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winter 2012

[www.nrcs.usda.gov](http://www.nrcs.usda.gov)  
[www.bigstoneswcd.org](http://www.bigstoneswcd.org)  
[www.pheasantsforever.org](http://www.pheasantsforever.org)

# Big Stone Conservation News

## NRCS

*District Conservationist*  
 Krecia Leddy

*Soil Conservation Tech*  
 Dale Thiel

## SWCD

*District Technician*  
 Blayne Johnson

*Administrative Assistant*  
 Tammy Neubauer

## PHEASANTS FOREVER

*Farm Bill Biologist*  
 Travis Issendorf



There are two new faces in the Big Stone office since this fall. Dale Thiel was hired as the new Soil Conservation Technician for the NRCS (far left) and Blayne Johnson was hired as the new District Technician for the SWCD (third in from the right).

### Big Stone SWCD Board of Supervisors

Area 1- Scott Gillespie    Area 2- Vernon Johnson    Area 3- Mike Jorgenson  
 Area 4- Holly Wellendorf    Area 5- Lon Moen

## Tree Orders for Spring 2012!

Big Stone SWCD is now taking orders for the spring tree planting season. We have a wide variety of trees and shrubs available. Fabric for weed control is available for installation. This fabric restricts weed growth and retains moisture in the soil. Go online to our website to download our order form and look at our prices. You can also stop in the office and discuss different options for your tree planting with Blayne. Tree care products are available as well. Tubex tree tubes can be ordered by the district. These tubes not only provide protection from deer and rabbits, but also aid in the growth of your newly planted trees. Call Blayne with any questions.



What would be the feeling of this Nation should a foreign nation suddenly enter the United States and destroy 90,000 acres of land, as erosion has been allowed to do in a single county?  
 -H.H. Bennett, 1928

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE  
Natural Resources Conservation Service  
342 NW Second St.  
Ortonville, MN 556278-1413 Phone (320) 839-6149  
Contact person: Krecia Leddy  
District Conservationist

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
1/1/12

### “EQIP Funding Available”

The Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) provides technical assistance, and cost-share payments to assist crop, livestock, and other agriculture producers who are planning new environmental and conservation improvements to their operation. To be eligible for the cost share or incentive payments under the EQIP program, you must be in compliance with all the USDA Farm Bill provisions. Conservation practices may only be cost shared if you are signed up and approved for EQIP funding and conservation practices are planned, designed, and implemented according to NRCS standards.

Below is a list of four resource concerns defined at the national level and some conservation practices producers can implement through EQIP that provide solutions to those concerns.

- *Soil Erosion* – Conservation crop rotation, residue management, no till, grade stabilization structures, sediment dams, and field windbreaks.
- *Water Quality* – Nutrient management, pest management, stream bank and shoreline protection, animal waste storage, feedlot runoff structures, and feedlot runoff.
- *Air Quality* – Residue management, no till, and field windbreak.
- *At-risk Wildlife Species* – Upland wildlife management with the restoration of rare and declining habitat.

Consider enrolling in EQIP if you are facing any of these resource concerns. *There is currently a sign-up period going on now until January 27th. For more information contact the Big Stone County NRCS at (320) 839-6149 ext. 3, or stop in your local NRCS office.*

## MINNESOTA WETLANDS CONSERVATION ACT (WCA)

The Minnesota Wetlands Conservation Act was passed in 1991. The intention of the law was to protect wetlands which were not covered by any other wetland protection laws and to obtain a **no net loss in the quantity and quality of Minnesota's existing wetlands**. The WCA requires persons proposing to impact a wetland (draining, excavating or filling) to first, attempt to avoid the impact if at all possible; second, attempt to minimize the impact; and third, replace any impacted wetland area with a restored wetland of at least equal function and value. When considering the work involved in obtaining an approved replacement plan for a project that will impact a wetland, or the hiring of an environmental consultant to complete the necessary work, it is usually much easier to completely avoid the wetland if at all possible.

In Big Stone County, the WCA is administered by the Environmental Officer with oversight provided by the MN Board of Water and Soil Resources. Remember to contact the Environmental Officer and other appropriate agencies well in advance before doing work in a wetland. Also, be reminded that wetlands normally **extend considerably beyond the cattails**, and that these areas are **equally protected** even though cattails are absent. There are cropping exemptions to this rule and will be considered by the LGU. Contractors can now be held liable for work done in wetlands in addition to the persons that hire them. The best method is to check before doing any work that might impact a wetland. In Minnesota, WCA may be stricter than any other wetland law in the state depending on the site.

## Conservation Programs

Everything you do, or don't do, on your land has an effect on the wildlife you share it with. Just letting plants grow taller, rather than clipping close to the ground, gives more cover for wildlife. Also letting a few weedy plants grow results in more insects for young birds. If you think about leaving food or cover for wildlife as you manage your land, you're on your way to doing the little things that add up to having a major impact. Here are some suggestions along the way:

**Grass and hay fields.** Leave ditchbanks, roadsides, grassed waterways, and other odd areas undisturbed or wait until after the nesting season to mow. Add flushbars to mowing equipment. The above article showed a photo of a flushbar a producer added in Big Stone County. This practice was part of his enhancement practices in his CSP contract. Another option would be to mow hayfields from the center to the outside, giving wildlife a chance to escape to field edges.

**Crop fields.** Use no-till or conservation tillage to provide cover and food for wildlife in winter. Leave a few rows of standing crop along field edges to provide wildlife habitat. Maximize the likely survival of pheasants, prairie chicken, and other birds by leaving these rows next to large tracts of grasses, trees or other habitat.

**Maximize odd areas.** Make full use of non-farmed areas by establishing habitat used by the wildlife you want to see on your farm. Use native grasses as well as forbs and legumes. Plant native trees and shrubs to produce fruits and nuts.

All of the NRCS programs have practices that can enhance wildlife habitat. Whether it be EQIP, CSP, GRP, WHIP, WRP, or even CRP, stop in and learn more about how we can help you enhance the wildlife habitat on your operation or call (320) 839-6149 ext. 3

## Big Stone County Accepting Wildlife Applications

The NRCS office is accepting applications for improving wildlife habitat. Through the Wildlife Habitat Incentive Program (WHIP), applications are scored and submitted for approval. **\*Now is the time to begin planning for wildlife habitat development for 2012 applications.\***

The Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program (WHIP) is a cost share program providing up to 75% cost share to install wildlife practices. Some of the practices cost-shared include...

- Restoration and management of native grasses and wildflowers
- Plant native trees and shrubs
- Streambank protection and fish habitat improvement
- Wetland restoration
- Prescribed burning of native remnant prairie

Eligible participants include those individuals who own or have control of the land under consideration. All lands are eligible for WHIP, except; land currently enrolled in the Conservation Reserve Program, Wetlands Reserve Program, or Environmental Quality Incentive Program. Participants are offered technical and financial assistance for the establishment of wildlife habitat development practices. USDA and the participant enter into a cost-share agreement. This agreement generally lasts from 5 to 10 years. Under the agreement, the landowner agrees to install and maintain the WHIP practices. Landowners maintain control of the land, and no public access is required. WHIP does not provide rental income or purchase easements. In addition, if the landowner agrees, cooperating Federal and State wildlife agencies and nonprofit or private organizations may provide expertise or additional funding to help complete a project.

Applications for WHIP technical and financial are accepted on a continuous basis. **However, if you are interested in submitting an application for 2012, it is recommended that you work with the local NRCS office as the 1<sup>st</sup> ranking period will end January 27<sup>th</sup>.** For more information about WHIP, and eligible wildlife habitat practices, contact the Big Stone County NRCS office at (320)839-6149, or on the World Wide Web at [www.mn.nrcs.usda.gov](http://www.mn.nrcs.usda.gov).

## Can you farm a Wetland?- of Course!

Recently, I have been asked several questions, regarding wetlands. The two main questions include: 1) if an area is indicated as a wetland on a map and it doesn't have cattails and standing water is it still a wetland?, and 2) can an area that is indicated as a wetland be farmed? How these two myths came about does not stem from USDA farm bill policy. One cannot DRAIN or otherwise alter a wetland to convert it and still receive USDA benefits. There are also several different classifications of wetlands so one does not have to have a cattail slough to have a wetland on their farm. Here are some definitions and uses for wetlands:

"A wetland is an area of predominantly hydric soil that is inundated or saturated and can support a prevalence of plants that will grow in saturated soils or standing water". The allowed use "may be used to produce ag commodities and forage when weather permits if there is no alteration of the wetland, including removal of woody vegetation." A **temporary wetland** holds water or is saturated for about a dozen days in the spring during normal years. It may reflood during heavy rains. A **seasonal wetland** holds water for about two months in the spring during normal years, but in dry years, there may only be enough runoff to saturate the soil. A **semi-permanent wetland** is usually in an obvious basin, and holds water through the summer in normal years. This is typically thought of as a cattail slough. A **permanent wetland** holds water year-round. In other words, you can farm the wetland if you can get into it! There is nothing prohibiting you from farming a wetland area when it is dry enough to farm.

To confuse matters even more, a 'Farmed Wetland' (FW) is a "wetland that was partially drained or altered before 12/23/85, and an ag commodity was planted before 12/23/85. The land was not completely drained and the area still meets wetland criteria." Producers can farm it as it was farmed before 12/23/85. You can also maintain the drainage (waterway, tile, ditch, etc.) in accordance with the original degree of drainage or alteration done before 12/23/85 as documented with NRCS on the Drainage Worksheet. For example, if the ditch was made with an 8 foot wide scraper, it should be maintained with the same type of equipment and not made wider, deeper or longer than it was originally built.

In some cases, your land may have never been inventoried for wetlands and then a Certified Wetland Determination will need to be completed. These take some additional time to complete, so please make your requests in advance of any work that you may want to do. **As a reminder, if your thinking of doing drainage maintenance or any new tile make sure that you complete an AD-1026 request with FSA, get your permit from your local Watershed District, and check with the county to ensure you're in compliance with WCA (Wetland Conservation Act) of Minnesota.**



### NEW PROCEDURES FOR REVIEWING AD-1026 DRAINAGE REQUESTS

By Krecia Leddy, District Conservationist, Big Stone County

Producers please be aware that the process for reviewing drainage requests has changed. Local field offices have received guidance nationally that the revised Food Security Act Manual has clarified the process to be used to review wetland conservation provisions. This guidance will affect how AD-1026 requests are reviewed for drainage maintenance and new drainage requests. Anytime a producer wants to maintain drainage systems or create new drainage, an AD-1026 form is to be requested at FSA. The new change is that the producer's signature on for AD-1026 provides authorization for NRCS to conduct certified wetland determinations and gives USDA authorization to enter upon and inspect all farms in which the producer has an interest for the purpose of confirming their AD-1026 statements. A Certified Wetland Determination must be completed in order to respond to the drainage request. If a producer has a certified wetland determination on file for the tract the proposed work is to be completed, no 'new' certified wetland determination will be completed.

As spring approaches and you have intentions of maintaining ditches or installing tile, please get your requests in early and allow NRCS extra time as your request will need to be reviewed in the office and in the field for the entire tract of land. There are not many certified wetland determinations on file in Big Stone County; your patience will be appreciated as we work through completing these requests.

As a reminder, if your land is located in a Watershed Management District, you will need to complete a Watershed Drainage Permit in order to complete your drainage request, and Minnesota State Wetland Conservation ACT (WCA) Provisions may also apply so contact the County Environmental Officer. Any questions regarding drainage systems in Big Stone County should be referred to NRCS at (320) 839-6149 ext. 3, Ortonville.



Left: Grassed Waterway



Right: Sediment Basins

Source for Photos: NRCS

## Preventing Soil Loss with Water/Sediment Control Basins and Grassed Waterways

**Grassed waterways** are strips of grass seeded on cropland where water concentrates or flows off a field. Grassed waterways are beneficial on cropland because they help form natural drainageways, prevent gully erosion and reduce the movement of sediment. The natural channel carries water runoff from the field while the grass prevents the water from forming a gully. The vegetation in the waterway will also trap sediment washed from cropland, absorb chemicals and nutrients, and provide cover for wildlife. Grassed waterways are also easier to cross with farm machinery than are natural gullies. To enhance grass waterway effectiveness, combine a waterway with a filter strip along the edge to trap additional contaminants and field sediment.

**Water and sediment control basins** are erosion control structures installed to prevent bank and gully erosion on farmland. A water and sediment control basin in a conservation system can achieve the same objective as a grassed waterway. This structure is comprised of an earth berm or dam, constructed across a low draw in a field, and built to a height to pond the runoff water from the upstream watershed for the maximum expected storm which may occur once every 10 years. The runoff water is temporarily stored behind the berm eliminating its erosive capabilities further down slope. This ponded water is slowly released through an inlet riser pipe to an underground tile exiting at an adequate outlet. Water and sediment control basins, grassed waterways, and many other conservation practices can be cost-shared with the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) through the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP).

## State Cost Share Program

Each year the SWCD receives a State Cost-Share grant from the Board of Water and Soil Resources (BWSR), to be used on conservation practices. Some of the practices eligible for this program include: field windbreaks, shelterbelts, grassed waterways, terraces, sediment basins, strip-cropping, and critical area plantings.

The practices funded with this program seem to change with the times and availability of other programs. The past few years have seen most of these dollars being used primarily for shelterbelts that are not eligible for federal dollars. Examples of this would be shelterbelt renovations where the lack of crop history makes these ineligible for continuous CRP, or shelterbelts on land not currently under a federal farm program number. This program fills a niche for people living in the country, and not associated with farming.

Erosion is a concern for everybody. For those whose livelihood depends on raising a crop it is very true. With heavy rainfalls or strong winds causes more soil to erode away. A producer may lose bushels around the eroded area. NRCS wants to help those with erosion issues. There is a program called EQIP. EQIP stands for Environmental Quality Incentive Program. Under this program, the NRCS has allocated money to help producers/landowners protect their land from erosion. There are 3 main practices the NRCS uses. They are Terraces, Water and Sediment Control Basins (WASCOBs), and Grass Waterways. The EQIP program helps offset the cost of building these practices.

Terraces and WASCOBs are used to store water behind them and flow down an intake into tile. They are designed to drain in a 48 hour period.

A grass waterway consists of a constructed vegetated channel that is shaped or graded to carry surface water at a non-erosive velocity to a stable outlet.

If you have any erosion issues and would like to discuss your options, feel free to call the NRCS office in Ortonville at 320-839-6149 ext.3.



WASCOB



Terrace

### **NEW EMPLOYEE FOR NRCS!!!!**

***My name is Dale Thiel. I come to Ortonville from Jackson MN. For the last three years I worked for the NRCS in Jackson County. Working in Jackson County, I was exposed to Terrace, Grass waterways, no-till, strip till, wetland recoveries, CRP, CSP, and Pest and Nutrient Management. I grew up in SE North Dakota outside of Mooreton ND. I graduated from NDSU in 1998 with a Bachelors' degree in Agronomy. I was out of the agricultural field for 10 years before starting with the NRCS.***

***I enjoy playing golf, playing basketball, volleyball, and other sports. In the summer you will see me on the golf course quite often. I have 4 brothers and 2 sisters. Most of my family is living around the Wahpeton ND area. My mother still resides in Wahpeton.***

# NEWS FROM THE SWCD

Hello to all,

My name is Blayne Johnson. I was hired by the Big Stone Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD) as the new District Technician in August. My position includes managing our tree sale services, overseeing our native grass drill program and seed sales, managing weed control, well monitoring and wildlife plantings. I grew up on a hobby farm near Litchfield, MN. I graduated college from South Dakota State University in Brookings, SD with my degree in Wildlife & Fisheries Science. Upon graduating, I began gaining experience working with the Game Fish & Parks in South Dakota and was then hired by the SWCD in Ortonville where I now live and work. I value our natural resources and plan on continuing to practice conservation throughout our county. That being said, the Big Stone SWCD needs your help continuing to make our county cleaner and more productive. We offer a variety of programs to better enhance our natural resources; including:

**Farmstead Shelterbelts** are designed to protect housing, livestock and other property while aiding wildlife with the implementation of a dense tree grove. This includes any number of rows to be established to safeguard your property from extreme winds along with snow accumulation. State cost share, EQIP (Environmental Quality Incentive Program) and CRP (Conservation Reserve Program) funding is available for this practice. The Big Stone SWCD receives state cost-share funding to provide reimbursement payments of 50% - 75% to those in need of financial assistance. Based on eligibility and cropping history, applicants may also apply under EQIP with the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) and receive federal dollars to enhance the overall reimbursement payment and reduce the land owners total out of pocket expense.

**Field Windbreaks** are enabled to reduce wind and soil erosion in open areas and along fields by planting 1 or 2 rows of trees to create a barrier. Studies have shown that windbreaks may help increase average yields by reducing crop stress caused by dry air being pushed through crops due to high winds. Field windbreaks can be funded through EQIP, state cost share and CRP. The CRP funded program provides a 15 year land easement payment to the land owner based on the amount of area the planting occupies.

**Wildlife Planting:** Quality habitat through tree plantings are always needed and more so beneficial to wildlife. Whether it consists of a few rows or a larger scale planting it creates another area of space, cover and a potential food source for various animals to occupy during the sometimes harsh and damaging winter months. The Pheasants Forever Chapter along with the Big Stone SWCD are the contributors in providing financial assistance to willing participants. Wildlife plantings generally include tree and shrub species best suited for providing dense cover along with an adequate food source.

**Native Grass Drill:** The SWCD offers a no till grass drill rental for all your seeding needs along with providing a tractor operator and distributing the necessary seed. Several varieties of grasses and forbs can be established through our office. Stop by and ask about our seed prices and drill rental fees.

The time to place orders for the 2012 planting season is NOW. The SWCD is currently accepting all applications and tree orders. Stop by our office to visiting us at [www.bigstoneswcd.org](http://www.bigstoneswcd.org) or call us at 320-839-6149 x3. If you are having any questions, feel free to email me at [blayne.johnson@mn.nacdnet.net](mailto:blayne.johnson@mn.nacdnet.net).

# NEWS RELEASE

Web: <http://www.mn.nrcs.usda.gov>

**Contact: Julie MacSwain, State Public Affairs Specialist (651) 602-7859**

## USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service Announces Sign-Up Period for Conservation Stewardship Program

**St. Paul, MN, December 13, 2011** – USDA’s Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) recently announced that the cut-off date to have an application submitted for the Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP) is January 13, 2012. Producers interested in CSP should submit applications to their local NRCS office by the deadline so that their applications can be considered during the first ranking period of 2012.

“CSP is one of our most popular conservation programs, and we expect to receive many applications,” NRCS State Conservationist Don Baloun said. “I encourage all farmers and ranchers who are interested in applying to contact their local NRCS office as soon as possible so they can meet the deadline.”

CSP is offered in all 50 states, and the Pacific and Caribbean areas through continuous sign-ups. The program provides many conservation benefits including improvement of water and soil quality, wildlife habitat enhancements and adoption of conservation activities that address the effects of climate change. Eligible lands include cropland, pastureland, rangeland, non-industrial private forest land under the jurisdiction of an Indian tribe.

A CSP self-screening checklist is available to help potential applicants determine if CSP is suitable for their operation. The checklist highlights basic information about CSP eligibility requirements, contract obligations and potential payments. It is available from local NRCS offices and on the CSP Web page.

As part of the CSP application process, applicants will work with NRCS field personnel to complete the resource inventory using a Conservation Measurement Tool (CMT). The CMT determines the conservation performance for existing and new conservation activities. The applicant’s conservation performance will be used to determine eligibility, ranking and payments.

During the first three sign-ups in 2010 and 2011, over 2,300 Minnesota applicants enrolled in CSP, putting additional conservation on over 1.4 million acres in Minnesota, to improve water and soil quality, enhance wildlife habitat and address the effects of climate change.

Visit the NRCS National Web site, [www.mn.nrcs.usda.gov](http://www.mn.nrcs.usda.gov), and connect with an NRCS office near you.

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# Pheasants Forever Perspective

Travis Issendorf – Farm Bill Wildlife Biologist

12/19/2011

## Winter Weather – Ways to Curb Impacts on Wildlife

As I write this article, I glance outside to see the brown grass and notice the temperature is unseasonably mild for December, and has been for the latter half of the fall. What a great time to live in Minnesota! Right? In a flash, the weather in the upper Midwest can dramatically change. It was only a year ago that four separate, December snowstorms blanketed various portions of the Gopher State. Several inches of snow on the ground with blowing winds made for some early winter weather conditions on the roads, as well as making the winter feel that much longer.

Some of us, human and beast alike, have the option to head south when the first sign of winter exposes its ugly head. All migrating wildlife migrate to find suitable food resources that will help them to survive until the migration in spring once more. This behavior has been ingrained in them to ward off this harsh winter weather. I think the same can be said of the older generations that annually head to warmer climates to the south. I can understand why these “snow-birds” migrate. After reviewing historical data on the MNDNR/U of M’s Climatology Working Group website, [www.climate.umn.edu/climatology.htm](http://www.climate.umn.edu/climatology.htm), many of the generations before me have experienced some of the worst blizzards in state history. Since the Armistice Day blizzard in 1940, there have been over 21 severe blizzards throughout the state. Unfortunately, most of us with limited budgets don’t have the luxury of removing ourselves from the situation, and must deal with whatever mother-nature hands us, wildlife included. The next time you peer out the window on that cold January morning in Minnesota or take that snowy, snowshoe hike in March, just take a minute and think of the many species of resident wildlife that are in a fight for their lives all winter long.

### Dense Winter Cover is Key!

What can I do to help you may ask? Some of the best long-term ways to help are to implement native grass plantings that can be utilized for nesting cover, as well as winter cover during mild winters. Although, with severe winters the need for more robust or secure habitat is needed. This is where woody plantings are such a benefit. A conifer/shrub planting designed in the correct location will act as a windbreak, shelter, and a temporary food source for many types of wildlife. Implementation of this secure cover near a food source and robust nesting cover is always best. That way the woody vegetation provides cover near the food plot while protecting the food source and nesting cover from the wind and drifting snow. Designing this woody planting near or adjacent to a cattail slough, Phragmites’ stand, sandbar willow thicket, or other natural winter cover would also be very beneficial. This way you can enhance the natural cover that is already providing shelter for our farmland wildlife. The need for these woody plantings can be high during severe winters, especially when it coincides with a previously, dry fall when ditch maintenance and fall tillage is extremely prevalent.

The key point to take away here is that in knowing how important this cover is for wildlife, we still need to be mindful of where we locate these wildlife plantings and to what duration they are implemented on the landscape. If placed in the wrong location or not planned carefully, these projects can do more harm than good.

## **Weather Trends**

All of us can remember the past, severe winters when the majority of our natural cover was drifted in by late January, or sometimes earlier. This type of weather was a past phenomenon that seemed to occur once every 10 years or so. In recent years, these stronger storms have occurred with more frequency. Many would argue the reason(s) for this change, whether it is due to human factors like global warming or natural, climatic changes such as weather patterns; regardless of the cause, the severe storm (blizzard) conditions seem to be occurring more often. This new trend is a major reason why we as conservationists and wildlife enthusiasts must do our part. Pheasants and other farmland wildlife are forced to sometimes move to less quality cover, such as farmstead groves when things get bad. Don't get me wrong, some of the newly-planned shelterbelts, as well as renovations utilize more conifers and shrubs in their plan, which makes for better quality winter habitat. This type of shelterbelt plan provides more suitable cover that may be adequate to hold birds through the winter. Some of our older farmstead shelterbelts were not designed to be high-quality winter wildlife habitat. They were designed to be adequate windbreaks for buildings and livestock. Due to that, the vegetation established didn't provide much for ground level cover or food sources. They tend to include tall, deciduous trees as well as some conifers and shrubs that don't provide many stems/ft<sup>2</sup>. These farmsteads lack the ground cover for roosting. This problem makes wildlife very vulnerable to avian and terrestrial predators. Due to this, certain avian predators, such as owls and hawks will actually key in on these locations. We need to be mindful of this relationship between large trees and predators when planning our 2012 planting project.

## **Programs to Establish Cover**

When you begin tabulating the expenses of site preparation, conifer/shrub seedlings, planting fees, fabric, and weed control or grass seeding, it adds up. What if I told you that you could receive up to 75% reimbursement on those incurred expenses for establishment through a few programs that our NRCS/SWCD office promotes to landowners? Is it sounding better? This is a financial option that we can offer landowners for plantings through: **1.) WHIP** **2.) Big Stone County - Pheasants Forever**

**WHIP – Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program**, This program is a voluntary program for landowners who would like to develop or enhance wildlife habitat on private or tribal lands. Technical assistance and cost-sharing to establish the fish and wildlife habitat enhancement is provided. Eligible lands are tracts greater than 5 acres which include: grassland, woodland/pastureland, wetlands, streams and riparian areas, and agricultural or non-agricultural lands. This isn't to say a person has to implement enhancements on 5 acres, but they must have ownership on those acres, at a minimum. To participate, you must own or have control of the land being considered for enhancements for the duration of the agreement. Cost-sharing will reimburse up to 75% of costs. Cost-share agreements normally last 5-10 years from the date that the contract is signed. This agreement states that the landowner maintains

his cost-shared practices and gives NRCS access to monitor the progress of the implemented practices. The first step is completing an application explaining the habitat enhancements you would like to implement. This step can be completed with the help of your local, NRCS staff. For more information, contact the NRCS office in Ortonville at (320) 839-6149, ext 3 or stop in to the USDA Service Center at 342 NW 2<sup>nd</sup> St., Ortonville, MN. For additional information on this program as well as other USDA programs, locate the NRCS website on the World Wide Web at [www.mn.nrcs.usda.gov](http://www.mn.nrcs.usda.gov). NRCS is taking WHIP applications now!

**Wildlife Planting Program – Big Stone Pheasants Forever**, This local chapter offers cost-share to landowners for implementing suitable winter cover in Big Stone County for pheasants and other farmland wildlife. The chapter offers this program for sites that do not qualify for other programs (i.e. fallow land, non-program acres). The chapter provides cost-share up to 75% for project costs related to plantings that they determine to be suitable for the landscape. Eligibility requirements are that landowners are PF members. The Soil & Water Conservation District/ Big Stone PF Farm Bill Wildlife Biologist will work with you to provide technical assistance on design planning, species selection, site preparation, weed control, and establishment. Ordering of conifers and shrubs can also be provided by the Big Stone SWCD.

Any questions relating to this article or any other conservation programs, contact our office at (320) 839-6149, ext 3 and we would be happy to discuss available options for your farm or property.

**Wishing you and your family an enjoyable and productive 2012!**

### SWCD Working on Weeds

The Big Stone SWCD has received grants from the Board of Water and Soil Resources in 2010 and in 2012 to establish and maintain a Cooperative Weed Management Area. This established a group of local, federal, and state agencies to develop a plan to control weeds in Big Stone County and also Traverse County added in 2012. An ATV and sprayer were purchased by the CWMA and are available for all of your spraying needs. Some weed control may be eligible for cost-share.

*If you have any small acre CRP, RIM, etc. land that is in need of spraying call Blayne or Tammy at the office for more information.*



**Big Stone SWCD** is now supplying this repellent to producers and land owners, to prevent animal browsing problems which jeopardize conservation efforts. Testimonials, professional referrals, government and industry field trials demonstrate that **Plantskydd** is the **most effective, longest lasting animal repellent available. Year Round Protection**—up to 3-4 months during the active growing season and up to 6 months on dormant plants. **Economical**—Lasts up to TWICE as long as other repellents. **Safe** for use in protecting fruit, vegetables, and other food crops against browse damage. The FIRST repellent to be **OMRI listed for use in production of ORGANIC food and fibre.** **100% Natural**—Non-Toxic—No synthetic additives—Not harmful to animals or the environment. For use on a plants, including ornamental shrubs and flowers, deciduous and conifer trees, grasses and bulbs. **Odor-based Repellent**—*Animals avoid plants before they bite—not after!*

### Tubex Tree Tubes

Our overall objective is to make life easier for you after planting the trees, by improving the quality of the trees and by reducing the costs of growing and maintaining them. The Tubex tree shelter produces better growth and it protects the tree from the elements such as animals, environment, and herbicides. Contact the SWCD for pricing!!!!!!!



### **Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) Season Tunnel Systems for Crops**

Agricultural producers looking to solve natural resource problems on their farms should apply now for assistance through the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) administered by the USDA-Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS).

A new pilot practice that is available this year under the Know Your Farmer, Know Your Food initiative, seasonal tunnels are used to increase the availability of locally grown food produced in a conservation friendly way.

“Potential natural resource benefits from using tunnel structures could include improved plant quality, improved soil quality and improved water quality through methods such as reduced nutrient and pesticide transport,” said Krecia Leddy, Big Stone County District Conservationist for NRCS.

NRCS will fund one high tunnel per farm, up to 2,178 square feet in size. To be eligible for financial assistance on this practice, a high tunnel kit must be purchased from a commercial manufacturer and be installed in accordance with the manufacturer’s recommendations. These are temporary, seasonal structures (not greenhouses) and are only for use in growing crops. Additional conservation practices for control of water runoff from the tunnels or erosion may also need to be installed.

**Completed applications must be received at local NRCS Field Offices throughout Minnesota by January 27<sup>th</sup> for producers in order to be considered for this funding period.**

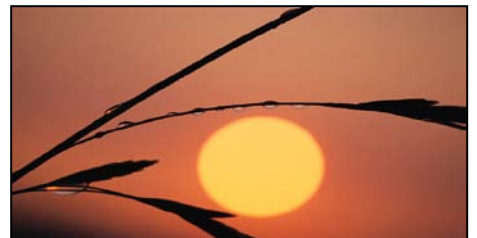
Participation in EQIP is limited to agricultural producers. Organic producers, limited resource farmers, beginning farmers, and underserved farmers were designated in the 2008 Farm Bill focused outreach groups and may benefit from EQIP.

To find out more about EQIP in Minnesota, contact your local NRCS field office or visit the MN NRCS website: [www.mn.nrcs.usda.gov](http://www.mn.nrcs.usda.gov).

Big Stone SWCD has a **Great Plains 10’ No-Till drill available for rent**. We also provide a variety of grass seed mixes for all of your conservation needs.



Rates are available at the USDA office or online at the SWCD website



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