Minnesota Ag Water Quality Certification

Todd County is doing awesome on getting applications and certifying area farmers for the Minnesota Ag Water Quality Certification Program (MAWQCP). Currently we have 11 Certified farmers with 5,737 certified acres.

MAWQCP is a voluntary program for farmers through which they receive a full farm assessment and a score. Anyone with a passing score of 8.5 or higher can become certified, and if you fall a little short we will work with you to find a way to get you there. Some benefits of becoming certified are: recognition, certified farmers can use their certification to promote their product; they receive priority for technical and financial assistance to implement practices; and they have regulatory certainty for 10 years where they are deemed to be in compliance with any new water quality rule and regulations.

If you are interested in becoming certified or would like more information, call the Todd County SWCD.

A landowner in Todd County used his MAWQCP certification to receive technical and financial assistance to install a water tank for his beef cattle.

2017 Updates To The State Buffer Law

As many of you may have hoped, there were some changes made to the buffer law this spring. Buffers are still required to be established on public waters by November 1, 2017 and on public ditches November 1, 2018. The only exception to the deadlines is through a new Parcel Specific Compliance Plan.

Landowners can submit a Parcel Specific Compliance Plan for an extension of the deadline on installation of buffers on public waters.

The plan needs to be submitted on the required form to the SWCD on or before November 1, 2017. The form will be made available on the Todd SWCD website at http://www.co.todd.mn.us/departments/soil_water/buffers. For more details please contact Danielle at the Todd SWCD.

Todd County has elected to handle enforcement of the State Buffer Law through the Planning and Zoning Department.

Poison Hemlock

If you suspect this highly toxic invasive plant in Todd County call Arrest the Pest, a MDA program, at 1-888-545-6684.
Incentive Programs for Landowners

**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 property owners who are committed to improving water quality by installing native plant buffers along their shorelines.

**LAKE OSASKIS WATERSHED:** These funds are specifically targeted for the Lake Osaskis Watershed due to the impaired status of the lake. Eligible cost share projects in either Todd or Douglas County are focused around animal management, farm erosion prevention and nutrient management.

**MISSISSIPPI RIVER WATER PROTECTION THROUGH WOODLAND MANAGEMENT PLANNING:** These funds are specifically targeted for the landowners within the Lincoln Lakes, Little Elk River and Crow Wing River Watersheds. Eligible landowners would provide forest stewardship management planning assistance which would allow them to be eligible for property tax relief through the Sustainable Forest Incentive Act. Cost share dollars would also be available for tree planting, invasive species control, forest improvements, erosion control and wildlife habitat.

**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 shoreline 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.

**Soil Testing Assistance**
We have a SOIL COMPACTION tester, an INFILTRATION tester, a SOIL THERMOMETER, limited to: Replacing existing individual septic systems, ag-waste systems, erosion control projects, conservation tillage equipment and relocation of wells.

**Tree Sales will begin in October**
If you would like to receive a tree order, please notify Soil and Water by calling (320)-732-2644 or send an e-mail to: sarah.katterhagen@co.todd.mn.us

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**Precipitation Average Amounts (INCHES) TODD COUNTY**

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**Todd Soil & Water**
Tim Steiber
Sarah Katterhagen
Shannon Wettstein
Deja Anton
Lew Noska
Danielle Anderson
(320) 732-2644

**Todd NRCS**
Russell Kleinschmidt
Darlene Drayna
320-732-6618 X3

**Pheasants Forever Farm Bill**
**Biologist**
Sabin Adams
(320)732-6618

**Todd SWCD Board**
Norman Krause
Kenneth Pesta
Dale Katterhagen
Leland Buchholz
Tom Williamson

**Todd Commissioners**
Barb Becker
Gary Kneisl
Rod Erickson
David Kircher
Randy Neumann

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**Calendar**

- SWCD Board Meetings—Second Thursday of the each month at 8:30 am (except Nov, Feb and May)
- Aquatic Invasive Species Bio-Blitz Day August 5th
- Enviro-Fest September 21st
- Local Work Group Meeting November 15

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THANK YOU TO THE FOLLOWING SPONSORS AND SUPPORTERS OF THIS YEAR’S 2017 “RAISE THE STEAKS!” FEEDLOT MEETING AND FARMER APPRECIATION BUFFET:

- Central Lakes College
- Minnesota National Bank
- Nyhus Chevrolet Buick
- Central MN Credit Union
- First International Bank & Trust
- Auto Value- Staples
- AgStar
- MN Corn & Soybean Growers Assoc.
- Aldrich Tractor
- Unity Bank
- MN Assoc. Of County Feedlot Officers
- Sunby’s Trailer Sales
- Mid-Minnesota Credit Union
- NAPA Auto Parts
- Pro Ag- Browerville
- American Heritage Bank
- Bjerja’s Feed Stores
- Tri County Livestock Sales
- Todd livestock Advisory Council
- Ennies
- Bernel’s Shoes & Boots
- Minnesota Farmers Union
- Staples Ace Hardware
- Bit of Tack
- Wettstein Farms
- Hardware Hank- Browerville & Motley
- Pat Luneman
- Joe Eischeid
- Rinde Farms
- Stellings- Land & Cattle
- Mike Stine/ Stonebridge Beef
- MN Ag Water Quality- Dept. of Ag
- KEYL/KXDL Hot Rod Radio
- E. Ottertail Stalk Nitrate Testing
- Crow Wing SWCD

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River and Lake Day participants were able to get up close and personal with our Minnesota aquatic plant vegetation in a workshop offered through Todd SWCD and MN DNR.
New Wetland Specialist

Lew Noska is the New Wetland Specialist in Todd County as of January 2017. He was born and raised in Todd County, about 7 miles northeast of Browerville. Lew currently lives in Fawn Lake Township with his wife of 2 years and 7 month old son.

Lew is a 2006 graduate of Minnesota State University Moorhead with a B.A. in Biology. Some of his duties at Todd County SWCD include administering the Wetland Conservation Act, groundwater level monitoring, agricultural irrigation plans, and Walk-In Access signups for the MN DNR.

In his free time, Lew enjoys anything outdoors including hunting, fishing, and competitive games with friends and family. He is looking forward to working with the citizens of Todd County and helping them fit their wetland projects within the rules of the State. He is also eager to educate and inform Todd County’s residents on how wetlands benefit groundwater quality and wildlife habitat.

Please feel free to contact Lew with any wetland concerns or projects at 320-732-2644.

Water Testing in Eastern Todd

The Upper Mississippi River - Brainerd watershed, which includes parts of Todd, Morrison, Crow Wing, Cass and Aitkin counties, includes 212 lakes that are larger than 10 acres, and 2,149 river miles — sources of economy, recreation and tourism for the area.

While the health of Todd County’s waters are important to those who live, work and vacation here, it trickles down — literally — to the Gulf of Mexico, where the water eventually ends up, a resource for millions of people along the way.

In an effort to ensure water leaving Todd County is just as clean, if not cleaner, than when it arrived here, the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency (MPCA), along with the Crow Wing Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD), the Aitkin County SWCD and Central Lakes College are teaming up to monitor bodies of water to identify areas where land use changes are necessary and resources need protecting.

This spring, teams will be collecting water samples from 25 locations within the watershed. They study water clarity, oxygen, nutrient and bacteria levels in area lakes, streams and rivers. MPCA crews will also be sampling fish using electrofishing equipment from June-September, and collecting invertebrate samples from August-October.

This is the second year of the four-year process. Once all the data is gathered and analyzed, a full picture of the health of Todd County’s waterways, and the watershed as a whole, will come together. Then, local SWCDs and the MPCA will create an improvement plan and take actions designed to restore and protect each county’s water quality.

A recent study by the MPCA shows the upper Mississippi River, which starts at Lake Itasca in northern Minnesota, is nearly pristine. It becomes more polluted — by development, farm runoff and pollution from cities — as it flows south. By the time the river reaches Minneapolis, it no longer meets standards set by the Clean Water Act for aquatic life and human use.

This project, funded by the Clean Water and Land Legacy Amendment, was created to preserve Minnesota’s drinking water sources, as well as protect, enhance and restore wetlands, prairies, forests, fish, game and wildlife habitat. For more information, visit www.co.todd.mn.us and navigate to Soil and Water Conservation Development, or www.pca.state.mn.us, and search “Mississippi River Brainerd.”

Community Education

Todd SWCD regularly participates in community outreach events. If you are interested in a presentation at one of your community groups or classes give us a call!

Deja Anton presenting to 4th grade students at the Douglas County Groundwater Festival
Frequently Asked Questions about Pit Closure

WHEN IS A PIT REQUIRED TO BE CLOSED? A pit is required to be closed if it is no longer in use and has no intention of being used again OR if it was installed without an engineer design or is without a permit OR the pit is in poor condition—such as trees growing on the side walls, rodent burrows dug into pit walls and the pit no longer holds water. As far as a date goes, by rule: ASAP, but in reality, timelines vary based on the identification, classification, severity and condition of the pit.

EXPLAIN HOW MY PIT IS THREATENING WATER QUALITY?! It is likely that an older unpermitted pit installed in the eighties was simply dug into the ground. In Todd County, a pit with an 8-10 foot depth is most likely at or in the water table. Many, many older pits have been scientifically tested to determine if and how much nutrient volumes seep through the liner and pit walls into groundwater. While a well-constructed and carefully maintained pit can store nutrients for up to forty years, unused pits after ten or twenty years can have compromised structures due to age, misuse, vegetative growth, and animal activity. The nutrient content of just the liner itself after years of use has proven to be very high. Once the liner thins, cracks or starts to seep, those nutrients eventually contaminate the groundwater we drink. The contamination often does not show up for many years so you may feel safe drinking out of your well. But your offspring, future landowners, or neighbors may be the ones affected years down the road.

CAN I PUNCH A HOLE IN THE SIDE OF THE PIT WALL TO GET THE LIQUID OUT? No. This is considered a hazardous spill, even if it just appears to be water, and you will receive a violation notice and potential fines from the MPCA. It is just not the safe or ethical way to drain a pit.

WHY IS IT OKAY THAT I TAKE THE MANURE AND CONTAMINATED SOILS OUT OF THE PIT AND SPREAD IT IN A FIELD BUT IT IS NOT OKAY TO JUST LEAVE IT IN THE PIT? The answer supplied is that we all know our soils benefit from manure nitrogen and phosphorous if properly applied. When any piece of ground receives a high dose of dense nutrients, healthy vegetation does not grow and the area is fallow for years. Why? Because the nutrient dosage was more than the soil needed or could properly absorb. Spreading contaminated soils across a field disseminates the nutrient load into smaller volumes across a larger area. By removing the nutrients from the pit, the area in which the pit lies no longer carries such a lethal dose and can grow healthy vegetation to be farmed, keeping groundwater safe.

WOULD IT BE BETTER FOR ME TO CLOSE MY PIT WITHOUT CONTACTING THE SWCD OFFICE TO KEEP THE GOVERNMENT OUT OF IT? The SWCD Livestock Advisor, if contacted before and throughout pit closure, can certify that your pit has been closed properly. This way you will not be held liable in the case that a neighbor’s or future landowner’s well tests high in nitrates for improper pit closure. It is a safety net for you and future landowners.

DO I HAVE TO PERMANENTLY CLOSE MY PIT IF I JUST WANT TO TAKE A BREAK FROM FARMING FOR A WHILE? No, permitted pits can be temporarily “closed” by pumping out water at regular intervals, controlling growth of woody vegetation on berms and sidewalls, and using effective rodent control and maintenance.

WHAT IS THE CHEAPEST WAY TO CLOSE MY PIT? You can either go through a cost-share program or do it yourself through various methods—contact, Deja at 320-732-2844 for information on the most cost-effective, common sense method to close your pit. There are options.

Program Transparency: Feedlot Inspection Schedule for 2017/2018

- Farms having an outdated Open Lot Agreement or sites not inspected in the last ten years
- Farms under Permit for Construction or Expansion
- Brand new farm registrations with over 50 animal units
- Manure application events
- Farms within the minor watershed of Osakis Watershed
- New Funding Opportunities for the Osakis Area begins in the 2018 through 2021: cost-share available for farm site and water quality improvements: ag waste systems; scrape lanes, curbing, clean water diversions, livestock access control fencing, alternate watering devices and more. Contact Deja or Sarah at 320-732-2644.

Feedlot Meeting and Farmer Appreciation Buffet

Farm Site Registrations—Continuous throughout 2017

A huge thank you to Todd County Farmers, Landowners, and Livestock owners for your continued cooperation, inquiries, and especially your patience as we continue to “muck” our way through the new state data system for “feedlot” registrations here in Todd County. This process will be on-going throughout 2017. Maintaining your feedlot registration for 10 animal units or more is required by Todd County, can provide certain zoning protections referring to new well setbacks standards and the continued ability to raise livestock in certain zones. Registration provides a database for our livestock in case of a disease epidemic and identifies Todd County as a strong rural/agricultural base for industry, economic, and political purposes.

Farm Events

SWCD Patty Toss Event at the 2017 Todd County Breakfast on the Farm