



YELLOW MEDICINE

SOIL & WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICT

2017 ANNUAL REPORT

The mission of the SWCD is to provide technical, financial, and educational support to the public for the purpose of conserving and protecting soil, water, and other natural resources.

The Yellow Medicine Soil & Water Conservation District was duly organized as a governmental subdivision of this State, and a public body corporate and politic on the 17th day of April, 1950. The SWCD works with landowners in both rural and urban areas to conserve Soil and Water Resources.

YELLOW MEDICINE SWCD STAFF

Kurt Johnson	District Manager
Tyler Knutson	Technical Director
Anita Borg	Office Administrator
Ian A. Olson	Environmental Resource Specialist
Brooke Buysse	Water Resource Technician

YM SWCD SUPERVISORS

Jerry Nelson. Chairperson	Delon Clarksean. Treasurer
Darwyn Bach. Vice Chairperson	Tom Remmele. Reporter
Hollis Weber. Secretary	

NRCS (Natural Resources Conservation Service) STAFF

Danielle Waldschmidt. District Conservationist
Jon Paul Pringle. Soil Conservation Technician
Jeffrey Berens. Soil Conservationist

PROGRAMS and SERVICES

AgBMP PROGRAM: The AgBMP Loan Program is a water quality program that provides low interest loans to farmers, rural landowners, and agriculture supply businesses. Its purpose is to encourage agricultural Best Management Practices that prevent or reduce runoff from feedlots, farm fields and other pollution problems, including well and septic issues. The AgBMP Loan Program is part of the Minnesota Department of Agriculture Finance and Budget Division. It works with counties, Soil and Water Conservation Districts (SWCDs) and local water planners to identify current and future financial needs, modifying the program to meet changing trends in agriculture and rural Minnesota.

The program is administered locally through the Yellow Medicine Soil and Water Conservation District. The borrower proposes a project on the county level. If the borrower meets state eligibility requirements and the project addresses local water quality priorities, the project can be approved and refer it to a cooperating lender, who evaluates the borrowers credit worthiness and services the loan.

In 2017, over \$340,000 was loaned in Yellow Medicine County through the program to replace 15 non-conforming Subsurface Sewage Treatment Systems (SSTS), replace 7 wells, and help finance conservation tillage equipment and manure management equipment for 2 producers. The SWCD works cooperatively with the Yellow Medicine County Land and Resource Management Office staff to determine project eligibility and submit applications to local lenders.



AG WATER QUALITY CERTIFICATION PROGRAM (AWQCP):

Farmers can be recognized for protecting one of our natural resources, water. The Minnesota Agricultural Water Quality Certification Program (MAWQCP) is an opportunity for landowners in agricultural districts or farmers to be recognized for their conservation practices. For those who sign up for the program and incorporate approved farming practices will be certified and given regulatory certainty for 10 years.

To become a certified farm a program application would need to be completed and meet with a certifying agent to complete the assessment process. The certifying agent will gather an understanding on the management of your operation and review all the farmland with land practices implemented such as soil tests, nutrient application, manure application, pesticide application, etc. The certifier will then conduct field visits to review your farm for erosion and other potential impacts it could have on water quality. Once the farming operation meets standards then it will be eligible to be a Water Quality Certified Farm.

In 2017 Yellow Medicine SWCD had a total of 11 applications completed resulting in 4 certifications, one still in progress. The program began in 2016 and has had 77 certifications in Area 5 (SW Minnesota).

BROADCAST SEEDER PROGRAM: In 2017, the SWCD started a Broadcast seeder program to assist landowners in seeding conservation practices on their land. Landowners seeded 14.10 acres in Yellow Medicine County in 2017 with the Broadcast seeder.



BUFFER IMPLEMENTATION:

Minnesota Statute 103F.48 Implementation. Through 2017, SWCD staff continued to track status and update the Minnesota Buffer Compliance and Tracking Tool (BuffCaTT). Staff also continued, as in 2015 and 2016, to implement conservation programs including the

Conservation Reserve Program (CRP), Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP), and other Cost Share programs. Yellow Medicine County landowners achieved a compliance rate of 80.26% on affected 50' and 16.5' buffers in the county. The SWCD will continue to work with landowners on a voluntary basis going forward to reach 100% buffer law compliance before landowner names, specific parcels and corrective actions are needed to be reported to the Yellow Medicine County Board of Commissioners.

COST SHARE OPPORTUNITIES: Through the end of 2017 the SWCD had allocated less than \$10,000 of about \$116,000 in currently available cost share. SWCD Staff has recognized the need to better utilize these funds in a responsible and effective fashion. Staff has also realized the availability of a large funding source in the implementation of the One Watershed One Plan. The SWCD is also employing resources in private industry, such as crop consultants, in the effort to give these cost share programs greater effectiveness.

The District conducted 54 inspections of existing cost share projects, finding all projects compliant.

CREP: In 2017 the Federal Conservation Reserve Program and the State of Minnesota Reinvest In Minnesota program partnered to create the Minnesota Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (MN CREP). MN CREP is a voluntary program that allows landowners to enroll land into a permanent easement. The MN CREP focuses on Filter Strips, Wetland Restorations, and Wellhead Protection areas. The SWCD focused on promotion and outreach of the program.



EASEMENT DELIVERY: SWCD staff are responsible for conducting status reviews on CREP and/or RIM Easements: Staff conducted site inspections on 60 easements in 2017.

FARM BILL ASSIST GRANT: The SWCD received funding through the Farm Bill Assistance program to provide technical assistance to landowners with Farm Bill Programs. The SWCD assisted 198 landowners with planning conservation practices on over 1470 acres in Yellow Medicine County. We assisted the NRCS in promoting the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP), and other aspects of the Farm Bill.

TREE PROGRAM: The SWCD has planned, planted, sold and established trees since 1961 for windbreak to mitigate soil erosion and to promote rural conservation and wildlife habitat. Today, the SWCD still sells, plans, advises, and provides for the sale and installation of products to ensure a successful planting.



In 2017, the SWCD planted 4,625 feet of field windbreaks and 12.52 acres of farmstead windbreaks. 19,790 feet of fabric tree mat were also installed.



WALK IN ACCESS PROGRAM: Introduced in 2011 as a part of the Farm Bill, the Walk-In Access (WIA) program allows individuals with a site validation coupon access onto sites throughout the 46 county WIA area from Sept 1- May 31. Landowners receive compensation to allow public access onto their land. In Yellow Medicine County there were 40 acres enrolled in 2017.

WETLAND CONSERVATION ACT (WCA): Created in 1991 to preserve existing wetlands and restore legally drained wetlands having potential for flood damage reduction, wildlife, recreational, and groundwater recharge benefits, where practical.

Yellow Medicine County appointed the SWCD as the local government unit to administer the Wetland Conservation Act and the rules of the Board of Water and Soil Resources adopted under the act.

WCA Continued: In 2017, the SWCD spent approximately \$13,577 of WCA grant funds, and the same in local match funds administering WCA guidelines thru review of tiling permits and other projects (see breakdown below):

179	1026's approved
20	1026's approved with restrictions
1	1026 denied
12	COE/DNR maintenance requests
94	Building permits approved
1	Building permit approved with restrictions
4	On site investigations conducted
53	Contacts without decisions

Received 2 basic applications, made one decision and worked with one landowner violation. In 2017, staff spent 427 hours administering this program, including 18.5 hours of staff training.

EDUCATION and PROMOTION

AG IN THE CLASSROOM: SWCD staff brought the message of “Stopping Aquatic Hitchhikers” to 4th area graders participating at the annual Ag in the Classroom event held in Granite Falls in March of 2017. They used an interactive Aquatic Invasive Species trivia game designed by SWCD staff to share their message.



AQUATIC INVASIVE SPECIES (AIS): The SWCD installed counters at the following sites: Curtis Lake Access, Del Clark Lake Accesses (By boat landing and by beach), and Wood Lake Access in Wood Lake to help determine the amount of boat traffic at each access and use this information for better prevention planning in the future.

Staff attended the Aquatic Invaders Summit in St. Cloud, MN. It had many informational sessions that taught staff more about decontamination units, zebra mussels, Starry Stonewort, AIS Detectors, and Conservation Officers were on hand to talk about enforcement and showed one of the zebra mussel detecting K9 officers at work.



Pictured: Staff, Brooke Buysse; Supervisor Hollis Weber, Eric Dybsetter of Dybsetter Farms, INC; staff, Tyler Knutson at MASWCD State Convention.

CONSERVATION FARMER AWARD: The Yellow Medicine Soil and Water Conservation District selected Dybsetter Farms Inc. of Porter as the 2017 Yellow Medicine SWCD Outstanding Conservationists. They are grain farmers on the North Branch of the Yellow Medicine River. This family farm is dedicated to conservation and constantly looking to implement conservative practices. The family has switched to a strip till and no till practice and have been implementing cover crops. Eric works with local NRCS as a technical service provider designing drainage water management plans.

2017 ENVIRONMENTAL FAIR: The Environmental Fair was held on September 19th and 20th, 2017 at the Lyon County Fairgrounds. The Fair is organized by the participating soil and water districts. Around 1,900 5th & 6th grade students from an 11 county area attended in the two days, including approximately 180 students from Yellow Medicine County.



The Environmental Fair is a learning event in the “outdoor classroom”, giving students an opportunity study natural resources in a setting that will give them the opportunity to see, touch and sometimes taste what they are learning about. It is designed to encompass multiple aspects of environmental education, and be available to a large number of students.



OUTREACH THROUGH TECHNOLOGY: In 2017, the SWCD gave a fresh look to their website and added a lot of new and updated information. It can be seen at www.yellowmedicineswcd.org.

AND, the public can look for us on Facebook: the Yellow Medicine SWCD can now be found on Facebook. Our page is being updated regularly with news and events.

It is also linked on our SWCD website.

PUBLISHED NEWS ARTICLES TO ADDRESS CONSERVATION ISSUES AND CONCERNS: News articles were written throughout the year addressing conservation issues and concerns. A paid advertisement was put in the Advocate Tribune’s Spring Farm Focus Edition.

PARTNERSHIPS & COOPERATION

CONSERVATION CORP APPRENTICE PROGRAM: Garrett Wee from Cottonwood served as the Conservation Corp Apprentice in 2017. Garrett had the opportunity to work with farmers to conserve and protect our natural resources. Some of the knowledge Garrett obtained through his experience included: tree varieties, methods of planting trees and tree care and maintenance; the State of Minnesota Wetland Conservation Act; native plants; aquatic invasive species in Minnesota; easement maintenance guidelines.

DNR WELL MONITORING: The SWCD monitors three groundwater observation wells throughout the year designated by the DNR.

NEW STAFFING PARTNERSHIP CREATED WITH THE YELLOW MEDICINE WATERSHED: The Yellow Medicine SWCD and the Yellow Medicine River Watershed District have a shared services agreement. The SWCD Water Resource Technician Brooke Buysse will be working at the watershed roughly one day a week to help with permitting and day to day tasks.



ONE WATERSHED ONE PLAN: The Yellow Medicine River 1W1P began its first year of implementation including the development and approval of a Memorandum of Agreement for the work to be conducted by the partners and the preparation of a work plan for roughly a half million dollars in funding from the Clean Water Fund to be allocated in 2018.

RAINFALL MONITORING PROGRAM: The SWCD participates in the state's rainfall monitoring program. Yellow Medicine County currently has ten volunteer rainfall monitors that record precipitation daily. These reports are submitted monthly to the State Climatologist.

RCRCA, IMPROVING WATER QUALITY IN REDWOOD RIVER WATERSHED: The Redwood-Cottonwood Rivers Control Area (RCRCA) is an eight county non-regulatory joint powers organization which was established in 1983. RCRCA works to enhance and protect the Redwood and Cottonwood Rivers by making land use changes that improve water quality. SWCD Supervisor, Tom Remmele, serves on the RCRCA committee making decisions for the Redwood River Watershed.

SOUTHWEST PRAIRIE TECHNICAL SERVICE AREA: SWCD contributed \$3,978 towards the Southwest Prairie Technical Services' overall budget. Supervisor, Jerry Nelson, serves on the Southwest Prairie Technical Service Joint Powers Board and attended meetings throughout the year.

USDA STAFF: The SWCD, the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), and Farm Service Agency (FSA) are all housed in the Ag Services building in Clarkfield. Together SWCD staff and these agencies provide technical and financial assistance to individuals, groups, organizations, and governments in reducing costly waste of soil and water resulting from soil erosion, sedimentation, pollution and improper land use through programs like CRP, CSP, CREP and EQIP.

WATERSHED RESTORATION AND PROTECTION PROJECT STRATEGY (WRAPS)

Yellow Medicine River Watershed: In 2017, the SWCD joined discussions on the second 10-year cycle of intensive watershed monitoring by the MPCA. This process will be starting again within the next few years.

WATERSHED RESTORATION AND PROTECTION STRATEGIES (WRAPS) Lac qui Parle

Watershed: The SWCD continued its involvement in the development of the Lac qui Parle Watershed Watershed Restoration and Protection Strategies document. The current phase of the LQP WRAPS is the monitoring and stressor identification funded by the Surface Water Assessment Grant (SWAG) as part of the 10-year watershed cycle. The SWCD is also involved with the education committee headed by the LQP-YB Watershed District.

YELLOW MEDICINE COUNTY: The SWCD and Yellow Medicine County have grown the partnership of the two government units exponentially. The benefit of each to the other has expanded greatly in 2017. Although, significant growth in sharing resources has occurred, the cost of this partnership has maintained steady while the benefits have grown. Through the Minnesota Clean Water Fund, the SWCD and County were able to leverage \$18,000 in state funding for cost share projects against \$18,000 in Yellow Medicine County funds to assist Yellow Medicine County landowners in implementing projects. YM SWCD implements the Yellow Medicine County Local Water Plan. To view plan go to the Yellow Medicine County Website: www.co.ym.mn.gov. The link is located on the right side of the page.

COOPERATING AGENCIES

Board of Water & Soil Resources

John Jaschke	Executive Director
Jason Beckler	Board Conservationist

USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service

Catherine Pullman	State Conservationist
Gary Watson	Assistant State Conservationist-Field Operations

Yellow Medicine County Commissioners

Ronald Antony	Canby
Gary Johnson	Montevideo
Greg Renneke	Echo
Glen Kack	Canby
John Berends	Granite Falls

Other Agencies

Trudy Hastad	Lac qui Parle-Yellow Bank Watershed Administrator
Emily Javens	Yellow Medicine Watershed Administrator
Peggy Heglund	County Administrator
Jolene Johnson	Planning & Zoning Coordinator
Liz Ludwig	FSA County Director
Chris Balfany	County Ditch Inspector
Wendy Kruger	DNR Area Wildlife Manager
Lucas Youngsma	DNR Area Hydrologist YM Watershed
Ryan Bjerke	DNR Area Hydrologist LQP Watershed
Alicia Webb	Yellow Medicine/Lyon 4-H Program Coordinator