



2021

# Annual Report

Waseca County Soil and Water  
Conservation District

# Waseca County Soil and Water Conservation District

## 2021 Annual Report

300 North State Street

Waseca, MN 56093

Phone: 507-835-0603

Website: [www.wasecaswcd.org](http://www.wasecaswcd.org)

### Mission Statement

#### **MISSION STATEMENT:**

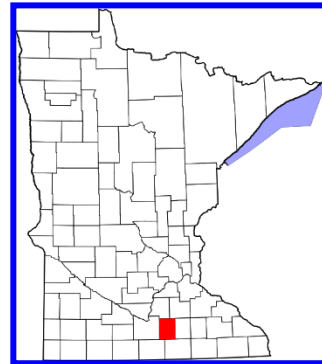
**The Prime Responsibility of the District is to coordinate assistance on private lands to control erosion, prevent flooding, enhance wildlife, develop recreation, build the economic base, and to manage our soil and water resources.**

#### **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 member activities on each acre of land, public and private, towns and villages. It is governed by a five-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 2021 Annual Report.



subdivision  
Statutes  
includes all  
member  
activities.

on each

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

**DISTRICT GOVERNING BOARD**

**Wayne Cords, Chairman**

**Scott Hildebrandt, Vice Chairman**

**Todd Stencel, 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**

<b>Ciara Ahrens</b>	<b>NRCS Team Lead</b>
<b>Lee Nachreiner</b>	<b>NRCS Soil Conservationist</b>
<b>Mallory Malecek</b>	<b>NRCS Soil Conservationist</b>
<b>Jeremy Kite</b>	<b>Wetland Conservationist</b>
<b>Brandon Berndt</b>	<b>Wetland Specialist</b>
<b>Trace Strahle</b>	<b>Wetland Specialist</b>

**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 DeAnne (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

## 2021 Outstanding Conservation Farmer

### Jason Norton



### **Congratulations Jason and thank you for your dedication!**

Jason Norton farms 430 Acres in Blooming Grove Township in Waseca County. Jason is very conservation minded. He strongly believes in Cover Crops and has proven the benefits of using this practice. Jason has designed and assembled many different forms of equipment to help in his practices. He has been very willing to share his accomplishments with others by attending meetings and forums and also by participating in Soil Health Tours. His plots are one of the stops on the Waseca SWCD & NRCS Self-Guided Tour in 2020-2021. Jason is also active in installing Buffers and in Rotational Grazing for his cattle.

**Congratulations Jason for all your conservation efforts.**

# 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 2021, four thousand six hundred twenty-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. 1<sup>st</sup> place is awarded \$1000 and 2<sup>nd</sup> place is awarded \$500. Applicants were asked to write an essay on one of the following topics:
  1. Pheasants in Southern Minnesota, and what may be done to ensure their survival?
  2. The importance of trees and field windbreaks in reducing erosion.
  3. The role of soil health in groundwater regeneration and protection.Unfortunately, there were no Waseca County Students awarded scholarships.
- ❖ This year the Waseca Soil and Water handed out Coloring/Activity Books to the 308 Kindergarteners and 288 First Graders in the three Waseca School Districts. The coloring books were funded by dollars from the 2021 Local Capacity Grant.
- ❖ On-The-Farm Cover Crops and Soil Health  
Participants enjoyed a beautiful September Minnesota evening, while discussing and watching demonstrations on Soil Health topics. Demonstrations included: Rainfall Simulator-Miles Elsen, NRCS District Conservationist & Mark Schaetzke, Waseca SWCD District Manager, and Interseeding with a Highboy into standing Corn-Joe Jirik, Owner/Operator-Soil Health Solutions, and Discussion with Landowner, Jason Norton.



- ❖ 2021 Waseca County Fair  
This year a number of fair goers explored the Soil Health Tunnel and picked up information of Soil Health and other informational items from SWCD and NRCS. Although attendance wasn't up to normal capacity, the Waseca SWCD Office received calls from landowners about questions on programs that are offered through the various agencies.



- ❖ Since Covid played such a huge part in limiting our in person learning and field plot tours, the Waseca SWCD and Waseca NRCS 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. This tour began in the fall of 2020 and continued in the spring of 2021.

**Self-Guided Soil Health Tour**

Waseca SWCD & Waseca NRCS have put together several locations where the landowners have graciously allowed access to their fields for soil health education. Pick a day that fits your schedule and when the weather suits you. Tour will remain open until crop canopy. Visit one or visit all. An informational page will be provided at each location. Look for these signs.

You can expect to see sweet corn, pea, soybean, and corn fields; a variety of cover crop mixes; and a variety of conservation tillage practices.

Things to consider bringing with you: camera, shovel/trowel to examine soil structure and rooting, tape measure, cover crop ID book, and thermometer. Enjoy the tour!

For more information contact the Waseca SWCD at 507-835-0603 or check out our website: <http://www.wasecaswcd.org/soil-health.html>

We want to know if this was valuable to you. Please fill out a survey at: <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/29c7mW3>

Brought to you by Waseca Co Landowners, Operators, NRCS, and Waseca SWCD



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.

## 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 119 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

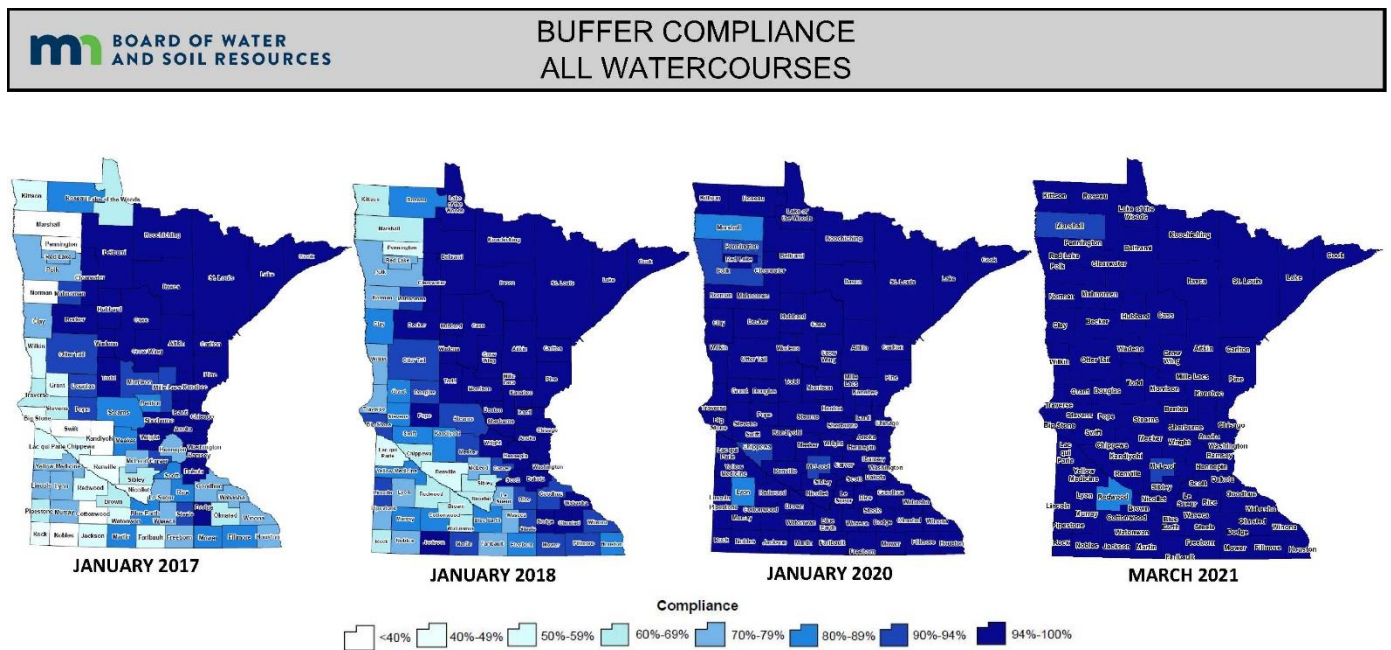
invasive trees and weeds on these easements is an ongoing challenge. The District continues to assist easement owners with technical assistance for cutting and spot spraying invasive trees, shrubs, and weeds. Controlled burns are recommended on the easements by certified vendors every four or five years.

### SWCD Local Capacity Grant

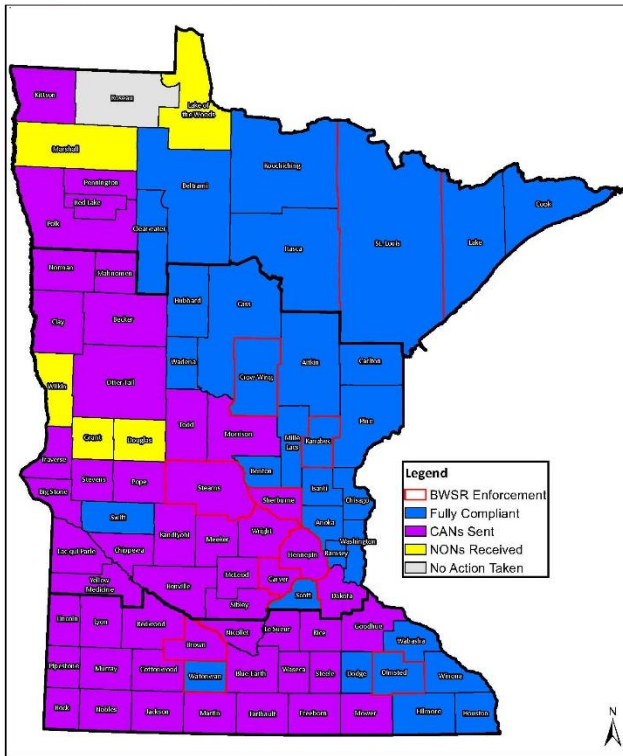
- ❖ This grant came through the Clean Water Land and Legacy Fund. The District used the funds to employ staff to improve how the District can assist landowners. The grant provided the necessary funding to support a full time Administrative Assistant and a District Manager to help fulfill the mission 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. The following two maps show the progress made on the Buffer Law Compliance over the years and Statewide Compliance as of November 2021. As of December 2021, Waseca County is at 98.6% Compliance.



As you can see, all counties in the State have improved in compliance issues over the last 4 years. This is due to greater education on Buffers and their importance, but most of all the willingness of the landowners to comply with Buffer Laws to help keep our waters cleaner.



Most counties have had to send out Corrective Action Notices (CAN) to some landowners. Upon receiving these notices, the majority of the landowners are willing to correct issues in a timely manner. Of course there may be some who don't quite understand the reasons, Soil and Water Staff along with Planning and Zoning Staff explain the importance of the Buffers. Most information is eagerly accepted and plans are made to correct the issues at hand. In some instances, the SWCD and/or the County have been able to help in the cost of some of the corrective actions through the help of the Board of Soil and Water Resources (BWSR) Grant dollars and other State Funding that may be available.

## 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.

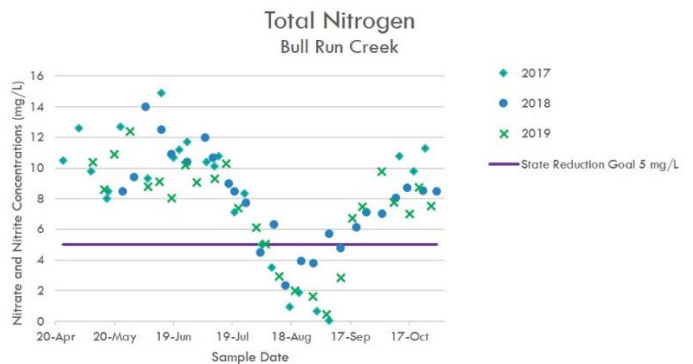
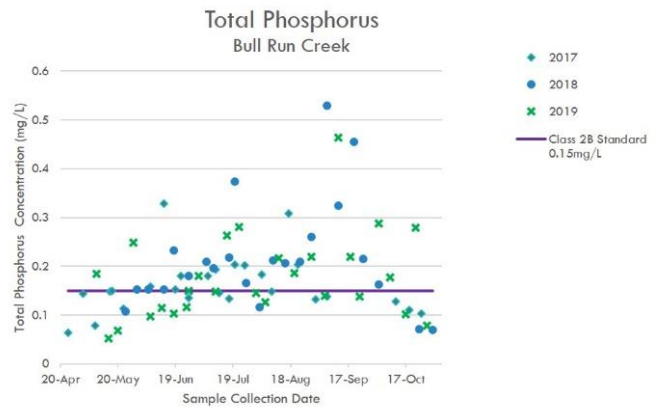
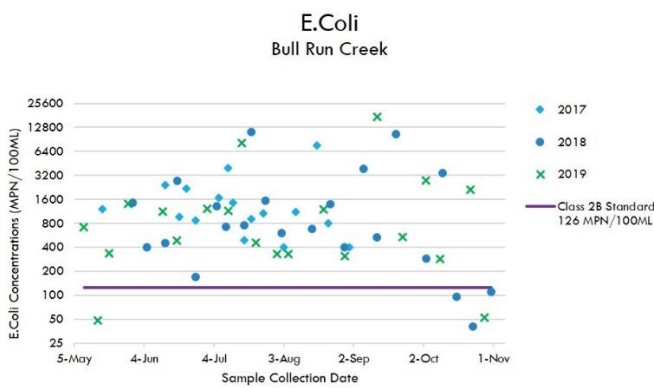


*Wetland Banking Site*

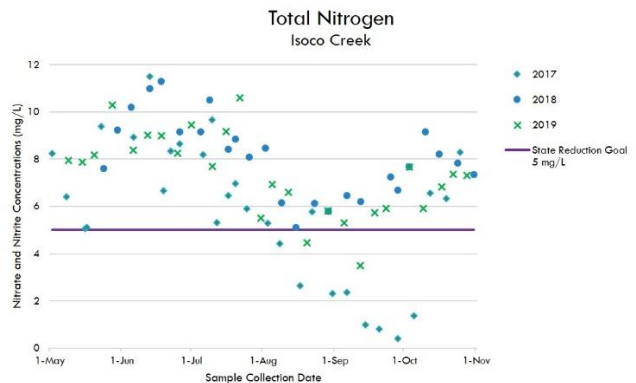
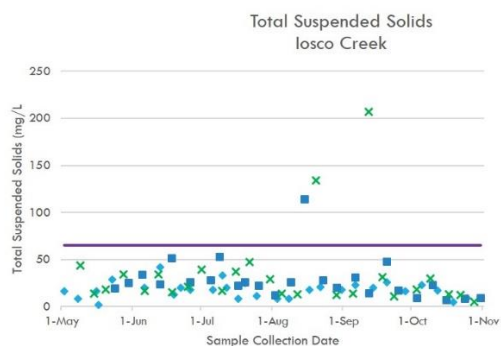
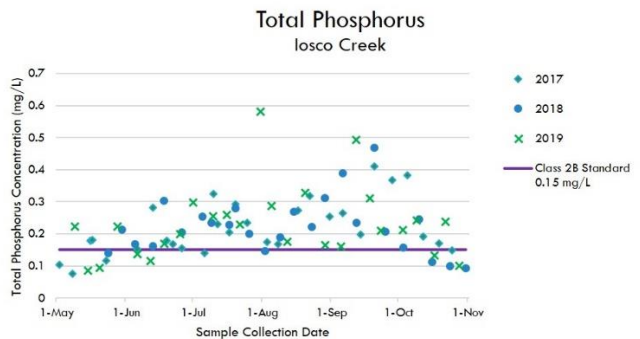
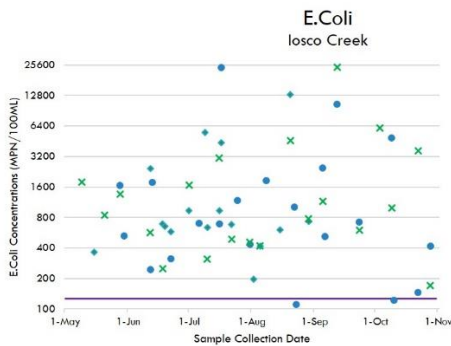
# Water Monitoring Program

- ❖ 2021 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 fifth 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. (also on website under Water Monitoring) Results show that Iosco Creek and Bull Run would fail to meet state water quality standards for E. Coli, phosphorus, and nitrogen. Bull Run is pushing the limit on total suspended solids while Iosco Creek consistently meets the standard.

## Bull Run Water Monitoring Project



## Iosco Creek Water Monitoring Project



### District Tree Program

- ❖ The District had another successful tree and shrub sale in 2021. We distributed approximately 7257 trees and 16 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. The orders were over 2000 more trees and shrubs than in 2020.



*Conservation Bare Root 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 2021 brought about some Cost Share Funding Projects. A Terrace Projects and a Waterway Projects. Both projects were underway 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. A water treatment and storage wetland on County Ditch 19 was funded through GBERBA. 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 2021 they assisted us with: 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. In 2021, the CRWJPB received Watershed Based Implementation Funding and began to implement projects throughout the watershed. Projects included WASCBS, Cover Crops, Shoreline Survey, Soil Health Outreach and Lake Management Plan. Waseca SWCD is represented on the CRWJPB by a Supervisor and on the Planning Work Group by the District Manager.



## 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. A Soil Health Field Day was held at Farmamerica on September 9, 2021 which included discussions on Soil Health Tests and what they mean, Soil Biology and how it impacts crop production and soil health and also Test Plot results with strip till and cover crops.



*Myles Elson, NRCS District Conservationist*



*Dr Anne Sawyer, Extension Educator, UMN Water Resources*



*Gene Kuntz, Farmamerica Site Manager*

**New Richland Sub-watershed/Boot Creek Headwaters**

- ❖ Waseca County completed a Best Management Practice (BMP) Feasibility study for the City of New Richland/Boot Creek Headwaters. Funding for this effort was through an Accelerated Implementation Grant through BWSR. The study provided stakeholders potential BMP locations, estimated peak flow reductions, and 6 concept BMP designs. Practice locations for concept designs were prioritized by stakeholders within the watershed. Waseca SWCD provided 4 concept designs for grassed waterways and water and sediment control basins as part of the effort. Next steps include determining landowner interest and securing public funding for voluntary implementation.

**The Programs and Project of the Waseca SWCD and Partnering Agencies Results for 2021**

<b><u>SWCD 2021 Project Accomplishments</u></b>	
<b>Cover Crops</b>	<b>5 contracts on 180 acres</b>
<b>Grassed Waterway</b>	<b>1 contracted</b>
<b>Reinvest in MN (RIM) Easements</b>	<b>1 closed</b>
<b>Water Storage &amp; Treatment Wetland</b>	<b>1 completed</b>

<b>Waseca County NRCS Conservation Funding</b>			
<i>(Information furnished by NRCS &amp; FSA)</i>			
<i>Fiscal Year October 1, 2020-September 30, 2021</i>			
<b><u>Program</u></b>	<b><u>Contracts</u></b>	<b><u>Acres</u></b>	<b><u>Amount Paid</u></b>
<b>CRP (NEW)</b>	<b>84</b>	<b>1246.75</b>	<b>\$218,602</b>
<b>Active CRP</b>	<b>674</b>	<b>5640</b>	<b>\$1,452,083</b>
<b>EQIP</b>		<b>1632</b>	<b>\$130,817</b>
<b>CSP</b>		<b>927.9</b>	<b>\$132,892</b>
<b>RIM</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>65.5</b>	<b>\$31,106</b>
<b>WRP</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>235</b>	<b>\$95,252</b>