

2017 Annual Report

Big Stone Soil & Water Conservation District

A Soil and Water Conservation District is a legal subdivision of the State governed by a five member Board, elected by the public. They provide local leadership & direction for applying conservation practices to the land.

This annual report is presented by the following board members and office personnel for the Big Stone SWCD:

Board of Supervisors

Board of Supervisors' meetings are the first Tuesday of the month at 3:00 p.m.

Area I	Dan Morrill, Vice Chairman & Personnel Committee	Toqua, Graceville, Moonshine Twps
Area II	Thomas Holker, Member	Browns Valley, Foster, Prior Twps
Area II	Mike Jorgenson, Chairman & Personnel Committee	Malta, Almond, Otrej Twps
Area IV	Ronald Reisdorph, Finance Committee	Ortonville, Big Stone Twps
Area V	Lon Moen, Treasurer & Finance Committee	Odessa, Akron, Artichoke Twps

Staff

Blayne Johnson - District Technician	Beau Peterson – District Manager
Mitchell Kill – District Technician	Joseph Otto – FarmBill Technician
Tammy Neubauer - District Administrative Assistant	

Cooperating Agencies

USDA-NATURAL RESOURCES CONSERVATION SERVICE

Krecia Leddy - District Conservationist	Gary Hoffman - Soil Conservation Technician
Cathee Pullman - State Conservationist	Jennifer Sweeney - Asst. State Conservationist

UPPER MINNESOTA RIVER WATERSHED DISTRICT

Dianne Radermacher - Administrator

BOARD OF WATER AND SOIL RESOURCES (BWSR)

Jason Beckler - Board Conservationist
Lynda Ponting - BWSR WCA Representative

MINNESOTA ASSOCIATION OF SOIL & WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICTS (MASWCD)

John Jaschke - Executive Director LeAnn Buck - MASWCD Executive Director

BIG STONE COUNTY ENVIRONMENTAL OFFICE

Darren Wilke - Environmental Office/Local Government Unit

BIG STONE COUNTY COMMISSIONERS

Wade Athey Brent Olson Jay Backer
Roger Sandberg Joseph Berning

Services Provided by the District:

- Tree planning, planting, and fabric installation
- Tree tubes and installation available, and Plantskydd were sold for animal control
- Technical and financial assistance through state cost-share for installation of conservation practices
- Promoted conservation educational activities through information contests and displays
- Administered State Conservation Programs such as RIM, Erosion Control & Water Management Program, Buffer Implementation, Buffer Cost Share, etc.
- Served on the TEP for the Wetlands Conservation Act of 1991
- Provided no-till drill, rotary mower and spraying services as requested.
- Provided grass seed for various seeding projects
- Administered the county well-sealing program with appropriate funds as they became available
- Assisted walk-ins and customers – provided information or directed to a contact person
- Entered State Grant information into the eLINK program for resource management for BWSR
- Assisted NRCS with filing, sorting mail, bulletins, and correspondence.
- Assisted NRCS with Farm Bill implementation of CRP, EQIP, WRE
- Administered the Cooperative Weed Management Area (CWMA) grant for noxious weeds

Education Activities

- Beautiful Farmstead Award – recipients for 2017 are Rob and Kathy Randall of rural Ortonville.
- Conservationists Award – recipients for 2017 are Jim and Cindy Nelson of rural Ortonville.
- Arbor Day – Each 4th grade student in Ortonville and Clinton-Graceville-Beardsley schools in Big Stone County received a bare root tree to plant in recognition of Arbor Day.
- District presented soil education at the 4H Youth Hidden Habitats event at the Big Stone Lake State Park.
- District presented soil education at the Pomme de Terre Open House for 1W1P in Morris.
- District presented noxious weeds education to 6th graders at the Bonanza Education Center.
- Newsletters – one newsletter was developed in partnership with NRCS
- The annual report was distributed to essential partners.
- Newsletter information page is available on the District website @ www.bigstoneswcd.org.
- Envirothon –no one participated from the local schools.
- Big Stone County Fair – A conservation booth was periodically staffed during the 3 day fair.
- Ortonville Sports & Leisure Show – A conservation booth was periodically staffed during the 2 day fair.
- District participated in 11 radio programs.
- Maintained District website and kept updated records and information on the website as required by BWSR.
- District staff regularly submitted articles to the local newspapers about conservation opportunities.

Program Activities

- **Abandoned Well Sealing** – Big Stone County Water Plan provided \$2,000 for cost-share funding for sealing abandoned wells in 2017. Well sealing was considered a priority for State Cost Share in 2017.
- **DNR Observation Wells** – The SWCD monitors 5 wells monthly for 8 months. Readings are entered on the DNR Observation Wells website, and annually receives compensation of \$60.00 per reading per well.
- **Rainfall Monitoring** – Five sites in Big Stone County volunteered to monitor precipitation. The SWCD monitors one rain gauge at the Ortonville field office. We are always looking for more monitor volunteers.
- **Tree Plantings** – District sold 2617 trees to private landowners. The District planted 919 trees in 4 EQIP projects. 1449 trees were planted in 2 CRP contract projects. 1128 trees were planted by the District for landowners that were not contract plantings. 12 plantings had weed barrier fabric applied. The total amount of fabric applied was 27,530 feet or 5.2 miles. 197 tree tubes were sold for these practices for animal control. The Pheasants Forever Local Chapter helped to fund 2 tree planting projects with cost share.

- **Grass Drill Seedings** – 289.81 acres of grass seed were sold to 39 landowners; 257.71 acres were planted by the District’s drill and operator on 31 sites. The District seeded 1 site in-between tree rows and sold seed to 4 other tree row projects.
- **Rotary Mower Services** – The District provided mowing services on 86.9 acres for 7 parcels.
- **Spraying** – The District provided weed spraying for 5 landowners on 18.5 acres. 41.5 hours were also spent spraying volunteer trees for 2 townships in the road right-of-way ditches.
- **State Cost-Share Practices** – One well was decommissioned at 50% cost share assistance totaling \$500.00.
- **Site Inspections for Cost Share Practices** – 8 farmstead shelterbelts were inspected and conditions documented per requirements of the cost share contracts.
- **Easement Inspection** - The District site checked 10 RIM and/or CREP easement parcels.
- **WCA** – The District serves on the TEP for the WCA administered by the Big Stone County Environmental Office. Activities in 2017 included monitoring active banking site establishments, and planning a new wetland banking site. Violations were reviewed but most are managed by the Environmental Office.
- **CWMA** – see agency coordination.
- **Native Prairie Bank** – There are sites interested in the program and are still being considered by the State with one additional site visit made in 2017.
- **Walk In Access Program** – The District promoted the Walk In Access program with no additional interest.
- **Working Lands Initiative** – see agency coordination below.
- **Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP)** – There were 18 interested landowners in the CREP program during 2017. One application was completed and submitted, but was not approved.
- **Farm Bill Assistance Grant** – Farm Bill Technician assists with the implementation of CRP. CRP was promoted with radio and newspaper articles. Sign Up 50 produced 54 new contracts and renewed 14 contracts. Four contracts were modified in 2017. Programs were applied on the following:

Contracts	Practice	Acres
5	CP5A	12.80
32	CP21	107.00
1	CP22	0.46
12	CP23A	86.20
1	CP27	2.43
5	CP37	132.00
4	CP38E	18.60
4	CP42	5.00
1	CP31	1.41
8	FWP	6.42

Agency Coordination

The District is involved with several multi-agency groups that meet accordingly. These include:

- **Pomme de Terre River Association** – The District made attempts to meet monthly at TAC meetings and 1W1P meetings in Morris.
- **Bois de Sioux Watershed** - The District attended the annual steering committee and have been in discussion for upcoming 1W1P meetings.
- **Upper Minnesota River Watershed District** – The District met one-on-one with UMRWD on numerous topics throughout the year regarding drainage permits, buffer law, Whetstone River restoration, WRAPS citizen committee, and discussed upcoming 1W1P meetings.
- **Working Lands Initiative (WLI)** – The District promoted the WLI through radio, landowner discussion and letters, and along with other partners, a landowner meeting was held in Appleton to discuss accomplishments of the program. Two tree removals, 7 prescribed burns, and 1 easement inter-seeding were completed in the spring of 2017, impacting 245 acres. Monetary total of these projects equaled \$48,455.73, to which the District received \$1,186.71 in administrative money from this total.
- **County Local Water Management Plan** – The District was involved with the CLWM committee and was allocated \$4,000 to be spent by 12/31/18, for well sealing cost share and rain gardens cost share.
- **EQIP/NRCS** – District was involved with the coordination of the Public Local Workgroup meeting.
- **Farm Bill Technician** - Big Stone SWCD partnered with BWSR to maintain funding for a fulltime technician for Big Stone County through the Farmbill Assistance Grant.
- **Big Stone County Pheasants Forever Chapter** – The District Technician and Farmbill Technician worked at the Annual PF Banquet. The District technical staff coordinated approved projects in the spring of 2017, including 2 tree plantings, 3 prescribed burns, and 3 prairie seedings on 31 acres. Monetary total of these projects equaled \$7,300.
- **Cooperative Weed Management Area (CWMA)** – Big Stone SWCD participated with other agencies to receive a grant of \$15,000 for education and weed eradication in Big Stone County beginning in 2010. The CWMA joined with Traverse County to form the Big Stone/Traverse Counties Cooperative Weed Management Area and received a grant for \$20,000 for 2012-2014. The District administers and tracks all aspects of this grant accordingly. Progress, results and expenditures of this program are recorded by the District in eLINK. The District submitted a grant proposal and was awarded another grant of \$15,000 in 2016 to continue the enhanced work being accomplished. The District submitted the next competitive grant application in 2017, but were not funded for the 2018-2019 grant years. The District will continue to provide weed control services through District.
- **West Central Technical Service Area** – The District utilized the WCTSA to work on civil engineering projects for landowners, including grass waterways, water and sediment basins, shoreline restorations, and wetland restorations. The WCTSA serves 12 counties for engineering purposes and each district uses their funds to keep them in service.

Additional Funding Opportunities

The Environmental Quality Incentive Program (EQIP) allocated \$157,633 with 10 contracts funded.

NRCS funded 8 CStP contracts for \$1,003,609 contract dollars on 6,997.3 acres, in addition to 6 renewal CStP contracts with \$976,827 obligated on 8,732 acres. The County has 36 active CStP contracts on 20,389.8 acres.

The Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) and Continuous Conservation Reserve Program (CCRP) can provide additional funding for BMP applications such as grass waterways, buffers, and tree establishments. The Farmbill Technician created 73 contracts on 481.3 acres in 2017. The CRP was promoted with radio and newspaper articles.

The NRCS filed one easement for 120.23 acres for the Wetland Restoration Easement program (WRE). There were no new applications.

BIG STONE SOIL AND WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICT GRANTS ADMINISTRATION

Local Capacity Funding:

-The District has received Local Capacity funding from the Board of Water and Soil Resources in 2016 for \$120,337, \$110,000 in 2017, and \$110,000 in 2018.

-The District used these funds to install a shoreline restoration project for \$7,381. Three ag BMPs for water and sediment basins were installed for \$13,128 in cost share funds.

-Funds from the Local Capacity grants were also utilized to purchase equipment and supplies to enhance and continue the conservation services provided by the District. It also provided funding to support the time, effort and training of the District Manager and staff.

Erosion Control and Water Management Policy:

-The District used these funds to cost share well sealing at 50%. One well was sealed and cost shared for \$500.00.

Buffer Cost Share:

-The District has received funds to use toward buffers and/or alternative practices for landowners. Current encumbered amounts exceed \$30,000.

Buffer Law Implementation:

-The District sent a letter throughout the entire county regarding updated information about the Buffer Law which brought in additional interest for CRP Sign-up 50. Several landowners requested the SWCD to review their land for compliance. Sites were measured, flagged and gps'd per request by each landowner.