

**Dakota County
Soil and Water Conservation District**



**2008
Annual Plan**

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INTRODUCTION

ORGANIZATION BACKGROUND

Soil and water conservation districts have a broad based charter in natural resources allowing them to be fully engaged in a number of resource management programs including soil and water conservation, flood control, recreation, fish and wildlife, and various aspects of resource development. Conservation districts are subdivisions of local government and are generally organized along county boundary lines. Soil and water conservation districts provide a ready-made vehicle to address local resource problems and to help citizens and landowners address issues important to them.

A Board of five Supervisors, elected countywide by general ballot, oversee and develop the policies of the Dakota County Soil and Water Conservation District (DSWCD). The DSWCD lacks the power to pass ordinances, tax or condemn and does not receive any direct funding appropriations from the State legislature.

The DSWCD was established in 1955 out of the "dust bowl" years. Historically, we have worked cooperatively with the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service to implement programs and activities. Over the past several years, we have strengthened our relationship to work more collaboratively with Dakota County government and various watershed management authorities. . These relationships increase efficiency and effectiveness with natural resource management.

ANNUAL PLAN PURPOSE, MISSION STATEMENT

The purpose of this 2008 Annual Plan is to guide and direct the activities of the DSWCD to meet the needs of the citizens in all areas of the County while protecting the integrity of our natural resources. It is developed to plan for future conservation work.

The Board of Supervisors adopted a five-year Strategic Plan in 2006 that is intended to provide guiding principles for the organization. Periodic review of existing programs, and the examination of potential for new programs or opportunities, are essential to effectively deliver services to Dakota County citizens. Each year, an annual SWCD staff work plan is developed to incorporate applicable County Board Goals with the objectives outlined in the SWCD Boards five-year Strategic Plan. Through this annual staffing plan, the foundation is prepared for calendar year 2008 programs and activities.

New programs may be developed or existing programs modified. The District must be responsive to change throughout the year without losing sight of our mission. The Districts Mission Statement is:

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

Nine objectives and strategies have been developed to address priority issues for 2008. The DSWCD uses three main techniques to implement strategies – Technical Assistance, Financial Assistance, and Educational Assistance. Throughout this plan, specific activities are identified and consideration given to staffing, finances, and other resource needs.

To ensure the DSWCD is a leader in these techniques, staff training and office technology shall be assessed regularly and advanced as necessary. Included in this annual plan are our Board of Supervisors Officer and Committees assignments, SWCD Board five-year Strategic Plan, staff organizational chart for 2008, and staff work plan for 2008

ORGANIZATIONAL CHART

Board of Supervisors

| | |
|-------------------|--|
| Kevin Chamberlain | Chair |
| Chris Nielsen | Vice Chair |
| Joe Meyers | Treasurer |
| Scott Holm | Secretary |
| Marian Brown | Public Relations & Information Officer |

District Staff

| | |
|------------------|--|
| Brian Watson | District Manager |
| Jim Davidson | Senior Urban Conservationist |
| Mikael Isensee | Urban Conservationist |
| Megan Feeser | Urban Conservation Technician |
| Laura Jester | Watershed Conservationist |
| Curt Coudron | Resource Conservation Technician |
| Travis Bistodeau | Water Resource Specialist |
| Brad Becker | Senior Resource Conservationist |
| Todd Matzke | Resource Conservationist |
| Darren Carlson | Resource Conservationist |
| Dave Holmen | Resource Conservationist/IT Specialist |
| Lana Rotty | Accounting & Finance Specialist |
| Dee Parker | Office Specialist |

USCA NRCS Staff

| | |
|------------------|---------------------------------|
| Michelle Wohlers | NRCS – District Conservationist |
| Matthew Schaar | NRCS – District Technician |
| Lynnette Harmon | NRCS – District Technician |

2008 - COMMITTEES AND ASSIGNMENTS

| <u>Committee</u> | <u>Primary</u> | <u>Alternate</u> |
|-----------------------|-------------------|-------------------|
| Public Relations | Marian Brown | Kevin Chamberlain |
| Finance | Joe Meyers | Kevin Chamberlain |
| Personnel | Kevin Chamberlain | Chris Nielsen |
| Rural Lands | Joe Meyers | Chris Nielsen |
| Community Development | Scott Holm | Marian Brown |
| Equipment | Chris Nielson | Joe Meyers |

Staff will join committees as needed

Kevin Chamberlain, as Board Chair, will serve on all committees as an exofficio member

| <u>Assignment</u> | <u>Primary</u> | <u>Alternate</u> |
|---|----------------|----------------------|
| Association of Metropolitan Soil and Water Conservation Districts | Scott Holm | Marian Brown |
| Legislative | Marian Brown | Brian Watson (staff) |
| NRCS Working Group | Joe Meyers | Chris Nielsen |
| Vermillion River Watershed Joint Powers Organization | Scott Holm | Kevin Chamberlain |
| North Cannon River WMO | Chris Nielsen | Joe Meyers |
| Other Watershed Management Authorities | Marian Brown | Scott Holm |

II. OBJECTIVES

Community Conservation Program

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

1. Integrate technical, financial and educational techniques to shift primary program emphasis from reactive to proactive approaches.
2. Provide encouragement and guidance to land use decision makers to improve programs, ordinances and rules for surface water, groundwater, wetland and upland habitat protection and enhancement.
3. Provide high quality assistance to connect citizens, developers and Local Units of Government with the educational, technical, regulatory and financial information needed to put innovative stormwater management and conservation practices on the land.
4. Participate and support all efforts (public and private) to implement effective erosion and sediment control programs in Dakota County and throughout the State.
5. Promote water resource conservation using integrated management practices, low impact development, and better site design through demonstration sites, volunteer and cost-share programs, ordinance enhancement, watershed and urban planning, and educational activities.
6. Provide practical and convenient assistance to homeowners for installing and maintaining rain gardens, stable shorelines, and native gardens through the Blue Thumb Program, workshops, and cost-sharing programs.
7. Provide technical and educational assistance to implement Dakota County's MS4 programs and integrate water resource protection strategies on all County properties, collaborating with Community Development, Parks, Facility Management, and Transportation Departments. Enhance the overall protection of resources within the County by assisting other Local Units of Government to achieve compliance with their MS4 requirements.
8. 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.

II. OBJECTIVES

9. Minimize wetland impacts through implementation of the Wetland Conservation Act.
10. Conduct site plan reviews and strive to become involved earlier in the design 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.
11. Provide assistance to local units of government with erosion and sediment control by reviewing grading and erosion control plans, attending pre-construction meetings, inspecting construction sites and working with developers and contractors to properly install and maintain erosion control.

II. OBJECTIVES

Agriculture

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

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. Work with watershed authorities to develop agricultural BMP programs.
2. Implement Feedlot Program through local delegation of feedlot officer and associated activities.
3. Implement and promote vegetated buffers and filter strips.
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, and total farm management.
7. Collaborate with DNR and County to ensure proper water appropriation management, including assisting with the development of water appropriate tracking program in Dakota County.
8. Conduct education and marketing activities targeting agricultural issues.

II. OBJECTIVES

Rural Land

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

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. Buffer and filter strip management
 - d. Wildlife 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
 - j. Native grass no-till drill rental program
 - k. County Agricultural Inspector program
2. Minimize wetland impacts through implementation of the Wetland Conservation Act.
3. Partner with County as requested to implement groundwater protection strategies.
4. Partner with County and local units of government as requested to promote greenway corridors into transportation planning activities.
5. Conduct educational and marketing activities targeting hobby farms and non-traditional agricultural land occupiers.

II. OBJECTIVES

Prime Soil and Habitat

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

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 including Dakota County's Farmland and Natural Area Protection Program.
4. Promote and support Comprehensive Wetland Management Plans. Assist the North Cannon River WMO with developing a wetland management and protection model ordinance.
5. Partner to protect sensitive groundwater dependent resources and recharge areas.
6. Perform streambank erosion inventory on Vermillion River and gully inventory in Vermillion priority sub-watershed.
7. Update land cover mapping in the Vermillion River Watershed using Minnesota Land Cover Classification System (MLCCS) or comparable.
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.
10. Continue annual tree sale program for rural and suburban landowners.

II. OBJECTIVES

Education and Marketing

The DSWCD shall advance awareness of natural resources and its programs.

1. Provide continual updates to the District's website to keep residents informed of programs and activities.
2. Provide an annual conservation tour for residents, community leaders, watershed organizations, agency staff, nonprofit organizations, and elected officials to observe and experience completed projects.
3. Assist Dakota County and Cities with implementing the education components of their National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System permit and MS4 Requirements.
4. Use informational meetings, workshops, demonstration sites, newsletter articles, and Dakota County fair booth to educate County citizens of programs and the importance and benefit of protecting our natural resources.
5. Provide one-on-one technical assistance to agricultural producers, urban homeowners, and citizens on programs and services available.
6. Coordinate the Vermillion River Watch Program through the Vermillion River Joint Powers Organization.
7. Continue a relationship with the Minnesota Erosion Control Association and University of Minnesota to deliver education programs and training opportunities to residents, elected officials and technical staff.
8. Participate in Area IV's Senior Envirothon competition. Provide general assistance or conduct presentation at one learning station.
9. Assist in the implementation of the County's educational goals as part of their comprehensive plan.
10. Host our annual Outdoor Education Field Days for 5th Grade students in Dakota County to learn about topics such as wetlands and water quality, agriculture, soils, wildlife and the nutrient cycle.
11. Attend and distribute appropriate information at municipal meetings and township officers meetings.

II. OBJECTIVES

Collaboration

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

1. Coordinate conservation efforts with NRCS to strengthen existing contribution agreement and deliver efficient and effective services to landowners.
2. 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. Farmland and Natural Area
 - c. Environmental Operations
3. Maintain and improve upon the Joint Powers Agreement with Dakota County Board of Commissioners.
4. Prepare collaborative grant applications to enhance conservation efforts and promote partnerships.
5. Coordinate and implement Dakota County MS4 collaborative.
6. Enhance permit coordination between agencies through regular communications with DNR, County, MPCA, Watersheds, Cities, Townships, and others.
7. Develop and enhance relationship with local units of government through joint projects, cost-share, technical services, and other practices.
8. Further our relationships with watershed management authorities by collaborating on cost sharing programs, hosting their websites, and providing technical and administrative assistance.

II. OBJECTIVES

Data Acquisition and Sharing

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

1. Create website interface for reports on specific water resources such as a link to the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency on Impaired Waters.
2. Monitor and report stream water quality and quantity by partnering with watershed management authorities, the Metropolitan Council, and the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency.
3. Collect and report well data for the Department of Natural Resources through an Observation Well Program agreement and the Lower Minnesota River Watershed District agreement for fen monitoring.
4. Develop GIS-based projects and application form interface over the web.
5. Ensure data are compatible by using up-to-date software and hardware.
6. Compile water resource data and integrate into publicly available interface – e.g. Local Wetland Management Plans and Dakota County Comprehensive Plans
7. Finalize and update natural resource inventories and assessments including completion of the Vermilion River and North Cannon Watercourse and Wetland Inventories
8. Collect field data digitally and ensure synchronization and integration with GIS and project database.
9. Research and report data acquired from cost-share projects, innovative stormwater management projects, and other best management practices to advance the state of the art.

II. OBJECTIVES

Financial Stability

The DSWCD shall pursue long-term financial options to create stability and adequate funding that supports natural resource protection within all land use types.

1. Work with County, Minnesota Association of Soil and Water Conservation Districts, and others to develop long-term stable funding for Conservation Districts, including updating and refining Joint Powers Agreement with Dakota County
2. Develop multi-year contracts and agreements with watersheds and other 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.

II. OBJECTIVES

Grant and Contract Management

The DSWCD will competitively seek grants and manage awarded grants and contracts to ensure that identified outcomes are delivered and that budget performance is appropriate.

1. Pursue and implement Clean Water Legacy Act grants from State agencies to identify and correct impaired waters under the Federal Clean Water Act.
2. Pursue and implement Met Council funding to plan, protect or restore regionally important greenway corridors and reduce nonpoint source pollution to waterbodies.
3. Pursue and implement Water Environmental Research Foundation Grant for researching bioretention performance in cold climates.
4. Actively participate in the Minnesota Board of Water and Soil Resources eLINK system to report contractual outcomes.
5. Identify appropriate grant opportunities from nonprofit organizations such as Pheasants Forever or Cannon River Watershed Partnership to supplement local funding or increase program effectiveness.
6. Continue to seek and improve upon contractual agreements with watershed authorities to implement local watershed management plans.

III. CONSERVATION PRACTICE GOALS

General

The District has agreements with three watershed management authorities (North Cannon River WMO, Gun Club Lake WMO, Vermillion River Watershed JPO) to combine cost share programs in 2008 and into the foreseeable future. In addition to their established funding sources, the DSWCD will pass funds from watersheds through the District's existing cost sharing programs. This system is efficient as it uses established programs, trained staff, and our Board of Supervisors to deliver technical assistance and financial contracts for voluntary conservation efforts on behalf of our watershed partners.

State Cost Share Program

There have been no significant changes to the State Cost Share Program policies since our last Annual Plan was submitted.

Technical assistance for survey, design, and installation of a water quality practice is provided through District staff, Non-point Engineering Assistance Program, or Natural Resources Conservation Service.

Other Financial Assistance Programs

In addition to the State Cost Share Program, landowners have the opportunity to participate in various other cost share or financial incentive programs such as the Community Cost Share Program, Conservation Initiative Program and the Incentive Payment Practice Program. Fact Sheets and information about all of our local cost share programs can be found at www.dakotacountyswcd.org.

Total funding needed to install anticipated conservation practices under our various financial assistance programs is estimated at \$400,000 for 2008. Final cost estimates and cooperators for this year are evolving and have not yet been fully determined. Using all current and projected sources of available funding, the following practices are anticipated for installation in 2008 with technical assistance from DSWCD staff:

- Native Habitat Plantings and Shoreline Restorations
- Bioretention Basins and Rain Gardens
- Integrated Management Practices for Stormwater Management
- Feedlot Runoff Control and Manure Storage
- Grassed Waterways
- Water and Sediment Control Basins
- Streambank Stabilization
- Planned Grazing Systems

III. CONSERVATION PRACTICE GOALS

- Grade Control Structure
- Nutrient Management Planning
- Filter Strip Installation and Maintenance
- Total Farm Comprehensive Planning

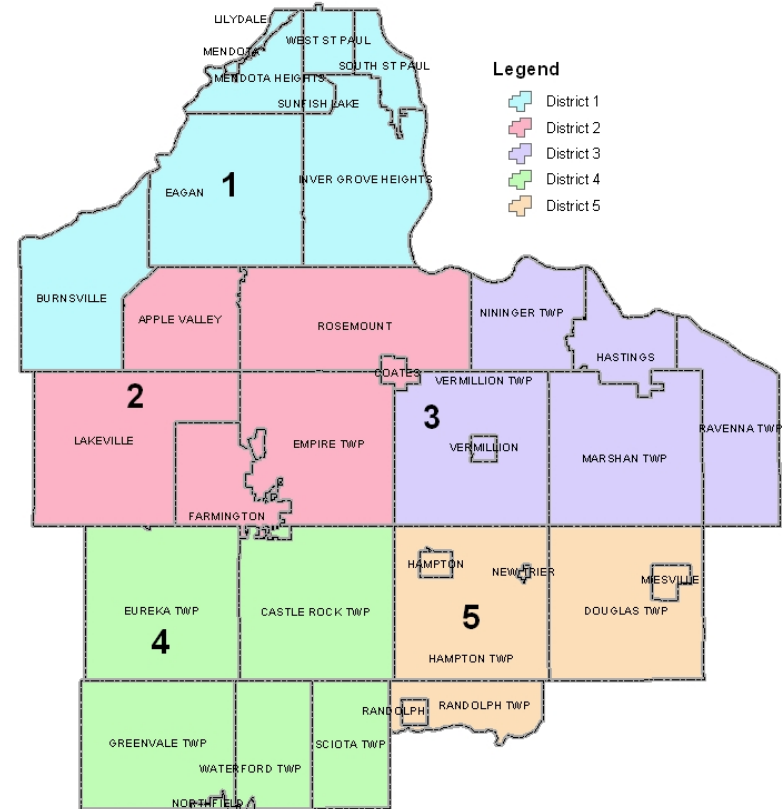
IV. FINANCIAL INFORMATION

2008 Budget

| | Budget |
|-------------------------------------|--------------------|
| REVENUES | |
| Intergovernmental Revenue | |
| Other – Grants | \$15,000 |
| Local - Grants | \$157,942 |
| County - Grants and Operating Funds | \$467,927 |
| State - Grants | \$239,565 |
| Federal - Grants | \$10,000 |
| Total Intergovernmental | \$890,434 |
| Charges for Services | \$40,000 |
| Interest | \$20,000 |
| Miscellaneous and Other Funds | \$5,500 |
| TOTAL REVENUES | \$955,934 |
| EXPENDITURES | |
| District Operations | |
| Personnel Expenses | \$843,407 |
| Operating Expenses | \$36,800 |
| Supplies - Office and Field | \$6,500 |
| Capital Outlay | \$0 |
| Total District Operations | \$886,707 |
| District Expenditures | |
| District Projects Expense | \$31,350 |
| Other - Grants Expense | \$0 |
| Local - Grants Expense | \$200 |
| County - Grants and Funds Expense | \$0 |
| State - Grants Expense | \$95,486 |
| Total Project Expenditures | \$127,036 |
| TOTAL EXPENDITURES | \$1,013,743 |
| Excess of Expenses over Revenues | (\$57,809) |
| Fund Balance - January 1, 2008 | \$394,326 |
| Fund Balance - December 31, 2008 | \$336,517 |

V. ATTACHMENTS

Supervisor Areas of Representation



V. ATTACHMENTS

Watershed Authority Map

