



YELLOW MEDICINE
SOIL & WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICT

2025 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.

Contents:

ABOUT US	PAGE 2
PROGRAMS and SERVICES	PAGE 3
EDUCATION and PROMOTION	PAGE 8
FINANCIALS	PAGE 10
PARTNERSHIPS and COOPERATION	PAGE 11

ABOUT US

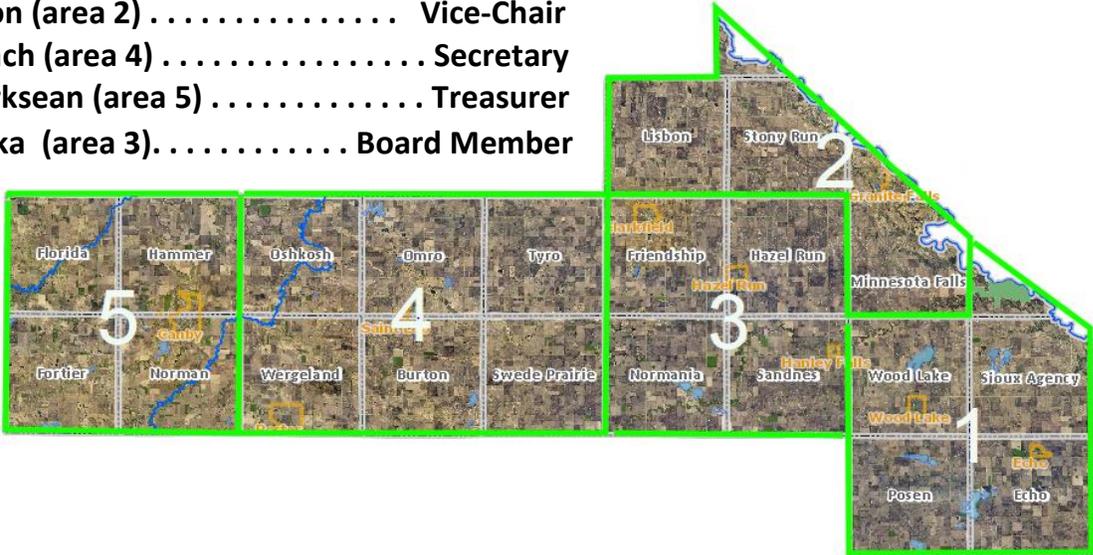
The Yellow Medicine Soil & Water Conservation District (SWCD) was duly organized as a governmental subdivision of this State, and a public body corporate and politic on the 17th day of April, 1950. The SWCD works with landowners in both rural and urban areas to conserve soil and water resources.

YELLOW MEDICINE SWCD STAFF

Brayden Anderson	Director
Emily Albin	Office Administrator
Michael Pitzl	Conservation Technician
Ryan Reishus	Conservation Technician

YM SWCD SUPERVISORS

Tom Remmele (area 1)..... Chair
 Jerry Nelson (area 2) Vice-Chair
 Darwyn Bach (area 4) Secretary
 DeLon Clarksean (area 5) Treasurer
 Garret Niska (area 3)..... Board Member



NRCS (Natural Resources Conservation Service) STAFF

Kelly Heather NRCS Customer Service Team Lead
 Jeffrey Berens..... District Conservationist
 Randy Kraus ACES Technician

PROGRAMS & SERVICES

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 and local 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 borrower's credit worthiness and services the loan.

In the past 5 years, almost 1.3 million dollars has been loaned in Yellow Medicine County, including nearly \$40,000 in 2025. While much of these funds have been used to replace Subsurface Sewage Treatment Systems (SSTS) and wells, over the years several of these low interest loans have also helped purchase farm equipment that will support agricultural best management practices supporting improved water quality.

2025 loan distribution based on number of loans processed:

100% of loan contracts for SSTS and wells 0% for qualifying ag equipment

2025 loan distribution based on dollars distributed:

100% of loan dollars for SSTS and wells 0% for qualifying ag equipment.

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. Those who sign up for the program and incorporate approved farming practices will be certified and given regulatory certainty for 10 years and are eligible for financial and technical assistance through the program.

To become a certified farm, a program application is completed. The landowner then 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 using soil tests; reviewing nutrient application, manure application, pesticide application, etc. The certifier will then conduct field visits to review the farm for erosion and other potential impacts it could have on water quality. Once the farming operation meets standards, it is eligible to be a Water Quality Certified Farm.

The program began in 2016 and has a total of 264 certifications in Area 5 (Southwest Minnesota consisting of 11 SWCDs), including 19 in Yellow Medicine County.

BUFFER IMPLEMENTATION: Minnesota Statute 103F.48 Implementation. In 2025, the SWCD finished the year with six non-compliant parcels. This converts to nearly 100% compliance with the law. The final parcels' reasons for noncompliance range from accidental herbicide damage to outright unwillingness to comply to non-response to communications over the last half decade. The SWCD has assisted Yellow Medicine County and the Minnesota Board of Water and Soil Resources with achieving compliance under ordinance and statute. A policy has also been adopted to plan for monitoring continued compliance in the future.

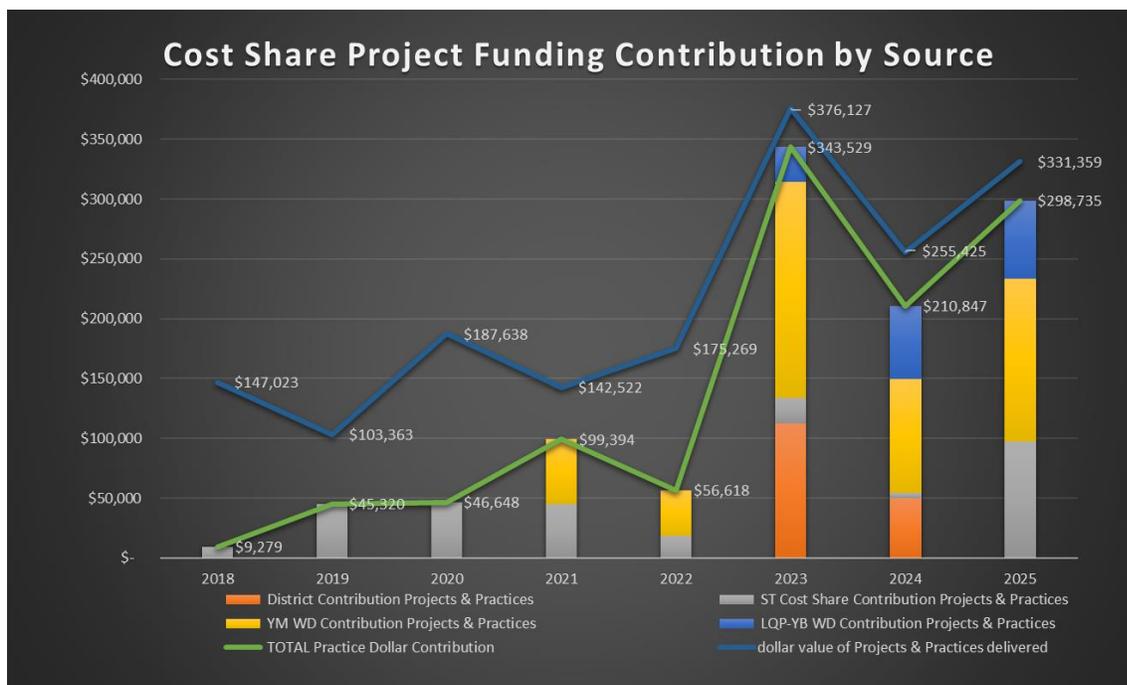
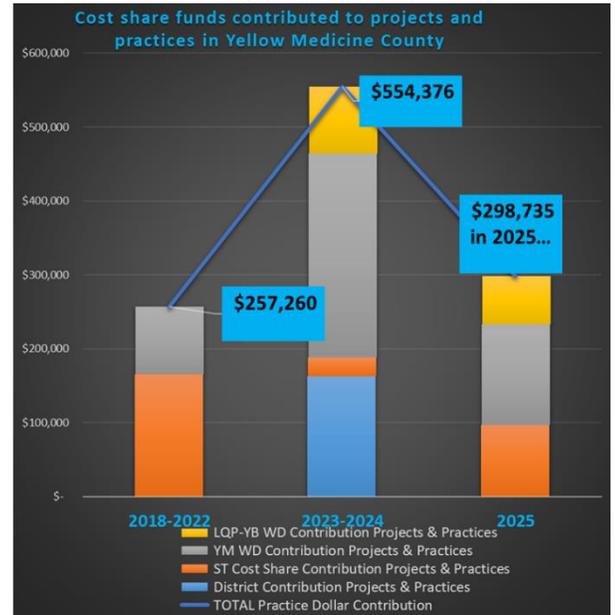


COST SHARE OPPORTUNITIES: The SWCD has never been more active in the development of structural and soil health practices across the work area. Much of the increase in activity has been due to funding opportunities made available since the implementation of One Watershed One Plans in Yellow Medicine and more recently Lac qui Parle-Yellow Bank Watersheds.

The Yellow Medicine SWCD provides technical and administrative support for these practices. Brayden Anderson has been leading implementation of these practices since 2022. Our technicians, Ryan Reishus and Michael Pitzl will continue to work with our producers on these opportunities.

As shown on these charts, cost share funds utilized in 2025:

- Provided almost \$300,000 in cost share funds for projects and practices
- Put more than \$330,000 worth of projects and practices on the land in Yellow Medicine County
- In this 2-year period,
 - 32% of cost share dollars came from the State cost share dollars
 - 46% from the Yellow Medicine One Watershed One Plan cost share funding
 - 22% from Lac qui Parle-Yellow Bank One Watershed One Plan cost share funding.





CREP: In 2017 the Federal Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) and the State of Minnesota Reinvest In Minnesota (RIM) 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.

Since the start of CREP III in 2017, Yellow Medicine has signed up 1475 acres into the program.

Year	# of Easements	Acres Enrolled
2018	9	396
2019	11	607
2022	2	67
2023		30
2024	2	266
2025	2	109



EASEMENT DELIVERY & SITE INSPECTIONS: SWCD staff are responsible for conducting status reviews on CREP and/or RIM Easements and inspections of existing completed cost share projects: Staff conducted site inspections on 95 easements and 40 cost share projects in 2024.

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 2025, the SWCD planted and/or sold 5,100 trees to local residents. 1600 feet of fabric tree mat was also installed as well as 80 3' fabric squares, and 63 protective 4' tree tubes sold.



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 are 27 locations, totaling 3,172 acres enrolled in the WIA in Yellow Medicine County.**

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 2025, the SWCD utilized \$8,100 of WCA grant funds administering WCA guidelines thru review of tiling permits and other projects (see breakdown below):

89	1026's approved
11	1026's approved with restrictions
0	1026's denied
0	Drainage Maintenance request
1	COE/DNR maintenance requests
56	Building permits approved
0	Building permit approved with restrictions

Staff spent almost 150 hours administering this program in 2025.

EDUCATION & PROMOTION



AIS (Aquatic Invasive Species): Public knowledge of how AIS is spread and how it affects the eco system is critical not only to our county's waters, but also to waters our residents visit and to our area's visitors.

In 2025, we helped sponsor AIS awareness commercials featured on PBS's Prairie Sportsman for television broadcast across the state. Through these ads the word of AIS prevention was spread not just through the county, but statewide. A full page AIS prevention ad was featured in the Farm and Home Publishers Yellow Medicine County plat book. The District also Distributed vinyl license holders bearing an AIS prevention message to area vendors selling hunting and fishing licenses. Special focus this year was placed on local AIS awareness, spread to lake users through projects in Yellow Medicine County. At Timm Park on Wood Lake, an attention grabbing large Adirondak chair was purchased and a new dock was added to the shoreline, with signage on each to educate lake users about their part in AIS prevention. Del Clark also received a large Adirondak chair, new dock, and signage, as well as waste receptacles and outdoor advertising kiosks for additional information sharing.



ENVIRONMENTAL FAIR:

Soil and Water Conservation Districts of Southwest Minnesota finally had the opportunity to resume the Environmental Fair after the pandemic and its aftermath. The 2025 Fair took place September 23 & 24 at the Lyon County Fairgrounds in Marshall. Around 1500 5th & 6th grade students from 11 counties attended in the two days.

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 accommodate a large number of students.

OUTREACH STATS for 2025:

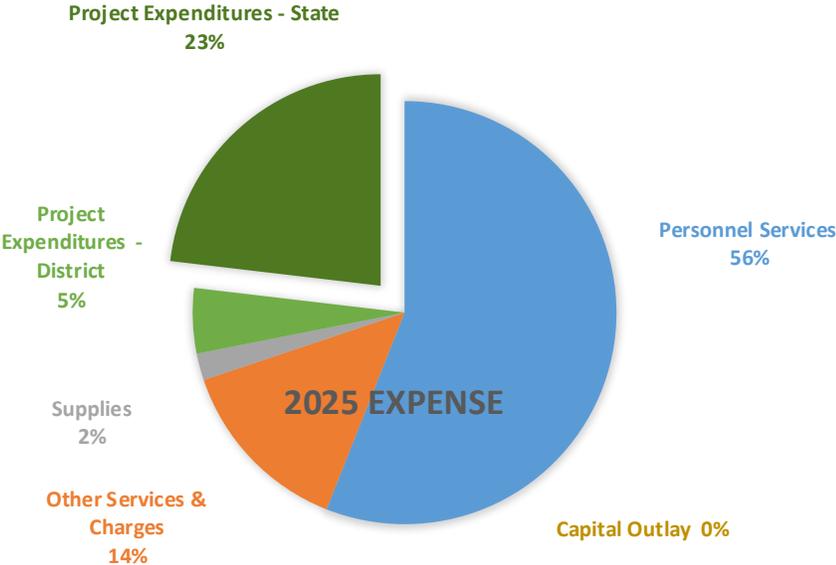
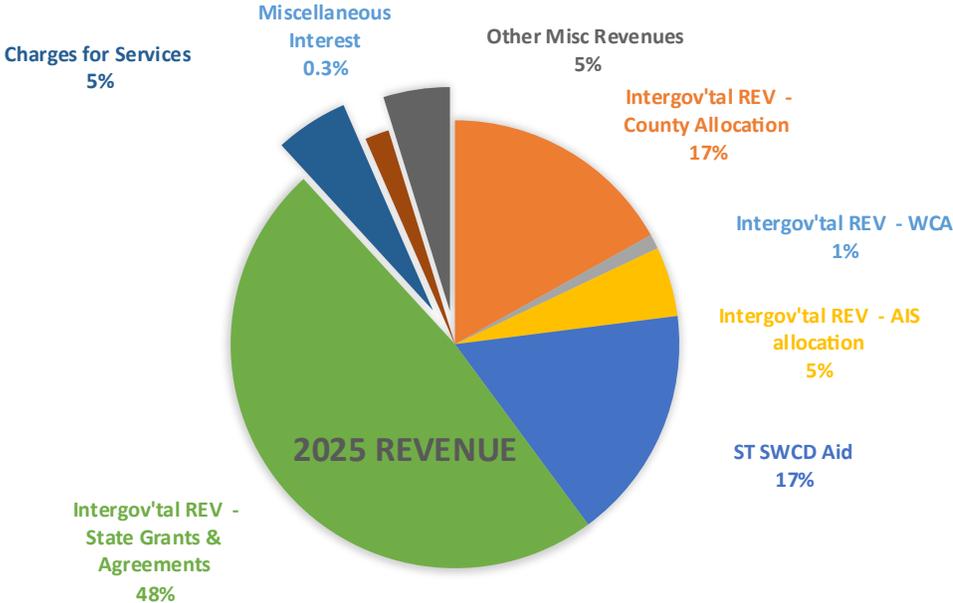
Media Outreach:

- Facebook - over 95,000 views
- Website - averaged 250 visits per month
- Personal contact – 1-6 per day
- Mail – 400+ letters to landowners
 - 700+ soil health postcards



FINANCIALS

The Yellow Medicine SWCD funds its day-to-day operations through a variety of funding sources. These sources include State SWCD Aid – a state appropriation started in 2023 (17%); State grants (48%); County allocation funds (17%); the WCA grant (1%) and AIS allocation (5%) 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 (5%). 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.



These charts depict the distribution of our 2025 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



**One Watershed
One Plan**

ONE WATERSHED ONE PLAN: The Yellow Medicine River 1W1P has utilized several million dollars in state and federal funding to bring priority projects to priority geographies since its implementation in 2017. This planning area covers the Yellow Medicine River Watershed and a few tributaries of the Minnesota River and includes portions of Lac qui Parle, Lyon, Lincoln, and Yellow Medicine County. The majority of cost share funds implemented in Yellow Medicine County in 2025 came from the Yellow Medicine 1W1P.

The Lac qui Parle-Yellow Bank Watershed area includes portions of Lac qui Parle, Yellow Medicine and Lincoln Counties. The final draft of the Lac qui Parle-Yellow Bank 1W1P was completed and implemented in 2023. Over \$1.1 million in grant funds have been used to implement projects throughout the watershed district.

RAINFALL MONITORING PROGRAM: The SWCD participates in the state's rainfall monitoring program. Yellow Medicine County currently has eight 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.

SOUTHWEST PRAIRIE TECHNICAL SERVICE AREA (SWPTSA):

SWCD contributed \$3,546 the Southwest Prairie Technical Services' overall budget. Supervisor Jerry Nelson serves on the Southwest Prairie Technical Service Joint Powers Board and was able to attend meetings throughout the year.

The District utilized SWPTSA technical services on several landowner projects associated with Yellow Medicine Watershed and Lac qui Parle-Yellow Bank Watershed One Watershed One Plan Cost Share Grants.

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.

YELLOW MEDICINE COUNTY: Mitch Kling is the County’s Commissioner representative appointed to sit in on SWCD meetings. 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	Executive Director
Luke Olson	Board Conservationist

USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service

Troy Daniel	State Conservationist
Kelly Heather	NRCS Customer Service Team Lead

Yellow Medicine County Commissioners

Ronald Antony	Canby
Mitch Kling	Granite Falls
Greg Renneke	Echo
Glen Kack	Canby
John Berends	Granite Falls

Other Agencies

Trudy Hastad	Lac qui Parle-Yellow Bank Watershed Administrator
Michelle Overholser	Yellow Medicine Watershed Administrator
Angie Stienbach	County Administrator
Jolene Johnson	Planning & Zoning Coordinator
Stacy Miller	FSA Director
Chris Balfany	County Ditch Inspector
Wendy Kruger	DNR Area Wildlife Manager
Kyle Jarcho	DNR Area Hydrologist YM Watershed
Jace Jackman	DNR Area Hydrologist LQP Watershed
Alicia Webb	Yellow Medicine/Lyon 4-H Program Coordinator