



2018

Annual Report

Waseca County Soil and Water
Conservation District

Waseca County Soil and Water Conservation District

2018 Annual Report

105 22nd Ave NE

Waseca, MN 56093

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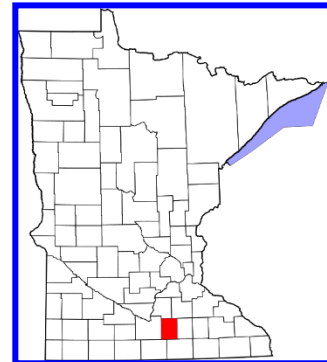
Mission Statement

MISSION STATEMENT:

The Prime Responsibility of the District is to coordinate assistance on private lands to control erosion, prevent flooding, enhance wildlife, develop recreation, build the economic base, and to manage our soil and water resources.

Introduction:

The Waseca County Soil and Water Conservation District is a legal subdivision of State Government operating under provisions of the Minnesota State Statutes Chapter 103C. The District is located entirely within Waseca County and includes all land, public and private, towns and villages. It is governed by a five-member board of elected supervisors, who are responsible for directing all District activities. The Board meets on the second Thursday of each month.



Soil and Water Conservation is essential to the preservation of our environment. Our goal is to implement a soil and water conservation plan on each acre in Waseca County. The District's success is a result of the efforts of the landowners of Waseca County, the Waseca County Commissioners, the Board of Water and Soil Resources, the Natural Resource Conservation Service, the Farm Service Agency, the Extension Service, and the Department of Natural Resources.

We submit to you, this 2018 Annual Report.

Board of Supervisors

The Board meets the second Thursday of each month at 6:30 p.m. at the Waseca SWCD Board Room, 105 22nd Avenue NE, Waseca MN.

DISTRICT GOVERNING BOARD

Wayne Cords, Chairman

Scott Hildebrandt, Vice Chairman

Todd Stencel, Treasurer

Jessie Shaffer, Secretary

Keith Morgan, Member

AREA OF REPRESENTATION

Alton, Janesville Townships

St. Mary, Woodville
Townships

Freedom, Vivian, Wilton
Townships

Byron, New Richland, Otisco
Townships

Blooming Grove, Iosco Townships

District Staff

Mark Schaetzke

Tyler Polster

Cheri Brummund

Eric Gulbransen

District Manager

District Technician

District Administrative Assistant

Contracted District Manager

NRCS Staff

NATURAL RESOURCES CONSERVATION SERVICE PERSONNEL

Justin Ross (3/2018-8/2018)

Tom Steger (8/2018-12/2018)

Acting District Conservationist

Acting District Conservationist

James Smith

Soil Conservation Technician

Christina Ripplinger

Wetland Conservationist

Brian Montroy

Wetland Specialist

Samantha Iskrzycki

Wetland Specialist

Partners Staff

BOARD OF WATER AND SOIL RESOURCES:

Jennifer Mocol-Johnson Board Conservationist

WASECA COUNTY COMMISSIONERS:

District 1 - Commissioner Doug Christopherson

District 2 - Commissioner Brian Harguth

District 3 - Commissioner Blair Nelson

District 4 - Commissioner Richard Androli

District 5 - Commissioner Dan Kuhns

WASECA COUNTY OFFICES:

Mark Leiferman Planning & Zoning Administrator

Liz Bushaw Planning & Zoning Specialist

Haley Byron Water Resources Specialist

David Malakowsky Feedlot Officer

MINNESOTA DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES:

Dan Giralomo Area Hydrologist

2018 Outstanding Conservation Farmer

Tom Klug



Tom Klug was selected as the 2018 Waseca Outstanding Conservationist by the Waseca SWCD board of supervisors. Tom operates a corn, soybean, sweetcorn, and small grain operation with 250 head of beef cattle south of Waseca. Tom has farmed 43 years and his family has been in the Waseca area for over 100 years. One of the biggest changes he has witnessed is shifting from plowing to less intense tillage that leaves more residue. He is part of the Soil Health Champion network through National Association of Conservation Districts (NACD).

Tom has installed grassed waterways and terraces to protect his fields from erosion. He has also planted cover crops for 12 years. Tom believes in trying new things to see if they can improve his operation. Future conservation plans include looking into converting to strip till and installing more grassed waterways. Tom was honored with other outstanding conservationist from around the state at the MASWCD annual convention in Bloomington on December 11th.

Congratulations and thank you for your dedication!

SERVICES PROVIDED BY THE SOIL and WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICT

- **Conservation Planning**
- **Planning and Design of Conservation Practices**
Including:
 - Erosion Control Practices
 - Residue Management Systems
 - Windbreak and Wildlife Tree Plantings
 - Animal Waste Control Systems
 - Manure Application Plans
 - Drainage Systems
 - Wetland Restorations
- **Cost-Sharing for Erosion Control Practices**
- **Assist with implementation of the Food Ag. Conservation Trade Act:**
 - Conservation Compliance Plans
 - Swampbuster and Sodbuster
 - Conservation Reserve Program
 - Wetland Reserve Program
 - Environmental Quality Incentive Program (EQIP)
- **Administer Minnesota Conservation Easement Programs:**
 - Reinvest in Minnesota
 - Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program
 - Permanent Wetland Preserve Program
- **Implementation of the Waseca County Comprehensive Water Plan**
- **Implementation of the Wetland Conservation Act**
- **Conservation Tree Sale and Tree Planter**

PRODUCTS AVAILABLE FROM THE SOIL AND WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICT

- Colored Marking Flags
- Educational Materials
- Plantskydd Animal Repellant
- Native Prairie Plants
- Quality Tree Nursery Stock
- Tree Weed Barrier Matting

2018 Project Accomplishments

| | |
|--------------------------------|--------------------------|
| Cover Crops | 4 contracts on 305 acres |
| Grassed Waterway | 1 contracted |
| Cover Crops (GBERBA) | 2 contracts on 76 acres |
| Alternative Tile Intakes | 3 contracted |
| ReInvest in MN (RIM) Easements | 3 new easements funded |

70 year anniversary of the Waseca County SWCD!

- ❖ Waseca SWCD has been providing 70 years of conservation assistance for Waseca County landowners and operators. Special outreach and display of the accomplishments of the last 70 years were displayed at the County Fair, Southern Research and Outreach Center (SROC) Open House, and FarmAmerica Fall Festival. It is inspiring to see the conservation benefits of the hard work and dedication of past employees, supervisors, and landowners.



Education and Promotion

- ❖ Soil and Water Conservation promotion and education is a high priority of the District. The primary effort in this arena each year is publishing the Conservation Calendar. In 2018, two thousand seven hundred and thirty copies were distributed to rural landowners, cooperating agencies, and businesses. The calendar highlights local conservation related photos and events. The District also improved its website by having the ability to update information directly. This has made it easier for the public to get up to date information on a regular basis. The Waseca SWCD also distributed six hundred and forty-seven coloring-activity books with emphasis on Water Conservation to kindergarten and first classrooms in Waseca County School Districts. We updated our logo and added it to our enclosed trailer and truck to help promote the district.



Logo prior to 2018

Logo for 2018 and beyond



Conservation Easements

- ❖ The District in cooperation with the Natural Resources Conservation Service, and the Board of Water and Soil Resources has assisted many Waseca County landowners with the establishing 115 permanent conservation easements on marginal cropland areas. The easements not only benefit the landowner they benefit the community by controlling erosion, storing and filtering water, reducing flooding, and providing much needed wildlife habitat. Maintaining these easements in high quality

native prairie, and wetland restorations is a priority of the District. Controlling invasive trees and weeds on these easements is an ongoing challenge. The District continues to assist easement owners with technical assistance for cutting and spot spraying invasive trees, shrubs, and weeds. Controlled burns are recommended on the easements by certified vendors every four or five years. In 2018 three new Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP) Easements were funded. Two of them are wetland restorations protecting 95.4 acres and one is a buffer strip protecting 3.9 acres.

Local Capacity Grant

- ❖ This grant came through the Clean Water Land and Legacy Fund. The District used the funds to add new services and equipment to improve how the District can assist landowners. The funds were used to purchase Conservation Farmer Signs and to increase our soil health education and outreach. The District put together a Cover Crop cost share program for those interested in trying cover crops. There were 3 producers that participated and applied cover crops to a total of 305.42 acres. Bringing the total number of acres of cover crops to 1024.22 and 16 contracts in Waseca County over the last 3 years. The grant provided the necessary funding to support a ¾ time Administrative Assistant and a District Manager to help fulfill the mission of the SWCD.

Water Monitoring Program

- ❖ 2018 has brought continued use of the Water Monitoring Equipment purchased through the Local Capacity Grant in 2016 in partnership with Waseca County. Monitoring was done on



two areas throughout the year from April through October. The program involves:

- 2 Sites: Bull Run Creek and Iosco Creek
- Data will be used in the future to pursue grants to fund water quality practices and projects.
- Water samples are taken to measure E. Coli, Nitrogen, Phosphorus and suspended solids.

Wetland Conservation Act

- ❖ The District in Cooperation with Waseca County administers the Minnesota Wetland Conservation Act for the County and all the cities within the County. Working closely with Waseca County, the SWCD aids in confirmation of any violations and aids in development of appropriate restoration orders.



Wetland Banking Site

District Tree Program

- ❖ The District had another successful tree and shrub sale in 2018. We distributed approximately 3,693 trees and 13 wildflower packets, containing 48 plants per packet. The trees and shrubs will be used for snow control, energy conservation (windbreaks), reducing wind erosion, and wildlife habitat/cover plantings. The wildflower packets will provide pollinator habitat and reduce erosion.



Conservation Tree Stock

Conservation Delivery

- ❖ The Conservation Delivery Grant has been used in promoting effective Conservation Practices fitting landowner concerns. Some examples are: site visits, mapping, designing and giving recommendations for waterways, terraces and basins to aid in soil erosion.

Greater Blue Earth River Basin Alliance (GBERBA)

- ❖ GBERBA is a Joint Powers Organization consisting of ten Counties and SWCDs encompassing the Blue Earth, Le Sueur, and Watonwan River Watersheds. GBERBA provides cost share opportunities for Waseca County landowners through various competitive grants. It also facilitates several speakers and information opportunities throughout the year. Waseca SWCD is represented on the Policy Board by one Supervisor and on the Technical Committee by staff.

South Central Technical Service Area (SC TSA)

- ❖ The SC TSA is a Joint Powers Agreement between 11 SWCDs in south central MN. The SC TSA provides technical assistance to the SWCDs for water quality projects. They have one engineer and two engineering technicians available. In 2018 they assisted us in two project site preliminary investigations, one design review, and assistance on one Nitrogen Bioreactor design. Waseca SWCD is represented on the TSA board by one supervisor.

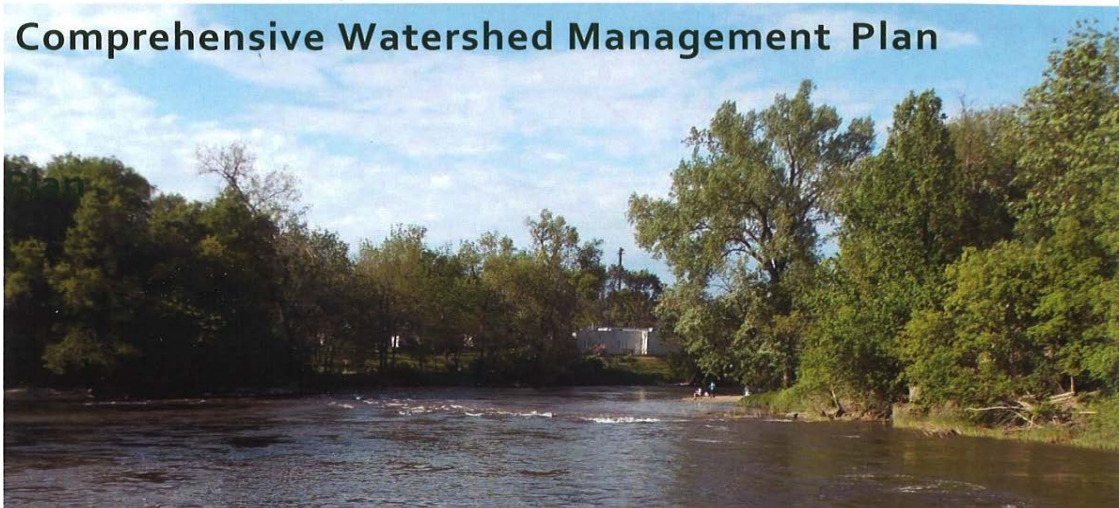
One Watershed One Plan – Cannon River

- ❖ The next logical step in the evolution of water planning in MN is to align local water planning on major watershed boundaries with state strategies towards prioritized, targeted, and measurable implementation plans. The Cannon Watershed was selected for funding from BWSR in 2016. Since then the SWCDs and Counties in Waseca, Steele, Rice, Goodhue, Le Sueur, Dakota, the North Cannon Water Management Organization, and the Bell Creek Watershed District have been meeting consistently to develop a water plan for the Cannon Watershed. In 2018 the majority of the draft plan was completed, and partners are planning on forming a Joint Powers Board to continue the work of the 1W1P. Waseca SWCD is represented on the Policy Committee by a Supervisor and on the Planning Work Group by the District Manager.

Cannon River Comprehensive Watershed Management Plan – DRAFT 01/08/2019

CANNON RIVER

Comprehensive Watershed Management Plan



Buffer Law Grant

- ❖ Using equipment purchased through the Buffer Grant and other funds in 2016, many field checks were completed to give landowners more information and assistance in getting into compliance. Outreach was accomplished by sending out Buffer information to County residents with properties containing or adjacent to public waters lakes and streams. Many questions were answered and actions taken to help improve water quality. November 1, 2018 was the deadline for all buffers to be in place. A buffer law tracking plan was created to meet the requirements of the MN buffer law and is posted on our website.

Landowner File Re-organization

- ❖ To provide better customer service, an effort was undertaken to update our filing system for landowner records such as conservation plans and tile maps. These have not been updated to our knowledge since the creation of the district in 1948. Many of the files were located under previous owners and all the landowner's information was in one file, even if that person owned several farms. The new system is organized by Township and FSA tract number, with an index map for each section. Each farm will have one folder that is easily searchable, saving customer and staff time.

NRCS Programs

| WASECA COUNTY CONSERVATION PROGRAM FUNDING | | |
|---|-------------------------------|---------------------------|
| <i>Oct. 1, 2017 to Sept. 30, 2018 (Fiscal Year)</i> | | |
| <u>Program</u> | <u>Number of Participants</u> | <u>\$ Paid</u> |
| • CRP | 189 | \$ 653,797 |
| • EQIP | 3 | \$ 18,880 |
| • CSP | 7 | \$ 554,202 |
| • WRP- cost-share | 2 | \$ 2,789 |
| • RIM-cost-share | 0 | \$ <u>0</u> |
| | | Total \$ 1,229,668 |

(\$'S ARE APPROXIMATE)