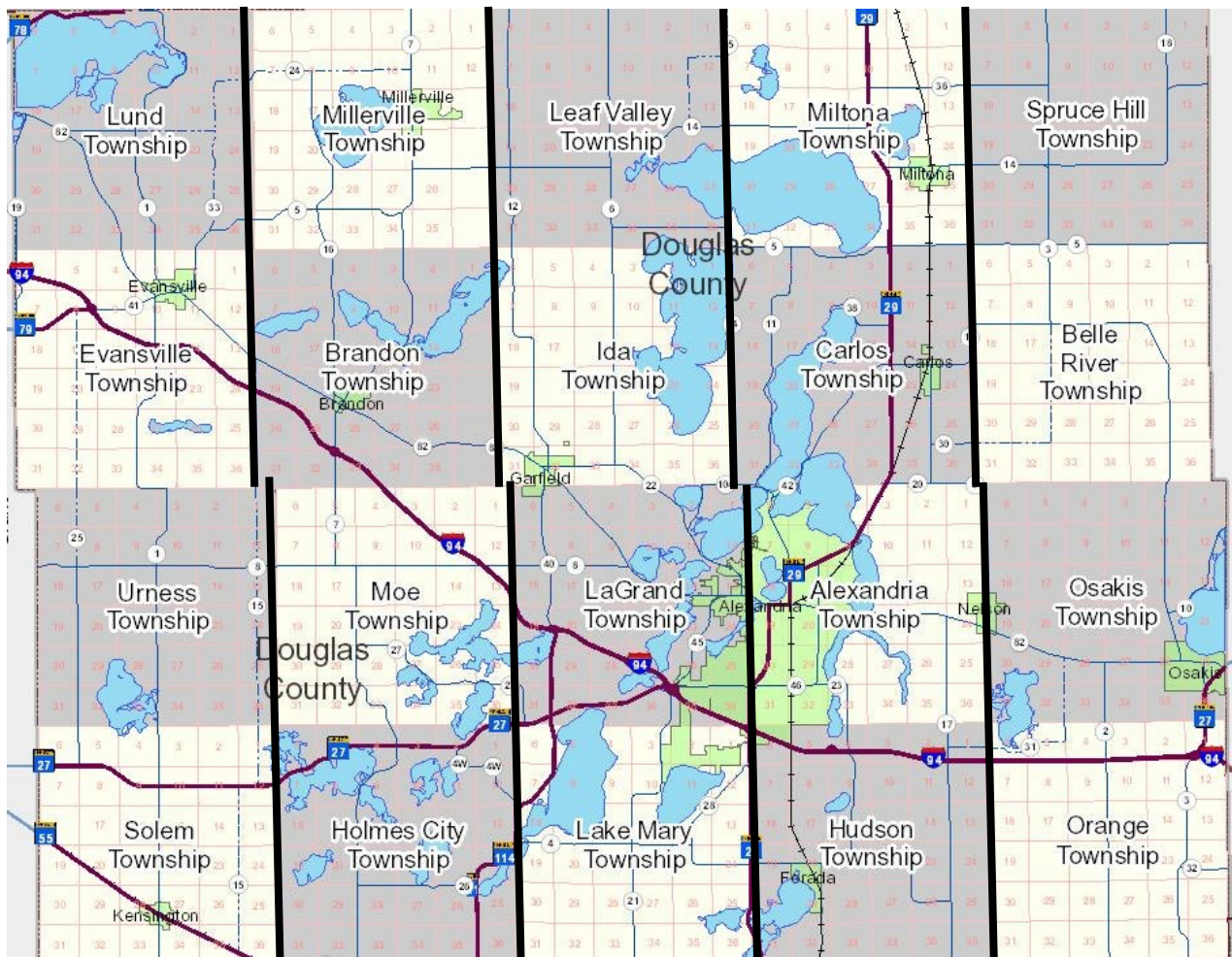
Paul Barsness
Area 1

Mike Cleary
Area 2

Rod Froeming
Area 3

Bill Dropik
Area 4

Ken Rutten
Area 5



2022 staff



Jerry Haggemiller
District Coordinator



Danielle Anderson
Water Planner/Land Use
Technician



Andy Rice
District Technician



Ian Olson
Planner Technician



Jessica Albertsen
Education and Outreach
Coordinator



Kasey Jenc
Pheasants Forever
Wildlife Biologist



Starla Arceneau
District Secretary

Partnerships



NRCS Staff

(L-R): Cindy Wojtkiewicz, Kevin Behrens, Mark Dybdal, Rich Giving, Cory Walker, and Olivia Mickelson

New Staff



Hi, my name is Kevin Behrens and I am a Soil Conservationist at the Alexandria, MN USDA Service Center. I grew up in west central Minnesota near Dumont on a grain farm. I have a B.S. in Environmental Sciences, Policy and Management from the University of Minnesota and am completing a M.S. in Natural Resources, Science and Management from the University of Minnesota where I studied forest hydrology and watershed management with an emphasis on biogeochemistry. My graduate research examined the response of mercury in wetlands and the atmosphere from changing climates at the Spruce and Peatland Responses Under Changing Environments (SPRUCE) experiment near Grand Rapids, MN. I am also a veteran of the United States Air Force where I served as an Aircraft Electrician in Minot, ND. My education and military experiences have created a strong sense of community and public service especially in rural communities. I am passionate about utilizing emerging technologies and using science to address resource natural concerns to prepare communities for a changing climate.

Hello, my name is Olivia Mickelson. I am a new soil conservationist in the Douglas County office for NRCS. I have been here since the Middle of June. I am originally from the Frazee/Detroit Lakes area. I grew up on a 4th generation turkey farm where I grew a passion for agriculture. Following that passion, I went to The University of Minnesota Crookston where I graduated with an Agronomy degree and a minor in Ag Business. I am grateful for all the experience that I have had at UMC. In my free time I enjoy hunting, fishing, and just enjoying the great outdoors! I have two horses that I love to take trail riding. In the picture above is, Zelda, my German Shorthair Pointer who loves hunting just as much as I do! Thank you for welcoming me into the Douglas County area and I can't wait to meet you all!



Outstanding Conservationist

The Douglas SWCD is proud to announce the Langdon Collom family as this year's Conservation Farmer Family for Douglas County. The Collom's operate a beef and cash crop operation a few miles out of Rose City. The Collom family has converted from a beef feedlot to a grass raised beef operation. Currently they have 60 angus cross cow pairs and 25 feeder cows.

They have 80 acres of cropland that is all farmed no till or reduced till. Cover crops are planted after the main crops are harvested, this allows the cattle to graze the fields in the winter. When needed, the cattle are also moved around for grazing on the 200 acres of pasture.

The Colloms have been huge advocates for conservation programs, and through the Environmental Quality Incentive Program (EQIP), they have put in over two miles of waterlines, with eight watering facilities, three geothermal, and five tire tank waterers. They also installed two plus miles of fencing on pasture ground for a rotational grazing system. The need for commercial fertilizer has been reduced because of the increase in winter grazing on the cropland and pastures. The Colloms also use portable windbreaks which provide wind protection to livestock from cold winter winds and are moved around fields in winter to help distribute manure throughout the fields and pastures.

Langdon has a metal shop on the farm where he creates and develops his own tools to help increase his efficiency at the farm. He has built a three point waterline plow that can install shallow bury pipeline. He has helped other farmers in the area by lending out his equipment to help them install their shallow water lines as well.

The Collom family continues to convert new farms (rented and owned) into permanent pasture which in return improves water quality and soil health of the land. They have plans in the future to continue with more conservation practices. On behalf of the Douglas SWCD we want to congratulate the Collom family!



Kernza® Planting



On August 23, the Douglas SWCD staff hooked up their no-till drill and helped perform a Kernza® planting at the Alexandria Area High School. Kernza® is a robust perennial grain developed from intermediate wheatgrass that is up and coming. It is enriching fields around the world and pleasing palates (some say it gives food a nutty flavor). Why is this



crop so sought after? The root structure is one of a kind; the average length for this grain is 10 feet, but can in the right growing conditions reach up to 30 feet deep! It will produce a crop for many years, and can be grazed in between without harming the grain.

Over-all, the test plot was just about an acre, and was planted with the Douglas SWCD no-till drill at 17 lbs. of seed per acre. If interested in the progress of how this project is turning out, head over to the high school and look for the signs! Kernza® is regulated, requiring permits to attain and grow this grain. Can't wait to see how it grows and turns out, and where this grain can go in the future! This event was put on through the help of the Alexandria Area High School Agriculture Education Department, University of Minnesota and Extension Services.

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, Wild Parsnip, Canada Thistle, 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. 320-762-2999

2022 Staff hard at work



Gully Stabilization Project



This is a project that has been in the works for years. Surveyed back in 2016, this site has gully erosion which is eroding soil along drainage channels by surface water runoff which causes sediment along with nutrients to be deposited into Lake Ida. With the heavy rains that we have seen in recent years, some of the channel banks had begun to sluff in as well. Initially, it was discussed to reshape the channel and try to establish native vegetation to reduce the erosion and keep the site more natural, but due to the amount of water that flows through this

channel and the tree canopy creating almost full shade in this area that was not a great option. It was decided that rock lined channel with turf reinforcement mats (TRM) in some areas would be the best option to stabilize this site. The channel is almost 600 feet long and took 360 cubic yards of rock where work was completed.

In addition to the work in the channel, a concrete structure was placed at the entrance of the main culvert that feeds into this channel to meter down the water during heavy rain events. This will slow down the flow of water, which will reduce the risk of erosion within the channel. It took 5 different landowners to get on board for this project to get completed. A Clean Water Fund Grant, 319 Grant along with Douglas County Water Quality Legacy Funds were used to help cost-share the expenses for this project. Just look at that transformation! Call the office today if you have a project.



Surface Water Assessment Grant (SWAG)

Douglas SWCD received a surface water assessment grant (SWAG) through the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency (MPCA) which is a two year program for sampling and assessing water quality in the county. This year we had a total of twelve sample spots. Three streams and nine lakes in the Long Prairie River Watershed. The purpose of SWAG is to collect data on surface water quality to identify lakes and streams that are in need of restoration or protection strategies.

Who you Gunna call?

With lots of calls coming in lately, we wanted to make sure you are calling the right place to help with your questions:

Aquatic Invasive Species (AIS) - Department of Natural Resources/County

Farm land lease rates - Extension

Federal programs - Natural Resources Conservation Service

Home repair grants - Rural Development

Hydrology - Department of Natural Resources

Low interest septic loans - Soil and Water Conservation District

Shoreland restorations - Soil and Water Conservation District

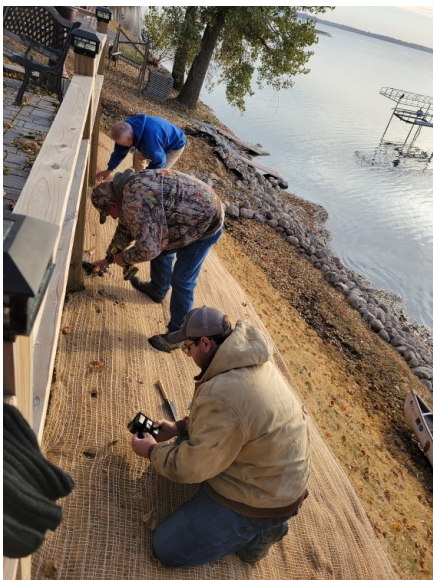
Trees - Soil and Water Conservation District

Water testing kits - Soil and Water Conservation District

Wildlife (animals) - Department of Natural Resources



Shoreland Projects



Over the years many different landowners have reached out to the office requesting cost-share or technical assistance with a shoreland restoration project. This particular project was cost-shared through a federal 319 grant and completed this fall by landowners and district staff, which included a lot of partnering with various other agencies, and the county for permitting. This project consisted of 109 feet of riprap, stabilization blankets, and 1,008 native plants that were plugs to be installed. Projects like this are done when the shore starts to erode and landowners are concerned enough to do something to prevent it from happening further. Not only does it help stabilize the shore, it provides some new color and vegetation to the area which prevents this from happening again, while making the area look pretty and colorful! If you have a project on your shore that could use some assistance, or have questions on if you could possibly get some cost-share to help with the project, please reach out to the office today to get an appointment set up!

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 organisms that have invaded our natural ecosystems beyond their natural historic range. Currently in Douglas County, there are Zebra Mussels, Eurasian Watermilfoil, Carp, Curly-leaf Pondweed, and Flowering Rush.

Over the years, various AIS have shown up and spread throughout the Douglas County waters. The first CD3 (waterless way to Clean, Drain, Dry, Dispose of unwanted invasive species) Station was purchased and installed 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 AIS.

Please report any suspicions of AIS to Minnesota Department of Natural Resources. In most cases, live specimens/samples 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.

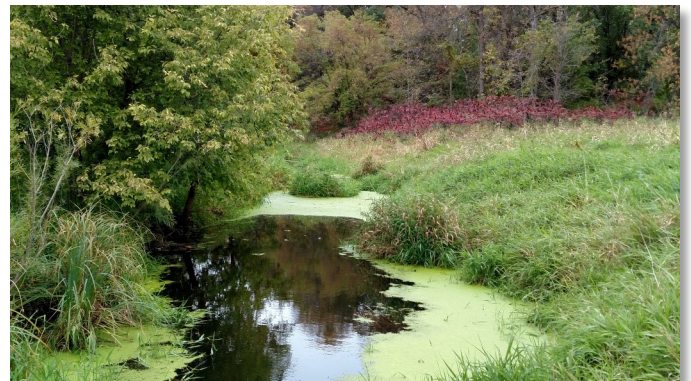
The Douglas SWCD office can answer questions you might have about what the program offers.



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 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 present or not. We encourage you to contact our office if you are unsure if an area is a potential wetland.



Conservation Trees, Planting & Fabric

2022 marked the 60th year Douglas SWCD sold trees. The tree open house was canceled but staff were available to take tree orders and answer questions. Douglas SWCD sold out of all the trees that were pre ordered! We had a beautiful start to spring with weather being very accommodating to getting all the trees planted in a timely fashion.

We are now taking orders for trees for spring 2023 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.

Not only do we provide trees for your selection, we also provide services from planning to planting, fabric mulch installation and tree tube installation. Fabric mulch improves 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. Our staff will gladly work with you and we can provide design assistance for farmstead shelterbelt, field windbreak, living snow fence and wildlife habitat plantings. If you are looking at completing a tree planting, you might be eligible for cost-share to help pay for the planting. There are federal and state programs that provide funding to help pay for the costs associated with a tree planting.

2023 Tree Order Form
Douglas Soil & Water Conservation District
500 Robert Street, Suite 102
Alexandria, MN 56308
320-763-3191 Ext 1 www.douglaswcd.com

Date: _____ Name: _____ City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____
Mailing Address: _____ Phone: _____
Payment for trees must accompany order. Trees will be reserved for you upon payment only. Make check payable to Douglas SWCD.
No guarantee can be made for initial survival.

Number of Burdles	Species of Trees	Growth Rate	Mature Height	Cost
Small Shrubs (Sold in bundles of 25 trees @ \$47.50)				
	Arrowwood	Moderate	6-10'	
	Baldcherry	Moderate	6-14'	
	Black Chokeberry	Rapid	6-10'	
	American Cranberrybush	Moderate	3-6'	
	Gray Dogwood	Moderate	8-12'	
	Redosier Dogwood	Moderate	7-10'	
	Chokeberry	Moderate	6-10'	
	Common Lac	Mod-Rapid	8-12'	
Large Shrubs (Small Trees) (Sold in bundles of 25 trees @ \$47.50)				
	Mountain Ash	Fast	20-30'	
	Chokecherry	Most Rapid	12-25'	
	Red Spindler Crabapple	Rapid	12-25'	
	Amur Maackia	Moderate	10-25'	
	Laurel Leaf Willow	Mod-Rapid	10-20'	
	Black Birch	Rapid	25-40'	
	Black Cherry	Moderate	50-70'	
	Red Maple	Rapid	50-70'	
	Silver Maple	Mod-Rapid	50-60'	
	Sugar Maple	Rapid	50-70'	
	Box Elder	Moderate	50-60'	
	Red Oak	Slow	50-75'	
	Shoveler Poplar - Cottonwood	Moderate	40-70'	
	Black Walnut	Rapid	60-80'	
	Cottonwood	Moderate	50-100'	
	Northern White Cedar	Moderate	34-55'	
	Red Pine	Moderate	20-40'	
	White Pine	Rapid	75-100'	
	Black Hills Spruce	Rapid	75-100'	
	Norway Spruce	Moderate-Rapid	30-60'	
	Spaced Conifers - 1 gallon (\$12 each)		45-100'	
	Northern White Cedar	Moderate	20-40'	
	Red Pine	Moderate	75-100'	
	White Pine	Rapid	75-100'	
	Black Hills Spruce	Rapid	75-100'	
	Norway Spruce	Moderate-Rapid	30-60'	
	Spaced Conifers - 1 gallon (\$12 each)		45-100'	

*** Tree Tubes Strongly Recommended *** Tree Tubes Recommended

Planting Charges:
\$0.75 One Tractor for Planting
\$2.00 Hand Planting/Bare Root
\$1500 Min. Planting Charge in County
\$1500 Min. Planting Charge + \$150 Transport Charge - Out of County

Tube/Stake Charges:
4" tubes @ \$3.00 each
6" tubes @ \$3.00 each

Tube/Stake Installation:
\$2.00 per tube/stake (\$150 Min)

Fabric/Plastic Mulch:
Fabric: \$1.00 per sq. ft.
Plastic: \$0.40 per sq. ft.
Fabric squares @ \$2.00 each

Fabric Installation:
\$0.50 per foot (\$150 Min)
\$2.00 per fabric square (\$150 Min)

Turf Staples:
Turf Staples @ \$0.08 each

Tree Cost
Tube Cost
Stake Cost
Fabric Cost
Staple Cost
Subtotal
7.380% Sales Tax
Planting Charges
Tube Installation
Fabric Installation
Grand Total

Please contact Douglas SWCD before ordering if interested in having us plant trees, install fabric or install tubes.

Tree Pickup Day

In celebration of Arbor day, Douglas SWCD had their annual tree handout on April 29 and 30 at the tree shed. The weather was unpredictable for this time of year, which allowed for a rainy, chilly and windy pick up. There was just under 30,000 bareroot and potted trees that the district sold this year in a total of 299 orders! Staff were busy for almost a week getting them all bagged and tagged for pickup!



Kids' Groundwater Festival

Douglas County is the home of the first and original Kids' Groundwater Festival, and on May 4th, Douglas SWCD held their 29th annual Kids' Groundwater Festival.

The theme this year was "Know The Map To Your Tap". Overall, the day was a huge success and it was great to be back in person. There was a total of 630 people which included presenters, volunteers, teachers and students. They were from 25 classes from 13 schools and 1 home school group.

The students had the opportunity to participate in many stations throughout the day ranging from: 3M Water Wizards, Aquatic Invasive Species (AIS), Bubbleology, Enviroscape, Flush the Kids, Furs and Feet, Glaciers, Groundwater Flow, Incredible Journey, Invertebrates and Water Quality, Streams, The House That Jack Built, Water Distribution, Water Drilling, Water Jeopardy, Water Pictionary, Water Treatment, What Water Would You Drink, Well Drilling and Wetlands.

The success of this event would not be possible without the generosity of our volunteers, sponsors, and donors. Thank you very much!



Education & Outreach

The education and outreach activities the district staff hosts were getting back to normal this year. Some were canceled, some were rescheduled many times, and others were held virtually due to schedule conflicts and weather. Here is a brief year in review of what events and activities we were able to have throughout the year.

January -

- Douglas SWCD helped sponsor Take a Kid Ice Fishing to promote family time and outdoor adventures.
- Started on Kids' Groundwater Festival schools and presentation list

February -

- Virtual School sessions.
- Starting Poster Contest.
- AIS Task force meeting to prep and plan for the new year.
 - Ordered AIS promotional items for the year to hand out at events

March -

- Co-hosted Irrigation Clinic
- Career Fair/Expo at the area high school
- Co-hosted Annual feedlot conference

April -

- Area 2 Envirothon
- Tree Delivery and sorting/bagging also took place.
- Tree Pick up Days
- Ordered Event Banners/ Program signs and a building sign to promote events and activities Douglas SWCD is hosting.
- Lake association presentations

May -

- Tree Plantings took place.
- 29th Kids' Groundwater Festival
- State Envirothon



June-

- Summer School Sessions weekly
- Rain Garden Presentation

July -

- Summer school sessions weekly.
- Kids Poster contest winners announced.
- Co-hosted Chippewa Bus Tour

August -

- Douglas County Fair.
- Youth Outdoor Activity Day
- Starry Trek.
- School Sessions
- Kernza® Planting at the area high school

September -

- Nitrate Clinic.
- Virtual School sessions.
- Two multi county outreach - water festivals/nature days and conservation days.

October -

- One multi county outreach water festival
- 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.
- Presented at the MASWCD state convention
- Composting School Sessions - Multi County Outreach.
- Virtual school sessions/planning for the new year.



Environmental Quality Incentive Program (EQIP)

The EQIP program provides technical and financial assistance to producers for conservation practices for their operation in the community. The program delivers economic and environmental benefits for a variety of conservation activities including high tunnel systems, no-till, cover crops, water & sediment control basins, forest management plans, grazing plans, nutrient management, ag. waste systems, and more.

Through the EQIP program, the NRCS helps producers improve air and water quality, build soil health, improve forest lands, conserve energy, and more to achieve climate smart agriculture for their operation. Selected 2023 EQIP applicant contracts for funding will be approved March 17th, 2023.

To participate in EQIP, applicant must be a farmer, rancher, and forest landowner who own or rent eligible lands. For more information, visit nrcs.usda.gov/farmbill.



Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP)

The NRCS offers technical and financial assistance to eligible producers through the CSP program to go beyond traditional agriculture practices for ag. and forest lands. The program offers opportunities for producers to expand their operations through several climate smart practices by applying natural resource conservation enhancement activities. Participation in this program is completely voluntary and is a 5-year commitment to integrating conservation into their operations beyond traditional practices.

CSP encourages land stewards to improve their conservation performance by installing and adopting additional activities, improving, maintaining, and managing existing conservation activities on their agricultural and forested lands. NRCS staff will conduct an evaluation of the land offered to determine eligibility requirements for the program and provide technical assistance to improve operations. The program compensates producers for adopting and maintaining a baseline level of conservation. The deadline for 2023 CSP applications is in early 2023.

For a complete conservation activities list, and to learn more about CSP, visit the office today or visit nrcs.usda.gov/farmbill.

Farm Service Agency (FSA)

USDA announces details for the upcoming Census of Agriculture

America's farmers and ranchers will soon have the opportunity to be represented in the nation's only comprehensive and impartial agriculture data for every state, county and territory. The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) will mail the 2022 Census of Agriculture to millions of agriculture producers across the 50 states and Puerto Rico this fall in phases; starting with an invitation to respond online in November followed by paper questionnaires in December. Farm operations of all sizes, urban and rural, which produced and sold, or normally would have sold, \$1,000 or more of agricultural product in 2022 are included in the ag census.

Collected in service to American agriculture since 1840 and now conducted every five years by USDA's National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS), the Census of Agriculture tells the story and shows the value of U.S. agriculture. It highlights land use and ownership, producer characteristics, production practices, income and expenditures, among other topics. Between ag census years, NASS considers revisions to the questionnaire to document changes and emerging trends in the industry. Changes to the 2022 questionnaire include new questions about the use of precision agriculture, hemp production, hair sheep, and updates to internet access questions.

To learn more about the Census of Agriculture, visit nass.usda.gov/AgCensus or call 800-727-9540. On the website, producers and other data users can access frequently asked questions, past ag census data, [partner tools](#) to help spread the word about the upcoming ag census, special study information, and more. For highlights of these and the latest information on the upcoming Census of Agriculture, follow USDA NASS on twitter [@usda_nass](#).



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.

Chippewa River Watershed Kick-off Meeting

The Chippewa River Watershed partners have worked together for many years, going as far back as 1998. A group called the Chippewa River Watershed Project (CRWP) has worked since that time to improve water quality in the watershed. This group completed watershed monitoring and worked to secure funding to do Best Management Practices (BMPs) and conduct education and outreach across the watershed. This group recently reorganized and is now called the Chippewa River Watershed Association (CRWA).

About three years ago the partnership worked to reorganize its Joint Powers Agreement. The partnership previously only included the Counties and the group worked to revise the agreement to include Soil and Water Conservation Districts (SWCDs). This group also began efforts to prepare for an application to the Board of Water and Soil Resources (BWSR) for the “One Watershed One Plan” program. The CRWA was successful in attaining a planning grant from BWSR.

This program allows counties to transition from county-based water plans to watershed-based planning. The planning area for the Chippewa River One Watershed One Plan includes portions of Otter Tail, Grant, Douglas, Stevens, Pope, Swift, Chippewa, and Kandiyohi counties. County and SWCD Boards in each of these counties have entered into a Joint Powers Agreement for the purpose of developing a watershed plan and to restore and protect the water and soil resources in the Chippewa River Watershed planning area. Pope Soil and Water Conservation District staff are acting on behalf of the partnership to coordinate this effort and to manage the fiscal duties.

The group held a public kick off and annual meeting on Tuesday, April 5th at 5:30 p.m. at the Minnewaska House in Glenwood, Minnesota. This meeting was an opportunity for citizens that reside in the watershed to provide feedback and learn more about monitoring, funding opportunities, and status of work of the Chippewa River Watershed Association and partners. The event was well attended with 100 participants at the event.

This planning effort will take approximately two years to complete and at its conclusion will provide state funding for conservation projects that are considered a priority for improving and protecting our resources as identified and agreed upon by the CRWA members.



Dig down deep with rain gardens

Douglas SWCD staff partnered with the Legacy of the Lakes Museum to do a water talk on rain gardens. Although it was during the summer months and attendance was not the best, the information presented was still very useful and helpful to those that showed up. There is some cost share available for parts of the county if interested. Please call the office today to ask questions and see if this type of a project is a good fit for your area!



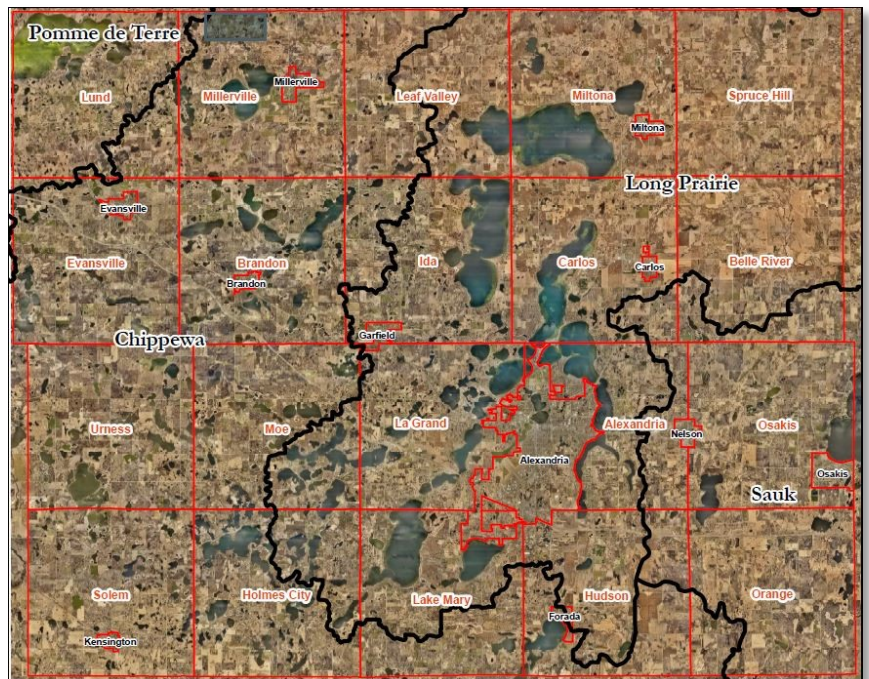
Chippewa watershed bus tour

The Chippewa River Watershed covers parts of Ottertail, Douglas, Stevens, Pope, Stearns, Swift, Chippewa and Kandiyohi counties. Staff from the Chippewa River Watershed Planning Committee put together and hosted a bus tour on July 15 for Supervisors, Staff and other agency staff involved with the One Watershed One Plan. The bus tour departed from the pope county fair grounds and featured a few projects and unique facts about the watershed. Some of the projects highlighted along the tour were a ravine restoration project in Pope County, streambank protection project in Douglas County, an a landfill groundwater protection project in Grant County, and a wetland restoration and rain garden in Swift County. Each and every project that was on the tour stop had a great story and a lot of dedicated staff time and money that went into preserving our natural resources.



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.

The 1W1P program offers planning resources and staff support for groups working together to develop comprehensive watershed management plans. These plans break the traditional planning boundaries (county lines) to follow the water – from the watershed headwaters to its outlet. A completed, approved plan is a source of non-competitive funding for SWCD's to implement projects in prioritized areas. Douglas has five watersheds and is participating in four plans (Douglas SWCD opted out of the Red Eye due the small acreage

within Douglas). Douglas is at the headwaters of four of the watersheds, (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 – Plan has been completed for a few years now and has money available for shoreline, erosion, and manure management projects. If you live in the watershed (NW corner of Douglas County, near Lake Christina) and have a project in mind give us a call and we may be able to help get it done.

Sauk Watershed – Plan started implementing projects this fall. To date, one field erosion project in Douglas County have been completed. This watershed covers Smith and Osakis Lakes and the city of Nelson.

Long Prairie Watershed – Plan was approved by the State in October and will start implementing projects spring of 2023. In Douglas County, this watershed includes all the area between the Otter Tail County line and Pocket Lake, and from Garfield to the Todd County line.

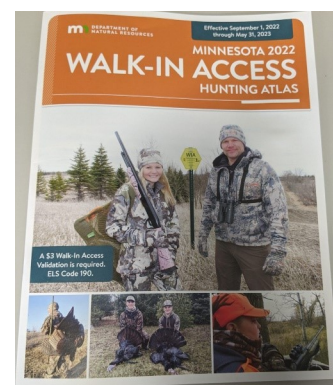
Chippewa Watershed – Planning team is working on establishing goals and identifying priority areas to incorporate into their plan. This watershed starts in Otter Tail County and flows south, picking up water from Douglas, Grant, Stevens, Pope, Swift, Kandiyohi, and Chippewa Counties before reaching the Minnesota River in Montevideo. It is anticipated that the plan will be completed in 2023.

Walk-In Access Program (WIA)

Landowners may enroll private land in the Walk In Access program, allowing hunters with a WIA validation to access the land from Sept. 1 to May 31. Land must be at least 40 acres or contiguous with a WMA/WPA or another WIA, with priority to land enrolled in a conservation program. Most landowners choose to enroll their property for two or three years in this voluntary program and are paid a flat rate of \$18 per acre to allow walk-in hunting access.

Enrolled lands are covered under the Minnesota recreational use laws that limit landowner's liability. WIA land is for hunting only. Landowners agree to maintain the wildlife habitat through the hunting season; any management activities that may impact quality of habitat must be reported to the local SWCD or DNR WIA coordinator in advance. No motorized vehicles are allowed, and parking is along roads or in designated parking areas. No target practice, 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, want a walk in access book, or if you are interested in enrolling your conservation land in the program, please stop by or call Kasey at the Douglas SWCD office.



Conservation Reserve Program (CRP)

There are multiple program options for your farmland if you're looking to transition portions or all your land to native grasses, trees, wetlands, or pollinator-friendly habitat, both short-term and permanent. CRP is a non-permanent option, offering 10 to 15 year contracts for landowners who establish approved vegetative cover to help control soil erosion, improve water quality, and enhance wildlife habitat. Options vary within the program depending on the field features and your conservation goals – we will work together to find the best fit.



Landowners and farmers who enroll in CRP receive a yearly rental payment to establish and maintain those native grasses, trees, or other approved cover as well as cost-share assistance for establishment. Currently, there are close to 22 million acres enrolled nationally with room for further enrollment. Almost 66,000 acres of CRP will be expiring in Minnesota in 2023 with the potential for re-enrollment on most. If you are interested and would like to talk about possible options, call or stop by the Douglas SWCD office and talk to Kasey Jenc, Pheasants Forever Farm Bill Biologist.

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 \$40,000 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 \$10,000 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:



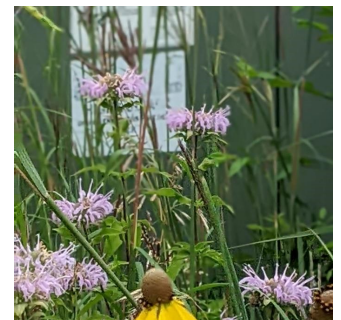
- ☒ **Coliform Bacteria**
(Every year)
- ☒ **Nitrate**
(Every other year)
- ☒ **Arsenic**
(At least once)
- ☒ **Lead**
(At least once)
- ☒ **Manganese**
(Before a baby drinks the water)

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



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.



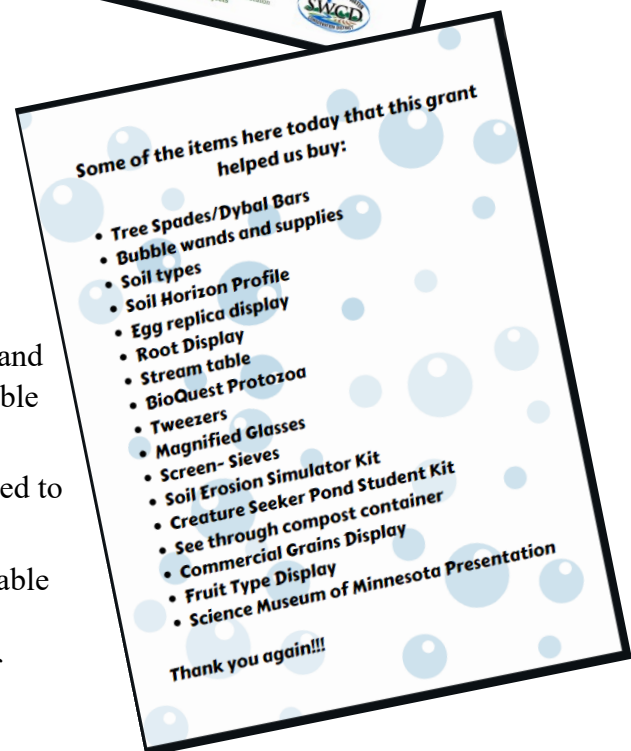
Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education (SARE) Grant

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

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 22– May 1, 2022. This year's theme is "Healthy Soil—Healthy Life." The focus was on healthy soil, nutrients, microbes and how it can not only benefit our foods but our over all health.

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!

The 2022 kids poster contest was once again a huge success! There was over 75 posters submitted by the 5th and 6th grade students within the county. The SWCD staff have a presentation that gives the students some background information with hands on activities to get them excited about the theme/topic for the poster contest. This years theme was "Healthy Soil, Healthy Life". All students have to either make their own poster, or work with up to two more students and create a mural that is judged by district supervisors and staff at our board meeting then sent on to the area meeting. All the top posters from Douglas County were selected from St. Mary's school!

Nitrate Clinic

Douglas SWCD once again held a FREE nitrate water testing clinic on Sept 2, 2022 from 9 am - 4 pm. This year with our building still closed to the public, the nitrate clinic was held out at the Douglas SWCD Tree Shed. Staff had brochures and information to take home that highlighted other tests that can be ran to ensure safe well water consumption. A total of 70 samples ran for nitrates during the clinic.



Flyers, Handouts & Fact Sheets

OWL PELLET EXPLORATION!

What is an owl Pellet?
Owl pellets are the parts of the critters an owl eats but can't digest (Bones, fur etc.) Not every pellet will always have full animals, sometimes there is a rib of a vole, or a leg bone of a mouse. Grab a owl pellet and compare the bones to see what kind of a critter your owl has eaten!



TREE COOKIES!

A tree cookie is a cross cut section of a tree. Each "ring" or line in a circle motion is another year old the tree is. The closer the rings are the more the tree was in "survival mode" and the further apart they are they were in "thriving mode". Starting at the "pith" (center most dot/spot of the cookie, can you count the rings and see how old the tree was?

Now it is your turn!

Grab a paper plate, put a dot in the middle and add a ring for every year old you are! If that year was full of adventures (good or bad) make the lines farther apart).

WHAT COMES FROM TREES?



Trees produce a lot more of our every day essentials than we give them credit for.

Read through the list and snap a photo of it.

Are there more things you can come up with that can be added?

You're invited to learn about: RAIN GARDENS

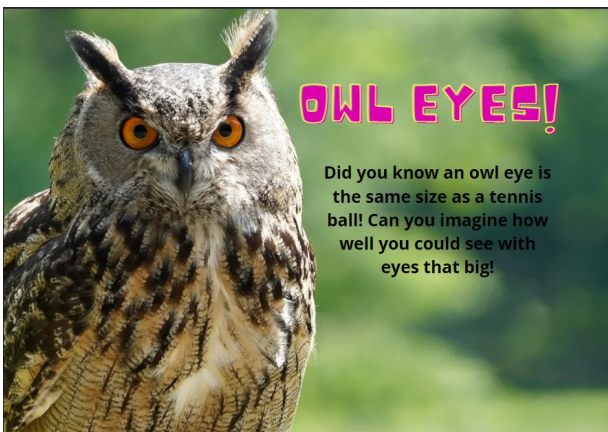
Location
Legacy of the Lakes
Museum

Date and Time:
JULY, 25 @ 1 PM



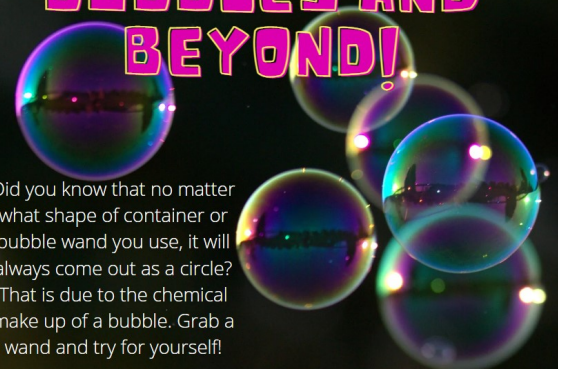
OWL EYES!

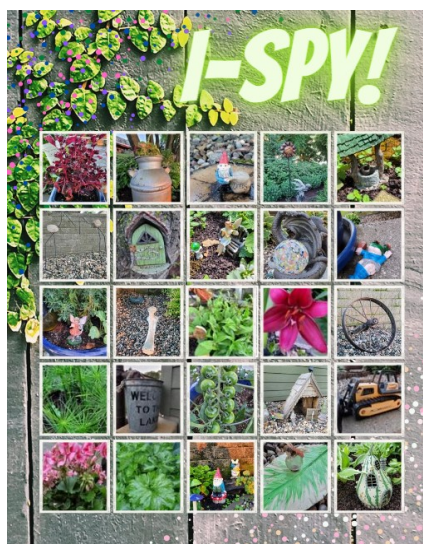
Did you know an owl eye is the same size as a tennis ball! Can you imagine how well you could see with eyes that big!



BUBBLES AND BEYOND!

Did you know that no matter what shape of container or bubble wand you use, it will always come out as a circle? That is due to the chemical make up of a bubble. Grab a wand and try for yourself!





News Releases

Press releases were sent out!

Topics included:

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



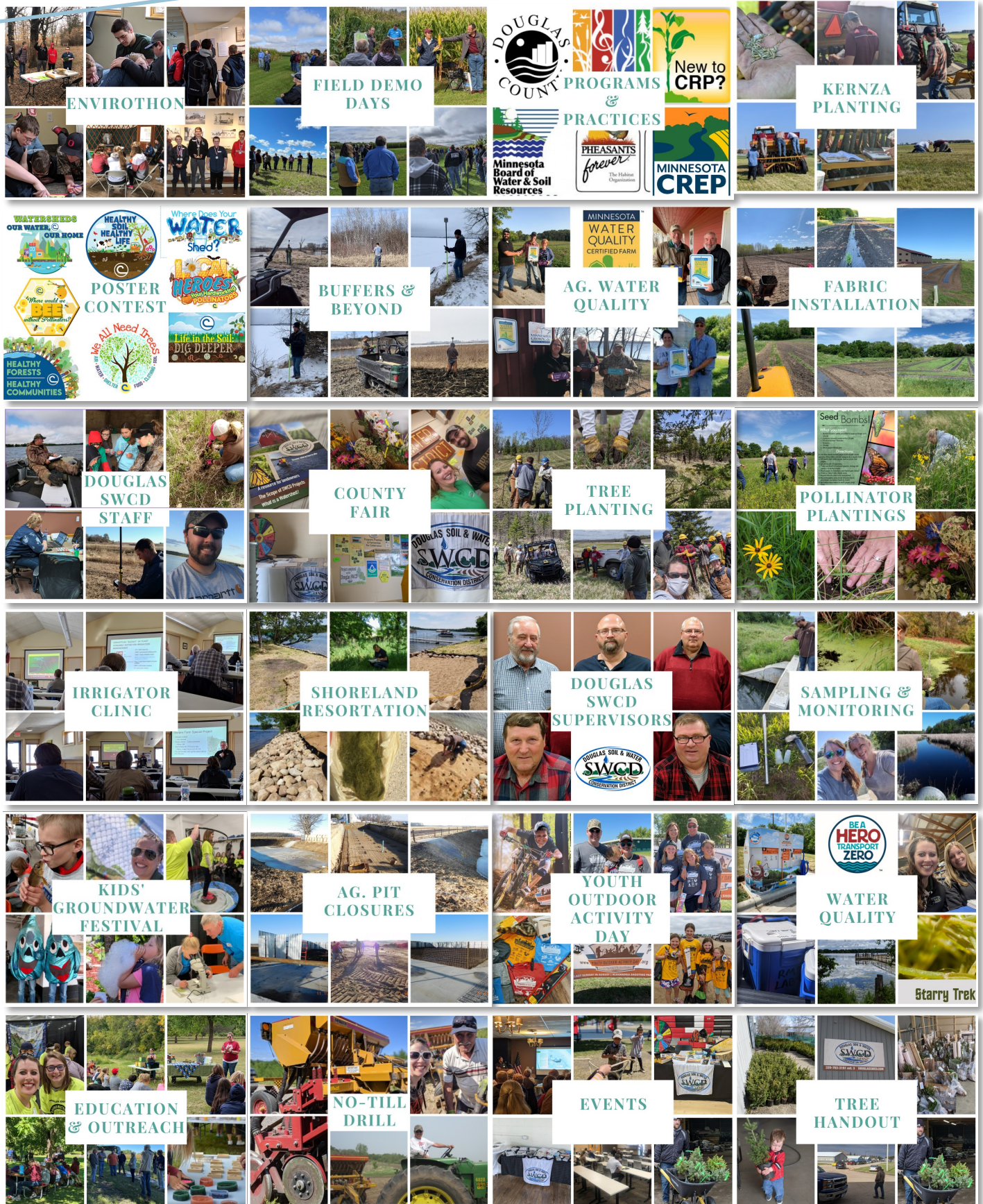
Social Media Topics

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



Like us on Facebook: DouglasSWCD

Social Media Program Photos

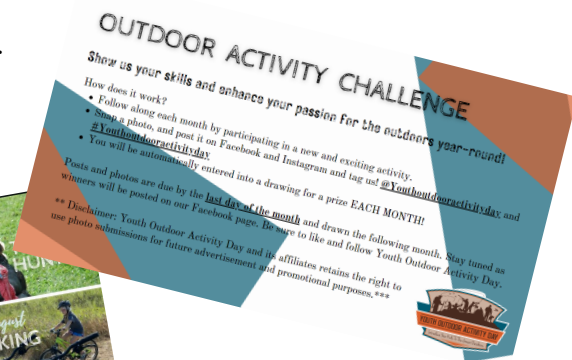
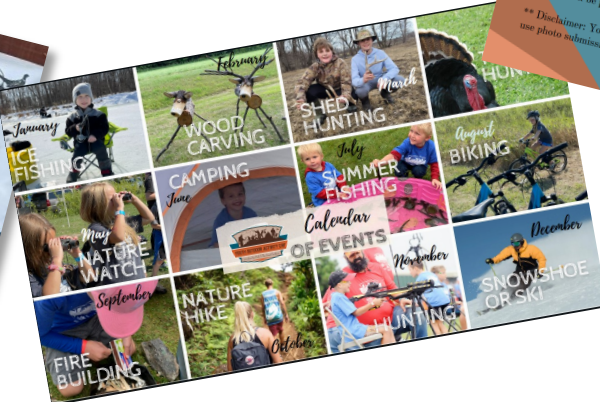


Youth Outdoor Activity Day

The 2022 Youth Outdoor Activity Day is in the books! Douglas SWCD helps participate in this event by being on the planning committee and also being a sponsor. What a spectacular day on a number of fronts the weather was cool, slightly breezy, and overcast. Absolutely perfect considering we had forecasts for high heat and storms throughout the week.

Everybody always wants to know about attendance. Well, this year we shattered our previous record, this year there were 2,587 kids that participated. Notice the word participate; there were no observers on this day! Kids threw axes, shot bb guns, archery, crossbows, held fish, salamanders, and turtles, tromped around in snowshoes, devoured ice cream (okay, maybe that isn't an activity), rode ATVs, looked through binoculars and spotting scopes, fished for trout, casted fishing rods, went on a nature hike, and so much more. This year we featured 50 outdoor activities for kids to try and gave away over 5,000 articles of outdoor gear to help remove the barriers for kids experiencing the outdoors! With volunteers, we had over 5,000 people at the event. With all those people, we are proud to say we had no accidents or issues. That is a testament to the 20 people on the planning committee which put forth an enormous effort to make sure this day ran smooth for everyone. Of course, the planning committee didn't run the activities. That was done by over 300 volunteers who gave up most of their weekend, used their equipment, and a lot of money to provide the kids the opportunity to try activities that they haven't done before! Keeping this day free is unique and special, it allows families to spend quality time together enjoying events like these which hopefully leads to more time in the great outdoors.

Lastly, we cannot thank our donors and sponsors enough. This event happens every year the last Sunday in August. For more information please visit www.youthoutdooractivityday.org.



Irrigation Clinic



On March 17, Douglas SWCD partnered with Stearns, Swift, Pope, and Kandiyohi SWCD's along with Minnesota Department of Agriculture to host our annual Irrigation Clinic. This year it was held in Benson, and we had a great lineup of presentations which covered Irrigation RCPP to Implement Innovative Irrigation Practices, Soil Health, Chemigation and Permit Requirements, Irrigation Management Strategies for Improved Corn Water Productivity and Yield, Update for Climate Conditions for Minnesota: Observations Trends and Outlooks, Managing Nitrogen for Profitable and Environmentally Responsible Corn Production in Irrigated Sands, and Strip Till To Improve Soil Health and Your Bottom Line. This clinic also offered 4.5 CEU in Soil and Water Management for participants. Without the help and support from our local sponsors, this event would not have been possible. We want to thank: Eagle Bank, Bonanza Valley State Bank, Ag. Country Farm Credit Services, Grand Irrigation Inc., EarthScout, Glenwood State Bank, Grimms, Thein Well Company and the Minnesota Department of Agriculture.

Programs, Practices and Partnerships in Conservation?

The Douglas County Fair was August 17-20th and once again the Douglas SWCD had a presence at their booth in the Fish and Game Building. This year's topic was "Programs, Practices, and Partnerships For Conservation". There were handouts, promotional swag, educational trivia questions and lots of smiling faces as they learned about what the district does and helps with throughout the year. The Evansville Area Sportsmen club was so gracious and donated 4 wood duck houses to be raffled by the district at the fair.



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.

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.

Cover Crops, Native grass and forb (flowers) seed mixes are available to landowners for conservation practices. Douglas SWCD Staff will work with landowners to determine an appropriate seed mix that is required for the practice they choose to adopt. Typically they are 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 controlling erosion.



CRP and Habitat Management Workshop



The CRP & Habitat Management Workshop was held March 31, 2022 at the Viking Sportsmen building, hosted by Viking Sportsmen Club & Douglas County Pheasants Forever. Organization members and area landowners came to learn about the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) & ways to help manage their land for wildlife habitat. A panel of local staff from the Douglas SWCD, NRCS, and Pheasants Forever as well as an area management vendor helped to lead discussion and answer questions. Conversation included everything from grassland establishment tips to CRP payments to management methods, timing, and more.

No-Till Drill

Douglas SWCD has two 10' Haybuster no-till drills available for rent. These drills work well for seeding native grasses, pasture mixes, hay mixes, alfalfa, soybeans cover crops, 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) for surrounding counties. Douglas 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.



Buffers & Beyond

Soil loss, wind erosion, and gullies are just a few things farmers have experienced over the last few years. Douglas SWCD can help! There are programs to address these every day problems in our farm fields.

One practice is a buffer, (which is still the law for public ditches and waterways), and another option is a field windbreak. Buffers are a strip of land that is covered in vegetation typically between a field and road, or a field and a waterway, to help reduce the amount of runoff and erosion. Windbreaks are a single to multiple row of trees and possibly shrubs planted in a linear fashion.

If you have some land, a farm field or shoreline with erosion, soil loss, or simply need some technical assistance, please reach out to the SWCD office today! We can assist you in planning, and help you to determine which practices are best for you. Also there might be cost share funding available (depending on the project and where you are in the county).



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 you information on where each one is in the county. If interested in one of these brochures, or have questions please call the office!

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 Comprehensive Watershed Management Plan. 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 for approval. If the borrower is able to meet the state eligibility requirements and can successfully demonstrate how it addresses local water quality priorities.

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 county will approve the project and assist in locating a cooperating banker.

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.

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.

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, it is as easy as 123. 1- application, 2- assessments, and 3- benefits. : 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. Producers working on certification also have priority for technical and financial assistance (including exclusive funding pools) to implement practices that promote water quality.

The program has been available statewide since the summer of 2016. Since then over 1,276 farms certified on over 890,075 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.

Will and Becky Haffner and their five children were recently certified through the MAWQCP. They, operate a diverse farm encompassing land in Douglas, Otter Tail and Todd counties. They grow corn, soybeans, wheat and alfalfa. The use of reduced tillage on all row crop acres helps to maintain crop residue on the soil surface going into winter and also in the spring after planting. Managing crop residue protects the soils from both wind and water erosion. They also add a diversity of livestock to the operation which is designed to serve as meat to table. Each year 50 feeder cattle, 60 hogs, 380 finished lambs are available for purchase. Livestock is carefully and intentionally raised with standards in mind and then sold to buyers via direct sales at farmers markets and their family website. The Haffners keep busy with growing crops, making hay and tending to livestock!

They use consulting services are through Pro-Ag in Clarissa, MN, which provides regular soil testing, field scouting and consulting services, and are working closely with the local NRCS office to improve manure utilization and pasture management. Rotational grazing is utilized presently but plan to expand the managed pasture acreage with the addition of watering facilities to accommodate rotational paddocks to support their pasture management plans.

More information on these certifications is located on the Douglas SWCD website, or by calling the office. Congratulations Haffner family!





Although the Douglas SWCD does a lot of projects, community outreach, grants and offers services on its own, we could not 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 2023 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
- Hold 1-2 FREE Community Nitrate clinics
- Multi-County Outreach Programs
- Continue getting back to normal—in person meetings and trainings
- Work with the county to start and establish a demonstration plot

