



Big Stone Soil and Water Conservation District

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Darren Wilke

**Upper Minnesota River
Watershed District**
Dianne Radermacher
Administrator



Pictured above, back row, left to right: Gary Hoffman, Beau Peterson, Blayne Johnson.
Front row, left to right: Krecia Leddy, Tammy Neubauer.



**The SWCD board meetings are the first Tuesday of every month at 3 pm
located at the USDA service center in Ortonville.**

Financial Payment for Enrolling Acres into Conservation Program

Nearly 60 supporting organizations, including the Minnesota Association of Soil and Water Conservation Districts, have called on U.S. Secretary of Agriculture Tom Vilsack to expedite the review and approval of Minnesota's latest Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP) application. The goal of the state's third CREP effort is to restore 100,000 acres of grasslands and wetlands in 54 Minnesota counties – stretching from the Iowa border to Clay and Becker counties in the northwest – primarily to improve water quality and create wildlife habitat.

The CREP proposal is currently under review by the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Farm Service Agency (FSA). The CREP proposal would fund the implementation of buffer strips, wetland restoration projects, and wellhead protection

efforts. Soil and Water Conservation Districts (SWCDs), and USDA's FSA and NRCS work with landowners and implement the program at the local level. The CREP proposal is a multi-agency effort, led by the Minnesota Board of Water and Soil Resources at the state level.

This project will feed two primary conservation goals of the state: cleaning up heavily polluted streams, rivers and lakes in farm country, and reviving the state's pheasant population. While the new buffer law requires minimum strips of filter vegetation between farm fields and waterways, the CREP buffer strips can be wider and more diverse. Besides hosting pheasants, the buffers will provide habitat for deer, wild turkey, badgers and other nongame species such as meadowlarks, bobolinks, bees and butterflies. The ease-

ment is not open to public hunting, and the landowner retains all property taxes and rights. The acres enrolled will begin to replace the half million acres of CRP contracts in Minnesota set to expire over the next few years.

This program is set to be signed into action soon and have a likely sign-up date sometime in 2017. When this happens you as a landowner will have the opportunity to enroll cropland into a 15 year rental program through CRP and into an easement simultaneously. All construction and restoration costs including dirt work, seeding, site preparation and other expenses are reimbursable. Please visit with your local conservation district as to estimated payment rates and requirements. Areas that frequently flood or are hard to farm can be given higher consideration and

would be a wise way to compensate for any unproductive acres.

If you are not interested in the easement aspect of this you can still look at temporary habitat on these acres through the regular Conservation Reserve Program (CRP). Expiring CRP land would be eligible for CREP as well. The SWCD staff would love to visit your site to discuss possible program boundaries and ideas before the application period opens.

The mission of the Big Stone Soil and Water Conservation District is to educate and assist the citizens of Big Stone County to efficiently and economically manage the soil and water resources of the County, for present and future generations.

If you are interested in receiving the SWCD newsletter on a yearly basis, please contact their office to be placed on their newsletter e-mail list.

Big Stone SWCD Announces 2016 Beautiful Farmstead Award

The Big Stone Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD) would like to recognize Todd and

Bonnie Dybdahl of Clinton, as 2016 recipients of the annual Beautiful Farmstead Award.

The Dybdahls completed a Farmstead Shelterbelt in the spring of 2007 through the Big Stone Soil

and Water Conservation District. A diverse planting of seven tree rows including conifers, hardwoods and shrubs were installed to provide protection from prevailing winds to their recently built home. Since then they have replaced and maintained the trees providing them with the care they needed in order to become the beautiful farmstead it is today. Todd and Bonnie also planted a well maintained six row field windbreak of trees through the SWCD across the road from their property in order to help catch drifting snow from entering their yard. They understand the importance of well-placed tree plantings in order to provide the necessary shelter to their home, sheds and other property.

Bonnie works at Minnwest Bank in Ortonville. Todd is a local farmer and business owner for Big Stone Ag Services. Their son David also farms and works with their family while their daughter Meghan just finished her degree at UND and is now employed at Lawrence Sign in Eagan.

Congratulations again to Todd and Bonnie Dybdahl for being chosen as the 2016 Beautiful Farmstead Award Winners in Big Stone County.



Pictured above are Bonnie and Todd Dybdahl after receiving their award.

SWCD Funds Help Address Big Stone Lake

In the fall of 2015 the Big Stone Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD) received Local Capacity funds from the Board of Water and Soil Resource (BWSR) to address valuable needs at the local level around Big Stone County. The SWCD quickly began promoting these dollars throughout the county, in particular, addressing Big Stone Lake. These funds are in place to help not only the SWCD's operational capabilities, but also landowners in a variety of ways who can correct erosion concerns and issues that have a negative impact on our county's surface water supply.

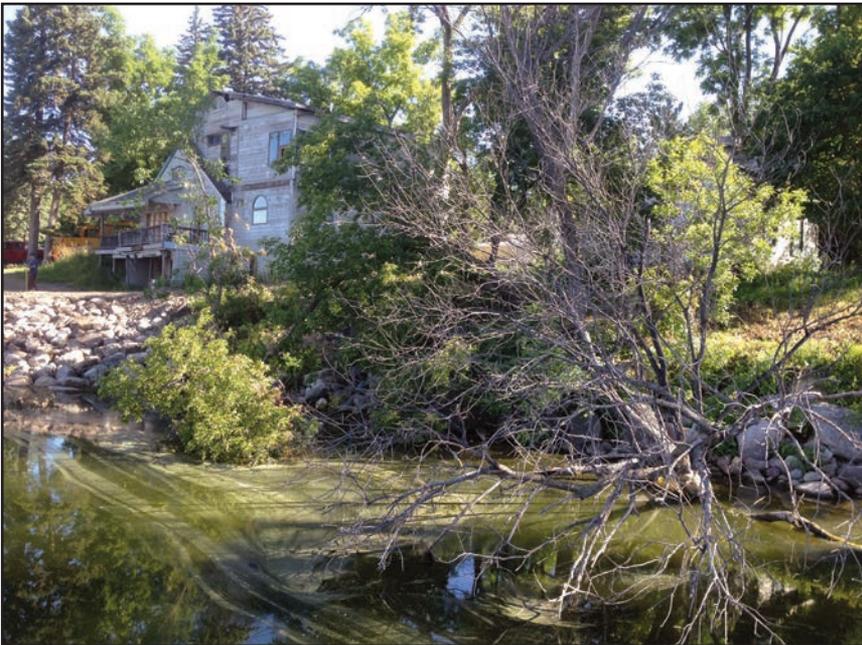
After being contacted by a land-

owner with shoreline questions it was clear to see that some dirt work needed to be done in order to properly strengthen and fix this particular stretch of property along Big Stone Lake. The landowner along with the SWCD and area engineer quickly created a suitable design plan that would do the job. The project was discussed and approved by the SWCD board of supervisors, and an agreement was signed to provide the landowner with grant fund dollars to help complete the project. Dirt work on site began in the spring of 2016 and was completed the same summer. Project work included re-sloping the shoreline to a more flat slope,

adding assorted sized rocks at the base of the lake to strengthen the underlining shoreline to withstand wind and wave action. The upslope of the shoreline was seeded to native grasses, shrubs and trees to provide additional root strength to the area that will help prevent future dirt and sediment from flowing into the lake.

Working with the local Upper Minnesota River Watershed District and county shoreline administrators on permitting, the Big Stone SWCD was able to reimburse the landowner 50 percent of the total project cost to help offset financial costs in order to effectively correct the degraded

shoreline in question. If anyone reading lives on Big Stone Lake, or other residential lakes throughout the county, and has questions on how to fix their eroding shoreline, contact the SWCD office for more information. Whether those questions lead to some type of project or not, the SWCD is available to assist with engineering designs or planning ideas to correct the issue at hand. The SWCD office still has available funding and plans to receive more grant fund dollars in the future to continue working on projects that help keep Big Stone Lake a clean and enjoyable place for everyone to experience.



Before construction.



After Construction.

An Update on Buffers

Almost two years have gone by since Governor Dayton's statewide Buffer Implementation Law went into effect and the time for compliance is fast approaching. This law requires all public waters to have a buffer of perennial vegetation and/or other alternative practices that improve, protect or enhance the quality of water throughout Minnesota. To see if your property is impacted you can go online to the DNR website <http://www.dnr.state.mn.us/buffers/index.html> and look at the interactive mapping software, or stop in to your local SWCD office located in Ortonville, MN.

The buffer requirements are as follows:

- The buffer width will be an average of 50 feet on public waters with a minimum of 30 feet.
- Public waters are defined as: all lakes, wetlands and other watercourses that meet the criteria set forth in Minnesota Statutes 103G.005, subd. 15, and are designated on public waters inventory maps.

The Big Stone SWCD has been tasked with the education and promotion aspect of this buffer law. Our job is to help landowners locate these public waters, determine necessary requirements and help provide adequate solutions on how to proceed. Our office is asking everyone involved to get started with becoming compliant. A good first step would be to visit the USDA office located in Ortonville and speak with the SWCD staff to see if your land is subject to any buffer law requirement.

In most cases cattails are not considered adequate vegetation and do not count towards buffer width requirements as they are commonly seen growing within and around wetland boundaries.

Landowners have the option to establish a buffer on their property at their own expense or enroll in a state or federal government program to be financially compensated. Buffers need to be planted into perennial vegetation and can include trees, native and/or non-native grasses, or even a mix-

ture suitable to haying or grazing.

At this time, once the deadline for compliance is reached, all federal and state programs will be unavailable to those landowners requiring a buffer, as that land will be listed as non-compliant. Those who decide not to participate and implement an approved practice will become non-compliant and

may be subject to various penalties or fines to be determined by another agency at this time. It is the SWCD's hope this does not happen, and that we can come to a reasonable agreement on how best to comply with the buffer law that affects each landowner in a different way.



Photo of a 50 foot buffer along a ditch.

What is a Rain Garden?

A rain garden can be a natural depression or hole dug in the ground that is planted with native vegetation to allow rainwater runoff from impervious urban areas, like roofs, driveways, walkways, parking lots, and compacted lawn areas, the opportunity to be absorbed.

The primary purpose of a rain garden is to improve the quality of water entering nearby bodies of water while also adding beautiful scenery around your home or yard.

This reduces rain runoff impacts by allowing storm water to safely soak into the ground, as opposed to flowing into storm drains which can cause erosion, water pollution, flooding, and diminished groundwater. These gardens should be designed for the specific soils in their given location.

Rain garden obstructions such as nearby trees, buildings or property lines that may be hazardous should be given special consideration. A typical rain garden size may be as

small as 10' by 20', but can be larger, and shaped as desired depending on the amount of water being directed to its location. Species such as native grasses, shrubs and pollinating flowers are commonly planted to absorb the necessary water and beautify your yard. Rain gardens have been proven to reduce the amount of pollution from reaching our lakes and streams by

up to 30%. The flowering plants also provide an essential food source for pollinating bees, butterfly's and insects around the area.

The Big Stone SWCD along with the Upper Minnesota River Water District has money available to help establish a successful rain garden on your property. Inquire with the SWCD office for more details.



residential rain garden

(keep 10 feet away from most structures)



"Conservation means harmony between men and land. When land does well for its owner, and the owner does well by his land, and both end up better by reason of their partnership, we have conservation."- Aldo Leopold

Financial Opportunity Available for Sealing Wells

The Big Stone SWCD has funding available to provide cost-share assistance for sealing wells. We can contract with the property owners to share in the cost of sealing any abandoned or unused well. In turn, the property owner must contract

with a state licensed well sealing contractor to perform all necessary work. Work must be done in accordance with the Minnesota Well Code, including the filing of a sealed well record with the Minnesota Department of Health. Upon completion of all required work and documentation, the SWCD office will reimburse the property owner.

Big Stone SWCD will financially reimburse a landowner 50% of the total cost per well not to exceed a maximum of \$400 per well. The funding is limited and is offered on a first come-first serve basis. To learn more about the well sealing program, or to request an application contact the Soil and Water Conservation District at 320-839-6149x3.



Rain Barrels Help Save Water



ing water, improving garden and lawn health, reducing storm water erosion and can save you money on electricity. Typical barrels are two feet in width and three feet in high, but can vary depending on need. They are light weight and can easily be moved around to fit your watering needs, not to mention in and out of the house during the winter season.

For more information on rain barrels visit the SWCD office located in Ortonville, MN, or shop around online www.recycleminnesota.org.

Do you have a garden, landscape plants or a flower bed? Could you benefit from having free water at your disposal? A rain barrel would provide free, untreated water to your fast absorbing plants throughout the warm summer months. Rain Barrels come in all shapes and sizes. They are designed to capture the water from rooftops and store it in a large barrel or container.

The rain barrel includes a screen to filter water entering in from a downspout along with a spicket and hose to water nearby plants. Rain barrels are great for conserv-



2016 Big Stone SWCD Conservation Farmers of the Year

The Big Stone Soil and Water Conservation District recently recognized Ron and Tammy Schumacher of rural Ortonville, at their 2016 Minnesota Association of Soil and Water Conservation Districts (MASWCD) annual convention December 4-6 in Bloomington, MN. Ron and Tammy have been farming in Big Stone County since 1992 and have been using no-till and strip-till practices since that time. Their two children still help on the farm as well. Stephanie works at the SWCD office in Milbank, SD and Kenny is a diesel mechanic in Graceville.

Ron began working with the SWCD office more frequently after his 2014 shelterbelt project to help alleviate winter winds and snow drifting around his home. Since then, Ron has been experimenting with various cover crop application methods through EQIP participation and also on his own.

Ron and Tammy have attended the Big Stone County Soil Health Field Day, toured the USDA Research Facility and Gabe Brown's farm in Bismarck, ND, and also attended several other conservation tillage workshops around the area to learn more about the health of their soil and how to improve upon

it. They also have six designated locations in two of their fields to track soil temperature, infiltration, and cover crop establishment throughout the growing season to give them a better understanding of what is happening under their crops. The Schumachers also enrolled in the CSP program for several improvements, some of which include: grid sampling, drift reducing nozzles, pest management and utilizing the Haney Test to track their soil health. They value how their soil productivity has increased over the years, and since 2016 began transitioning their farming operation into a four species rotation including corn, soybeans, wheat and alfalfa.

Ron and Tammy have been a joy to work with and a great illustration of what it means to be committed to improving their farming enterprise. Ron and Tammy are very thankful for their landlords continued support participating in conservation programs to enhance their farming production.

To learn more about any of these programs or other improvement opportunities we have available contact the SWCD office located in Ortonville, MN or call 320-839-6149x3.



Correcting Gully Erosion and Saving Your Soil

Gullies are one of the more visible forms of soil erosion noticed in fields after a heavy rain. Gully erosion on the farm is not only a major source of soil loss and sediment pollution, but a field can become less convenient to farm when gullies become too large to cross with equipment. Small gullies can be farmed shut, but once they are established, the soil used to fill them is usually washed away with future runoff events, and the gullies reappear.

Two conservation practices used to correct problem gullies are Water and Sediment Control Basins (WASCB) and Grassed Waterways. WASCBs are the preferred method by most producers. They are earthen embankments designed to hold and route runoff through a tile line in 48 hours or less. Once installed, they protect the gully, and the field is more easily farmed across. The embankments are normally designed to be parallel with the farming direction, and are quite often designed to be farmable. On steeper slopes however, they may require grassed front and/or back slopes. Water and Sediment Basins will not fit every landscape and there is not always an adequate outlet for a tile line. In most cases, WASCB systems are limited to around 100 - 125 acres of watershed before it is not feasi-

ble to install them. In these cases, a grassed waterway may be the most practical cure for the gully.

Grassed waterways are the most cost effective method to control gully erosion. The gully is graded and shaped, then seeded to grass and mulched. Waterways can be installed in small or large watersheds to prevent erosion. When possible, waterways are designed to be crossed with farm equipment, and support tile is installed to dry out the bottom of the water-

way, preventing ruts from forming when being crossed with equipment.

Both WASCBs and Grassed Waterways are eligible practices through the Environmental Quality Incentive Program (EQIP). EQIP provides financial assistance for landowners and producers to install conservation practices. Grassed Waterways are also eligible for the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP). CRP can provide financial assistance for the water-

way construction, and a rental payment on the acreage of the waterway.

If you are experiencing erosion problems that you would like to address, stop in or call your local NRCS field office. For more information, or to set up an appointment, contact Krecia Leddy or Gary Hoffman with the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service at (320) 839-6149 #3.



Photo of an eroding gully washing away a corn crop from a 2015 rain.

WHAT IS A LIVING SNOW FENCE?

Living snow fences are linear plantings of one or multiple rows of conifer or shrubs established for environmental purposes, such as managing snow, providing living screens, and enhancing wildlife habitat. Living snow fences block snow and dust to protect roads, lanes, railroads, etc. and also provide travel corridors, nesting sites, food, and escape cover for many wildlife species. Tree rows are planted parallel to road ways yet away, at a safe distance to allow for drifting snow to catch and be stored.

How does it work?

Drift-free roads are achievable through proper road design and snow fences. A suitably designed roadway will promote snow deposition in ditches rather than on the roadway, and blowing snow that does reach the road will move across without drifting.

Snow fences can also help maintain clear roadways by capturing blowing snow upwind of a problem area and storing that snow over the winter season. Blowing and drifting snow on roadways are ma-

lor transportation safety and mobility concerns, causing accidents and requiring expensive winter roadway maintenance. Roads protected by living snow fences report fewer accidents and lower snow removal costs. Livestock feeding costs and home heating costs are also reduced when protected by living snow fences.

What are the benefits?

- Prevent big snow drifts that could lead to stranded motorists
- Help Improve driver visibility and reduce vehicle accidents
- Reduce use of public money by reducing plow time
- Lessen our impact on the environment with less salt use, less fuel and reduced truck trips
- Reduce shipping delays for goods and services
- Control soil erosion and reduce spring flooding
- Serve as visual clues to help drivers find their way
- Shows farmer leadership and community service

Temporary Solution

The Minnesota Department of Transportation (MnDOT) operates



a program that pays landowners in identified problem areas to plant living snow fences consisting of trees and/or shrubs or leave standing corn rows to reduce the volume of snow blowing or drifting onto roadways. Standing corn rows can also act as a windbreak.

LSFs improve driver visibility, road surface conditions and have the potential to reduce accidents, snow removal costs and equipment emissions while increasing motorist mobility. MnDOT traffic safety data suggest using LSFs can reduce snow and ice-related acci-

dents.

Permanent Solution

A Living Snow Fence enrolled in the Conservation Reserve Program gives you annual foregone income payments and cost share assistance to establish. Many times these areas along the road are not the top yielding acres so CRP may help bring your average income up on your field.

Stop in to the USDA office in Ortonville, today to do your part to keep Big Stone County safe. We can help sign you up today!

Conservation Land Payment Opportunity

The Walk-In Access program can offer you additional income on non-farmed acres.

Quite simply, the program compensates you for providing public hunting access on your land from Sept. 1 to May 31. Signup by February to enroll for 2017-2018 season.

WIA targets parcels of 40 acres or more with high quality natural cover. This may include parcels already in a conservation program such as Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP), Conservation Reserve Program (CRP), Reinvest in Minnesota (RIM) and the Wetlands Reserve Program (WRP). Other high quality habitat, such as river bottom or resting grassland pastures may also be eligible to enroll.

WIA compensates landowners \$10-\$13 per acre to provide public hunting access on the parcel. Landowner agreements are limited to three years and include a no-hassle opt-out clause. All landowners in the program are afforded liability protection through the Minnesota Recreational Use Statutes, so rest at ease, wealthy city hunters won't lawyer up if they sprain their ankle.

When you enroll land in the Walk-

In Access Program you are leasing the land to the state of Minnesota for the public to hunt. Hunters who have purchased a WIA Validation can access the land one-half hour before sunrise to one-half hour after sunset from Sept. 1 to May 31. Other uses by the public are prohibited without your written permission.

If you wish to make a donation to the program you can go to a DNR license vendor and get a donation license. License vendors should know the difference between a WIA validation license and a WIA donation. Be sure they give you the correct license when you go hunting on WIA sites.

In 2016, approximately 210 sites covering more than 23,000 acres were enrolled across 46 Minnesota counties.

If you'd like to learn more about the Walk-In Access program, contact Beau Peterson at the Big Stone Soil and Water Conservation District in Ortonville at 990 US Highway 12, or call him at 320-839-6149. Deadline is nearing so stop in to enroll soon.

More information is also available at www.mndnr.gov/walkin.



Big Stone County Producers Learn about Soil Health in North Dakota

Producers from Big Stone County and the surrounding area participated in the Big Stone Soil Health Producer Tour August 24. Thirty two participants traveled to Burleigh County, North Dakota, to learn about soil health. The theme of the tour was "See the Difference, Be the Difference." The group was given a tour of the Bismarck USDA-NRCS Plant Materials Center by Wayne Duckwitz, Plant Materials Manager, and Nancy Jensen, Agronomist.

The center has released over 40 improved conservation plants including varieties of blue grama, buffalograss, western wheatgrass, Indian grass and switchgrass.

The group learned about the development of new varieties for conservation and toured plots, including a new plot of winter hardy cover crops. The day concluded with a tour of Gabe Brown's operation and ranch.

Gabe is a cover crop expert who has been using cover crops for the past twenty five years. He has increased his organic matter from 1.7-1.9 percent to reaching a goal of 12 percent organic matter. He continually plants a cover crop and believes in feeding his soil by having living roots in addition to utilizing grazing livestock, such as beef cattle, sheep, pasture pigs and pasture chickens. This has enabled him to decrease his inputs such as fertilizer and chemicals. Gabe stressed we can't make more soil and we have to take care of what we have. By creating healthy soils we will be able to produce healthy, nutritious crops with added value to feed a growing global population.

The following day was spent touring

the Menoken Farm with Jay Fuhrer, North Dakota USDA-NRCS Soil Health Specialist. Jay covered the four principles of healthy soil including: 1) keep the soil covered as much as possible 2) disturb the soil as little as possible, 3) keep plants growing throughout the year to feed the soil, 4) diversity as much as possible using crop rotation and cover crops.

Jay explained the carbon cycle and the importance of a carbon to nitrogen ratio to feed soil microorganisms and begin to build soil health. He performed a series of demonstrations and tests including a rainfall simulator to demonstrate the run off and infiltration of different residue covers, Solvita Test to determine carbon in the soil, and infiltration test to determine rate of infiltration from precipitation in different managed fields with and without cover crops and tillage.

Jay has been a career NRCS employee and spent the first half of his career constructing erosion control practices such as grass waterways and water and sediment basins. He explained to the group that after years of watching these practices merely serve as 'band-aids' to solve conservation challenges, he learned that what we need to fix is infiltration by building healthy soils with organic matter with reduced tillage. We can improve infiltration to where the soil is not eroding.

The tour was sponsored/supported by: Millborn Seeds, Prairie Creek Seed, Agassiz Seed, Big Stone County Water Plan, Mycogen Seeds, Big Stone County Pheasants Forever Chapter, CHS - Border States, Mustang Seeds, Control, Big Stone SWCD, and USDA-NRCS.

Marsh Lake Restoration Project Update

Marsh Lake is on the Minnesota River between Swift and Lac qui Parle Counties near Appleton, Minnesota. The Marsh Lake Dam is owned and maintained by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers as part of the Lac qui Parle Flood Risk Management project. The fixed-crest dam holds a conservation pool in the upper portion of the Lac qui Parle Reservoir. The Works Progress Administration constructed the dam and rerouted the Pomme de Terre River into the reservoir between 1936 and 1939. The Corps modified the dam between 1941 and 1951 as part of the Lac qui Parle Flood Risk Management project. During floods, the Marsh Lake Dam is inundated by the Lac qui Parle pool and serves no significant flood risk management purpose.

Marsh Lake lies within the Lac qui Parle Wildlife Management area, which is managed by the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources. In the fall, as many as 150,000 Canada geese use the management area at one time. Marsh Lake is also home to Minnesota's largest breeding colony of American white pelicans and several species of fish.

The recommended plan features include:

- Restoring the Pomme de Terre River to its natural chan-

nel,

- Modifying the dam with a fishway for fish passage,
- Constructing a drawdown water control structure,
- Restoring connectivity to an abandoned fish rearing pond adjacent to the dam, and
- Constructing recreational features.

In combination, each of these features would contribute toward restoring river habitat, eliminating winter oxygen refuge for carp, and providing for ecosystem connectivity. The natural flooding and drying cycles could be restored, promoting growth of emergent vegetation, increasing waterfowl habitat, and reducing sediment re-suspension. Restoration would benefit thousands of migratory waterfowl and many other species of birds and fish.

Fiscal

Planning, Engineering and Design Cost (Cost shared 65-35) - \$1.32 million

Construction Cost (Cost shared 65-35)

Federal - \$7.55 million

Non-Federal - \$4.06 million

Total estimated construction cost - \$11.61 million

Estimated total project cost - \$12.93 million

Through FY16, all Federal funds have been appropriated.



SWCD Services

The Big Stone SWCD's services are available for your conservation needs. Our local Pheasants Forever Chapter has financially helped the SWCD to purchase some of the necessary equipment, including a 10-foot Great Plains no-till native grass drill to seed CRP, grassland areas, pasture ground, wetland areas, cover crops and food plots. The SWCD also purchased a 15-foot Schulte Rotary Mower for all your mowing needs.

Other equipment available at the SWCD's disposal includes our tree and fabric laying machine along with spraying equipment.

We offer services for seeding, mowing, spraying, tree/fabric/tree tube installation and other grass plantings. We can also purchase the right seed mix for whatever your needs may be.

The 2016 season was a diverse one for the SWCD. The rotary mower and boom sprayer were kept busy controlling weeds while the grass drill was busy all year long. 465 acres of grassland seeding were completed on 39 sites. The district also provided the necessary seed for those projects, with several of them being high priority pollinator enhancement sites. The

District also put our no-till drill to good use helping local farmers inter-seed cover crops into wheat stubble fields. The District planted a variety of seed mixes including some 4-5 species mixes for saving nitrogen to help next year's crop to more diverse mixes of 7-8 species for cattle to graze. The cover crop plantings were a big success

and remained green well into fall thanks to the increased amount of precipitation Big Stone County experienced this fall.

For prices and availability of equipment contact Blayne Johnson with the SWCD at 320-839-6149 x3, or look online at www.bigstoneswcd.org.



Tree shelter belt planting.



Before - No tilling cover crops in two wheat stubble in August of 2016.



After - Cattle grazing cover crop mix in October of 2016.

Working Lands for Working People

Minnesota has many natural resources with plant communities ranging from native prairie to thick forests, and over 550 species of wildlife. However, the impacts of agricultural practices, urban development, invasive species, and climate change are increasingly degrading and destroying wildlife habitat, causing a decline in some wildlife populations. This threatens Minnesota's sustainabil-

ity of natural resources. There are 78 species of wildlife in Minnesota currently listed as endangered, threatened or of special concern.

Over 75 percent of Minnesota is privately owned, meaning landowners will be the ones to sustain these resources. By being active stewards you are not only protecting wildlife, but protecting the air, water, and livelihood of what it means to be from the Midwest.

That is what the Soil and Water Conservation District is here for, to help the private landowner do good things on their landscapes.

The goal of WLI is to strategically influence protection, enhancement, and restoration of wildlife habitat on private land, and integrate wildlife habitat management on public and private lands. The work that is completed through the WLI grant can be almost any-

thing you would like to get done on your property to enhance the quality of habitat.

Work completed in the past has been; upgrading pastures and native grass seed plantings, prescribed burns on native prairie and other protected lands, removal of invasive trees, fencing grassland for prescribed grazing, setting up watering systems in pastures, education events to promote stewardship, and providing incentive payments to install habitat management practices that improve soil, water, and wildlife such as cover crops.

For the past nine years, Big Stone area enhanced thousands of acres each year through the WLI. If you have been thinking about enhancing your pasture, native prairie, conservation easement, or tree/weed infestation this may be the financial and technical assistance you have been looking for. Not every parcel of land can or should provide everything, but doing the best you can will be a great way to pay it forward.

For assistance in understanding what habitats and wildlife you can most effectively benefit in your landscape, contact your local Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD). Being a good steward is a lifelong endeavor and the outcome is appreciated for generations!



A dam structure was put in place on a wetland restoration project 15 years ago to control water elevation and create additional waterfowl habitat. WLI helped pay for the prescribed burn completed in 2016.