



2025

Annual Report

Waseca Soil and Water Conservation
District

Waseca Soil and Water Conservation District

2025 Annual Report

300 North State Street

Waseca, MN 56093

Phone: 507-835-0603

Website: 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.

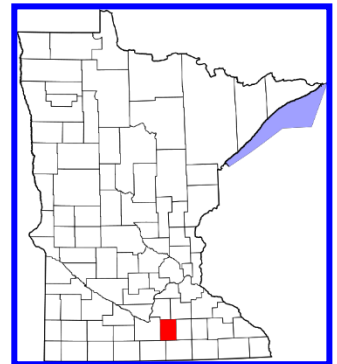
Introduction:

The Waseca Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD) 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 SWCD'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 2025 Annual Report.



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

Larry Muff, Chairman

Gregg Rosenthal, Vice Chairman

Wayne Cords, Treasurer

Matt Sommers, Secretary

Dan Roemhildt, Member

AREA OF REPRESENTATION

Byron, New Richland, Otisco Townships

St. Mary, Woodville Townships

Alton, Janesville Townships

Freedom, Vivian, Wilton Townships

Blooming Grove, Iosco Townships

District Staff

Mark Schaetzke

Joe Edel

Cammi Phelps

Cheri Brummund

Jade Peterson

Jayme Sandbeck

District Manager

District Technician

Resource Technician

Administrative Assistant (Jan. 2025 - July 2025)

Administrative Assistant (June 2025 – Dec. 2025)

SWCD Intern (June 2025 – August 2025)

NRCS Staff

NATURAL RESOURCES CONSERVATION SERVICE PERSONNEL

Jessica Beske

Lee Nachreiner

Jeremy Kite

NRCS Team Lead

NRCS Soil Conservationist

Wetland Conservationist

PHEASANTS FOREVER

Taylor Rasmussen

Farm Bill Biologist

Partners Staff

BOARD OF WATER AND SOIL RESOURCES:

Jill Sackett Eberhart

Board Conservationist

WASECA COUNTY COMMISSIONERS:

District 1 - Commissioner Doug Christopherson

District 2 - Commissioner Brian Harguth

District 3 - Commissioner Brad Milbrath

District 4 - Commissioner DeAnne (De) Malterer

District 5 - Commissioner Brad Krause

WASECA COUNTY OFFICES:

Chris Howard

Land & Water Resources Director

Brian Zabel

Agriculture & Ditches Coordinator

Greg Huber

Watershed Coordinator

MINNESOTA DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES:

Erynn Jenzen

Area Hydrologist, Mankato

Todd Piepho

Area Hydrologist, Sakatah

2025 Outstanding Conservation Farmer

Congratulations Don Huebl and Gary Born



Figure 1 Don Huebl and Gary Born during their interview for their Outstanding Conservationist award.



Figure 2 One of Don and Gary's filter strips along a ditch.

Don Huebl and Gary Born were selected as the 2025 Outstanding Conservationists for Waseca County by Waseca Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD) Board of Supervisors. They were picked as outstanding conservationists because of their nearly 30 years of minimum tillage practices on their corn and soybean crops. This is important to soil and water resources because it meets two of the principles of soil health: Reduce soil disturbance and keep the soil covered. They had been strip tilling since 1996 and changed to no-till corn and one spring vertical tillage pass on corn residue before planting beans. Their main reason they changed to vertical tillage is that with the genetics of corn, they saw tough corn stalks damage some of the equipment on their planter and tires.

By using minimal tillage they have noticed no white mold pressure on their soybeans, reduced fuel, equipment, and labor costs, less wear on machinery, and less erosion. They said they really noticed a difference this spring when topsoil was blowing off many local fields and their fields were protected from this wind erosion. They have done test strips where the fields were tilled in the fall and spring and found that minimal tillage yields the same or better than the test strip.

Gary has enrolled 25 acres in the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) with filter strip and wetland restoration practices. This provides important wildlife habitat and water quality protection for Boot Creek, a priority stream in the Le Sueur Watershed. Waseca SWCD congratulates Don and Gary on their conservation accomplishments throughout their farming careers.

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
 - Conservation 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 Le Sueur and Cannon River Comprehensive Watershed Management Plans**
- **Implementation of the Wetland Conservation Act**
- **Conservation Tree Sale and Tree Planter**
- **Management and distribution of Waseca SWCD's Native Grass Drill**
- **Educational conservation field days, events, and demonstrations**
- **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

- ❖ In May we hosted a Planting Green demonstration at the Southern Research and Outreach Center. Attendees saw the planter planting into a living cover crop. Discussion was based around planting methods, terminating cover crops, planting depth and more. We also viewed cover crops that were planted green weeks earlier and the crop was emerging.
- ❖ Throughout the year we partnered on three other events. These events included the Annual Hwy 14 Tour event in Owatonna, focusing on the economics of soil health practices, and a Steele County Free Fair Event, focusing on how communities and farmers can work together in conservation. Both events were put on in partnership with the Freeborn Area Soil Health Team. We also



Figure 1 May Planting Green field day.



Figure 2 2025 Waseca County Fair booth

partnered with University of Minnesota and other partners in hosting *How Drainage & Tillage Affect Your Bottom Line*.

- ❖ Each year as an effort to encourage students to learn more Waseca SWCD tries to encourage young students to learn more about conservation. We distribute Conservation themed coloring books to the kindergarten students in Waseca County. 233 coloring books were delivered.

- ❖ 4793 Newsletters were distributed to rural landowners, cooperating agencies, and businesses. This was up 40 recipients from 2024. The newsletter highlighted tree order form and other events held throughout the year.

- ❖ Throughout the year staff attend a number of events to represent the SWCD. This year a group of staff, including our summer intern, attended Farm Fest in Redwood County. During this event staff worked an Area 6 booth and answered many

questions on how famers can implement conservation on their farms. A staff also represented Waseca SWCD at the Minnesota State Fair on August 29th in BWSRs DigIt Exhibit



Figure 5 Joe Demonstrating to a class how to plant with a dibble bar

- ❖ Multiple classrooms of students took part in a one-day tree-planting event focused on environmental stewardship and community engagement. During the event, students worked together to plant trees in designated areas while learning about the importance of trees, sustainability, and caring for the environment. The activity encouraged teamwork, hands-on learning, and a sense of responsibility toward protecting natural resources. By the end of the day, the students

had contributed to a greener space and gained a greater appreciation for environmental conservation.

- ❖ As usual Waseca SWCD had a booth at the Waseca County Free Fair. This is a great opportunity to network and engage with community members who may not typically interact with the SWCD. This year we featured a tabletop rainfall simulator which showed how soil health practices can prevent soil erosion on agricultural fields. We also presented nine ribbons to 4H project participants that we thought represented the SWCD's mission.
- ❖ Staff continue to attend the World Honeybee Day at Hofmann Apiaries, rural Janesville, in August. Education about pollinators, such as honeybee, aligns with many of our projects and goals of the producers that we work with.



Figure 6 Tabletop rainfall simulator displayed at Waseca County Fair



Figure 7 Joe at World Honeybee Day



Figure 8 Hoffman Apiary

Personnel Updates

- ❖ 2025 brought a year of various staffing changes. In June Waseca SWCD welcomed Jayme Sandbeck to the team as a summer intern, she was hired through Minnesota Valley Action Council. During her brief time at the SWCD she spent time on RIM easement maps updating boundaries and map imagery, she also attended a variety of field days and outings, as well as assisted District staff with various field work. In anticipation of our Administrative Assistant, Cheri Brummund, retiring in July we hired Jade Peterson in June which allowed for some overlap in the position to allow for training needs to be met. Jade carried on the roles and responsibilities of the Administrative Assistant then resigned in December. In July we wished Cheri farewell as she retired from her nearly 10-year position as Administrative Assistant at Waseca SWCD and long career in agriculture. She made a great impact on the District and had excellent connections within the county.

In 2025 we had changes in District Supervisors as well. December of 2024 was Board Member Keith Morgan's last meeting as a Supervisor. In January of 2025 Dan Roemhildt was sworn in to the SWCD Board. Keith represented District 5 and served on the Board since 2017.

Clean Water Funds

- ❖ In 2025 Waseca SWCD received a Clean Water Funds grant of \$76,500. This grant is meant to be used for projects designed to improve water quality in lakes, rivers, streams, and groundwater across the state. For Waseca SWCD, these funds are going towards finding a solution for a complex ravine stabilization project that affects multiple houses and other public resources. A problem like this requires complex engineering to find a long-term solution, which the funds are being used for. The grant requires matching fund that have been provided by Waseca SWCD, landowners, and the Reeds Lake Association.

Expanding on Soil Health

- ❖ Waseca SWCD and many other SWCDs received funding from the Soil Health Practices RCPP grant which is dedicated to putting soil health practices on the ground. In 2025 Waseca SWCD enrolled over 3,500 acres into cover crop cost share programs and 3,800 into no-till. This was through grants such as Soil Health Practices RCPP, Soil Health Delivery, and others. We have also expanded on our Peer-to-Peer Mentor program with increased interest from mentors. Additionally, there was progression on a soil health field tour projects which is intended to bring farmers and community members alike out to local farmers fields to view and learn about soil health practices that are applied to each field.



Figure 9 Cover Crops in Waseca County

Conservation Easements

- ❖ Waseca SWCD, in cooperation with the Board of Water and Soil Resources and the Natural Resources Conservation Service, has assisted many Waseca County landowners with the establishing 121 permanent conservation easements on marginal cropland areas. The easements not only benefit the landowner, they also 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 2025 there were 5 new RIM applications that were accepted, one RIM easement that closed, and one RIM easement in process.

SWCD Aid

- ❖ SWCDs have been striving for years to get stable, dedicated funding from the State of MN out of the General Fund. In 2023, SWCDs were successful in accomplishing that with a new allocation named SWCD Aid. It is a \$15,000,000 for the first two years and \$12,000,000 thereafter. The funding allows local SWCDs to have more decision-making authority on what and how those funds are used to

Wetland Conservation Act

- ❖ The District serves on the Technical Evaluation Panel (TEP) for lands within the City of Waseca and state owned lands. In 2023 Waseca County delegated administrative duties for WCA to the SWCD. Waseca SWCD coordinates TEP meetings, reviewing applications, application decisions, confirmation of any violations, and development of appropriate restoration orders. In 2025 there were 15 applications, one violation, two wetland bank reviews, and one decision that was appealed to BWSR and upheld.



Figure 10 Wetland in Waseca County

District Tree Program

- ❖ The District had another successful tree and shrub sale in 2025. We distributed approximately 8612 trees and shrubs and 18 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. Orders in 2025 were up from 2024.



Figure 11 Joe and Cammi unloading tree delivery

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.

Conservation Contracts Funding

- ❖ Conservation Contracts is used to provide up to 75% of conservation project costs. The SWCD also provides technical assistance in the form of evaluation, design, and construction certification to the landowner. The landowner was responsible for the remaining 25% of the project. In 2025 there were two grassed waterways, and 4 well sealing projects completed with Conservation Contract Funding.

Greater Blue Earth River Basin Alliance (GBERBA)

- ❖ GBERBA is a Joint Powers Organization consisting of ten participating 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. Current grants being administered include Watonwan Watershed Based Implementation Funds, Watonwan Watershed Drinking Water, and Soil Health Implementation Grant. Waseca SWCD is represented on the Policy Board by one Supervisor and on the Technical Committee by staff. GBERBA coordinated a self-guided

soil health tour with a website and created soil health videos in 2025. GBERBA serves as fiscal agent for the Watonwan Watershed Based Implementation Funding (WBIF) and will serve as fiscal agent for the Blue Earth WBIF.

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. Waseca SWCD is represented on the TSA board by one supervisor. In 2025 the SC TSA hired a Soil Health Coordinator who has assisted in coordinating events, putting together resources, spearheading the Peer-to-Peer Soil Health Mentor Program, among many other efforts to improve soil health in our area.

Watersheds in Waseca County

Waseca SWCD continues to work collaboratively on implementing two different One Watershed One Plan agreements. This includes the Cannon River Watershed and the Le Sueur Watershed.

One Watershed One Plan (1W1P) – Cannon River Watershed Joint Powers Board (CRWJPB)

- ❖ The Cannon Watershed continues to implement projects throughout the watershed. The Cannon Watershed was selected for funding for watershed-based water planning 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. Since 2021 the CRJPB has received three grant allocations. These funds continue to help implement conservation projects across the watershed. These projects can include cover crops, no-till practices, WASCObS, lake management plans, and more. The CRJPB also provides educational webinars related to conservation ranging from soil health topics to pollinators and anywhere in between. In 2025 six webinars were presented. Waseca SWCD is represented on the CRWJPB by a Supervisor and on the Cannon Implementation Group by the District Manager. In 2025 Waseca SWCD had four projects approved within the CRJPB. This includes two no-till contract totaling over 905 acres, one cover crop contract totaling 330 acres, and one shoreline planting project. CRWJPB also coordinated algae sampling in lakes and a feasibility study for water storage in the Upper Cannon Watershed.

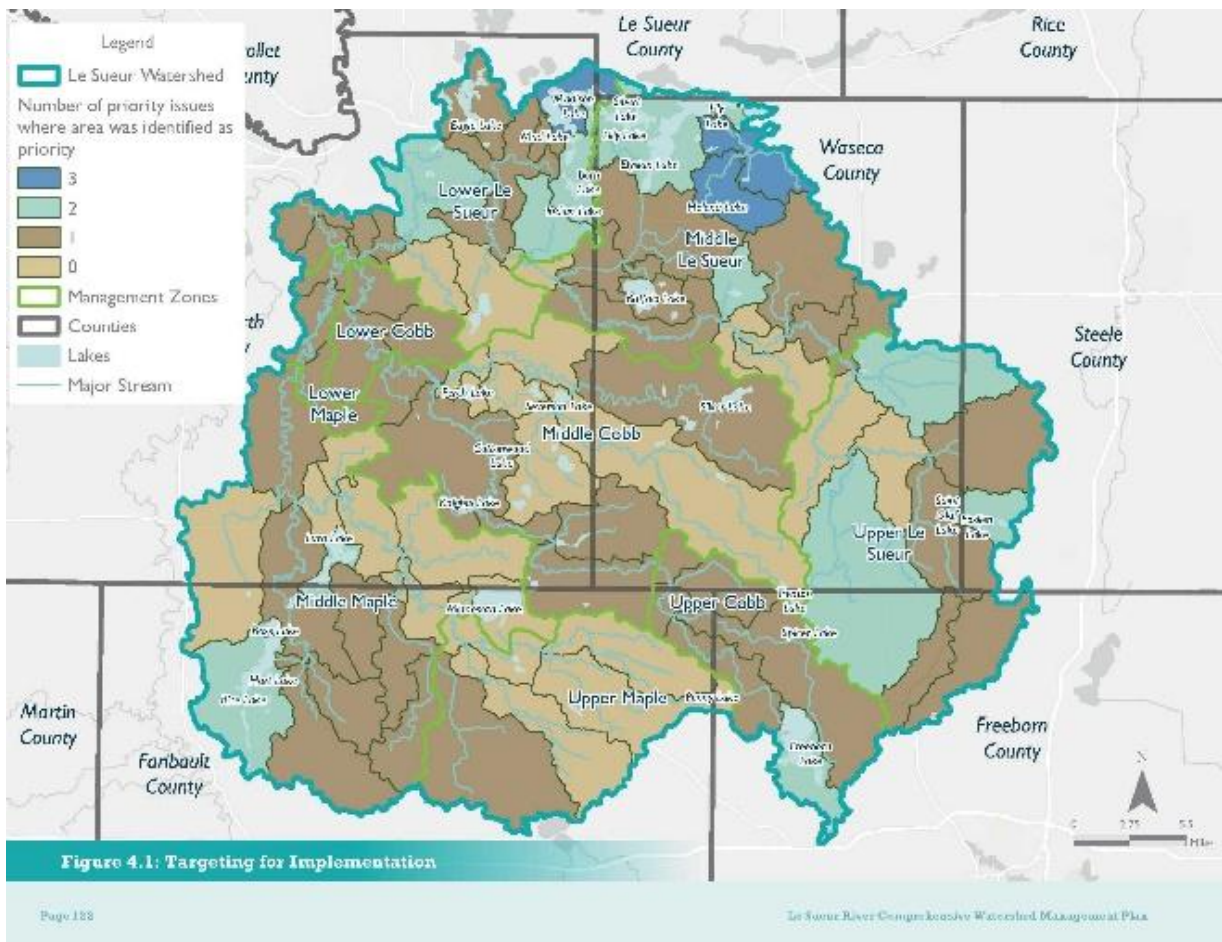
One Watershed One Plan – Le Sueur River Watershed Based Implementation Fund(WBIF)

- ❖ Partners within the Le Sueur River Watershed were selected for a 1W1P planning grant through BWSR in 2020. The Partners in the Watershed are Blue Earth County, Blue Earth SWCD, Faribault County, Faribault SWCD, Freeborn County, Freeborn SWCD, Waseca County and Waseca SWCD. Waseca County is the current Plan Coordinator and Waseca SWCD is serving as Fiscal Agent. Representatives on the Policy Committee, Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) and Steering Team met regularly to work on planning tasks. Waseca SWCD is represented on the policy committee by one Supervisor and on the Steering Team and TAC by Staff. The Le Sueur River Watershed WBIF grant has many projects that can aid landowners with funds to pay partial or pay all a project depending on the parameters of allowed through Board of Water and Soil Resources (BWSR).

❖ In 2025 the 2026 Le Sueur River WBIF grant was awarded, giving the watershed an additional \$1,364,269 to implement conservation practices within the watershed. In 2024 Le Sueur WBIF was awarded a grant of \$1,355,872.00. Majority of the new grant has yet to be used. This grant will be used on practices such as cover crops, no-till, grassed waterways, well sealing, septic, and more. These funds have been used to aid landowners throughout the Le Sueur River Watershed Area. In 2025 Waseca had 5 projects approved with this funding including 3 water and sediment control basins, 1 no-till, and 2 well sealings.



Figure 12 Le Sueur 1W1P Policy Committee at Public Hearing



Programs and Projects of the Waseca SWCD and Partnering Agencies Results for 2025

2025 came with many projects that helped landowners in implementing conservation practices on their land.

Cover Crops	16 Contracts on over 3,500 acres
No-till	7 Contracts on over 3,800 acres
Water & Sediment Control Basin	3 Contracts
Well Sealings	5 Contracts
Tree Windbreaks	3 Contracts
CRP Incentives	2 Contracts
Reinvest in Minnesota (RIM) Easements	5 Easement Applications Accepted 1 Easement Closed

These projects were funded by grant programs like Soil Health Practices RCPP, 2025 Soil Health Delivery, Cannon/Le Sueur WBIF funding, Riparian Funds, Conservation Contracts, and Fishers and Farmers.

Waseca County Federal Conservation Funding			
<i>(Information furnished by NRCS & FSA)</i>			
<i>Fiscal Year October 1, 2024-September 30, 2025 (FY25)</i>			
<u>Program</u>	<u>Contracts</u>	<u>Acres</u>	<u>Amount Paid</u>
CRP (NEW)	*	*	\$*
Active CRP	*	*	\$*
CRP Expired	*	*	\$*
EQIP (NEW)	1	42.7	\$5,619.73
Active EQIP	12	2,345.5	\$192,789.18
CSP (NEW)	3	472.5	\$21,643.00
Active CSP	8	3,637.4	\$288,832.00
WRP	0	0	\$0
	<i>New Contracts Totals included in Active Contract Totals</i>	<i>New Contracts Totals included in Active Contract Totals</i>	

*** 2025 information not provided**