



TODD SWCD 2016 ANNUAL REPORT



New Buffer Initiative

<p>Inside:</p> <p>Programs 2</p> <p>Projects 3</p> <p>Recognition & Awards 4-5</p> <p>Other News & Happenings 6</p> <p>Partners 7</p> <p>Public Relations & 8</p> <p>Staff & Boards 9</p>	<p>Most Todd County landowners know vegetative buffers will be required on public waterways November 1, 2017 and on county ditches by November 1, 2018. This seems like quite the task considering Todd County spans out over almost 1,000 square miles, has 123 public lakes, 380 miles of public streams, and 379 miles of county ditches.</p> <p>Using 2013 aerial imagery, the Todd SWCD completed a county wide buffer inventory on all public waters and public ditches. The results show that 433 landowners will likely need to establish some amount of buffer. Todd County needs a grand total of 271 acres of vegetative buffers installed to reach full compliance! This breaks down to 235 acres on public waters (average of 0.5 acres per landowner) and 36 acres on county ditches (average of 0.16 acres per landowner).</p> <p>Through this inventory, the Todd SWCD has been able to rank landowners according to acres of buffers needed. On public waters the top 10 landowners own 14% of the area needing buffers while on public ditches the top 10 landowners own 27% of the area needing buffers.</p> <p>Landowners can install the buffer on their own or they can enroll in a program to help cover the cost of installation and some programs even offer incentive payments. Once such program, the Sauk River Watershed Hayed Buffer Program is available through Sauk River Watershed District in partnership with Todd SWCD.</p> <p>What do these numbers tell us? That Todd County is making excellent progress toward being compliant with the state buffer initiative. There is still plenty of work to be done, but Todd County is well on its way!</p>
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MN AG Water Quality Certification Program

Seven new Todd County producers received their Minnesota Ag Water Quality Certification this summer. We now have eight certified in the county. Certified producers include: Pete Berscheit (beef), Bill Berscheit (cash crops), Tyler Carlson (beef), Kevin Ehnes (no-till crops), Danny Peyton (cash crops, beef), Lauren Schroeder (cash crops), Mike Stine (beef) and Tom Williamson (cash crops).

The Minnesota Ag Water Quality Certification Program is a voluntary program though the Minnesota Department of Agriculture designed to accelerate adoption of on-farm conservation practices that protect Minnesota's lakes and rivers. Farm owners and operators who implement and maintain approved farm management practices will be certified and in turn assured that their operation meets the state's water quality goals and standards for a period of ten years. Farm operators and owners seeking certification will be evaluated using an on-farm assessment tool. The on-farm assessment is customized specifically to your operation. It is a great educational opportunity to learn about how to maintain and improve your environmental performance.

Programs

- Coordinated 11 Todd County precipitation volunteer monthly monitor reports
- Monitored 13 observation wells for static water levels in Todd County
- Reviewed 2 Irrigation Water Appropriation permit applications
- Irrigation Scheduling Program, Stalk Nitrate Testing and Nutrient Management Initiative Plots delivered through East Otter Tail SWCD
- Finished the 2016-2021 Revision of the Todd County Local Comprehensive Water Plan
- New Minnesota Agricultural Water Quality Certification Program (MAWQCP) began and Todd County certified seven producers in 2016
- New Buffer Initiative work began to provide guidance and support to landowners; Developed inventory of buffer needs in the county
- Assisted MPCA in water quality monitoring in 11 lakes through the SWAG Grant
- Offered the Walk-In Access program through the DNR to landowners.



Bill Berscheit Receives Ag Water Quality Certification with his family from Tom Wilczek (Certification Specialist) and Danielle Kuperus (Todd SWCD)

Wetlands Conservation Act

- 15 Exemption Decisions
- 7 No Loss Decisions
- 2 Replacement Plan Decisions
- 2 Boundary/Type Decision
- 1 Local Road Program Concurrence
- 98 Site Visits
- 296 Wetland Related Questions
- Hosted Monthly TEP Meetings

Tree and Plant Sale Program

- 10,525 Trees
- 200 One Gallon Potted Stock
- 31 Native Plant Kits

Feedlot Program

- 290 Feedlot Registrations Updated & New
- 4 Construction Short Forms (new buildings or expansions)
- 5 Interim Permits
- 183 Site Visits (Assistance/Compliance)
- 330 Feedlot Related Questions
- 4 Liquid Manure Storage Closures

Potted Tree Stock



Best Management Practices Installed



Vegetated Treatment Area: CWF Livestock



Water and Sediment Basins: State Cost Share

State Cost Share

- 1 Water and Sediment Basin Project
- 4 Well Sealing (3 Domestic/1 Irrigation)

CWF Livestock Management

- 1 Ag Waste
- 1 Engineer Certification

MPCA 319 Grant

- 1 Water and Sediment Basin Project

Feedlot Assistance

- 1 Ag Waste
- 2 Pond Closures

CWP Swan River

- 1 Shoreland Restoration

AgBMP Loans

- 3 (1 Ag Waste, 1 WASCORB, 1 Equipment)

RIM Easement

- 1 for 70 acres



Shoreland Restoration: CWP Swan River



**CLEAN
WATER
LAND &
LEGACY
AMENDMENT**

Recognition & Awards

Todd SWCD has selected Swan Lake Acres as its **2016 Conservation Landowner Award** winner. Swan Lake Acres is a farm managed by John Kunstleben and Lois Thielen who have owned and operated the 185 acre farm since 1987. They have always had dairy cows on the farm and currently milk 45 head but have milked up to 99 at times over the years. John and Lois participate in the Farmers Assuring Responsible Management program through their local dairy which recognizes excellent animal husbandry practices. Their cattle are let out daily to graze on pasture during the summer months and for exercise. In 2015, Lois and John worked collaboratively with the Swan Lake Association to ensure water quality by installing an engineered designed vegetative treatment area, clean water diversions, and settling basins to reduce, collect, and treat any potential runoff from the cattle feeding area.

John raises hay, corn, grains, and soybeans on their 185 acres and on an additional 450 rented acres. They tackle field erosion in the moment with Lois' philosophy "if erosion exists, we are doing something wrong, and we fix it; we don't wait for it to get worse". They experienced soil erosion on some fields in their early years and solved these issues through adoption of minimum tillage and vertical tillage, strip cropping, grassed waterways, and maintenance of buffers to Schwanke Creek and to Big Swan Lake. They own 1320 feet of Big Swan Lake shore frontage which has always been maintained in a natural condition. John also enjoys renovating old farm buildings in their original vintage condition – a few of which dot the landscape along the shore of Swan Lake.

One of Lois's many hobbies and careers includes writing for the Times Writers Group. She has used this forum to raise awareness about the difficulty agriculture has with recycling plastics and other waste products that are produced as a result of modern farming practices. John and Lois go to great lengths to recycle their farm and home wastes. "Everything is separated and recycled". Lois also has a large organic garden which she maintains every year. Their diet is farm raised and Lois' baking skills are often rewarded with ribbons at the State Fair. Lois has actively participated in the Adopt-A-Highway program for the past 13 years-- caring for and cleaning up 4 miles of Highway 287.

John and Lois consider wildlife an important part of their farm. There has been a bald eagle nesting near the lake almost every year and other wildlife are commonly spotted. John usually plants small wildlife food plots or leaves a few rows for game to tide them over the winter. They leave patches of milkweed around the farm to help support Monarch butterflies and fondly remember the year when a major Monarch migration stopped at their place. In a generation of waning family farms, Lois and John continue to thrive—making conservation key in the foundation for farm management. They are lifelong and enlightened learners, continually evolving their farm with best management practices that secure longevity and health for the environment.



Lois Thielen and John Kunstleben Accepting the Outstanding Conservationist Award from Todd SWCD Chairman Lee Buchholz



Conservation Farm Tour Hosted by John and Lois on their Farm in 2015

Recognition and Awards Continued



Tim Stieber presented Todd Parks and Trails Board Chair AI Loken with the Land Stewardship Award.

Photo Credit: Karen Nauber

The **2016 Land Stewardship Award** winner selected by Todd Soil and Water Conservation District is the Todd County Parks and Trails Board. The Todd County Board of Commissioners created the County Park and Trail Board in 2008. The current board consists of two County Commissioners, and five citizen representatives, one from each of the Commissioner District. The board is an active “working” board that handles improvement projects as well as routine maintenance at Battle Point Park, Long Prairie River Canoe Access, and Todd Counties section of the Wobegon Trail.

Todd County assumed ownership of the park property (its first) known as Battle Point in May of 1977. A park improvement plan was developed and the initial park improvements began between 1983 and 1985. The first improvements included the development of the boat ramp and parking lot. According to project documents, prior to the parking lot work an Archeological Study was completed and nothing of historical value was found.

Battle Point County Park is located in southwestern Todd County along the eastern shore of Lake Osakis. The park is approx. 10 acres in size and forms a peninsula into Lake Osakis. According to the 1983 Todd County Park and Recreation Management Plan in the pre-settlement years Sioux and Chippewa Indians occupied the area and many battles were fought between them. The most recently recorded battle describes a confrontation in 1866 resulting in many casualties at the water's edge of Lake Osakis.

The county's public areas grew in 2006 when the Lake Wobegon Trail section through Todd County was completed. It is well used during the summer by bicyclists and by snowmobiles in the winter. The Long Prairie River Canoe Access area was acquired as a surplus tax forfeit property then developed as a canoe access in 2014.

After eight years, the board continues to plan, bring about upgrades to Battle Point Park, and seek funding through grants and local contributions. It has to contend with weather events that occasionally bring about damage in the park. The park pavilion completed in 2011 was damaged by a falling tree and was replaced in 2014. Ice flows in the spring damaged the boat landing area several times and the parking area needs annual attention due to the heavy traffic from fishermen. The board handles these projects along with arranging for the routine maintenance burdens that always accompany a public property. Looking to the future, playground equipment was installed in 2015 and 2016 and the board has been actively exploring new projects and park features for Battle Point and other areas of the county.



Deja Anton was awarded the **Tina Rosenstein Award** at the annual Minnesota Association of County Feedlot Officers (MACFO) conference for her demonstrated leadership within this field. The award goes on to recognize her for her “dedicated service and commitment to Minnesota Livestock Producers, the general public and the Minnesota Association of County Feedlot Officers.”

Other News & Happenings

Water Plan Update—2016-2021

The purpose of local water management planning at the county level is to meet the requirements set forth in Chapter 103B.311 and 103B.315, through identification of existing and potential problems or opportunities for protection, management, and development of water resources and related land resources. The development and implementation of a plan of action is to promote sound hydrologic management of water and related land resources and to work towards effective environmental protection and management throughout the entire County, including municipalities.

The information presented in the updated Water Plan is based on the most pressing concerns of our community members as well as the best available data available used in analyzing and rating **individual watershed's health. At the forefront of the Todd County Water Plan's goals and objectives** are the two core values of civic engagement and voluntary programs, both aimed at protecting and preserving our water quality and our unique landscape. The update is available on the Todd County website as well as individual subwatershed maps which identify local features.

Mississippi River Brainerd and Sartell Watersheds—2016-2020

The official kick-off for both the Upper Mississippi River - Brainerd and Sartell watersheds began in 2016. The latter covers 1,079,950 acres (1,687 square miles) in the north central part of the Upper Mississippi River Basin in central Minnesota and encompasses all or parts of Aitkin, Cass, Crow Wing, Morrison and Todd counties. The former or Mississippi River - Sartell watershed covers approximately 652,800 acres (1,020 square miles) in the central part of the Upper Mississippi River Basin. The watershed is also known locally as the Platte-Spunk Rivers watershed. The watershed includes parts of Benton, Crow Wing, Mille Lacs, Morrison, Stearns, and Todd counties.

Biological, chemistry and flow monitoring began in 2017 on several key stream reaches throughout the watershed. Volunteers and Todd SWCD as well as MPCA staff have been conducting lake monitoring on several key lakes throughout the watershed. Results will be presented in both **watershed's TMDLs and be used to formulate Watershed Restoration and Protection Strategies** for the area.

Township Nitrate Testing—Private Well Study

The Minnesota Department of Agriculture and Todd SWCD evaluated private wells in nine townships for nitrate levels in drinking water. Results were sent to landowners who participated. The individual landowner data is confidential but summaries by township will be available in 2017.

Partners

West Central Technical Service Area (WCTSA)

- 26 Site Visits
- 20 Site Surveys
- 10 Preliminary Projects Designs
- 10 Final Project Designs
- Provided Construction Oversight on 8 Projects



WCTSA Engineers Gary Borash and Luke Herkenhoff surveying a streambank in Todd County

Tri-County Irrigation

This year 16 Todd County fields were enrolled into the program from nine farmers. Wade Salo, the technician from East Otter Tail SWCD, worked with farmers to monitor the weather and soil moisture to give them a second opinion on whether they should irrigate or not.

Nutrient Management Initiative Plots & Stalk Nitrogen Program

There were two nutrient management initiative plots in Todd County this year. These plots are set-up in conjunction with the MDA for the intended purpose to be on-farm field trials. It helps farmers evaluate alternative nitrogen practices, highlight advancements in nitrogen management practices, and evaluate practices that may help reduce field nitrate loss. There are five producers enrolled in the stalk nitrate sampling program. Nathan Wiese from East Otter Tail is the Irrigation/Nutrient Management Specialist who delivers this program.

NRCS

2,420.56 Acres Continuous CRP
(2,225 grass plantings, 100.5 grass buffers, 95.06 trees)

17.3 Acres Honey Bee Habitat in 4 Contracts

14 CSP Contracts

12 EQIP Contracts

1 Nutrient Management Plan

1 Comprehensive Nutrient Management Plans

322 Acres of Nutrient Management

2290 Feet Livestock Pipeline

1 Pit Closure

77 Cover Crop Acres

682 Acres of Prescribed Grazing

1 Forest Management Plan

3 Grade Stabilization Structures

136 Acres No Till

17 Acres Use Exclusion

Data is unofficial and has not been reviewed



Public Relations & Education

- **Representatives on the Livestock Advisory's Committee, Camp Ripley Landscape Stewardship Committee, City Wellhead Protection and MPCA Watershed Approaches**
- Annual Feedlot Meeting at the Hub Super Club, 175 attendees
- Annual River & Lake Day, 45 attendees
- 22nd Annual Enviro-Fest, 478 attendees (students, teachers & presenters)
- 2 SWCD Newsletters, 8 newspaper articles, 6 news releases
- Monthly radio show on KEYL/Hot Rod Radio
- Attended Liaison, Local Work Group, Area II, Township Meetings, NRCS Field Day and Cover Crop Demonstration
- Attended MASWCD Convention and Day at the Capital
- Assisted Todd County Planning and Zoning Department
- Provided technical assistance to landowners through field site visits
- Annual awards program for Outstanding Conservationist and Land Stewardship Awards
- Hosted Booths at the Todd County Fair, Breakfast on the Farm, Central Lakes Field Day and LPGE Career Fair
- Presented at Lake Association Meetings, Staples Motley Schools, Annual Township Meeting, Corn and Soybean Growers Annual Meeting, Annual Contractor and Land Rent Meeting.



Enviro-Fest Station on Soils led by SWCD Staff Deja Anton and Danielle Kuperus

SWCD Board



Dale Katterhagen
Leland Buchholz
Kenneth Pesta
Norman Krause
Tom Williamson

County Commissioners



Barb Becker
David Kircher
Gary Kneisl
Randy Neumann
Rod Erickson

SWCD Staff



Matt Danzl – Wetland Technician
Deja Anton – Feedlot Officer
Shannon Wettstein – Water Planner
Daniel Kuperus – Conservation Technician
Sarah Katterhagen – Program Coordinator
Tim Stieber – Division Director

NRCS Staff



Sabin Adams – Pheasants Forever Biologist
Justin Lindner – Soil Conservationist
Russell Klingschmidt – District Conservationist
Cariss Benning – Administrative Assistant
Grant Pearson – MAWQCP Certification Specialist
(no longer with NRCS)
Darlene Drayna – Soil Conservation Technician



To view the 2016 SWCD Board Meeting Minutes, visit the
Todd County website

<http://www.co.todd.mn.us/>