



Dakota County Soil & Water Conservation District

News & Notes

This newsletter also available at www.dakotacountyswcd.org Volume 23, Number 1 Spring, 2004

SWCD Selects 2004 Officers

In January, the Dakota County Soil and Water Conservation District held its first Board of Supervisors Meeting for 2004. At this meeting, officers were elected and meeting dates established for the year.

Officers for 2004 will be: Suzanne Savanick-Hansen (District 2) as Chair, Joe Meyers (District 5) as Vice-Chair, Monica Broin (District 3) as Treasurer, Dwain Otte (District 4) as Secretary, and Rick Hansen (District 1) as Public Relations and Information Officer.

The Board established the first Thursday of every month at 9:00 a.m. to hold the monthly meetings. An exception to this schedule will be in July, which has been scheduled for the second Thursday of the month at 9:00 a.m. The meetings are open to the public and are held at the Dakota County Extension & Conservation Center in Farmington.

SWCD Supervisor Openings

Filing Period is July 6–20, 2004

Dakota County citizens interested in influencing natural resources issues at the local level are encouraged to run for supervisor of the Dakota County Soil and Water Conservation District.

SWCD supervisor positions will be filled through general elections November 2, 2004. Individuals who wish to be on the ballot must file for the election between July 6 and July 20. Any citizen of legal voting age residing in the nomination district is eligible for election. Interested citizens need to file a "Minnesota Affidavit of Candidacy" (available from the Dakota County Treasurer/Auditor in the Administration Center in Hastings), along with a \$20 filing fee.

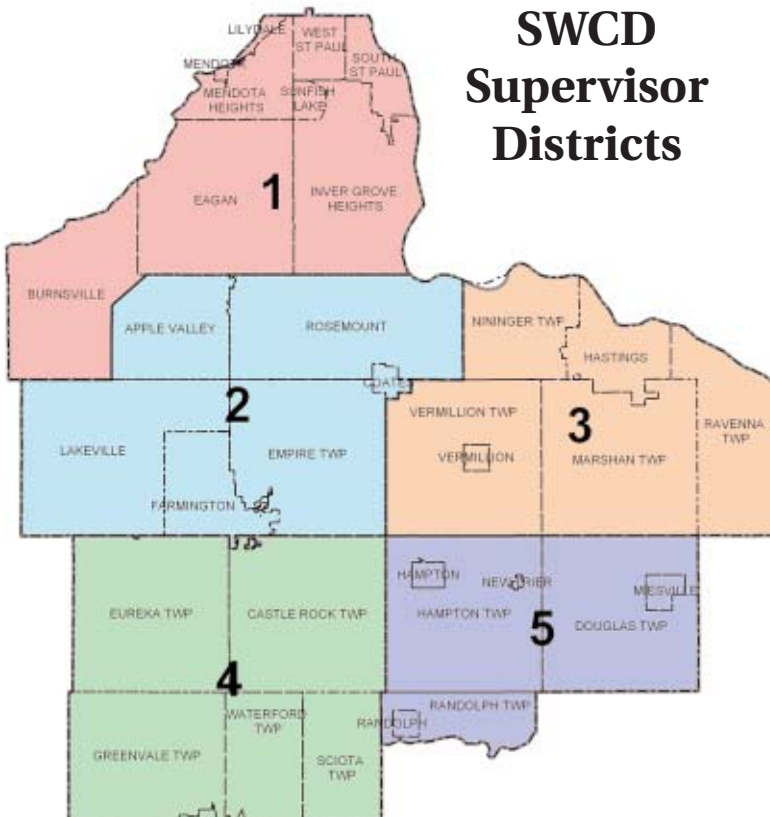
"Serving as an SWCD supervisor is a not only a meaningful way to influence the environment, it's a great way to get involved in local government," says Brian Watson, District Manager.

SWCDs are local units of government that manage and direct natural resource management programs. Minnesota's ninety-one SWCDs cover the entire state and generally follow county lines. Because SWCD Supervisor terms are staggered, at least two of the five positions in each district are generally up for re-election each election year.

SWCD supervisors have three main responsibilities during their four-year terms. They set overall policy and long-term objectives for their districts, develop their district's annual and comprehensive plans, and work with SWCD staff to see that policies and plans are implemented. They are not paid a salary; however, they do receive compensation for attending meetings and are reimbursed for expenses.

For more information about SWCD supervisor positions or filing for the election, contact the Dakota County SWCD at 651-480-7777.

SWCD Supervisor Districts



News & Notes

published semianually by

The Dakota County Soil & Water Conservation District

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District Board

Suzanne Savanick-Hansen, *Chair*

Joe Meyers, *Vice-Chair*

Monica Broin, *Treasurer*

Dwain Otte, *Secretary*

Rick Hansen, *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

Mike Isensee,
Conservation Technician

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.

USDA to Provide Funding to Protect Farm and Ranch Land

United States Agriculture Secretary Ann M. Veneman recently announced that \$84 million will be available to protect farm and ranch land through USDA's Farm and Ranch Lands Protection Program (FRPP).

Through the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), FRPP protects productive agricultural land by purchasing conservation easements to limit conversion of farm and ranch lands to non-agricultural uses. NRCS will accept proposals from interested state, tribal and local governments and non-governmental organizations until the end of April 2004. Dakota County will be submitting a proposal to obtain this federal funding source to supplement the Dakota County Farmland and Natural Area Protection Program.

Dakota County anticipates another application round in late summer under their Farmland and Natural Area Protection Program. If you would like to know more about the Dakota County Program please contact the SWCD at 651-480-7777.



Rick Hansen and Agriculture Secretary Ann M. Veneman

Hansen Appointed to National Conservation Committee

Rick Hansen, Dakota SWCD Supervisor, has been re-appointed to serve on the National Association of Conservation Districts (NACD) Environmental and Resource Policy Committee for 2004.

This committee evaluates a broad range of natural resource issues as they impact water quality and the environment. It serves as the primary liaison to environmental organizations and the fish and wildlife agencies of federal and state government. SWCD Supervisors serving on NACD committees create a mechanism for active involvement of local leaders making full use of their experience, talents and interests.

Hansen represents District 1, including the cities of Burnsville, Eagan, Inver Grove Heights, Lilydale, Mendota, Mendota Heights, South Saint Paul, Sunfish Lake, and West Saint Paul.

USDA Farm Bill Funding Available

The USDA is now accepting applications under the 2004 Farm Bill for installing conservation practices. The Farm Bill continues to allocate funding to Conservation Reserve Program for limited term easements. In 2004, approximately \$170,000 has been allocated to Dakota County through the Environmental Quality Incentives Program of the Farm Bill. This program includes cost-share incentives for the following practices.

- Irrigation Sprinkler Upgrades
- Irrigation Water Management
- Animal Composting Facilities
- Pest Management Planning No/Ridge/Mulch-till conversions planning
- Animal Waste and Nutrient Management
- Gully Erosion and Water Control Structures
- Habitat Improvements
- Livestock Grazing
- Cropland Management

Funding applications need to be completed by May 15. If you have any questions please contact Todd Matzke at 651-480-7777 or Matt Schaar at 651-463-8665.

Grant for Sediment Control in Etter Creek Watershed

The Metropolitan Council recently awarded a \$100,000 MetroEnvironment Partnership (MEP) Grant to the Dakota County SWCD for implementing an Etter Creek Watershed Sediment Control Project. In cooperation with the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) in Dakota and Goodhue Counties, and the Goodhue County SWCD, the money will be used to help pay for installation of water control practices in the upper reaches of Etter Creek located in Ravenna and Welch Townships.

Eligible landowners may be able to receive up to 85% in cost share funds to install water control basins. The goal of the project is to lower sediment loading to the Vermillion and Mississippi Rivers. In most cases, grant funds will be used to supplement federal funds from the Environmental Quality Incentives Program administered by the NRCS. Other eligible projects include installation of grass waterways and the repair or maintenance of a failing water control basins.

For more information, landowners in Goodhue County should contact Tom Steger with the NRCS at 651-923-5285. Interested landowners in Dakota County should contact the SWCD office at 651-480-7777.

Feedlot Improvement Grant Funds Available

The State of Minnesota has over \$1.2 million available for installing feedlot improvement projects throughout the state in 2004. Over the last three years the Dakota County SWCD has secured over \$383,000 to install feedlot improvement projects. We are seeking feedlot operators who may have feedlot runoff problems or manure storage problems who want to apply for grant funding.

The SWCD can cost-share up to 75% of the costs of feedlot improvements including manure pit construction, clean-water diversions, roof gutters, "picket-fence" construction, filter strips, roof construction over existing

feedlots, and concrete installation within existing feedlots.

Feedlot improvement grants are an effective way to increase the efficiency of your farm and ensure you are in compliance with Minnesota Pollution Control Agency feedlot rules. The closer your feedlot is located to a river, stream, pond, or waterway the greater chance you have of receiving grant funding.

If you are interested in improving your feedlot, or if you have any questions, please contact Brad Becker at 651-480-7782.



Before....



and After.

North Cannon Watershed Offers Cost Share Assistance

The North Cannon River Watershed Management Organization (WMO) has budgeted over \$5,500 in 2004 to help landowners improve rivers, streams, and natural resources in their area through the installation of best management practices. Eligible projects include practices such as 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 WMO boundaries (land in Dakota County that drains to 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, 2004. Please contact Connie Anderson, WMO Chair, at 952-469-2355, or the Dakota County SWCD office at 651-480-7777 for more information or to receive an application form.

Vermillion River Watershed Plan Update

The Vermillion River Watershed Planning Commission continues to work hard on developing a new Watershed Management Plan. Goals, objectives, and specific actions to guide watershed management over the next five years are being developed and discussed by the nine member Planning Commission, Joint Powers Board members, consultants, staff from Dakota and Scott Counties, technical agencies, and member communities. Watershed management goals include protecting groundwater quality and quantity, protecting and restoring wetlands, protecting open space for recreation and wildlife, protecting and enhancing surface water resources, managing the rate, volume, and quality of stormwater runoff, protecting floodplains from encroachment, promoting sustainable development, and educating local officials and the public about water resources. The plan may include some regulations or requirements relating to water quality, development, and agricultural practices in order to achieve its goals.

All or parts of the following cities and townships are in the Vermillion River sWatershed Organization: the cities of Apple Valley, Burnsville, Coates, Elko, Farmington, Hampton, Hastings, Lakeville, New Market, Rosemount, and Vermillion, and the townships of Castle Rock, Douglas, Empire, Eureka, Hampton, Marshan, New Market, Nininger, Ravenna, and Vermillion.

The management plan will be available for public review this summer. For more information on the Vermillion River Watershed Joint Powers Organization or to view their latest newsletter, please visit their web site at www.co.dakota.mn.us/planning/vermillionjpo/index.htm.

Failing Septic Systems May Be Polluters

The Vermillion River and its tributaries often harbor high levels of fecal coliform bacteria. Fecal coliform is a category of bacteria that are present in the fecal matter of all warm-blooded animals and which indicate potentially harmful contamination. In many streams in the watershed, the bacteria pollution violates the state standard of 200 organisms per 100 milliliters of water. (Drinking water must have 0 bacteria.) The contamination becomes even worse during storms and snowmelt when pollution flows off the land and into waterways.

Due to this contamination, the River appears on the Federal List of Impaired Waters or the 303(d) List and has been the subject of a Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) Study over the past few years. As part of the study, the Dakota County Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD) collected hundreds of water samples for bacterial analysis and mapped landuse, or land cover, in detail throughout the watershed. A large group of local and technical stakeholders recently reviewed the bacteria and landuse data, identified probable sources of bacteria in each subwatershed, and recommended a series of strategies to help stop the contamination.

The stakeholder group identified failing or non-compliant septic systems as the most significant source of bacteria pollution in the Watershed, followed by manure running off agricultural fields, urban or suburban runoff (which includes pet and urban wildlife waste), and runoff from feedlots. Recommended actions for reducing pollution include upgrading septic systems, placing buffers along streams and waterways, using best management practices for applying manure to fields, educating homeowners about pet waste, improving feedlots, and fencing livestock away from streams. Various components of these strategies are currently being considered by the Vermillion River Watershed Planning Commission for inclusion in the Watershed Plan. Additionally, grants will be sought to implement best management practices throughout the watershed.

The TMDL Study is nearing completion with a final document being reviewed by the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency. For more information on the TMDL study or bacteria in the Vermillion River, please contact Laura Jester at 651-480-7784 or laura.jester@co.dakota.mn.us.

Due to budget reductions and to more 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 www.dakotacountyswcd.org and send e-mail to swcd@co.dakota.mn.us so we can set you up with this service.

Residents Use Rainwater Gardens to Clean Crystal Lake

The residents of Rushmore Drive in Burnsville are doing their part to clean Crystal Lake. They are part of a study funded by the City of Burnsville and the Metropolitan Council to learn how efficient rain gardens are at cleaning urban runoff. Urban runoff carries with it fertilizers, oils, and many other pollutants — most of which end up in nearby Crystal Lake.

Rain gardens are landscaped shallow depressions (around six inches deep) that collect water after it rains, but are designed to filter and infiltrate the water into the ground



within a day or so. Seven neighborhoods were examined for suitability of rainwater garden construction, and the block of Rushmore Drive between Chicago Avenue and Southwind Drive was chosen because most of the residents were very excited about participating in the study.

“This is a great project! Not only are we helping to clean the lake, but our yards will look much better because of the landscaping,” said one Rushmore Drive resident.

Seventeen rainwater gardens located on fifteen lots were constructed in the fall of 2003. A contractor was hired to do the grading work, but the residents did all the plantings. Some of the rain garden designs include stone retaining walls to reduce grading impacts.

Monitoring will continue for another two years. This is a nationally significant study that will help city officials



and lake managers make better decisions on how to clean up urban lakes.

Contact the SWCD if you have any questions or would like more information about how to construct and install your own rainwater garden.

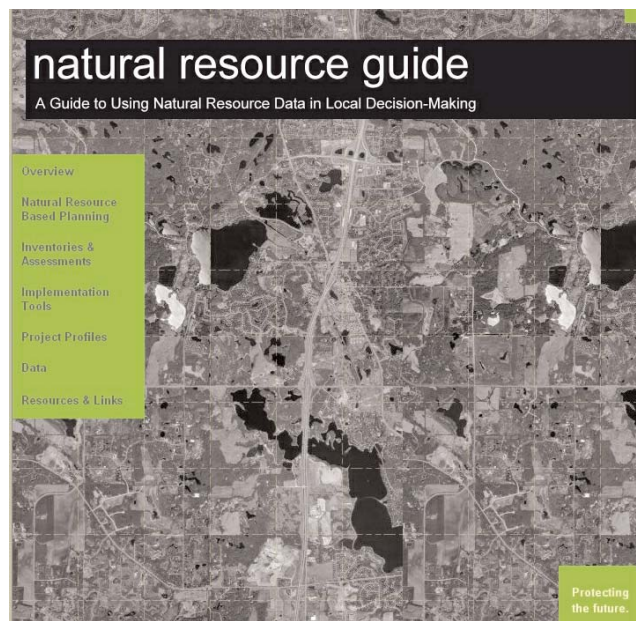
Natural Resource Guide to Help Local Decision-Making

The Department of Natural Resources and Dakota County SWCD have been working together to develop a “Guide to Using Natural Resource Data in Local Decision-Making.” The purpose of the newly-finished Guide is to provide citizens and elected officials basic information on why and how to use natural resource data in their land use decisions.

The guide answers 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)?

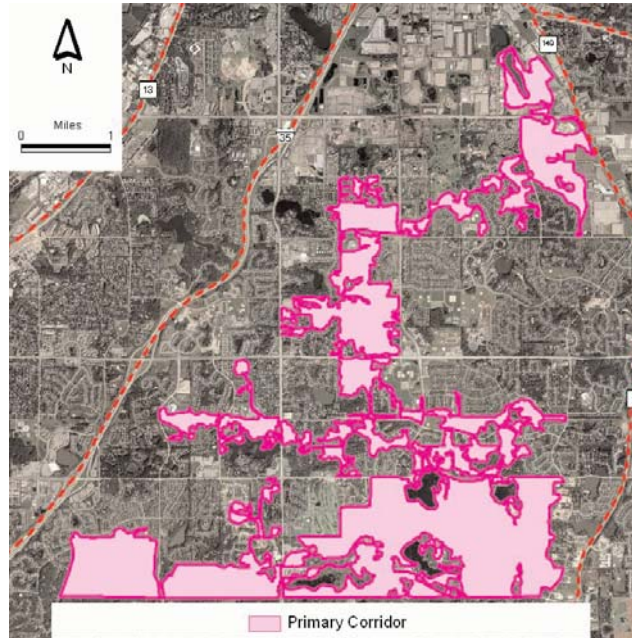


The goal is to promote well-informed decisions that can have significant environmental and economic benefits. A main component of the NRG was local example projects from across Minnesota. The Dakota County Farmland and Natural Area Project referendum is profiled under the example projects.

The NRG will be distributed on CD and include a wide variety of information and links. A “Quick Guide” printed brochure has also been prepared. Expect the NRG to be available by March of 2004. If you have any questions about this project, call Jay Riggs at 651-480-7779 or e-mail jay.riggs@co.dakota.mn.us.

Eagan Core Greenway

Over the summer of 2003, the Dakota SWCD worked with the City of Eagan to analyze existing natural areas and identify opportunities for protecting a greenway corridor through the city. Eagan is now over 90% developed, with few areas remaining as passive open space. The focus area for the primary greenway corridor extended from Lebanon Hills Regional Park, through the City of Eagan, to the north and east bounded by Highway 35 and Dodd Road. Once the primary corridor areas were identified, more detailed natural resource data was collected to identify critical links and implications for preservation and management. The project identified additional lands in and



around the greenbelt core that may enhance the corridor. Finally, parcels intersecting the corridor were identified. This will provide the City with a critical tool to prioritize parcels that need protection.

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

If you have any questions about this project, call David Holmen at 651-480-7791 or e-mail

david.holmen@co.dakota.mn.us.

SWCD to Monitor Water Quality

You may have noticed Dakota SWCD vehicles stopped near local bridges during the spring and summer months. That's usually because SWCD staff is collecting water samples and data from area rivers and streams in order to monitor stream health and flow. The SWCD monitors water quality and quantity, or flow, for the Vermillion River Watershed Joint Powers Organization, the North Cannon River Watershed Management Organization, the Lower Minnesota River Watershed District, and the Metropolitan Council. Water samples are taken during periods of low flow when there is no influence of runoff from rain or snowmelt, and during "runoff events" when rivers and streams receive rainwater or melting snow from surrounding landscapes.

The samples are delivered to the laboratory at the Metropolitan Council's Wastewater Treatment Facility in Saint Paul, where they are tested for nutrients such as phosphorus and nitrogen, bacteria, and solids such as sediment. The data collected over a period of years can indicate trends, or changes, in water quality, and can help determine if landuse and conservation practices are having positive or negative impacts on water quality. The SWCD plans to have data available on our web site in the future.

Local citizens also collect important data on rivers and streams through the Vermillion River Watch Program and the Citizen Stream Monitoring Program. If you would like to find out how to perform some simple water quality tests on the stream near your home, please contact the SWCD office at 651-480-7777.

No-Till Drills for Rent

No-till production is a cost-efficient method for seeding soybeans, hayfields and pastures. No-till reduces your trips through the field, reduces your production costs and increases your profits. No-till also reduces soil compaction, conserves soil moisture, improves soil health, reduces erosion and provides excellent weed control.

The Dakota County SWCD will provide two different no-till drills for rent in 2004:

15-foot John Deere 1560 Drill:

- Rent is \$9.75/acre, with a minimum charge of \$50
- 10" spacing
- Used to seed soybeans

10-foot Truax Drill:

- Rent is \$50 for the first acre, \$10 for each additional acre
- 7" spacing
- Used to seed native prairie, alfalfa, clover, grass seed, hayfields and pastures

Rent includes delivery to and from your site and instruction on how to use the machine.

No-till production is well suited to the soils in Dakota County, and it is an effective way for you to increase profits on your farm. The Dakota SWCD is currently signing up landowners who are interested in renting a no-till drill. If you are interested, or if you have any questions please contact Brad Becker at 651-480-7782.

Clean Water Is Everybody's Business

In urban and suburban areas, much of the land surface is covered by buildings and pavement, which do not allow rain and snowmelt to soak into the ground. Instead, most developed areas rely on storm drains to carry large amounts of runoff from roofs and paved areas to nearby waterways. The stormwater runoff carries pollutants such as oil, dirt, chemicals, and lawn fertilizers directly to streams and rivers, where they seriously harm water quality. To protect surface water quality and groundwater resources, development should be designed and built to minimize increases in runoff.

Did you know that because of impervious surfaces like pavement and rooftops, a typical city block generates more than five times more runoff than a woodland area of the same size?

How Urbanized Areas Affect Water Quality

Increased Runoff. The porous and varied terrain of natural landscapes like forests, wetlands, and grasslands traps rainwater and snowmelt and allows them to filter slowly into the ground. In contrast, impervious (non-porous) surfaces like roads, parking lots, and rooftops prevent rain and snowmelt from infiltrating, or soaking, into the ground. Most of the rainfall and snowmelt remains above the surface, where it runs off rapidly in unnaturally large amounts. When this runoff leaves the storm drains and empties into a stream, its excessive volume and power blast out streambanks, damaging streamside vegetation and wiping out aquatic habitat. Although urbanization leads to great increases in flooding during and immediately after wet weather, in many instances it results in lower stream flows during dry weather. Many native fish and other aquatic life cannot survive when these conditions prevail.

Increased Pollutant Loads. Urbanization increases the variety and amount of pollutants carried into streams, rivers, and lakes. The pollutants include:

- Sediment
- Oil, grease, and toxic chemicals from motor vehicles
- Pesticides and nutrients from lawns and gardens
- Viruses, bacteria, and nutrients from pet waste and failing septic systems
- Road salts
- Heavy metals from roof shingles, motor vehicles, and other sources

- Thermal pollution from dark impervious surfaces such as streets and rooftops

These pollutants can harm fish and wildlife populations, kill native vegetation, foul drinking water supplies, and make recreational areas unsafe and unpleasant.

Managing Urban Runoff

What Homeowners Can Do. To decrease polluted runoff from paved surfaces, households can develop alternatives to areas traditionally covered by impervious surfaces. Porous pavement materials are available for driveways and sidewalks, and native vegetation and mulch can replace high maintenance grass lawns. Homeowners can use fertilizers sparingly and sweep driveways, sidewalks, and roads instead of using a hose. In addition, households can prevent polluted runoff by picking up after pets and using, storing, and disposing of chemicals properly. Drivers should check their cars for leaks and recycle their motor oil and antifreeze when these fluids are changed. Drivers can also avoid impacts

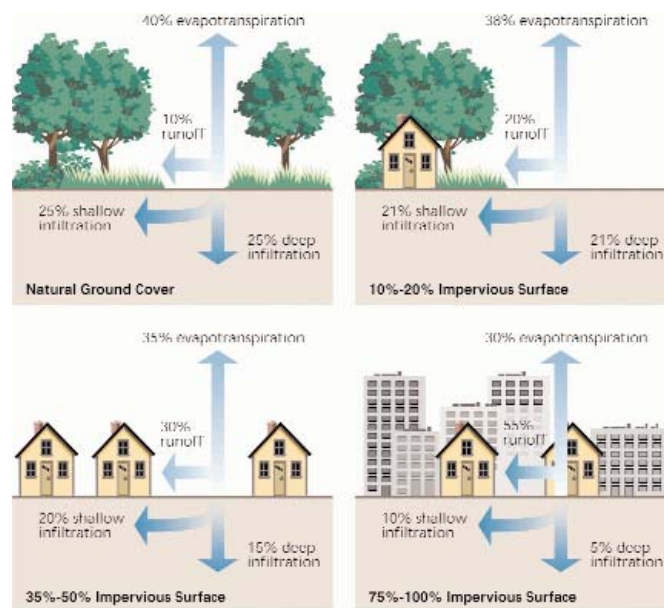
from car wash runoff (e.g., detergents, grime, etc.) by using car wash facilities that do not generate runoff.

Controlling Effects of New Development. Developers and city planners should attempt to control the volume of runoff from new development by using low impact development, structural controls, and pollution prevention strategies. Low impact development includes measures that conserve natural areas; reduce development impacts; and reduce site runoff rates by maximizing surface roughness, infiltration opportunities, and flow paths.

Controlling Effects of

Existing Development. Controlling runoff from existing urban areas is often more costly than controlling runoff from new developments. Local governments are encouraged to take lead roles in public education efforts through public signage, storm drain marking, pollution prevention outreach campaigns, and partnerships with citizen groups and businesses. Citizens can help prioritize the clean-up strategies, volunteer to become involved in restoration efforts, and mark storm drains with approved "don't dump" messages.

Modified from Protecting Water Quality From Urban Runoff (USEPA, 841-F-03-003)



Relationship between impervious cover and surface runoff. As little as ten percent impervious cover can result in stream degradation. Source: IRSRWG

Tree Sale

Cash Sale & Pick Up

April 22

NOON-6:30 P.M.

April 23

10:00 A.M. - 3:00 P.M.

If you have not ordered trees yet through the SWCD you may still be able to purchase selected varieties during the Cash Sale on April 22 and 23.



Tim Wilson (right), Area Conservationist for the Natural Resources Conservation Service, presented 2003 SWCD Board Chair Joe Meyers (left) a plaque in recognition of providing sixty years (1944-2004) of leadership for the conservation of natural resources in Dakota County.

Dakota Soil & Water Conservation District

Phone: 651-480-7777 \ FAX: 651-480-7775
Web site: <http://www.dakotacountyswcd.org>

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An Inside Glance...

- ❖ Supervisor Election Sign-Up Coming in July
- ❖ Watershed Management Updates
- ❖ Water Quality Monitoring
- ❖ Natural Resources Guide



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