Celebrating 50 Years! Established in 1965

Early in 1965 after an intensive educational campaign by a steering committee of County Commissioners and interested people, 170 petitions circulated among Todd County landowners to ask the Minnesota Soil Conservation Commission to form a Soil and Water Conservation District for Todd County. Over 1200 signatures were obtained.

Responding to the petition, the Commission held a hearing in the county. More than 120 people appeared and again responded in favor. On the March 24, 1965 referendum, the people voted 571 to 54 to organize a Soil and Water Conservation District. On March 29th the Commission approved the formation and appointed Percy Perreton, Carlos, and Wayne Voge, Bertha for one and two year terms of office.

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Conservation Buffers

Conservation buffers are areas or strips of land in permanent vegetation, designed to intercept at fields edge or convey water runoff through and off a field. Strategically placed buffer strips in the agricultural landscape can effectively mitigate the movement of sediment, nutrients, and pesticides from farm fields. This is accomplished through a direct filter effect and by slowing water velocity across large fields. When coupled with appropriate upland treatments, buffer strips work very well and observations taken this spring indicate that many buffers withstood the heavy rains. They also protect valuable topsoil, increasing the productive capacity of fields.

Renewed Interest in Promoting Buffers

This past winter Governor Dayton moved to introduce legislation to mandate a 50 foot buffer along all waterways in the state. This really started a conversation about buffers statewide. As legislative bills were drafted and debated this past spring many realized how complex this topic was. Three areas in need of some form of buffer include public waterways, drainage ditches, and road right-away areas. These are governed by different rules and government entities and not uniformly enforced around the state. Governor Dayton’s initiative was an attempt to get rules currently on the books to be implemented.

New Legislation Passed

A buffer bill passed in special session on June 12, 2015. The Riparian Protection and Water Quality Practices Bill (103F.48) outlines what is required of landowners and includes buffer requirements, timelines, and enforcement procedures. Rulemaking associated with this bill will begin immediately. Todd SWCD will be working to identify areas that are in greatest need of buffer plantings and pulling together a local buffer working group to develop an effective approach that will work in Todd County. Although considered controversial by some groups - there was broad support to increase the amount of vegetative buffers along Minnesota’s waterways. Todd SWCD will work to assist landowners in being compliant with the new rules.

Properly installed and maintained buffers have the capacity to:

- Remove up to 50 percent or more of nutrients and pesticides.
- Remove up to 60 percent or more of certain pathogens.
- Remove up to 75 percent or more of sediment.

More information on establishing buffers can be obtained from Todd SWCD (320-732-2644) or USDA-NRCS (320-732-6618 ext. 3)
Still have an Open Pit?

Talking with owners of unused pits...bad things can happen. One producer shared that he lost two hunting dogs in his pit; another had an unfenced pit during snow cover and a hunter went trouncing across the area and fell in up to his neck; others, not local, have lost children to abandoned open pits. The crust appears solid to a child. A ball bounces into the pit area...child pursues ball... (wince!!!)... You get the picture. As an owner of an unused pit, you risk this happening to your loved ones, friends or neighbors. A responsible pit owner will opt to close his or her unused pit.

Currently EQIP has EXCELLENT financial payments for pit closure. Do not hesitate, visit the local NRCS office before September 1 to see what Russell Kleinschmidt or Darlene Drayna can do for you. For more information, contact NRCS at 320-732-6618, ext. 3 or call Deja Anton at the SWCD at 320-732-2644.

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<tr>
<th>Precipitation Amounts (inches)</th>
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<td>2014/15 Monthly Average</td>
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And not that losing Greg wasn’t enough.....**Linda Bleess also retired after 42 years!** Linda has been the face of Planning and Zoning in Todd County and will be missed. From all of us, we wish Greg and Linda the best of luck in retirement. Thank you for all your hard work!

Greg Ostrowski retired after 36 years of working for the Todd SWCD. Over the years many landowners had the opportunity to work with Greg as he helped them solve problems ranging from livestock manure to fencing to tree selection and pest control. In 2013 he was awarded Outstanding District Employee of the Year for his dedication to conservation.

Greg on his last day with WCTSA Engineers Russ & Luke

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OSTROWSKI RETIRES

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The Todd County Aquatic Invasive Species (AIS) Program

The 2014 Legislative Session enacted Law Chapter 308 to provide Minnesota counties a County Program Aid for Aquatic Invasive Species (AIS) prevention. The amount designated to each county was based on the number of watercraft trailer launches as well as the number of watercraft trailer parking spaces within each county. Todd County staff met with Lake Associations and others to develop an AIS plan to utilize these funds. The county plan includes a variety of prevention strategies and education and outreach programs.

Occasionally a landowner will comment that the AIS prevention activities are an exercise in futility since some believe that all water bodies will eventually become infested with AIS. The research on this does not bear out. Only about 1% of Minnesota lakes have an identified AIS infestation even though AIS have been around for many years. This means that nearly all lakes do not currently have an AIS problem – making prevention the key to avoid future problems.

During 2015 over 20 of the most popular lakes in Todd County will have watercraft inspectors at boat landings. Inspectors are there to first and foremost inspect boats but these inspectors also are a key part of the education program to reach boaters using our lakes. The boat inspectors are working to change boater behavior relative to only launching and transporting boats that are clean, drained, and dry. Inspectors received training in how to spot a range of AIS – from small zebra mussel veligers to Eurasian Milfoil clinging on boats and trailers.

Another important activity this summer will be the monitoring of 20 lakes for zebra mussels. This work will be completed by Sauk River Watershed District. The results will help detail what lakes – if any – have zebra mussel infestations.

Much of the AIS education and outreach funds are being expended through locally lead efforts of the lake associations. AIS Prevention Grant Funds are being used to cost share a wide variety of outreach and on-the-ground activities organized by these groups. MN DNR is very active in AIS programs and has been coordinating training, enforcement, and guiding counties with their programs.

Barn Talk Tip:
Prior to making a farm purchase, contact your local feedlot officer and planning and zoning to make sure the farm is compliant with feedlot rules, that zoning allows the type of operation you desire, and that there are no hidden setbacks due to an illegal land split, well, or municipal use. This simple step could save you a lot of time and money while reducing potential “headaches”.

Who Is Up For Feedlot Inspection in 2015?
A transparent look at this year’s Todd County Feedlot Work Plan:

- If your site was due for a registration update in 2014 and you failed to do so, AND through examination of 2013 aerial imagery, livestock, lots, or manure storage areas appear on premise, you will be receiving a notice of scheduled inspection this year even if you have no livestock on site. Those former feedlots appearing in-active, will be closed out and de-activated in the registry.
- If you once signed an Open Lot Agreement and have not been visited by our program since, you have a likely chance of being inspected this year or in the next few years are substantially increased.
- If a complaint is called in to this office and is found to be valid, you will receive an inspection this year.
- If you have never been formally inspected by a feedlot officer, your chances of being inspected either this year or in the next few years are substantially increased.
- If your site was due for a registration update in 2014 and you failed to do so, AND through examination of 2013 aerial imagery, livestock, lots, or manure storage areas appear on premise, you will be receiving a notice of scheduled inspection this year even if you have no livestock on site. Those former feedlots appearing in-active, will be closed out and de-activated in the registry.
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- If a complaint is called in to this office and is found to be valid, you will receive an inspection this year.
- If your feedlot location is in the Long Prairie Watershed or the Crow Wing River Watershed, your chances of inspection are increased due to recent classification as an impaired water system.
- If you do something really sketchy as far as water quality goes… your chances of being inspected go up!

If you would like input into the 2016-2017 Feedlot Program Work Plan, please contact Deja @ 320-732-2644
Water Plan Survey Results

The Todd County Local Water Management Plan Survey was conducted from the period starting at the Water Plan Public Hearing held on November 19th, 2014 and ran through February 4th, 2015. Questions were designed by the SWCD Director, Water Planner and Task Force Committee after reviewing past surveys completed by surrounding counties for this same purpose. A number of groups were targeted for input which reflected the demographic of the county as well as a public outreach campaign to solicit participation. Paper copy surveys were made available at all public libraries, city offices, county office and the NRCS/USDA Service Center. A total of 350 completed surveys were received exceeding the goals of the project. An even cross section of age and property ownership type was represented in the data. Also, there was a proportionate response from people living in each of the six watersheds to the total watershed size.

A high level of confidence was given to the survey by the Water Plan Task Force Committee due to the high number of responses, the even representation of the participating respondents and that the responses received in the survey correlated with those voiced at the public hearing mentioned above.

A summary of the survey results can be found on the Todd County website at www.co.todd.mn.us.

SAUK RIVER WATERSHED DISTRICT INTRODUCES THE “HAYED BUFFER PROGRAM”

The Sauk River Watershed District (SRWD) has taken a proactive approach to protect the Sauk River from becoming impaired from nutrients and sediment. For the past year, the SRWD has been working with local farmers, a crop consultant, the Minnesota Extension Service and technical staff from the Todd and Stearns County Soil and Water Conservation Districts to develop a buffer program that benefits both the landowner and the water resource. This cooperative effort resulted in the SRWD’s new “Hayed Buffer Program” which allows a landowner to meet the 50 foot vegetated buffer State rule and still benefit financially. The SRWD’s Hayed Buffer Program offers landowners 75% cost share to establish a 50 foot vegetated buffer and offers a $100 annual payment per acre to keep the buffer in place for 10 years. In addition, the landowner is allowed to harvest the vegetation twice a year forage. It is anticipated that by the end of the 10 years the landowner has adopted the buffer into their farm management practices.

The SRWD’s Hayed Buffer Program will begin as a pilot program for the middle region of the Sauk River watershed. This includes the area from the Sauk Lake dam to County Road 111 at Richmond. The Osakis sub-watershed will also have the program available by next growing season. Land eligible for enrollment in this program must be cropland or pastureland adjacent to perennial streams, public ditches or private ditches. The buffer must be a minimum of 50 feet wide and maintained for 10 years.

To participate in the Hayed Buffer Program contact Sabin Adams at 320-732-6618 extension 3. If you have any questions regarding the Hayed Buffer Program please contact the SRWD at 320-352-2231.

NEW! SWAN RIVER WATERSHED SHORELINE BUFFER COST-SHARE: These funds are specifically targeted for the Swan River Watershed Area to help reduce runoff and pollutants from reaching surrounding lakes and Swan River. We are looking for adjoining property owners who are committed to improving water quality by installing continuous native plant buffers along their shorelines. Costs will be covered at 50% of the total project cost with Clean Water Legacy funds from the Pollution Control Agency.

STILL AVAILABLE! LONG PRAIRIE RIVER 319 COST SHARE: These funds are specifically targeted for the Long Prairie River Watershed due to the impaired status of the Long Prairie River. Eligible projects for cost share include, but aren’t limited to: Ag waste pond abandonment, grass buffers, exclusion fencing projects, bank stabilization and shoreland erosion control.

STATE COST SHARE: These funds can be used for, but not limited to, projects such as diversions, terraces, sediment basins, filter strips, ag waste ponds, and shoreland erosion control projects. ALL LANDOWNERS AND OCCUPIERS THROUGHOUT TODD COUNTY ARE ELIGIBLE TO APPLY FOR THESE FUNDS.

3% LOW-INTEREST LOANS (AGBMP): Project examples include, but aren’t limited to: Replacing existing individual septic systems, ag waste systems, erosion control projects, conservation tillage equipment and relocation of wells.