

**Dakota County
Soil & Water Conservation District**

News & Notes

This newsletter also available at <http://www.dakotaswcd.org> Volume 22, Number 1 Spring, 2003

Thank You Kevin Chamberlain!

In December of 2002 we said farewell to Kevin Chamberlain, who served as a Board Supervisor from District 3 for the last twelve years. Kevin, who lives in rural Nininger Township, has provided tremendous leadership and direction for SWCD policies and programs.

Kevin's father Harold previously served on the SWCD Board from 1944 to 1975. He was part of the SWCD's first governing body. Altogether the Chamberlain's have provided forty-three years of commitment to soil and water conservation efforts in Dakota County. The Board and staff would like to say thank you to Kevin for his twelve years of dedicated service. We hope that he continues to stop by the office to say hello every now and then and to "rub-off" some of that calming character we have become familiar with. We wish Kevin the very best in the future!

Due to budget reductions and in an effort to more quickly and cost-efficiently communicate information about Dakota County Soil and Water programs, we would like to invite you to subscribe to *News & Notes* on the internet. Please visit our site at www.dakotaswcd.org and send an e-mail to swcd@co.dakota.mn.us so we can set you up with this new service.

SWCD Tree Sale Coming to a Close

If we can measure ecological progress by the numbers, Dakota County SWCD's Tree Program certainly qualifies as a success... at least in the establishment of trees and shrubs on our farms and in our communities. Over the past six years, Dakota County residents have planted nearly a quarter of million trees and shrubs. We have a variety of trees and shrubs to offer. Combinations of varieties provide colorful surroundings, shade for our living areas, protection from wind, and cover for wildlife. All of our shrubs and many of the hardwood trees produce colorful blooms in the spring, some bearing fruit, as well as great fall color. Of course, the conifers provide green color year around.

To ensure availability, you need to order your trees today! Simply visit our website at www.dakotaswcd.org or call 651-480-7776 for an order form. **Do not delay in placing your order to obtain the best selection!** Those who placed an order and prepaid can pick up their trees between 12:00 p.m. and 7:00 p.m. on Thursday, April 24 and between 10:00 a.m. and 3:00 p.m. on Friday, April 25. Trees will be distributed from the Dakota County Fairgrounds located at 4008 220th Street West in Farmington. We will have a limited number of trees available for sale during distribution.

The University of Minnesota Master Gardeners will be on hand to answer your tree planting and tree care questions. Student volunteers from Hastings High School Environmental Studies classes and Randolph FFA members will also be assisting with the bagging and distribution of the trees. We will have several brochures and pamphlets available for you to take home with your trees.



Order Your Trees Now!

News & Notes

published semianually by

The Dakota County Soil & Water Conservation District

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District Board

Joseph Meyers, *Chair*
Rick Hansen, *Vice-Chair*
Suzanne Savanick, *Treasurer*
Dwain Otte, *Secretary*
Monica Broin, *Public Relations and Information Officer*

District Employees

Brian Watson, *District Manager*
Jay Riggs, *Urban Conservationist*
Laura Jester, *Watershed Conservationist*
Todd Matzke, *Resource Conservationist*
Brad Becker, *Resource Conservationist*
David Holmen, *Resource Conservationist*
Lana Rotty, *Administrative Assistant*
Dee Parker, *Office Assistant*

assisted by the **USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service**
John Crellin, *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.

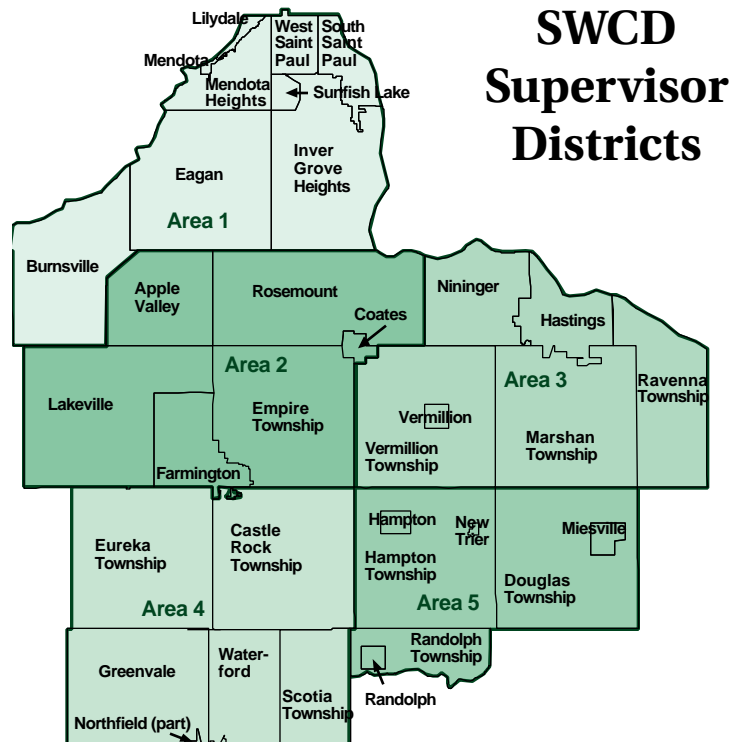
All programs and services of the U.S. Department of Agriculture, Natural Resources Conservation Service, and the Dakota County Soil and Water Conservation District are offered on a nondiscriminatory basis without regard to race, color, national origin, religion, sex, age, marital status, or handicap.

Dakota SWCD Board of Supervisors Take Oath

On January 2, the Dakota County Soil & Water Conservation District (SWCD) held its first Annual Board of Supervisor's Meeting for 2003. At this meeting, Rick Hansen (District 1) and Monica Broin (District 3) read the Oath of Office and were "sworn-in" for their 4-year terms. Officers were also elected, committees assigned, and meeting dates established for the year.

The Board of Supervisors for the SWCD are:

- Rick Hansen, Inver Grove Heights, entering his seventh year, representing District 1 (Cities of Burnsville, Eagan, Inver Grove Heights, Mendota Heights, South St Paul, Sunfish Lake, West St Paul).
- Suzanne Savanick, Apple Valley, entering her fifth year representing District 2 (Cities of Apple Valley, Farmington, Lakeville, Rosemount, and Township of Empire).
- Monica Broin is entering her first year representing District 3 (City of Hastings, and Townships of Marshan, Nininger, Ravenna, and Vermillion).
- Dwain Otte of Northfield is entering his twenty-sixth year, representing District 4 (Townships of Castle Rock, Eureka, Greenville, and Sciota).
- Joe Meyers of rural Douglas Township is entering his eleventh year representing District 5 (Townships of Douglas, Hampton, and Randolph).



Joe Meyers was elected as Chair and Rick Hansen will serve as Vice Chair. Suzanne Savanick was elected as Treasurer and Dwain Otte will serve as Secretary. Monica Broin was elected Public Relations and Information Officer.

Monthly Board meetings have been scheduled for 9:00 a.m. the first Thursday of the month. All meeting dates and times are subject to change. To learn more about the Dakota SWCD Board meetings visit our web site at www.dakotaswcd.org.

Watershed News

North Cannon River Watershed Management Plan — Public Input Sought

The North Cannon River Watershed Management Organization (NCRWMO) located in southern Dakota County recently updated its watershed management plan and is currently seeking comments on the document. The Dakota County SWCD, under an agreement with the NCRWMO, developed the plan and facilitated a citizen and technical advisory committee throughout the planning process. The plan consists of a land and water resource inventory which indicates that the most pressing water quality problems in the area include high bacteria levels in Chub Creek and high sediment levels in Trout Brook. Goals and strategies related to natural area and wetland protection, groundwater and surface quality and quantity, development, education, and evaluation are included in the draft plan.

Black Dog Watershed Management Organization Web Site Now Available

If you live in Burnsville, northwest Lakeville, or southwest Apple Valley, you're probably in the Black Dog Watershed Management Organization. This organization is charged with protecting and improving the water quality in your area. They perform studies, monitor water quality and quantity, and provide water resource education. For more information visit their new web site at www.dakotaswcd.org/watersheds/blackdogwmo.

Lake Monitors Wanted

The Lower Mississippi River Watershed Management Organization in Inver Grove Heights, West St. Paul, South St. Paul, Lilydale, Sunfish Lake, and Mendota Heights is looking for volunteers to collect water samples and transparency measurements on a number of lakes in their area. For more information or to volunteer, contact Laura Jester, Dakota County SWCD, 651-480-7784.

Cannon River Watershed Partnership

The Cannon River Watershed Partnership is a non-profit organization that works to protect and improve the surface and groundwater resources and natural systems of the Cannon River watershed. The Partnership provides outreach and educational opportunities for kids and adults including the Cannon River Festival in Northfield each summer and coordinating a network of volunteer stream monitors. They also perform water quality monitoring studies throughout the watershed, and they are involved in water resource advocacy on the local and state level. If you'd like more information on the Partnership or you're interested in becoming a volunteer monitor, visit their website at www.crowp.net or call 507-645-7094.

Vermillion River Watershed Joint Powers Board and Planning Commission Established

Last fall, the Vermillion River Watershed Joint Powers Board was officially formed through an agree-

ment between Dakota County and Scott County. Commissioners Joe Harris and Paul Krause from Dakota County and Bob Vogel from Scott County make up the Joint Powers Board, which usually meets every other month in Apple Valley. In December, the Board appointed a nine-member advisory Watershed Planning Commission from citizen applicants throughout the watershed. Eight members were appointed from Dakota County including Kevin Bigalke (Apple Valley), Terry Holmes (Empire Township), David Luick (Lakeville), Ron Mamer (Marshan Township), Jerry Ristow (Farmington), Faith Sienbenaler (Vermillion Township), and Mike Simacek (Hastings). Henry Zweber from the City of New Market was appointed from Scott County. The Watershed Planning Commission meets every month and is currently charged with re-drafting the watershed management plan. The plan is slated to be completed by the end of the year and will it is hoped it will get through the lengthy review process by late summer of 2004.

New Native Grass and Pasture Seeder for Rent

The Dakota County Soil and Water Conservation District has purchased a brand new Truax Native Grass drill. The drill was partially funding through donations received by the Dakota Ringnecks Chapter of Pheasants Forever and the National Wild Turkey Federation. Dakota County residents can rent the drill on a per-acre basis to seed native prairie, alfalfa, clover, pasture grasses, or oats.

The new Truax drill is 10 feet wide and has 8-inch row spacing. The no-till feature allows seed to be planted directly into sod, so tillage is not necessary. A tractor with at least sixty horsepower and two hydraulic ports is required to operate the drill.

Rent is \$50 for the first acre, and \$10 for each additional acre planted. This charge includes delivery of the drill to and from your site and technical assistance to properly calibrate and attach the drill to your tractor.

The Dakota County SWCD would like to remind you that we also have two 15-foot drills available for rent to plant no-till soybeans or pasture plantings. Rent is \$9.75 per acre and also includes delivery to and from your farm and drill calibration.

If you have any questions regarding drill rental, or if you are interested in planting native prairie or other wildlife habitat on your property, please contact Brad Becker at 651-480-7782.



New Trout Stream On Vermillion River

(Reprinted from DNR Press Release dated January 15, 2003)

Hailed at the beginning of the twentieth century as one of the upper midwest's top brook trout streams, by 1959 Dakota County's Vermillion River had declined to the point where its polluted waters were considered unfit for any game fish.

Now the Vermillion is making a comeback as a premier coldwater fishery, a phenomenon reflected by recent state action aimed at better recognizing and protecting one of the few metro region streams healthy enough to support trout.

In December, the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources assigned official trout stream designation to a 20.5-mile reach of the Vermillion stretching from Highway 3 in Farmington to just east of Highway 52 in Vermillion Township. The action nearly doubles the portion of the Vermillion River designated as a trout stream, which previously ran from Lakeville to Farmington.

"Not many communities in a major metropolitan area can boast of a trout stream running through them," said Dirk Peterson, DNR Central Region fisheries manager. "And it's not often we see this type of recovery, from a seriously impaired water to a trophy fishery. This is testimony to the impacts of the Clean Water Act, improvements in land use, and good local planning."

Designation acknowledges that stream conditions are right to support trout, a sensitive species that needs clean, cold waters to survive. It prohibits any angling except during trout season, which generally runs from mid-April through late September. And it sets stricter standards for activities that may affect the stream's water quality, such as discharge of municipal stormwater.

Stormwater runoff is of particular concern in the rapidly urbanizing Vermillion River watershed. As an area develops, more and more of the land that once allowed rain water to soak into the ground is covered with impervious surfaces such as pavement and roofs. Water running over these impervious surfaces is warmed; it picks up pollutants and it reaches the stream much more quickly, causing erosion and sedimentation in the stream, as well as thermal and chemical pollution. All these factors can add up to the demise of a trout stream.

With the Metropolitan Council projecting an additional 145,000 residents for Dakota County by 2030, the Vermillion could be at risk if that growth isn't well thought out, said Jason Moeckel, a DNR trout stream specialist. Moeckel points to the experience of Lakeville to illustrate how a community can maintain a healthy coldwater fishery while accommodating development.

Six years ago, Lakeville officials found themselves in a situation that seemed to pit economic growth in an industrial park against protection of the South Branch of

the Vermillion, a designated trout stream. Working closely with the DNR, the city was able to implement alternative stormwater management practices that minimized negative impacts to the stream, thereby preserving a valuable community amenity while enhancing the local tax base.

"It's not an either-or situation," Moeckel said. "What it means is cities and developers have to use different approaches to managing stormwater runoff. They've got to keep the water getting to the river cleaner and colder."

The DNR began exploring the feasibility of expanding the designated portion of the Vermillion several years ago, after angler reports suggested that trout were being found outside the twenty-five mile stretch that had been designated in 1983. Subsequent fish surveys showed that brown trout, some in the "trophy" range, could indeed be found in further reaches of the stream. After numerous meetings with local officials, landowners and the public revealed widespread support for efforts to protect the stream, DNR went ahead with the designation process.

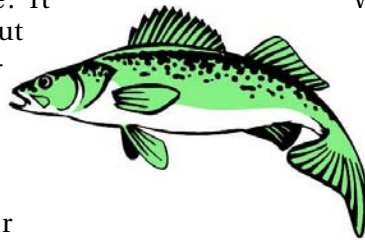
Currently only 1.2 miles of the designated portion of the Vermillion River is accessible to the public, all of it in Farmington city parks. The DNR is interested in expanding public access by working with willing landowners interested in selling or donating angling easements.

The expanded designation comes at a time when a growing amount of attention is being focused on the Vermillion River. For the past few years the Dakota County Soil and Water Conservation District has been involved in a study to determine the source of fecal coliform bacteria in the stream. The SWCD, in partnership with private landowners and other organizations, also has undertaken several streambank restoration projects. The Dakota County Farmland and

Natural Areas program, funded by a recently passed \$20 million referendum, identifies the Vermillion River corridor as a priority for protection efforts. And last summer the Legislative Commission on Minnesota Resources recommended spending \$8 million on the DNR-led Metro Wildlife Corridors project, which includes potential funding for work in the Vermillion watershed.

The DNR's Peterson sees all those things as encouraging signs. Taken together with the expanded designation, they point out positive trends and future challenges.

"In as much as trout are indicators of cold, clean waters, it's a sign water quality has improved," Peterson said. "The question now is, with all the urban growth going on, will we be able to maintain it as a trout stream? Or will we be talking, in 2059, about the Vermillion River not supporting any game fish again?"



Eagan Core Greenway

Starting this spring, the Dakota SWCD will be working with the City of Eagan to analyze existing natural areas and identify opportunities for protecting a greenway corridor through the City. The City is now over ninety percent developed, with few areas remaining as passive open space. The focus is the potential greenway chain from Lebanon Hills Regional Park, through the City of Eagan, to the Minnesota River Valley. Once the primary corridor areas are identified, more detailed natural resource data will be collected to identify critical links and implications for preservation and management. The project will identify land in and



around the greenbelt core that may enhance the corridor. This will provide the City a critical tool to prioritize parcels that need protection.

Eagan's Core Greenway has the potential to provide wildlife habitat, open space, and critical stormwater runoff storage. The City would like to incorporate preservation and stewardship into its decision making process and long term vision for protection, but it is important to first understand property ownership and the resource base.

If you have any questions about this project, call Jay Riggs at 651-480-7779 or e-mail jay.riggs@co.dakota.mn.us.

Dakota SWCD Receives Award From EPA

The Dakota SWCD was recently selected by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) as a *Clean Water Partner for the 21st Century*. This recognition was provided for the organization's efforts to protect and improve the nation's watersheds and further national clean water goals. Specifically, the SWCD was recognized for their past efforts within the Vermillion River Watershed and their leadership in developing the Vermillion River Watershed map *Communities connected by water*, and publishing the Vermillion River Watershed Handbook *A guide to help landowners make their property Vermillion River friendly*. Both of these resources are available to Dakota County residents by calling the SWCD office.

Dakota SWCD staff were scheduled to receive the award on February 18, 2003 at EPA Headquarters in Washington D.C. Unfortunately, one of the largest snowstorms on record fell on the Washington area and the event was cancelled.

The SWCD Board and staff would like to take this opportunity to say thanks to all of our partners who provided support and funding for these two projects. These partners include the Dakota County Board of Commissioners and the Office of Planning, the Dakota County Environmental Education Program, Friends of the Mississippi River, the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources, Metropolitan Council, U.S. Forest Service, and Trout Unlimited. We look forward to continuing our efforts in the future!

Welcome Matthew Schaar

Matthew Schaar is newest employee at the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) in Farmington. He joins us as a Soil Conservation Technician who will be working with the SWCD to develop conservation plans, assist in the implementation of conservation practices, and provide technical assistance to the owners and operators of land in Dakota County. Matthew had been the summer Conservation Technician for the SWCD in 2002, inspecting erosion control practices at urban construction sites as well as taking part in water quality monitoring activities. Matthew received his B.S. in Environmental Engineering Technology from the University of Wisconsin River Falls in December of 2001. In his spare time he enjoys fishing and target shooting. He looks forward to working with you.



New Guide to Using Natural Resource Data in Local Decision-Making

The Department of Natural Resources and Dakota County Soil and Water Conservation District are working together to develop a "Guide to Using Natural Resource Data in Local Decision-Making." The purpose of the Guide is to provide citizens and elected officials basic information on why and how to use natural resource data in local land use decisions.

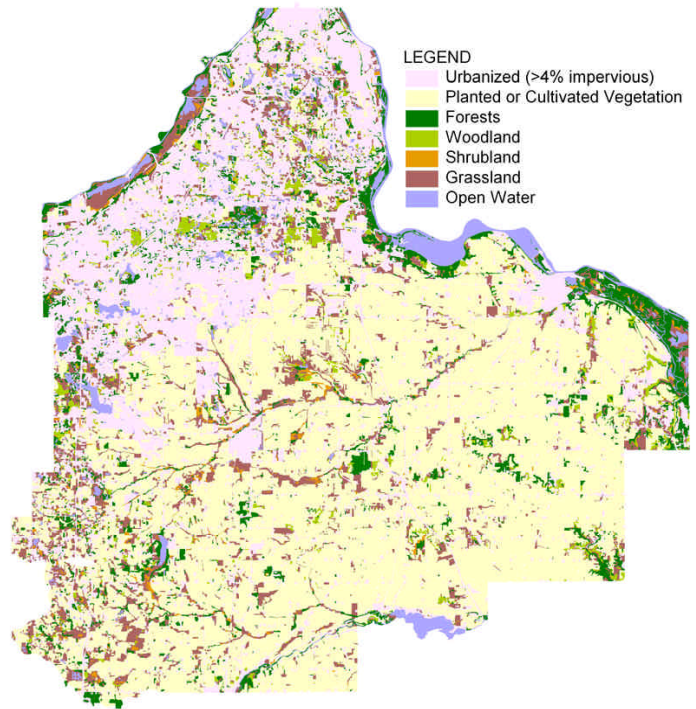
The guide would answer questions like:

- How can natural resource data be used in local decision-making?
- What types of natural resource data exist?
- What is a Geographic Information System and how can it help local planning efforts?
- What is the Minnesota Land Cover Classification System and is it done for my community?
- How do we use land cover mapping and integrate it with local policy and planning tools (like ordinances, comprehensive plan amendments, or conservation development plans)?

Ultimately the goal is to promote well-informed decisions that can have significant environmental and economic benefits. One of the main components of the NRG is local examples from Minnesota. The recently approved Dakota County Farmland and Natural Area Project referendum will be profiled.

The NRG will be distributed on CD and will include a wide variety of information and links. A "Quick Guide"

printed brochure will also be prepared. Expect the NRG to be available by June, 2003. If you have any questions about this project, call Jay Riggs at 651-480-7779 or email jay.riggs@co.dakota.mn.us.



◆ An Inside Glance...
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◆ New Supervisors Elected
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◆ Tree Sale Coming to a Close

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