

# 2018 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

|  |                                   |
|--|-----------------------------------|
| Mitchell Kill - District Technician                | Beau Peterson – District Manager  |
| Adam Kleinschmidt– 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    |
| Curtis Elke - State Conservationist     | Jennifer Sweeney - Asst. State Conservationist |
| Troy Daniell – State Conservationist    |  |

#### UPPER MINNESOTA RIVER WATERSHED DISTRICT

Dianne Radermacher – Administrator  
Amber Doschadis – Watershed Technician

#### 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 Officer  
Ronda Maas – Deputy Environmental Officer  
Danny Tuckett – AIS and Feedlot Deputy

#### BIG STONE COUNTY COMMISSIONERS

|                |                |            |
|----------------|----------------|------------|
| Wade Athey     | Brent Olson    | Jay Backer |
| Roger Sandberg | Joseph Berning |            |

### **New Mission Statement:**

The mission of Big Stone Soil and Water Conservation District is to educate policy makers and citizens on environmental conservation issues impacting Big Stone county. This will be accomplished through providing land management services, technical guidance, and financial assistance to landowners who are implementing conservation practices on their lands that will achieve: soil health improvement, water quality improvement, shoreline protection, storm water runoff reduction & retention, water and wind erosion reduction, and groundwater protection.

### **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, Soil Health, 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
- Educated and Assisted landowners with noxious weed control

### **Education Activities**

- Beautiful Farmstead Award – recipients for 2018 rejected the award
- Conservationists Award – recipients for 2018 are Dan Moberg and family. They attended an award ceremony in Bloomington in December.
- Arbor Day – Each 4<sup>th</sup> 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 pheasant habitat education to 4<sup>th</sup> graders at the Bonanza Education Center.
- District presented Rain Garden education to a camp in August at the Bonanza Education Center.
- District hosted a Soil Health and Weeds workshop in Graceville with Traverse SWCD, Dept of Ag and Sustainable Farming Association where several local landowners discussed their experiences with sustainability.
- 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](http://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 fully 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

- **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.
- **Water Testing Kits** – Test kits are now available at our office through RMB labs.
- **Tree Plantings** – District sold 1801 trees to private landowners. The District planted 193 trees for landowners that were not contract plantings. 1 planting had weed barrier fabric applied. 57 tree tubes were sold for these practices for animal control.
- **Grass Drill Seedings** – 506.85 acres of grass seed were sold to 54 landowners; 496.16 acres were planted by the District's drill and operator on 48 sites. Twenty-two of these were buffers.
- **Buffer Law** – District attended meetings and trainings regarding implementation of law, used BWSR tracking software to track compliance, and made a number of site visits with and without landowners.
- **Buffer Cost Share** – District provided cost share to landowners through various funds. See numbers below.
- **Rotary Mower Services** – The District provided mowing services on 297.86 acres for 14 parcels.
- **Spraying** – The District provided weed spraying for 22 landowners on 58.8 acres. Twenty-three hours were also spent spraying volunteer trees for 2 townships, and 9 hours for the county, in the road right-of-way ditches.
- **State Cost-Share Practices** – One well was decommissioned at 50% cost share assistance totaling \$487.50.
- **Site Inspections for Cost Share Practices** – 9 farmstead shelterbelts were inspected and conditions documented per requirements of the cost share contracts.
- **Easement Inspection** - The District site checked 19 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 2018 included monitoring active banking site establishments, reviewing new drainage applications, and attending training sessions. Violations were reviewed but most are managed by the Environmental Office.
- **Control Partnership** – The District continued the partnership with Control Crop Consulting to provide technical expertise to landowners involved in District cost-share programs for cover crops and other vegetative practices.
- **MAWQCP** - The District worked with Minnesota Department of Agriculture to promote the program to landowners within Big Stone County. Progress included program promotion and the certification of two landowners.
- **CWMA** – see agency coordination.
- **Native Prairie Bank** – There are sites interested in the program and are still being considered by the State
- **Walk In Access Program** – The District promoted the Walk In Access program with 2 renewals of agreements and 1 new agreement.
- **Working Lands Initiative** – see agency coordination below.
- **Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP)** – There were 21 interested landowners in the CREP program during 2018. Three applications were completed and submitted; three were approved.

➤ **Farm Bill Assistance Grant** – Farm Bill Technician assists with the implementation of CRP. CRP was promoted with radio and newspaper articles. Sign Up 51 produced 36 new contracts and renewed 17 contracts, with 65 different practices involved, for a total acreage of 702.01 acres. Sixteen contracts were modified in 2018. Programs were applied on the following:

| Contracts | Practice | Acres  |
|-----------|----------|--------|
| 36        | CP21     | 120.54 |
| 1         | CP22     | 0.63   |
| 17        | CP23A    | 362.24 |
| 2         | CP27/28  | 28.82  |
| 4         | CP37     | 74.68  |
| 3         | CP23     | 100.28 |
| 1         | CP8A     | 0.82   |

### 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/Mustinka Watershed** - The District attended the annual steering committee and are attending 1W1P meetings as well as serving on committees for side projects of the plan.
- **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, shoreline projects, and discussed upcoming 1W1P meetings.
- **Working Lands Initiative (WLI)** – The state of Minnesota is currently not funding this program.
- **County Local Water Management Plan** – The District was involved with the CLWM committee and utilized past and current year’s funds for cost share on well sealing, 51.54 acres of buffers installed equaling \$4,000, 3 buffers cost shared for \$1,198.91.
- **EQIP/NRCS** – District was involved with the coordination of the Public Local Workgroup meeting and assisted in conservation planning software and documents.
- **Farm Bill Technician** - Big Stone SWCD partnered with BWSR to maintain funding for a fulltime technician for Big Stone County through the Farm Bill Assistance Grant but the District chose to reduce Farm Bill grant money to half time for the technician position.
- **Big Stone County Pheasants Forever Chapter** – The District Technician, District Manager, and Farmbill Technician worked at the Annual PF Banquet. The District technical staff coordinated approved projects in the spring of 2018, including tree plantings, prescribed burns, and prairie seedings.
- **Cooperative Weed Management Area (CWMA)** – Big Stone SWCD was unsuccessful in receiving this grant for 2018-2019. However noxious weed control was still utilized through services and an intern was hired to educate landowners.
- **West Central Technical Service Area** – The District utilized the WCTSA to train staff and 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. The WCTSA worked on 12 active erosion control projects in Big Stone alone.

## **Additional Funding Opportunities**

The Environmental Quality Incentive Program (EQIP) allocated \$1,092,129 with 16 contracts funded, on 4,658.9 acres planned.

NRCS funded 3 CStP contracts for \$321,804 contract dollars on 1,743.7 acres, in addition to 5 renewal CStP contracts with \$848,229 obligated on 8,682.5 acres. The County has 35 active CStP contracts on 37,737.7 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 wetland restorations. The Farmbill Technician created 53 contracts on 702.01 acres in 2018. The CRP was promoted with radio and newspaper articles.

The NRCS Wetland Restoration Easement program (WRE). There were no new applications.

## **BIG STONE SOIL AND WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICT GRANTS ADMINISTRATION**

### **Erosion Control and Local Water Management Policy**

#### **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 encumbered these funds to install a shoreline restoration project for \$14,076. Three ag BMPs for water and sediment basins were installed/encumbered for \$21,620.56, 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.

#### **State Cost Share Funds:**

-The District used these funds to cost share well sealing at allowable 50%. One well was sealed, and cost shared for \$487.50.

-The District cost shared the application of cover crops to 2 landowners on 59 acres for \$2,925.81; encumbered cost share for cover crops for \$793.44; and encumbered WASCB for \$1,520.75.

#### **Buffer Cost Share:**

-The District has received funds to use toward buffers and/or alternative practices for landowners. Current disbursed amounts: \$4,956.08 on 4 contracts for conservation cover and cover crops. Current encumbered contracts for conservation cover – 4 contracts for \$1,670.00.

#### **Buffer Law Implementation:**

-The District completed field measurements; reported 18 parcels affecting 9 landowners, with plans to send a letter to remaining landowners without buffer plans in place, and to likely report an additional round of non-compliant parcels after spring field work is complete.