



2020

Annual Report

Waseca County Soil and Water
Conservation District

Waseca County Soil and Water Conservation District

2020 Annual Report

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Waseca, MN 56093

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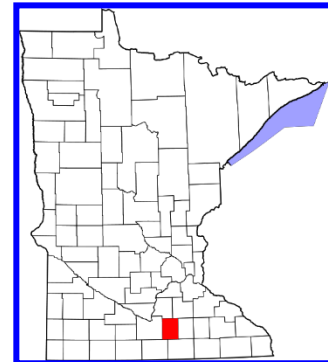
Mission Statement

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 2020 Annual Report.

The Board meets the second Thursday of each month at 6:30 p.m. at the Waseca Community Meeting Room, 300 North State Street, Waseca MN.

DISTRICT GOVERNING BOARD

Wayne Cords, Chairman

Scott Hildebrandt, Vice Chairman

Todd Stencil, Treasurer

Keith Morgan, Secretary

Larry Muff, Member

AREA OF REPRESENTATION

Alton, Janesville Townships

St. Mary, Woodville Townships

Freedom, Vivian, Wilton Townships

Blooming Grove, Iosco Townships

Byron, New Richland, Otisco Townships

District Staff

**Mark Schaetzke
Tyler Polster
Cheri Brummund**

**District Manager
District Technician
District Administrative Assistant**

NRCS Staff

NATURAL RESOURCES CONSERVATION SERVICE PERSONNEL

Ciara Ahrens

NRCS Team Lead

Jessica Beske

Soil Conservationist

Jeremy Kite

Wetland Conservationist

Brandon Berndt

Wetland Specialist

Trace Strahle

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 De Malterer

District 5 - Commissioner Brad Krause

WASECA COUNTY OFFICES:

Mark Leiferman Planning & Zoning Administrator

Haley Byron Water Resources Specialist

Brian Zabel Technician/Feedlot Officer/Ag Inspector

MINNESOTA DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES:

Dan Giralomo Area Hydrologist

2020 Outstanding Conservation Farmer

Carl Guse



Carl farms 425 acres in Waseca County, raising corn, beans and beef cattle. He has installed terraces to keep soil on the hills, a grassed waterway to decrease gully erosion and installed a pond to catch sediment before it enters the Le Sueur River. Carl has one of the few Nitrogen Bioreactors in Waseca County. The reactor uses wood chips to remove some of the nitrogen in tile water before it enters our surface waters. Carl hopes to see more of these installed.

Carl has also participated in the Le Sueur River Watershed Network, encouraging land stewardship ethics within the watershed. Carl's conservation plan is to maintain the conservation practices he has and monitor his land to see if he needs more.

Congratulations Carl and thank you for your dedication!

Due to the Covid-19 Virus Health Restrictions, the Annual Convention was not held. Since there was no recognition ceremony, the Waseca SWCD presented Carl with a Gift Certificate to an area Merchant.

SERVICES PROVIDED BY THE SOIL & 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 through the SWCD**
 - Educational Materials, Colored Marking Flags, Plantskydd Animal Repellant, Native Prairie Plants, Quality Tree Nursery Stock, Tree Weed Barrier Matting

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 2020, four thousand and one hundred and five copies were distributed to rural landowners, cooperating agencies, and businesses. The calendar highlights local conservation related photos and events. The District also is continually updating its website. This has made it easier for the public to get up to date information on a regular basis. The Waseca SWCD also sent out MASWCD Area VI Scholarship Contest information for seniors, to the Principles and Agriculture Instructors in all three Waseca County School Districts. There are 2 scholarships that are awarded through the Area VI MASWCD. 1st place is awarded \$1000 and 2nd place is awarded \$500. Applicants were asked to write an essay on “The Importance of Trees in Our Environment”.
- ❖ I90 Soil Health Tour



Matt Alford



Rick Clark

Waseca was one stop on the I-90 Soil Health Road Show Tour. It was held at FARMERICA on February 27. There was a good turnout for this event. Rick Clark and Matt Alford were the Speakers. Both gave presentations on Soil Health and Economic Impacts.

The Farmer Panel answered questions and discussed different issues that attendees had. There were many questions on costs, weed controls, timing of planting and burn-down. It was a very informative day. Also exhibited was the Soil Tunnel. This was located at the entrance and created some discussion on the information it contained.

There were 4 other stops in Southern Minnesota on the I-90 Tour.

If you have any questions on the information provided at the Waseca Stop, please contact us at the office. We will be happy to go over any questions you may have.



Farmer Panel: Rick Clark, Brad Spinler, Gene Kuntz, Matt Alford, Jim Krahnig, Randy Depuydt



- ❖ Since Covid played such a huge part in limiting our in person learning and field plot tours, the Waseca SWCD and Waseca NRCRS put together a Self-Guided Soil Health Tour. The tour consisted of nine landowners allowing participants on their property to inspect the practices they are implementing. A flyer explaining the practices and also a map of other sites was at each site.



After the participant finished the tour, they were asked to fill out the survey on Survey Monkey. Participants responded with positive feedback on the tour.

- ❖ Unfortunately both the Waseca County Fair and New Richland Farm and City Days events were cancelled due to the Covid 19 Pandemic.

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 118 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. Easements are inspected periodically. 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 2020 three new Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP) Easements were funded.

SWCD Local Capacity Grant

- ❖ This grant came through the Clean Water Land and Legacy Fund. The District used the funds to employ staff to improve how the District can assist landowners. The grant provided the necessary funding to support a full time Administrative Assistant and a District Manager to help fulfill the mission of the SWCD.

Buffer Law Grant

- ❖ The Buffer grant provides funding for technical staff to aid in helping the landowner maintain the proper buffer adjacent to public waters and public ditch systems throughout the county. The District assisted the county in Buffer Law enforcement, conducted site visits, and reviewed approximately one third of the parcels required to have a buffer.

Wetland Conservation Act

- ❖ The District serves on the Technical Evaluation Panel (TEP) and Waseca County administers the Minnesota Wetland Conservation Act for the County. Working closely with Waseca County, the SWCD aids in reviewing applications, confirmation of any violations, and in development of appropriate restoration orders.

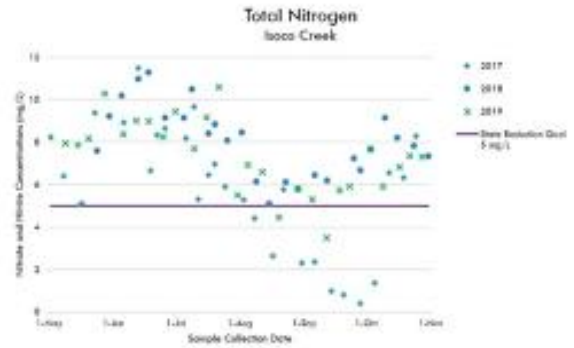
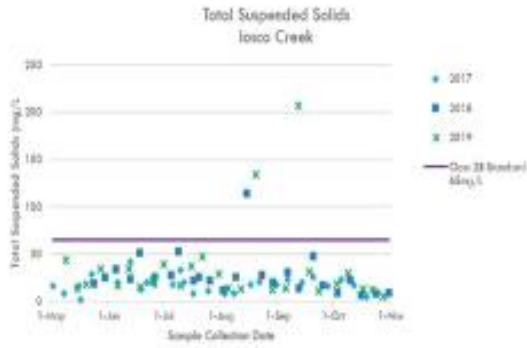
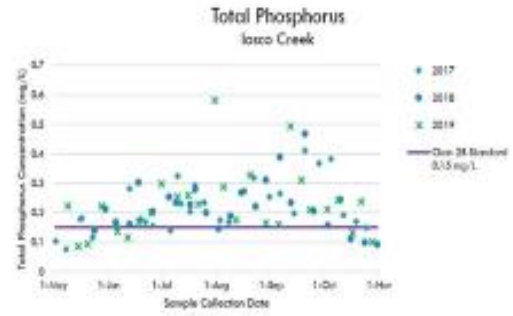
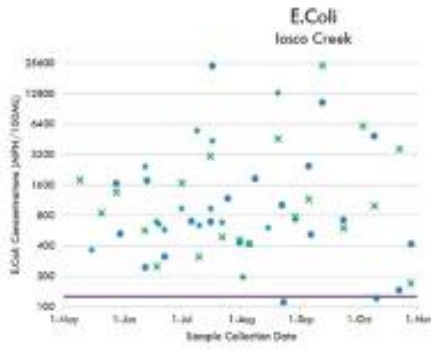


Wetland Banking Site

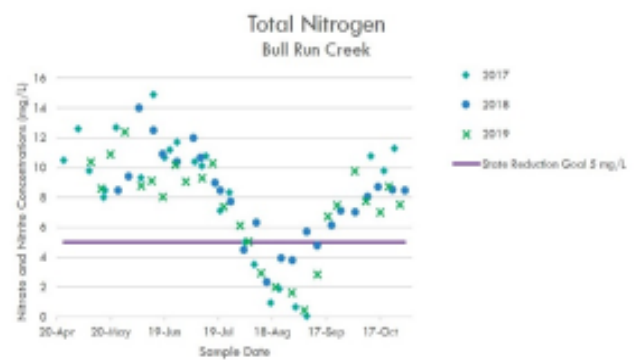
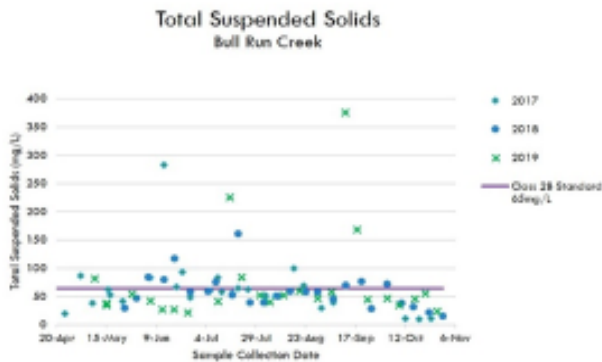
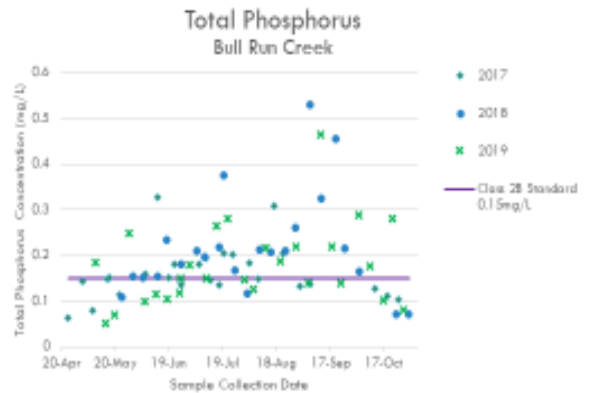
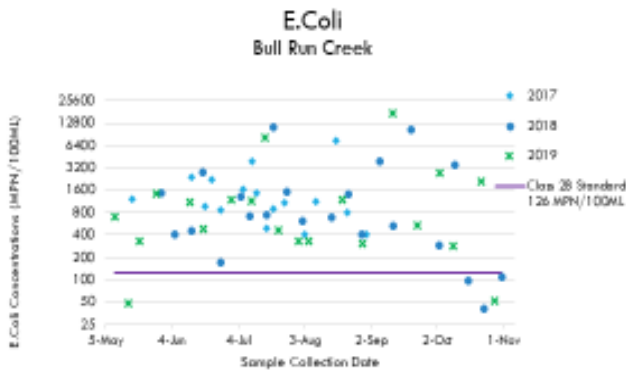
Water Monitoring Program

- ❖ 2020 has brought continued use of the Water Monitoring Equipment purchased through the Local Capacity Grant in 2016 in partnership with Waseca County. This is the fourth year of monitoring 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.
 - Below is the data that has been put into charts for clarification for the first 3 years of monitoring also showing the State Standard.

Iosco Creek Water Monitoring Project



Bull Run Water Monitoring Project



District Tree Program

- ❖ The District had another successful tree and shrub sale in 2020. We distributed approximately 5156 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.

State Cost Share Funding

- ❖ The year 2020 brought about some Cost Share Funding Projects. A Terrace Project and a Waterway Project. Both projects were completed and funding for 75% of the projects was supplied to the landowner to help with costs. The landowner was responsible for the remaining 25% of the project. Bills needed to be produced for all expenses and verification of practice completion was necessary before funding was disbursed.

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 2020 they assisted us with: construction of a nitrogen bioreactor, grassed waterway, and terrace; survey and design of a

grassed waterway and water and sediment control basins; and site visits on a terrace repair and ravine erosion. Waseca SWCD is represented on the TSA board by one supervisor.

Watersheds in Waseca County

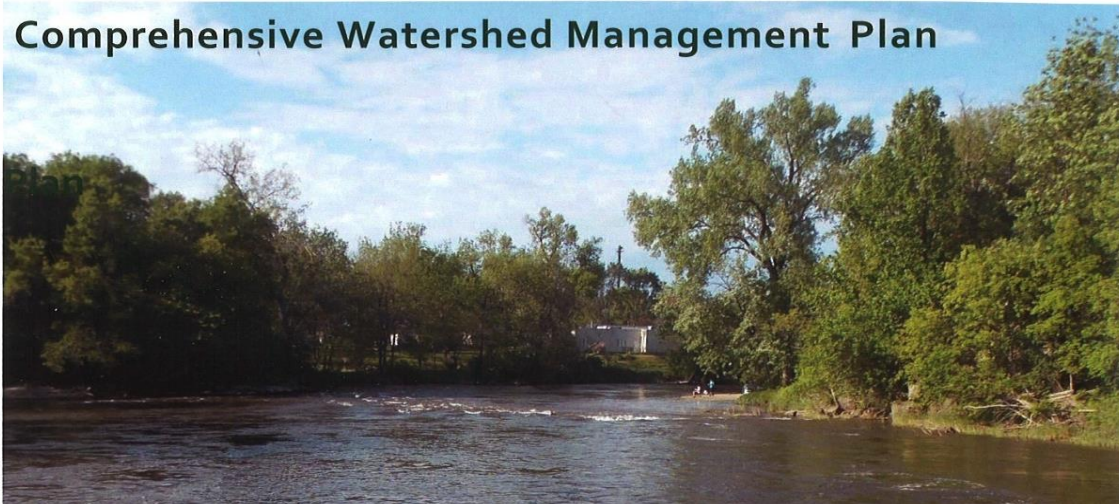
One Watershed One Plan (1W1P) – Cannon River

- ❖ 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 2020 the Cannon River Comprehensive Watershed Management Plan was completed, approved by BWSR, adopted locally, and partners formed the Cannon River Watershed Joint Powers Board (CRWJPB) to implement the plan. Waseca SWCD is represented on the CRWJPB 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



One Watershed One Plan – Le Sueur

- ❖ 2020 was a year of new implementations and beginnings of plans. Partners within the Le Sueur River Watershed were selected for a 1W1P planning grant through BWSR in 2020. Waseca County opted to serve as day to day contact and Waseca SWCD will be providing administrative services. Staff representatives met regularly to work on pre-planning tasks.

Le Sueur Civic Engagement

- ❖ The Le Sueur River Watershed Restoration and Protection Civic Engagement is funded through Minnesota Pollution Control Agency (MPCA). Its purpose is to educate and aid in development of plans along the Le Sueur River. Discussions on problems and solutions are the main focus at the present time. Many of the tasks were postponed due to the pandemic.

SWCD 2020 Project Accomplishments

Cover Crops	3 contracts on 180 acres
Grassed Waterway	1 completed
Cover Crops (GBERBA)	7 contracts on 765 acres
Nitrogen Bioreactor (GBERBA)	1 completed
ReInvest in MN (RIM) Easements	3 new easements funded
Terraces	1 completed

NRCS Programs

WASECA COUNTY NRCS CONSERVATION PROGRAM FUNDING

(Information Furnished by NRCS & FSA)

Oct. 1, 2019 to Sept. 30, 2020 (Fiscal Year)

<u>Program</u>	<u>Number of Participants</u>	<u>\$ Paid</u>
• CRP (NEW)	107	\$ 286,313
• TOTAL ACTIVE CRP Contracts	868 (8458.8 Ac)	\$1,999,631
• EQIP	10	\$ 66,483
• CSP	0	\$ 0
• RIM-cost-share	2	<u>\$ 11,778</u>
TOTAL Approximate Dollars Paid		<u>\$2,364,205</u>
• WRP- cost-share	16	998 Acre

(#S & \$S ARE APPROXIMATE)