



Dakota County Soil & Water Conservation District

News & Notes

This newsletter also available at www.dakotacountyswcd.org Volume 24, Number 1 Spring, 2005

New Supervisors Take Oath

On January 6, the Dakota County Soil & Water Conservation District (SWCD) held its first Annual Board of Supervisors Meeting for 2005. At this meeting, newly elected Supervisors Marian Brown (District 2) and Chris Nielsen (District 4) took oath of office and began serving their 4-year terms.

The Board of Supervisors also elected officers, made committee assignments, and established meeting dates for the year.

The Board of Supervisors for the SWCD are:

- Michael Pliml, entering his first year, represents the Cities of Burnsville, Eagan, Inver Grove Heights, Lilydale, Mendota, Mendota Heights, South St Paul, Sunfish Lake, and West St Paul.
- Marian Brown, entering her first year, represents the Cities of Apple Valley, Coates, Farmington, Lakeville, Rosemount, and the Township of Empire.
- Kevin Chamberlain, entering his thirteenth year (non-consecutive years), represents the Cities of Hastings and Vermillion, and Townships of Marshan, Nininger, Ravenna, and Vermillion.
- Chris Nielsen, entering his first year, represents the Townships of Castle Rock, Eureka, Greenville, Sciota, and Waterford.
- Joe Meyers, entering his thirteenth year, representing Cities of Miesville and Randolph and Townships of Douglas, Hampton, and Randolph.

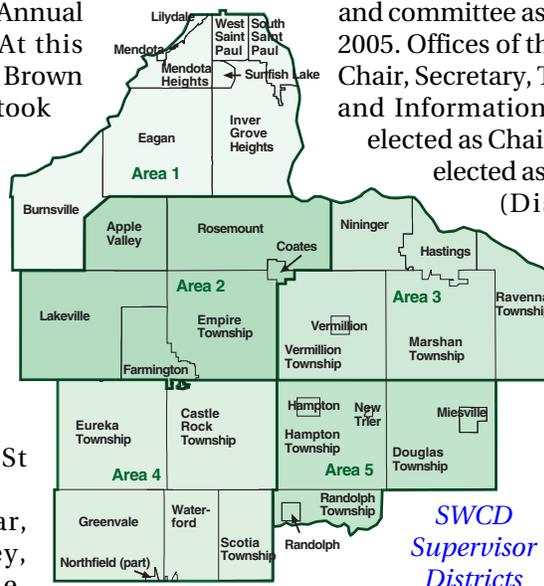


Supervisors Elect Officers

At the January 6 Board of Supervisors meeting, officers and committee assignments were established for 2005. Offices of the SWCD Board are Chair, Vice Chair, Secretary, Treasurer, and Public Relations and Information. Joe Meyers (District 5) was elected as Chair, Chris Nielsen (District 4) was elected as Vice Chair, Kevin Chamberlain (District 3) was elected as Treasurer/Secretary, and Marian Brown (District 2) was elected as Public Relations and Information correspondent.

The Board of Supervisors made committees assignments and established their regular meeting dates for 9:00 a.m. the first Thursday of the month (meeting dates subject to change). More

information about the SWCD Board meetings can be found at www.dakotaswcd.org.



SWCD
Supervisor
Districts

District 1 Supervisor Appointed

On March 3 the Dakota County Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD) Board of Supervisors appointed Michael Pliml to fill the remaining two years of the District I vacancy that occurred due to the resignation of Rick Hansen in January. District I covers the City of Burnsville, Eagan, Inver Grove Heights, Lilydale, Mendota, Mendota Heights, South St. Paul, Sunfish Lake, and West St. Paul.

Michael Pliml has served on the Inver Grove Heights Environmental Commission and is employed by Metropolitan Council as an environmental engineer.



Chair Meyers administers the Oath of Office to Michael Pliml

News & Notes

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District Board

Joe Meyers, *Chair*

Chris Nielsen, *Vice-Chair*

Kevin Chamberlain, *Secretary/Treasurer*

Marian Brown, *Public Relations and
Information Officer*

Michael Pliml, *Member*

District Employees

Brian Watson,

District Manager

Laura Jester,

Watershed Conservationist

Todd Matzke,

Resource Conservationist

Brad Becker,

Resource Conservationist

David Holmen,

Resource Conservationist

Lana Rotty,

Administrative Assistant

Dee Parker,

Office Assistant

Mike Isensee,

Urban Conservation Technician

Justin Watkins,

Water Resources Technician

assisted by the **USDA Natural
Resources Conservation Service**

Michelle Wohlers,

District Conservationist

Matthew Schaar,

Soil Conservation Technician

The Dakota SWCD Board of Supervisors meets on the first Thursday of every month. All meeting times subject to change. With changes of address or subscription inquiries, call 651-480-7777.

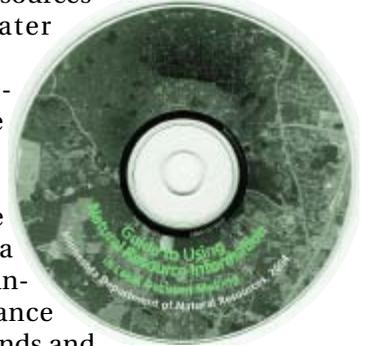
All programs and services of the U.S. Department of Agriculture, Natural Resources Conservation Service, and the Dakota County Soil and Water Conservation District are offered on a nondiscriminatory basis without regard to race, color, national origin, religion, sex, age, marital status, or handicap.

Resource Guide Receives Merit Award

A Guide to Using Natural Resource Information in Local Decision Making has received a 2005 Merit Award from the Minnesota Chapter of the American Society of Landscape Architects. This award is given to recognize communication of knowledge that conveys important ideas about landscape architecture. The Guide was created in partnership by the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources and the Dakota County Soil and Water Conservation District.

The purpose of the Guide is to illustrate how using natural resource information in the local land use planning process can ensure that decisions are made in an environmentally sensitive and fiscally responsible way. It outlines a step-by-step natural resource-based planning process designed to provide guidance for people with a wide range of backgrounds and interests, including local officials, local staff, concerned citizens, developers, and other land use professionals.

The Brochure, "A Quick Guide to Using Natural Resource Information" and companion CD-ROM "Guide to Using Natural Resource Information in Local Decision Making" are available in hard copy from the Soil and Water Conservation District or in electronic form at the DNR's web site, <http://www.dnr.state.mn.us/nrig/index.html>.



Feedlot Registration Required in 2005

If you raise livestock in Dakota County and you have not registered your feedlot or received a feedlot permit in the last three years, you may be required to register your feedlot before January 1, 2006. The Dakota County Soil and Water Conservation District is currently registering feedlots for livestock owners in Dakota County to keep them in compliance with Minnesota Pollution Control Agency (MPCA) rules.

The MPCA requires livestock owners to register their feedlots every four years. Most feedlots were registered in 2001 and those feedlots must re-register before the end of 2005. Any animal feedlot that has started since 2001 must also register before the end of 2005.

The registration process is simple and takes less than thirty minutes to complete. If you would like to make an appointment to complete your feedlot registration, or if you would like a registration form sent to you please call Brad Becker at 651-480-7782.



SWCD Partners with MPCA for Construction Site Inspections

The Dakota County Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD) is embarking on an exciting partnership with the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency (MPCA) to help protect water resources in Dakota County. The SWCD is one of ten Pilot Projects in the state designed to help the MPCA deliver conservation services at the local level. Regulations and programs designed to protect water quality can seem confusing but these projects are an important piece of the clean water program.

The MPCA is responsible for implementing the Clean Water Act, the Federal law enacted in 1972 to ensure America's water resources are fishable and swimmable. One portion of this clean water program covers the way developments protect water quality during and after construction. Construction site erosion can be a serious problem. In fact, construction sites can contribute ten to one hundred times more sediment to our lakes and rivers than agricultural runoff. Further, increased impervious areas such as pavement create more runoff that must be treated before it reaches our

water resources to avoid pollution problems.

All developments that disturb more than one acre of land must apply for a Stormwater Permit for Construction Activity. The permit regulates temporary erosion controls during construction and permanent stormwater management. The MPCA knows this is an important program for the State but has been overwhelmed by the workload. To address this issue, the MPCA worked with the Dakota SWCD to see if local units of government could help implement the program at the local level. This "pre-pilot" was done in 2004 and led to the ten Pilot Projects starting in the spring of 2005.

The ten MPCA partners will be inspecting local construction sites to ensure they meet state standards. Dakota County has over two hundred and fifty active construction sites, so SWCD staff will be very busy working with developers and contractors to minimize the adverse impacts of construction activities. The SWCD will also be conducting trainings this spring to help promote the program.

May is National Wetlands Month

Wetlands are the vital link between water and land. "Wetlands" is the collective term for marshes, swamps, bogs, and similar areas found in generally flat vegetated areas, in depressions in the landscape, and between dry land and water along the edges of streams, rivers, lakes, and coastlines. Wetlands can be found in nearly every county and climactic zone in the United States. Most likely, a wetland exists in your neighborhood or very close to it.

Because they are so varied, wetlands can be difficult to recognize. Some are wet all of the time; some may look completely dry most of the time. Our ideas of what a wetland should look like may not include all types of wetlands. Some wetlands are large and some are very small. Many have been altered by land uses such as farming, urban developments, and the building of roads, dams, and towns.

Wetlands have often been regarded as wastelands and

sources of mosquitoes, flies, unpleasant odors, and disease. Largely because of this negative view, more than half of America's original wetlands have been destroyed. In Dakota County, over eighty percent of our natural pre-settlement wetlands have been drained or filled.

As people understand ecological processes better, attitudes towards wetlands change. We now know that wetlands are, in fact, valuable natural resources. Whether drier or wetter, bigger or smaller, wetlands provide important benefits to people and the environment. Wetlands help regulate water levels within watersheds; improve water quality; reduce flood and storm damages; provide important fish and wildlife habitat; and support hunting, fishing, and other recreational activities. Wetlands are natural wonderlands of great value.



Wetland located in Eureka Township

SWCD Assisting with Dakota County Farmland and Natural Area Protection Program

The Dakota County Farmland and Natural Areas Program (FNAP) was initiated in response to the growing concerns about urbanization, segmentation, and loss of open space. The FNAP protects farmland through the voluntary sale or donation of conservation easements from willing landowners. The permanent agricultural easement allows the land to be used for agricultural purposes but prevents the land from ever being developed. The easement also requires certain land use and conservation activities to prevent soil erosion and protect water quality.

The SWCD is assisting Dakota County with public outreach efforts and in the implementation of this land protection program. An appointed citizen advisory committee and the Dakota County Board of Commissioners evaluate submitted applications. Approved applications move through an appraisal process after which the County Board, with recommendations from the citizen advisory committee, determines project funding. The SWCD then assists funded

landowners with identifying natural resources and developing land stewardship plans for implementation.

If you have any questions or would like to learn more about the Dakota County FNAP please contact the SWCD, 651-480-7777, or Al Singer, Dakota County Farmland and Natural Area Coordinator at 952-891-7001.

SWCD Provides Equipment to Improve Your Wildlife Habitat

The Dakota County Soil and Water Conservation District has a native grass planter and tree planter available for rent to landowners interested in establishing wildlife habitat on their property.

The ten-foot Truax native grass drill has a seven-inch spacing and can be used to seed native prairie grasses, native forbs, alfalfa, clover, small grains, and pasture grasses. The drill's no-till feature allows seed to be planted directly into sod



or crop stubble, so tillage is not necessary. Rent is \$50 for the first acre and \$10 for each additional acre.

The Detco tree planter can be used on any tractor with more than eighteen horsepower and a three-point hitch. Caution should be used when using the tree planter on a tractor with over fifty horsepower; hitting rocks or other obstructions with larger tractors can damage the planter. It is typically more efficient to plant trees by hand if you are planting fewer than two hundred trees. The tree planter is very efficient when planting long, straight windbreaks and shelterbelts, or block wildlife plantings with over two hundred trees. Rent for the tree planter is \$50 per day.

Rent for the drill and tree planter includes delivery to and from your site and technical assistance to properly use the equipment. Using the drill or tree planter to establish native prairie, food plots, windbreaks, or shelterbelts can significantly improve the cover, food supply and nesting habitat for wildlife on your property.



No-Till Soybean Drill for Rent

No-till soybean production is an effective way for Dakota County farmers to increase profits, reduce erosion and improve soil health. The Dakota County Soil and Water Conservation District provides a fifteen-foot John Deere no-till soybean drill for rent to Dakota County landowners. The drill has ten inch spacing and can be used to plant soybeans or small grains. Rent is \$9.75 per acre with a minimum charge of \$50. The rental charge includes delivery to and from your field and technical assistance to help you set up the drill based on your seed size and population.

This spring planting season will be the last year that the SWCD will provide their soybean no-till drill for rent. The program has



been extremely successful over the last fifteen years and many Dakota County farmers have purchased their own no-till drills based on this success. We thank all of the producers who have rented the no-till drill over the years for their efforts to prevent soil loss on agricultural lands.

Monitoring, Studies Increase in Vermillion River Watershed

The amount of monitoring, modeling, and studies happening in the Vermillion River Watershed is increasing! More and more attention is being paid to this unique watershed as its rapid suburban development, spacious agricultural land, and healthy trout population cause agencies and other groups to want more information. At least ten different agencies or organizations are monitoring groundwater and surface water in the watershed. Here is a brief summary of the major efforts:

The Vermillion River Watershed Joint Powers Organization (JPO) monitors nine sites where equipment records water levels and flow in the river. Water samples are collected and analyzed for bacteria, solids, and nutrients. Data shows that the river is high in nitrates and bacteria from the headwaters in Scott County to Hastings, and high in solids below Hastings to its outlet at Lock and Dam three in Goodhue County.

The Dakota County SWCD is currently performing a study on groundwater recharge areas in the Vermillion River headwaters through a grant from the Metropolitan Council. Goals of this study include locating critical recharge areas and determining their relationship with surface water flows and potential impacts from development within these areas. Data collection began last year and will continue this summer and fall. Ultimately, protection options for these areas will be developed for the JPO and communities to consider.

At least two different studies will get started this year related to water temperatures and the effect landscape changes (nonpoint source) and point source discharges have on temperatures in a collaborative effort among the DNR, JPO, PCA, SWCD, and possibly the University of

Minnesota. Trout are extremely sensitive to water temperatures and thus more data is needed if the trout are to be protected long-term. Over thirty temperature dataloggers will be deployed in the river and its tributaries this spring.

The Dakota SWCD continues to operate a permanent monitoring station for the Metropolitan Council at the Con Agra dam in Hastings. This site collects water quality and quantity data year-round.

High school and junior high students from five schools continue to monitor the health of the river by collecting macroinvertebrates (bugs) and habitat data. The groups go out each spring and fall through the Vermillion River Watch Program sponsored by the JPO and coordinated by the SWCD.

You can become a river monitor, too! The PCA is looking for individuals to collect transparency data and take other simple measurements on the Vermillion River and its tributaries. Contact the SWCD office or go to the PCA's web site for more information: <http://www.pca.state.mn.us/water/csmp.html>.

Low Interest Loans Available

Have a conservation practice you'd like to install? The State Revolving Loan Fund (SRF) provides low interest financing for such projects. An allocation of \$350,000 from the Minnesota Department of Agriculture is available to farm operators and agricultural landowners for implementing water quality improvement projects under the SRF program.

The SRF program provides a 3% low interest loan option to rural landowners within Dakota County for conservation practices such as installing feedlot and manure storage systems, replacing or upgrading individual sewage treatment systems, sealing abandoned wells, purchasing conservation tillage equipment designed to allow for higher levels of crop residue, or installing terraces, diversions, sediment, and water control basins. To be eligible for the program, applicants must have a water quality improvement project and have financial approval.

The SRF low interest loan may also be used in conjunction with State Cost Share or Feedlot Water Quality Grants. Past projects funded include:

- Manure storage pits & ponds
- Manure handling equipment
- No till seed drills
- Conservation tillage equipment
- Individual sewage treatment (septic) systems
- Sealing abandoned wells
- Constructing water diversions, terraces, and grassed waterways

Rural Dakota County residents wishing to apply for this low interest loan program can receive an application by contacting the Soil and Water Conservation District office at 651-480-7777.

Cost Share Assistance Available from North Cannon WMO

The North Cannon River Watershed Management Organization (WMO) has over \$14,000 in 2005 to help landowners improve rivers, streams, and natural resources in their area through the installation of conservation practices. Eligible projects include buffer strips, grassed waterways, feedlot improvements, fencing livestock off streams, sediment control basins, rainwater gardens, shoreline or streambank restoration, and others. Priorities will be given to projects that will help alleviate bacteria pollution in Chub Creek and sediment pollution in Trout Brook. Projects must be within the watershed boundaries of the Cannon River. The funds can be used in conjunction with other local, state, or federal cost sharing programs.

Applications for the cost share program are due by June 15, 2005. Please contact Connie Anderson, WMO Chair, at 952-469-2355 or call the Dakota County SWCD office at 651-480-7777 for more information or to receive an application form.

Tree Sale

Cash Sale & Pick Up

April 28

noon–6:30 P.M.

April 29

10:00 A.M.– 3:00 P.M.

If you have not ordered trees, you may still be able to purchase selected varieties during the Cash Sale on April 28 and 29.

- ◆ An Inside Glance...
- ◆ Supervisors Sworn In, Officers Elected
- ◆ Resource Guide Receives Merit Award
- ◆ Feedlot Registration Required
- ◆ SWCD Partners with MPCA

Dakota Soil & Water
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