

TODD SWCD NEWSLETTER



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SUMMER 2014
VOLUME 4 ISSUE 2

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Randy Neumann

The Todd Soil and Water Conservation District (Todd SWCD) was organized on March 29th, 1965 by the Todd County Commissioners and was certified by the Secretary of State on April 12th, 1965.

SWCD's are local units of government that manage and direct natural resource management programs at the local level. Districts work in both urban and rural settings, with landowners and with other units of government, to carry out a program for the conservation, use, and development of soil, water, and related resources. One crucial niche districts fill is that of providing soil and water conservation services to owners of private lands. Privately owned lands make up 78 percent of the land surface in Minnesota. Managing these private lands, whether agriculture, forest, lakes, or urban, is key to Minnesota's quality of life. Minnesotans trust SWCDs to provide needed technology, funding and educational services because they are established in each community, governed by local leaders and focused on conservation of local soil and water resources.

Soil and Water Conservation Districts are funded through a variety of sources. Many of their program administration dollars and funding for landowner projects are state dollars allocated by the legislature and passed through the State Board of Water and Soil Resources (BWSR). General operating funds are obtained from BWSR, counties, fees for service and grants or partnership agreements with the federal government or other conservation organizations.

Leadership and governance is provided by the board of five locally elected Soil and Water Conservation District Supervisors. Supervisors serve four year staggered terms; generally, two or three of an SWCD's five supervisors are up for election every two years. These positions have been local elected officials since SWCDs began to be formed in 1937. Since 1971 the offices have appeared on the November ballot as a nonpartisan office. The role of SWCD boards is to set overall policy and long-term objectives for their district, work with the SWCD staff to see that policies and plans are implemented and to develop a budget. They are not paid a salary; however, they do receive compensation for attending meetings and are reimbursed for expenses.

NEW FEEDLOT OFFICER! Who will be the new Feedlot Officer in Todd County? Deja Anton, former Douglas County Feedlot Coordinator, has been hired to step into the role last filled by Ed Uhlenkamp. Deja's background has been primarily in livestock, and comes with a B.S. in education and concentration in environmental sciences and pre-vet medicine. Her experiences range from managing small scale dairy operations to a multi-site 1100 head dairy feeder operation. Steer calves were started on six Lely automatic feeders and sent out to open lots until about 750 pounds. From there they were shipped off to Nebraska to be raised as source verified beef. Deja's passion is agriculture and livestock, whether it is dairy, beef, swine, poultry, sheep, large-scale operations to the homesteader, old



technology or new. She hopes to get more involved in the cropping and agronomic aspects, as well. She began working for Douglas County in 2012 as the Feedlot Coordinator. Since then, she has assisted in five stacking slab projects, five liquid manure pit projects, various barns and monoslope structures, and a myriad of other related projects. She has been an integral part in assisting producers gain access to livestock investment grants, watershed cost-shares, and EQIP funding. Manure analysis, water sampling, and general education are other important sidelines to her job. To Deja, being a feedlot officer encompasses much more than water quality and feedlot regulation. Being a resource and service provider for the citizens and producers of Todd County, Deja's home county, are what she looks forward to most. Deja and her family live on a farm in Browerville where they milked 41 head of registered Jerseys until February of this year. Her start date in Todd County is July 21st, 2014.

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Todd SWCD Board of Supervisors

Norman Krause—Area I--Staples, Fawn Lake, Germania, Villard, Moran, Turtle Creek

Kenneth Pesta—Area II--Bartlett, Bertha, Burleene, Stowe Prairie, Wykeham, Eagle Valley

Dale Katterhagen—Area III--Ward, Iona, Little Elk, Long Prairie, Hartford

Leland Buchholz—Area IV--Bruce, Birchdale, Grey Eagle, Round Prairie, Burnhamville

Thomas Williamson—Area V--Leslie, Gordon, Kandota, Reynolds, Little Sauk, West Union

Todd SWCD Staff & Program Responsibilities

Tim Stieber: Oversee District operations.

Sarah Katterhagen: Grant & Financial Management; Meeting Coordinator, Manages AgBMP Loan Program, Manages Tree Program

Greg Ostrowski: Ob Wells, Irrigation Plans, Tree Plans, Technical Assistance on Erosion & Feedlot Practices

Deja Anton: Feedlot Program



L to R: Dale Katterhagen, Lee Buchholz, Ken Pesta, Norm Krause & Tom Williamson

FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES

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 projects.

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: 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.

As with all AgBMP Loans, there must be an existing problem and the project must have a direct impact on improving or protecting water quality. **The eligibility is approved by the SWCD Board and the loan application is approved by the lending institute. No work can start until your application has been approved.** Contact Todd SWCD for an AgBMP loan application.

LOW INCOME COST SHARE FUNDS: Todd County Planning & Zoning has funds available to help replace open-end septic systems or noncompliant septic systems. Preference for funding will be determined based on income status, condition of existing system, and proximity to priority surface waters. Successful applicants will have from 75% to 85% of replacement septic system costs covered by the program. To see if you qualify or for more information contact the Todd County Planning & Zoning office at 320-732-4420.

To learn more about funding opportunities for your potential project, please contact Todd SWCD by calling 320-732-2644.

BUFFERS PROVIDE MANY CONSERVATION BENEFITS

Conservation buffers are small areas or strips of land in permanent vegetation, designed to intercept and convey water runoff. There are many different types of buffers including: riparian buffers, filter strips, grassed waterways, shelterbelts, windbreaks, living snow fences, contour grass strips, cross-wind trap strips, shallow water areas for wildlife, field borders, alley cropping, herbaceous wind barriers, and vegetative barriers.

Strategically placed buffer strips in the agricultural landscape can effectively mitigate the movement of sediment, nutrients, and pesticides from farm fields. When coupled with appropriate upland treatments, buffer strips should allow farmers to achieve a measure of economic and environmental sustainability in their operations.

Conservation buffers slow water runoff, trap sediment, and enhance infiltration within the buffer. Buffers also trap fertilizers, pesticides, pathogens, and heavy metals, and they help trap snow and cut down on blowing soil in areas with strong winds. Some forms of buffers (tree and shrub plantings) protect livestock and wildlife from harsh weather and buildings from wind damage. If properly installed and maintained, they 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.

Conservation buffers reduce noise and odor. They are a source of food, nesting cover, and shelter for many wildlife species. Buffers also provide connecting corridors that enable wildlife to move safely from one habitat area to another. A riparian forest buffer can help stabilize a stream and reduce its water temperature by shading the water.

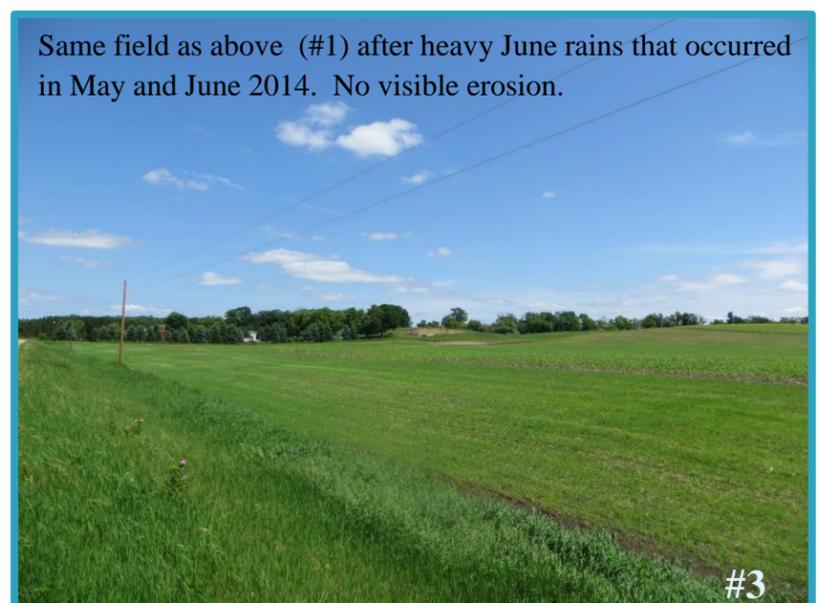
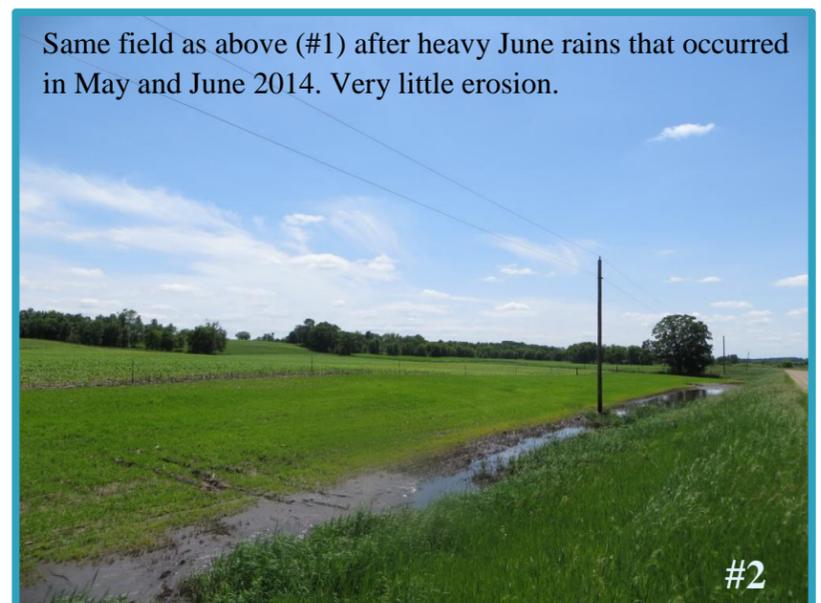
Depending on the size and type of buffer you are interested in there often are programs available to help install conservation buffers. Some even include an annual payment to compensate landowners for land taken out of production.

Like the trim on a house which makes the house look better, well-planned conservation buffers improve the appearance of a farm or ranch and provide visual proof of good land stewardship. If used as part of a comprehensive conservation system, buffers will make good use of areas that often should not be cropped due to the high risk of runoff impacts.

More information on establishing and maintaining buffers can be obtained from Todd SWCD or USDA-NRCS.

LOCAL BUFFER SUCCESS

Doug Kaiser of Leslie township owns 160 acres with about 80 acres leased out for farming while Doug works his contracting business. One of Doug's fields that has been cropped in corn for several years experienced severe erosion during the 2013 season (see photo #1) This resulted in an expensive cleanout of the township ditch along the road and sent some sediment toward the Long Prairie River to the west. Not wanting to see the field erode again Doug seeded the bottom 80 feet of the field for its ½ mile length to a mix of barley and alfalfa. This mix took hold and protected the field during heavy rains this season (see photos #2 & #3). Doug was happy with the results and plans to seed an additional strip further up the slope. The two strips will provide hay which has been in short supply and protect the soil from erosion.



Wetland Conservation Program

The purpose of the Minnesota Wetland Conservation Act (WCA) Chapter 8420 is to achieve no net loss in the quantity, quality, and biological diversity of Minnesota's existing wetlands and enhance degraded wetlands. WCA Rule was implemented in 1991.

Wetlands help protect Minnesota's local lands through water retention, water filtration, and wildlife habitat.

What is a wetland?

Wetlands have three parameters that need to be met. These parameters need to be met in normal conditions meaning that no alterations have been made to the land.

1. **Hydric vegetation** – vegetation that grows in wet soils or water. (Reed canary grass, cattail)
2. **Hydric soils** – soils that are saturated, flooded, or ponded long enough during the growing season to develop anaerobic conditions in the upper part.
3. **Hydrology** - having water within the top one foot of soil 14 days within the growing season.

There are 8 types of wetlands in the county.

- Type 1:** Seasonally flooded- farmed wetlands
- Type 2:** Inland fresh meadows- reed canary grass and sedges
- Type 3:** Inland shallow fresh marshes- cattails
- Type 4:** Inland deep fresh marshes- bull rush, reeds, cattails with open water
- Type 5:** Inland open fresh water- lily pads with open water
- Type 6:** Shrub swamps- willows
- Type 7:** Wooden swamps- tamarack, ash, most are located in floodplain
- Type 8:** Bogs- floating spongy soils

When do I need a Wetland Determination?

Todd SWCD provides wetland determinations for proposed projects free of charge. Final decisions on whether a project is allowed are made by the Local Governing Unit (LGU) of Todd County. The Todd SWCD Board acts as the Wetland LGU for Todd County.

Can I fill in low areas on my property?

Some areas may be filled others may not. Please contact SWCD office with questions or to set up a time to do a visit to your property.

How do I get someone to help me decide if I have wetland on my property and what I can do with them?

Activities within a wetland may require a determination from the LGU. Contact or visit the Todd SWCD for more information.

For the landowner to receive a wetland determination on his/her property, file a request in the form of a "Minnesota Local/State/Federal Application Forms for Water/Wetland Projects" with the SWCD office. Other agencies that may be involved in wetland project are: USDA, Army Corps, DNR, Watershed District, County Zoning, and County Ditch Authority.



Adaptive Nitrogen Management Program in Central Minnesota

Today it seems every agricultural publication you get in the mail contains some reference to precision agriculture. With sophisticated computer and GPS technology you can plant, till, fertilize, and harvest with more precision than ever before. All of these improvements in precision come with a cost. Over time these costs will be returned with savings on input costs. However, for many producers, the current cost of this technology is simply too high. This program seeks to provide some on-farm tools to central MN farmers to accelerate improvements in the efficiency of nitrogen use in this region.

The Basal Stalk Nitrate Test

The tool that this program is centered around is the basal stalk nitrate test. This test is only available for corn, so this program is focused on corn acres in central MN. A basal stalk nitrate test evaluates the adequacy of the nitrogen program for the current growing season. The test is "post-mortem" because stalk samples are taken after the grain is mature. Given that this is a very late season test, the interpretation of the results will not help fine-tune nitrogen management for the current year, but rather provide insight into management options for upcoming years.

Program Timeline

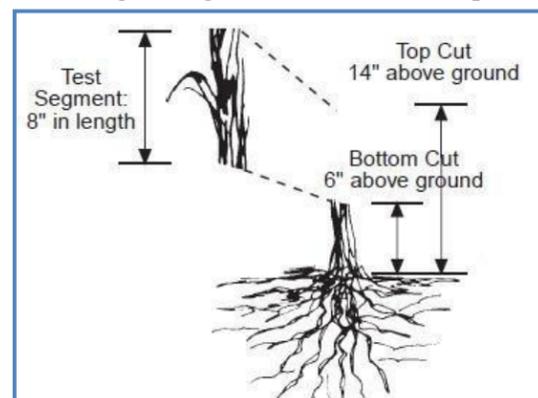
June: Participants are asked to sign up before the end of June.

June-July: Field management data and field boundaries are collected.

August: Aerial imagery is collected for each of the fields enrolled.

Sept-Oct: Four basal stalk samples are collected in each field.

Dec-Feb: A winter meeting is held for the participants to receive their imagery and sample results and have a chance to discuss their results.



The imagery is collected when the crop is most likely to show stress. Based on the imagery and soils information for each field, four basal stalk samples locations are chosen. Three samples are taken in areas that appear healthy, the 4th is collected in an area that looks stressed. After the crop has reached full maturity, 10 basal stalk samples are collected at each of the four sample points in the field. These 10 samples are combined and a composite is analyzed for nitrogen content. The results of this test are well suited to indicate where crop nitrogen uptake is excessive (no yield benefit) and thus costly to the grower and possibly the environment. The producer is able to use this information to make nitrogen management changes that are appropriate for their farm. When possible, nitrogen management trials will be supported to evaluate the changes that producers want to see on their field.

Farmers are annually faced with the challenge of balancing nitrogen inputs to maximize profit while limiting losses to the environment. Some innovative on-farm tools can offer insight to tip the scale in the farmers favor toward more efficient nitrogen use. To provide access to these tools, the Minnesota Department of Agriculture (MDA) has partnered with the East Otter Tail Soil and Water Conservation District (EOT SWCD) to offer this program, and make it available for Todd County landowners. For more information, please contact the Todd County Soil and Water office at 320-732-2644.

FEEDLOT REGISTRATION

Owners of the following facilities are required to register their feedlot with Todd County:

Any livestock operation capable of holding 10 or more animal units or a manure storage area capable of holding the manure produced by 10 or more animal units are required to register with Todd County.

Todd County and MPCA rules require the re-registration of all feedlots every 4 years and the deadline for the 4 year cycle is January 1, 2015.

Feedlot owners who last registered in 2010 will need to be re-registered. The SWCD will be sending out letters to those feedlots that are required to register this year. **There is no cost to register your feedlot.** If you have a new feedlot or are unsure if you need to register: Contact **Todd SWCD 320-732-2644.**



MANURE STOCKPILING

Short-term stockpiles cannot be located within:

1. 300 feet of flow distance and at least 50 feet horizontal distance to surface water, sinkholes, rock outcroppings, open tile intakes, and any uncultivated wetlands which are not seeded to annual farm crops or crop rotations involving perennial grasses or forages.
2. 300 feet of flow distance to any road ditch that flows to the features identified in #1 above or 50 feet of any road ditch where #1 does not apply.
3. 100 feet of any private water supply or unused-unsealed well and 200 feet from any private well with less than 50 feet of watertight casing and that is not cased through a confining layer at least ten feet thick.
4. 100 feet from field drain tile that is three feet or less from the soil surface.
5. No stockpiling on coarse textured soils.

WHAT SOIL DOES

Healthy soil gives us clean air and water, bountiful crops and forests, productive grazing lands, diverse wildlife, and beautiful landscapes. Soil does all this by performing five essential functions:

- **Regulating water** - Soil helps control where rain, snowmelt, and irrigation water goes. Water and dissolved solids flow over the land or into and through the soil.
- **Sustaining plant and animal life** - The diversity and productivity of living things depends on soil.
- **Filtering and buffering potential pollutants** - The minerals and microbes in soil are responsible for filtering, buffering, degrading, immobilizing, and detoxifying organic and inorganic materials, including industrial and municipal by-products and atmospheric deposits.
- **Cycling nutrients** - Carbon, nitrogen, phosphorus, and many other nutrients are stored, transformed, and cycled in the soil.
- **Physical stability and support** - Soil structure provides a medium for plant roots. Soils also provide support for human structures and protection for archeological treasures

Information from: <http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/main/soils/health/>

WHAT IF NITRATE IS FOUND IN MY WATER?

1. **If the nitrate-nitrogen concentration exceeds the health limit of 10 mg/L, do not give the water to any infant under six months of age**, either directly or in formula. Infants should be provided with water from a source which has been tested and shown to be low in nitrate and bacterially safe. Commercially bottled water is required to meet the nitrate standard.
2. **Do not boil to "treat" high nitrate water.** Nitrate is NOT removed from the water by boiling. Boiling actually concentrates the nitrate, due to evaporation of the water.
3. **Have your well inspected.** It's a good idea to have your well inspected by a licensed well contractor if the well is old, or you do not know if it is structurally sound. Nitrate and bacteria problems are sometimes caused by structural flaws which allow contaminated surface water to enter the well. Repairing the well or constructing a new, deeper well often results in a significant reduction in the nitrate level. To find [licensed well drillers](#) in your area, look in the Yellow Pages under "Well Drilling and Service."
4. **Identify and remove sources of nitrate near the well.** Fertilizers, animal wastes, and sewage systems should be located and managed so that they do not contaminate the well. If a nitrate source is too close to the well and cannot be moved, then you may need to consider having the well permanently sealed and replaced by a licensed well contractor.

Information from: <http://www.health.state.mn.us/divs/eh/wells/waterquality/nitrate.html>

TREE SALES WILL BEGIN IN OCTOBER 2014!

Stay tuned for Tree Open House information

We will be selling 1 gallon potted stock!!

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

WATER PLAN UPDATE & PROCESS

The Todd County Comprehensive Water Plan is scheduled to be updated starting in August 2014. A task force committee has been formed to go through the process. Updates of the current plan will be posted to the Todd Soil and Water website. For more information please contact the Todd SWCD 320-732-2644.

2014 CALENDAR OF EVENTS

SWCD Board Meeting: August 14
Todd County Fair: August 14-17
SWCD Board Meeting: September 11
Enviro Fest: September 18
Tree Sales: Begin in October
SWCD Board Meeting: October 9

PRESCRIPTION DRUG DROP-OFF BOX

Prescription drugs are the third most commonly abused drug behind alcohol and marijuana. Todd County residents can bring their solid prescription medicines to the front lobby of the Long Prairie City Hall, Monday through Friday from 8:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. The police department cannot accept needles or liquids, but all other forms of prescription medications can be accepted. If you have any questions, please contact the Long Prairie Police Department at 320-732-2156. This is a very helpful service for the residents and proper disposal is critical to good environmental stewardship. Residents are encouraged to take advantage of this service and safely dispose of their unused prescription medications.

2014 AVERAGE PRECIPITATION AMOUNTS (INCHES) IN THE COUNTY		10 YEAR AVERAGE
December 2013	1.56	1.06
January 2014	.77	.57
February 2014	.45	.80
March 2014	.89	1.59
April 2014	4.13	2.56
May 2014	5.94	3.76

SWCD MISSION STATEMENT: To meet the Public's Needs by Protecting the Land and Safeguarding the Water.