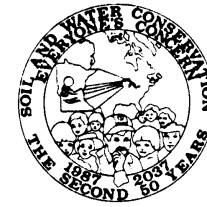


Nicollet Soil & Water Conservation District
424 South Minnesota Ave.
Saint Peter, MN 56082
507-931-2550

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Nicollet SWCD News

2017

Online version available @ www.nicolletswcd.org

The Nicollet Soil and Water Conservation District:

424 South Minnesota Ave.
St. Peter, MN 56082
Phone: (507) 931-2550

District Board

Robby Gieseke, Chair
John Kral, V-Chair
Pat Pehrson, Secretary
Tim Braun, Treasurer
Bruce Hulke, Member

District Employees

Kevin Ostermann
District Manager
Blake Honetschlager
District Technician
Melissa Lancaster
Administrative Assistant
Eric Miller
Watershed Technician
Vacant position,
Farmbill Technician

Great River Greening:

Susan Carlin
*Seven Mile Creek
Watershed Coordinator*

Office Hours:

**Monday-Friday
8:00am-4:30pm**
-Please call ahead to schedule
an appointment.

Natural Resource Conservation Service:

Phone: (507) 237-5435 ext. 3

April Sullivan
District Conservationist
Chris Schmidt
Soil Conservationist

Minnesota Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP) Basic Program Overview

* CREP is a federal-state natural resource conservation program that targets environmentally sensitive land across 54 counties in southern and western Minnesota.



* CREP focuses on the state's highest priority areas for achieving nitrogen, phosphorus and sediment reductions, protection of vulnerable drinking water, and enhancement of grassland and wetland habitats.

* The CREP agreement is administered by both the Board of Water and Soil Resources (BWSR) and the USDA – Farm Service Agency (FSA), and calls for 60,000 acres to be protected within the 24.2 million acre CREP area at a total cost of \$500 million.

* Approximately \$150 million of the total will be the responsibility of the State. Anticipated state sources include – Clean Water Fund, Outdoor Heritage Fund, Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund and Capital Investment (Bonding).

* \$350 million in federal funds will be used as direct payments for landowners enrolled in the program.

* Through CREP, landowners voluntarily receive financial incentives from both the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) and Reinvest in Minnesota (RIM) to protect and restore marginal cropland from agricultural production utilizing buffers, wetland restoration and wellhead protection practices.

* Landowners will be able to sign up continuously for CREP at local FSA offices, beginning Spring 2017. Projects will be scored and approved for funding in batches, based on environmental benefits.

* Over the next few months, BWSR and FSA staff will finalize CREP guidance processes and train field staff.

* CREP is supported by a coalition of more than 70 local, state and national organizations and agencies.

* Additional information and updates on CREP can be found at www.bwsr.state.mn.us/crep.



Thank you to all who ordered trees and shrubs from us again this year! We introduced two new species—Flame Willow and American Hazelnut, and had another successful season of sales! You can place an order for next year beginning January 2018—watch our website for the newest order form! For questions about planning out your plantings contact Blake Honetschlager @ 507-931-2550



Community Outreach

Nicollet SWCD participated in the Annual Children's Water Festival which is held for Nicollet County 4th grade students at South Central Community College in March each year. We also visited St. Peter South Elementary this spring where short presentation about trees and conservation was given to the 1st grade students. Each child was also given a tree to take home to plant.



Don't forget to "Like" us on Facebook! And keep up to date by visiting our website: www.nicolletswcd.org

Welcome Susan Carlin!



Nicollet SWCD is pleased to announce Susie Carlin has joined our staff as the Watershed Coordinator in our partnership with Great River Greening to lead the 7 Mile Creek Watershed Partnership, a longstanding coalition of 25+ agriculture, conservation, community, business, and government groups aimed at working with landowners to conserve and restore land and habitats, and to improve water quality.

Susie has been a resident of St. Peter for a decade and is currently an elected city council member. She brings an extensive portfolio of experience in land and water conservation, as well as community and organizational engagement.

Previously, Susie served as a Program Director for the Minnesota River Board (MRB), where she was the primary liaison between watershed professionals and county commissioners, communicating land management effects in the river basin, and opportunities for change. Also in that role, she helped establish the Upstream-Downstream Friendship Tours, which brought farmers and urban residents to one another's homes, fields, and businesses for honest discussions about the values of agriculture, environment, and economics.

Said Steve Hockett, Great River Greening Conservation Programs Director, "As MRB Program Director, Susie worked diligently to refute the notion that conservation efforts were at odds with the interests of the farming community. She is close to the people of St. Peter and comes to this position with an impressive skill set, which I believe will improve our 7 Mile Creek program and raise awareness of the good work that can be done throughout southern Minnesota."

Susie added, "My family enjoys visiting and playing in the natural areas of 7 Mile Creek Watershed. I'm proud to have the opportunity to help protect and restore these resources and support the landowners who manage the land."

Great River Greening joined Nicollet SWCD in leading the 7 Mile Creek Watershed Partnership in 2012. In that time, the group has elevated its activity and strengthened its conviction that modern farming methods, a vibrant farm economy, and excellent water quality are all dependent on one another. Susie will move that work forward and expand an already successful program.

Buffer News:

We are continuing to assist landowners with questions and buffer compliance. The Board of Water and Soil Resources (BWSR) reports in Nicollet County 40-60% of parcels adjacent to Minnesota waters meet preliminary compliance with the law. Requirements are 16.5 feet for public drainage ditches, and 50 feet for rivers, lakes, and streams (public waters). The original deadlines are still intact—11/1/17 for public waters and 11/1/18 for public drainage ditches. For the most up to date information please visit the new Buffer Website <https://mn.gov/portal/natural-resources/buffer-law/> or contact our office at 507-931-2550 and speak to Blake or Kevin.



<http://www.bwsr.state.mn.us/>

Updates From Seven Mile Creek Watershed:

Funding Is Still Available in Seven Mile Creek!

In 2015, Nicollet SWCD announced a major grant award for Seven Mile Creek. For two years, the Targeted Watershed Demonstration Program from the Minnesota Board of Water and Soil Resources (BWSR), and coordinated by partners at Great River Greening, has been funding local solutions to improve water quality in Seven Mile Creek. Combined with other funding sources, the grant allows the Seven Mile Creek Watershed Partnership to pursue both the relationship building and conservation implementation that will generate rapid, short-term gains in water quality, as well as the community dialogue and leadership development that will lead to long-term, sustained improvements.



Landowners within Seven Mile Creek Watershed are encouraged to contact Nicollet SWCD's staff with their needs and interests. Funding is available for experimenting with cover crops and different tillage practices. It will also fund the development of a wetland or pollinator habitat, or support the producer's exploration of new crops. Other practices that will continue to be funded include woodchip bioreactors (underground treatments to remove nitrates from tile water) and controlled drainage systems.

The Seven Mile Creek Watershed is a priority watershed for Nicollet County. The watershed's upper reaches are dominated by prime agricultural land, and it is anchored by a 630-acre county park that is widely used by the community for fishing, picnics, horseback riding, hiking, and biking. The creek, a designated trout stream, flows into the Minnesota River about five miles north of Mankato.

Area Residents Provide Input at Water Forum

On June 21, landowners along the Middle Minnesota River Watershed gathered in the Saint Peter Community Center to talk about the challenges and opportunities for improving water quality in the watershed. The Middle Minnesota River Watershed is primarily in Nicollet County, including Swan Lake. Nicollet County will likely work with Sibley County on a watershed management plan.

The discussion was the result of a public engagement grant to Nicollet County, with cooperation from Nicollet SWCD, Great River Greening, and Gustavus Adolphus College. A survey conducted by researchers at the University of Minnesota identified what Nicollet County landowners felt were the greatest challenges to water quality, and then forum organizers used the event to start brainstorm community-led solutions. The majority of the 329 survey respondents, owned property adjacent to a water resource and farmed more than 40 acres of land in the county. But surprisingly, less than 25% of the respondents were enrolled in any type of conservation program that provided financial compensation.

Three primary issues were identified as the main challenges to enrolling in conservation practices: 1) Lack of community leadership and personal resources, 2) The complexity of both factors contributing to water quality and the funding mechanism in conservation, and 3) the communication gap between private landowners and public agencies.

Forum participants were encouraged to identify opportunities and potential solutions to all these challenges. They provided stories of personal commitment to conservation, as well as the financial burdens that those actions entail. Their input is one step in the development of an action plan that is being developed for the Middle Minnesota Watershed Restoration and Protection Strategy.