



YELLOW MEDICINE
SOIL & WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICT

2018 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.

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
Brayden Anderson	Conservation Technician

YM SWCD SUPERVISORS

Darwyn Bach (area 4).Chairperson
 Hollis Weber (area 3). Vice Chairperson
 DelonClarksean (area 5).Secretary
 Tom Remmele (area 1).Treasurer
 Jerry Nelson (area 2). Public Relations & Info



NRCS (Natural Resources Conservation Service) STAFF

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

Contents:

PROGRAMS and SERVICES	PAGE 3
EDUCATION and PROMOTION	PAGE 8
FINANCIALS	Page 11
PARTNERSHIPS and COOPERATION	PAGE 12

PROGRAMS and SERVICES

The Yellow Medicine Soil & Water Conservation District (SWCD) 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.

AgBMP LOAN 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 SWCD. 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 2018, over \$214,000 was loaned in Yellow Medicine County through the program to replace 10 Subsurface Sewage Treatment Systems (SSTS), replace 4 wells, and help finance conservation tillage equipment for 2 producers. The SWCD works cooperatively with the Yellow Medicine County Land and Resource Management Office's staff to determine project eligibility on certain projects 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 is completed and the landowner meets with a certifying agent to complete the assessment process. The certifying agent will gather an understanding on the management of the operation and review all the land with land practices implemented such as soil tests, nutrient application, manure application, pesticide application, etc. The certifier will then conduct field visits to review the farm for erosion and other potential

AG WATER QUALITY CERTIFICATION PROGRAM (AWQCP), cont.:

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 2018 Yellow Medicine SWCD had a total of 11 applications completed resulting in 4 certifications. The program began in 2016 and has had a total of 109 certifications in Area 5 (Southwest Minnesota consisting of 11 SWCDs).

BROADCAST SEEDER PROGRAM: The broadcast seeder program began in 2017. The SWCD started the program to assist landowners in seeding conservation practices on their land. Landowners have seeded over 30 acres in Yellow Medicine County with the Broadcast seeder since the start of the program.

BUFFER IMPLEMENTATION:

Minnesota Statute 103F.48 Implementation. Through 2018, SWCD staff continued to track status and update the Minnesota Buffer Compliance and Tracking Tool (BuffCaTT). Staff also continued, as in 2015 to 2017, 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: 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 SWCD conducted 38 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.

In 2018, Brayden Anderson was hired in a shared position with Lincoln SWCD to promote the CREP program. He has sent out around 130 letters in Yellow Medicine county addressing ideal floodplain wetland restoration sites and expiring CRP sites. Yellow Medicine had 9 easements totaling 396.56 acres. 90 letters were sent out to Lincoln County land owners focusing on wellhead protection and floodplain wetland restorations. 1 easement was funded for 33 acres in Lincoln County. The outlook for next year's CREP looks promising with multiple land owners interested and ready to enroll.

EASEMENT DELIVERY: SWCD staff are responsible for conducting status reviews on CREP and/or RIM Easements: Staff conducted site inspections on 87 easements in 2018.

FARM BILL ASSISTANCE GRANT: The SWCD received funding through the Farm Bill Assistance program to provide technical assistance to landowners with Farm Bill Programs. The SWCD assisted 142 landowners with planning conservation practices on over 865 acres in Yellow Medicine County. We assisted the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) in promoting the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP), and other aspects of the Farm Bill.

SOIL HEALTH EVENTS: The District hosted two Soil Health events, November 16, 2018 at PK Egans in Canby, December 13 at Madea's Café in Clarkfield. These events were



intended to provide incentive and a venue for a conversation on Soil Health practices such as no till and cover crops. The SWCD provided a free lunch and an even platform for producers to ask questions and share their experience with improving and experimenting with soil health.



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 2018, the SWCD planted 4,110 feet of field windbreaks and 13.9 acres of farmstead windbreaks. 22,362 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. There were over 1,700 acres enrolled in the program in 2018.

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.

In 2018, the SWCD spent approximately \$9,760 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):

- 270 1026's approved
- 20 1026's approved with restrictions
- 2 1026's denied
- 11 COE/DNR maintenance requests
- 67 Building permits approved
- 1 Building permit approved with restrictions
- 7 On site investigations conducted
- 18 Contacts without decisions

Received 2 basic applications, made one decision and worked with two landowner violations.

In 2018, staff spent 391 hours administering this program, including 17 hours of staff training.

EDUCATION and PROMOTION



AG IN THE CLASSROOM: Our SWCD Staff participated in the annual “Ag in the Classroom” event held in Granite Falls in March 2018. Fourth grade students played a trivia and matching game about different aquatic invasive species and how they can affect water bodies in our area.

AIS (Aquatic Invasive Species):

The SWCD worked with Lac Qui Parle SWCD to attend the Lac Qui Parle ice fishing tournament on February 10th, 2018. Our staff created a board presentation along with a variety of handouts for hundreds of tournament attendees.

For fishing opener on May 12th, 2018 our staff visited Del Clark boating access to inform boaters of the AIS laws. They were shown how to inspect their boats and equipment to prevent spreading AIS.

NEW AQUAROBOTICS: Partnering with the Yellow Medicine 4-H program we began an aquarobotics program. Through this program participants built their own aquatic robot equipped with an underwater camera. The team practiced using the robot in the Clarkfield pool (photo right) and this year we are planning on taking it out the lake accesses and searching for aquatic invasive species in our county. We also attended the Yellow Medicine County Fair and displayed our robot. If you know a student who is interested in a program like this, please contact our office and we can set up a team near their school’s location.



AIS (Aquatic Invasive Species), cont.: In 2018 we sponsored three different types of AIS awareness commercials with KARE11, Prairie Sportsman, and the Angling Buzz. Through these networks the word of AIS was not just spread throughout the county, but statewide. This is important so anyone who visits our area is aware of what AIS are and how to prevent them from bringing them to our area.

Our SWCD was hard at work trying to think of new ways to catch people's eye on the topic of AIS. We designed 4 different coasters to be used at local restaurants and bars. The coasters are two sided with one side displaying an invasive species with informative facts while the other side had information about Clean, Drain, Dry and Dispose.

2018 ENVIRONMENTAL FAIR: The Environmental Fair was held on September 26th, 2018 at the Murray County Fairgrounds, Slayton. The Fair is organized by the participating soil and water districts. Nearly 1,500 5th & 6th grade students participated from an 11 county area, including students from Clarkfield Area Charter School.

Southwest Minnesota Association of Conservation Districts



The Environmental Fair is a learning event in the “outdoor classroom”, giving students an opportunity to 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.

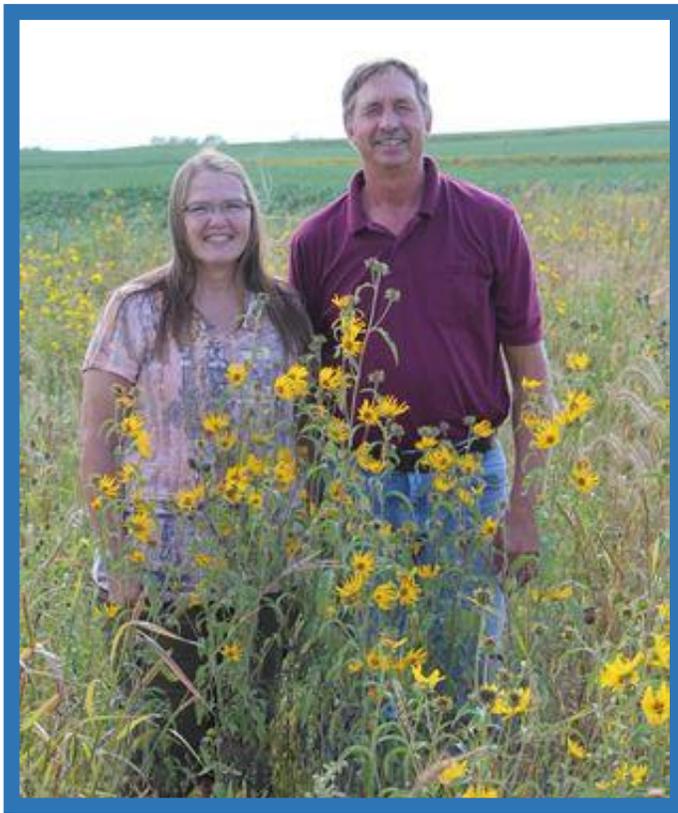
MEDIA OUTREACH: In 2018, the SWCD submitted more than two dozen articles to the local and regional newspapers for printing. This was done in an effort to share with the public what we do, and what we need their help to do. Regional papers also highlighted some of the things going on in the SWCD, interviews were held with some of the media outlets to expand our coverage and messaging. The SWCD also made significant investment of time and money into our social media presence. The SWCD had an active, paid advertisement on Facebook and Instagram at least 75% of the year.



OUTREACH THROUGH TECHNOLOGY: In 2017, the SWCD gave a fresh look to their website. We continued to update and add new information in 2018. It can be seen at www.yellowmedicineswcd.org.

AND, the public can look for us on Facebook: the Yellow Medicine SWCD can be found on Facebook, and we encourage the public to “Like” us, and stay up to date with news and events, which are being updated regularly. The Facebook page is also linked on our SWCD website.

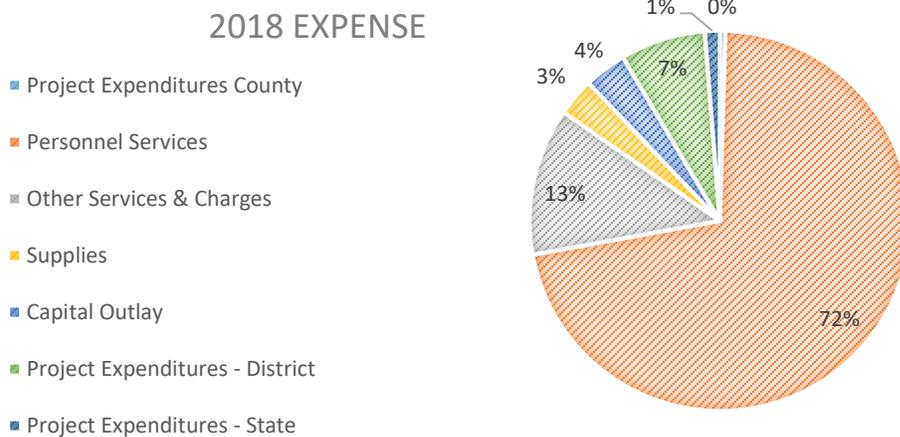
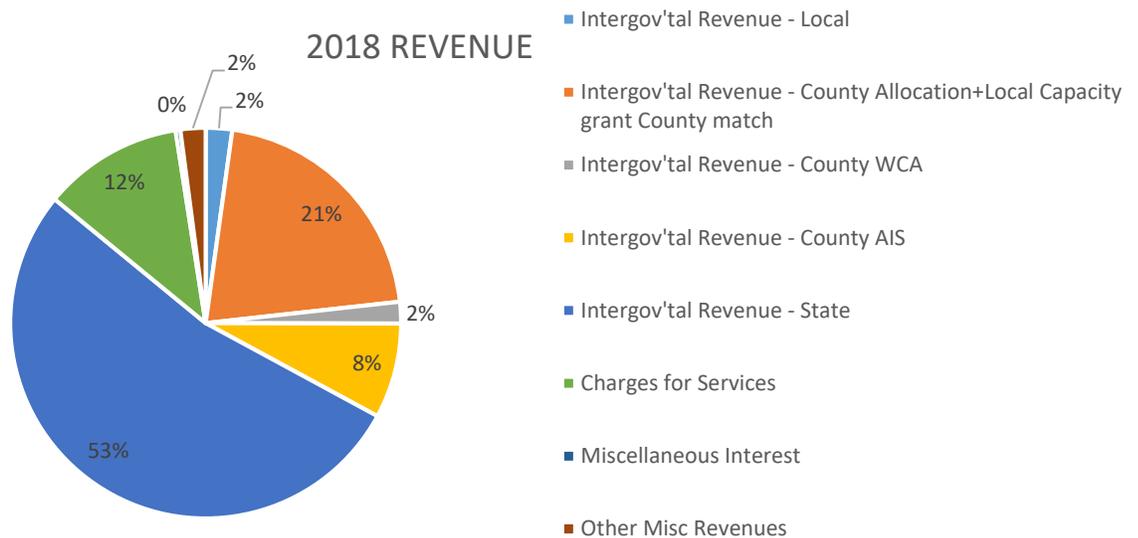
2018 OUTSTANDING CONSERVATIONIST AWARD: The Yellow Medicine SWCD nominated Loran and Patricia Haas as our 2018 Conservationist of the Year. Loran and Patricia Haas operate a grain and hay operation in Yellow Medicine County. They are very active in our SWCD and NRCS offices participating in Conservation Reservation Program, Conservation Stewardship Program, Environmental Quality Incentive Program, and the Minnesota Agricultural Water Quality Certification Program. They have been implementing conservation practices for over 30 years, which began with installing terraces.



The farming operation is located near the Buffalo Ridge which creates hilly fields dropping 90 feet in elevation from one end to the other. To reduce soil erosion, they have installed practices such as water and sediment control basins, terraces, rotational no till, and cover crops. With the application of cover crops they have successfully been able to suppress weed growth and avoid aphid infestation. They have taken land that has sensitive soils and converted it to grassland, along with creating habitat for pollinators and wildlife.

FINANCIALS

The Yellow Medicine SWCD funds its day-to-day operations through a variety of funding sources. These sources include State grants (53%); County allocation (21%); WCA grant and AIS allocation, sourced from the State to the County, then passed on to the SWCD for implementation; charges for services including services provided by our tree program, (12%). Although governed by an elected Board of officials, Conservation Districts do not have levy authority and must secure funds from a variety of sources. The District continues strive to leverage additional program funding for local conservation projects.



The charts above depict the distribution of our 2018 revenues and expenses after year-end adjusting entries (subject to audit). Funds are reported on the accrual basis of accounting, under which revenue is recognized when earned, and expenses are recognized when incurred.

PARTNERSHIPS & COOPERATION

CONSERVATION CORP APPRENTICE PROGRAM: Chyenna Julius served as the Conservation Corp Apprentice in 2018. Chyenna is a student of Iowa State University and grew up on a farm in Iowa. She was a great asset to the District, working with tree plantings, tree care and maintenance; the State of Minnesota Wetland Conservation Act; native plants; aquatic invasive species in Minnesota; easement maintenance guidelines and more.

We really appreciated her ambition and enthusiasm for learning.

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



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 of over a half million dollars in funding from the Clean Water Fund to be allocated in 2018. 2018 also saw the partners acquire \$123,750 in funding for the Cottonwood Lake Watershed in Yellow Medicine and Lyon Counties. This funding was acquired through the USDA NRCS National Water Quality Initiative (NWQI) Program that focuses on small sub-watersheds with high importance, specific goals, and quickly ready projects.

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 \$3,400 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 2018, the SWCD continued 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. In 2018, the lead up to completing a WRAPS for the LQP watershed saw the SWCD take part.

YELLOW MEDICINE COUNTY: The SWCD and Yellow Medicine County have continued to grow the partnership of the two government units exponentially. The benefit of each to the other has expanded greatly in 2018. 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 \$14,400 in state funding for technology and coordinated partnership projects dealing with drainage against \$14,400 in Yellow Medicine County funds to assist Yellow Medicine County's Land and Resource Management Office in implementing its work. YM SWCD implements the Yellow Medicine County Local Water Management Plan, and has adopted it as part of its Comprehensive Plan. To view the 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
Jason Beckler

Executive Director
Board Conservationist

USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service

Catherine Pullman, Curtis Elke, Troy Daniell
Gary Watson (retired August, 2018)

State Conservationist
Assistant State Conservationist-Field Operations

Yellow Medicine County Commissioners

Ronald Antony
Gary Johnson
Greg Renneke
Glen Kack
John Berends

Canby
Montevideo
Echo
Canby
Granite Falls

Other Agencies

Trudy Hastad
Michelle Overholser
Peggy Heglund
Jolene Johnson
Liz Ludwig
Chris Balfany
Wendy Kruger
Lucas Youngsma
Ryan Bjerke
Alicia Webb

Lac qui Parle-Yellow Bank Watershed Administrator
Yellow Medicine Watershed Administrator
County Administrator
Planning & Zoning Coordinator
FSA County Director
County Ditch Inspector
DNR Area Wildlife Manager
DNR Area Hydrologist YM Watershed
DNR Area Hydrologist LQP Watershed
Yellow Medicine/Lyon 4-H Program Coordinator