

Dakota County Soil and Water Conservation District

2006-2010 Strategic Plan

January 5, 2006

Dakota County Soil and Water Conservation District
4100 220th Street West, Suite 102
Farmington, Minnesota 55024
(651) 480-7777
www.dakotaswcd.org



**DAKOTA COUNTY SOIL & WATER
CONSERVATION DISTRICT**

2006-2010 Strategic Plan

**Dakota County Soil and Water Conservation District
Mission Statement**

*Providing high quality assistance to the citizens of Dakota County
for the protection of land and water resources.*

Encouraging voluntary conservation efforts since 1944

Working in Partnership with Federal, State and Local Governments



DAKOTA COUNTY SOIL & WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICT

2006-2010 Strategic Plan

Dakota County Soil and Water Conservation District Goals and Strategies

The Goals described below guide the implementation of strategies to address the natural resource threats in Dakota County. The Dakota County Soil and Water Conservation District (DSWCD) uses three main techniques to implement Strategies: *Technical Assistance*, *Financial Assistance*, and *Educational Assistance*. To ensure the DSWCD is a leader in these techniques, staff training and office technology shall be assessed regularly and advanced as necessary.

Goals and Strategies are developed to address the following nine priority issues:

1. New Development - The urbanization of land generates temporary and permanent adverse impacts to natural resources, including habitat fragmentation, increased impervious areas and soil loss.
2. Existing Development - Existing urban and suburban areas contribute to water pollution and natural resource impacts.
3. Agriculture - Conservation practices greatly reduce the impacts of agricultural activities on water quality and enhance wildlife habitat. Agricultural activities include commodity crop production, pasture management, and livestock operations.
4. Rural Land - Rural land management is a growing issue in Dakota County. Rural land includes hobby farms, horse pastures, fallow farmland, and natural areas. Generally it includes rural residential properties greater than five acres.
5. Prime Soil and Habitat – Conserving, restoring, and managing land at large scales are critical to preserving ecosystems. This requires new approaches and partnerships to be effective.
6. Education and Marketing – Education and marketing are central components of all DSWCD efforts. None of the Goals and Strategies are achievable without an effective education program. Techniques will vary depending on the target audience.
7. Collaboration – Partnerships and effective government coordination are required to reduce duplication and provide efficient services.
8. Data Acquisition and Sharing – Monitoring, research and data sharing are important to identify resource problems, track changes, determine project effectiveness, educate the public, and further the science of conservation.
9. Financial Stability – Long-term planning and project implementation is maximized when financial stability is secured.



DAKOTA COUNTY SOIL & WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICT

2006-2010 Strategic Plan

New Development Goal

The DSWCD shall minimize the adverse impacts of new development on natural resources.

New Development Strategies

1. Develop and implement countywide erosion control program.
2. Develop and implement enhanced cost-share and voluntary incentive program for innovative stormwater management. Work with watershed authorities to develop Best Management Practice (BMP) programs countywide.
3. Promote Low Impact Development (LID) through demonstration sites, cost-share program, ordinance enhancement, watershed planning, and educational activities.
4. Partner with County and watershed authorities to implement groundwater protection strategies (proper individual septic treatment system installations, recharge area protection, stormwater infiltration, etc). Use groundwater models during development plan review process.
5. Assist with implementation of the County's Municipal Separate Storm Sewer System (MS4) program.
6. Minimize wetland impacts through implementation of the Wetland Conservation Act.
7. Work with land use decision makers to improve programs, ordinances, and rules for surface water, groundwater, wetland and upland habitat protection and enhancement.
8. Conduct site plan reviews and become involved earlier in the plat approval process to promote designs that protect the ecological integrity of receiving waters (surface and groundwater) and integration of greenway corridor concepts. Prioritize reviews based on surface water quality, habitat value, resource impairment (e.g. TMDL's involved), and groundwater sensitivity.
9. Ensure the environmental review process is effective and efficient.
10. Conduct educational and marketing activities targeting new development issues.



DAKOTA COUNTY SOIL & WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICT

2006-2010 Strategic Plan

Existing Development Goal

The DSWCD shall minimize the adverse impacts of existing development on natural resources.

Existing Development Strategies

1. Implement stormwater management retrofit program. Use existing cost-share and incentive programs and seek additional funding sources for incentive funding. Work with watershed authorities to implement BMP programs.
2. Assist with implementation of the County's Municipal Separate Storm Sewer System (MS4) program. Provide comparable MS4 services to all communities.
3. Minimize wetland impacts through implementation of the Wetland Conservation Act.
4. Promote urban and suburban tree program. Investigate opportunities to provide incentives and discounted trees through partnerships with nurseries and others.
5. Promote proper shoreland and vegetation management. Integrate with tree program, BMP programs, conservation easements, invasive weed control, and noxious weed control.
6. Conduct educational and marketing activities targeting existing development issues.



DAKOTA COUNTY SOIL & WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICT

2006-2010 Strategic Plan

Agricultural Goal

The DSWCD shall minimize the adverse impacts of agricultural activities on natural resources.

Agricultural Strategies

1. Synchronize DSWCD, NRCS and watershed programs to maximize local, state and federal funds to implement agricultural conservation practices. Strive to ensure all agricultural lands have tolerable soil losses (T). Work with watershed authorities to develop agricultural BMP programs.
2. Implement Feedlot Management Program through local delegation of feedlot officer and associated activities.
3. Implement and promote vegetated buffers.
4. Work with farmers to promote resource-sensitive drainage management and promote natural stream management. Integrate with comprehensive wetland management plans.
5. Enhance public-owned cropland management.
6. Promote conservation pasture, irrigation, and nutrient management.
7. Collaborate with DNR and County to ensure proper water appropriation management.
8. Conduct educational and marketing activities targeting agricultural issues.



DAKOTA COUNTY SOIL & WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICT

2006-2010 Strategic Plan

Rural Land Goal

The DSWCD shall minimize the adverse impacts of rural land activities on natural resources.

Rural Land Strategies

1. Promote conservation land and vegetation management through multiple efforts such as:
 - a. State cost-share and other incentive programs
 - b. Wetland restoration and enhancement
 - c. Watercourse buffers and management
 - d. Upland habitat management plans
 - e. Erosion control and gully stabilization
 - f. Shelter belts and trees for conservation
 - g. Greenway identification and planning
 - h. Invasive weed control program
 - i. Forest and timber management plans
2. Minimize wetland impacts through implementation of the Wetland Conservation Act.
3. Partner with County to implement groundwater protection strategies.
4. Partner with County and local units of government to promote greenway corridors into transportation planning activities.
5. Conduct educational and marketing activities targeting hobby farms and nontraditional agricultural land occupiers.



DAKOTA COUNTY SOIL & WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICT

2006-2010 Strategic Plan

Prime Soil and Habitat Goal

The DSWCD shall work with County and local partners to preserve large, contiguous tracts of open space, prime agricultural soils, and natural areas.

Prime Soil and Habitat Strategies

1. Integrate greenway planning with development review process.
2. Coordinate NRCS, State, County, nonprofit and other easement programs.
3. Assist with local implementation of easement and land protection programs.
4. Promote and support Comprehensive Wetland Management Plans.
5. Partner to protect sensitive groundwater dependent resources and recharge areas.
6. Update countywide land cover mapping using Minnesota Land Cover Classification System (MLCCS) or comparable.
7. Promote and provide cost-share to restore native habitats.
8. Work with County and local units of government to ensure easement areas are effectively managed and maintained.
9. Work with landowners to develop conservation easement management plans.



DAKOTA COUNTY SOIL & WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICT

2006-2010 Strategic Plan

Education and Marketing Goal

The DSWCD shall conduct education and marketing activities to (1) actively engage citizens and decision-makers and (2) influence and change behavior in a way that will have a measurable positive effect on natural resources.

Education and Marketing Strategies

1. Identify target audiences and develop targeted education and marketing strategies. Prepare annual DSWCD education plan and integrate with MS4 education plan.
2. Develop and implement County MS4 education plan. Collaborate with MS4s to implement program. Coordinate and synchronize MS4 education with other DSWCD education activities.
3. Showcase demonstration projects and conduct regular tours. Prepare self-guided tour brochure for DSWCD cost-share projects.
4. Actively coordinate education and marketing efforts with County education programs.
5. Enhance and maintain up-to-date, interactive, and user-friendly website. Include menu-list of educational opportunities.
6. Prepare regular DSWCD newsletter (2 times per year). Provide articles to other County, watershed, and municipal newsletters.
7. Conduct technical training and workshops as identified in annual DSWCD education plan.
8. Make regular public appearances such as fair booth, Envirothon, municipal events, and others.
9. Prepare regular news releases to promote DSWCD programs and activities.
10. Coordinate DSWCD educational activities with adult education and community education programs.
11. Enhance DSWCD library and Fact Sheet references. Make Fact Sheets available to the public.
12. Coordinate reference materials with County Library system. Develop a "Conservation Corner".
13. Continue to provide Homeowners Packets. Develop packets targeted for specific audiences.
14. Partner with County and watersheds to develop educational techniques that show the surface and groundwater interactions in Dakota County.



DAKOTA COUNTY SOIL & WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICT

2006-2010 Strategic Plan

Collaboration Goal

The DSWCD shall develop and nurture collaborative partnerships to enhance natural resource conservation efforts.

Collaboration Strategies

1. Actively participate in water consortium to coordinate surface and groundwater efforts.
2. Coordinate conservation efforts with NRCS to deliver efficient services and strengthen existing contribution agreement to deliver services.
3. Participate in Dakota County Physical Development Division's workgroup management strategy to progress towards or achieve common conservation goals. Current workgroups include:
 - a. Water Resources
 - b. Environmental Education
 - c. Farmland and Natural Area
4. Update existing Joint Powers Agreement with County as necessary to strengthen relationship.
5. Prepare collaborative grant applications to enhance conservation efforts and promote partnerships.
6. Coordinate and implement Dakota County MS4 collaborative.
7. Enhance permit coordination between agencies through regular communications with DNR, County, MPCA, Watersheds, Cities, Townships, and others.
8. Develop and enhance relationship with local units of government through joint projects, cost-share, technical services, and other practices.



DAKOTA COUNTY SOIL & WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICT

2006-2010 Strategic Plan

Data Acquisition and Sharing Goal

The DSWCD shall be the definitive source of natural resources information in Dakota County by acquiring, maintaining, and sharing timely data in a user friendly way.

Data Acquisition and Sharing Strategies

1. Develop accessible water resource database.
2. Create website interface for reports on specific water resources (link to MPCA on Impaired Waters).
3. Develop and implement County baseline surface water monitoring program.
4. Update countywide land cover mapping using MLCCS.
5. Develop GIS-based projects and permit interface.
6. Link rain gauge data to our website.
7. Ensure data are compatible by using up-to-date software and hardware.
8. Compile water resource data and integrate into publicly available interface – e.g. Dakota County Comprehensive Plan.
9. Conduct and update natural resource inventories and assessments.
10. Collect field data digitally and ensure synchronization and integration with GIS and project database.
11. Research and report finds on cost-share projects, innovative stormwater management projects, and other BMPs to advance the state of the art.



DAKOTA COUNTY SOIL & WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICT

2006-2010 Strategic Plan

Financial Stability Goal

The DSWCD shall have long-term financial stability and adequate funding to support DSWCD mission and provide efficient implementation of cost-effective methods to address natural resource concerns.

Financial Stability Strategies

1. Work with County, Minnesota Association of Soil and Water Conservation Districts, and others to develop long-term stable funding for Conservation Districts.
2. Develop multi-year contracts and agreements with watersheds and partners.
3. Work to ensure County levy adequately supports conservation efforts in Dakota County and effectively addresses citizens concerns and needs.
4. Regularly prepare targeted grant applications to achieve goals.