



Lac qui Parle Soil & Water Conservation District 2009 January Newsletter

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The mission of the Lac qui Parle Soil and Water Conservation District is to take available technical, financial and educational resources, whatever their source, and focus or coordinate them so that they meet the needs of the local land user to help him/her protect Lac qui Parle's natural resources.

COMING SOON!

Lac qui Parle SWCD Website

The completion of the Lac qui Parle Soil and Water Conservation District Website is just around the corner! We anticipate going live on the Internet, sometime in January! From our website, you will be able to read about services that we provide and programs that we work with, including the Tree Program, Conservation Planning and Construction, Cost Share, Rain Gauge Monitoring and more! You will also be able to read about the Lac qui Parle County Comprehensive Local Water Management Plan. The LqP County Resource Commission, made up of people from our county, for our county, provide direction for implementing the Plan.

Our website will also include news of upcoming programs, events, and activities, as well as pictures. Agendas, minutes, plans and reports, information on the supervisors and staff and contact information will also be available. We have even included a little history on why Soil and Water Conservation Districts were created. Watch for us on the Internet, we'll be there soon!

District Supervisors

John Rebehn....Chairperson
Ed Radermacher....Vice-chair
LeRoy SchuelkeSecretary
Bob Ludvigson....Treasurer
Jeff JohnsonPublicity & Information

District Staff

Terry WittnebelDistrict Manager
Leslie Kvidera....District Technician
Deborah Hoffman....Program Assistant
Curtis Nordaune....District Eng. Tech
Assisted by **NRCS Staff**
Burton Hendrickson....District Conservationist
JonPaul Pringle....Soil Conservation Technician



A regular visitor to our office might notice JonPaul isn't at his desk every day. He received a transfer to the Clarkfield NRCS office effective January 5. Until the NRCS hiring freeze is lifted and a replacement found, JP will spend Wednesdays and Thursdays as needed in Madison helping with our workload.

If you live in the Madison area, and over the holidays viewed the Hall of Trees at the Public Library, we hope you noticed our little white tree. We didn't have a written message on it, but the white lights, icy blue ornaments, crystal snowflakes and icicles *had* to make you think of wonderful pure water!

The Lac qui Parle Soil & Water Conservation District, helping bring you clean water! *Happy New Year!*

Native Buffer Cost Share Program

\$25,000 waiting to be spent in LqP County!

Restoring native prairie and protecting clean water is the idea behind the Native Buffer Cost Share Program. This program provides up to 75% state cost share money to establish, restore, and maintain native prairie vegetation in areas next to streams, rivers, ditches and wetlands. Adding buffers to intercept runoff before it reaches a body of water slows and filters the runoff, allowing for improved water quality. Native buffers are not just for water quality. By using native grasses we also improve wildlife habitat as well as restore native vegetation.

Eligible land includes cropland, pasture, and land already covered by an easement, such as the Reinvest In Minnesota (RIM) Program. If not restricted by an existing easement, the landowner has the right to harvest the hay and/or to harvest and sell the seed.

Cities, counties, and non-profits that can leverage non-State and federal funds may partner on projects including storm water treatment projects (raingarden, biofiltraton, or detention areas), well head protection projects, and more.

The \$25,000 currently available for use in Lac qui Parle County must be spent by June 30, 2010. To explore the possibilities of this program, stop by the Conservation Office or call Les at 320-598-7321 x 3.



Remember Highly Erodible (HEL) Plans?

USDA Farm Program eligibility is still tied to cross compliance. Operators farming highly erodible fields (HEL) must be following an acceptable soil conservation cropping system to be eligible. Many of these conservation plans were developed and applied in the early 1990's to meet the established requirements. Seldom should these plans remain static.

Times change, operators change, and so should the plans. Some fields were enrolled in CRP and have now been brought back into annual crop production. Operators have changed tillage systems, and or rotations due to economic considerations. These plans should be reviewed and revised to more closely reflect what the current farming operation is.

The Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) will work with you to modify your HEL plan as needed to keep you in compliance. At a minimum, an HEL field must be farmed in a manner that has all concentrated flow erosion (gully) controlled, and sheet and rill erosion below the 2T (tolerable) level established for each soil type. In LqP County the typical HEL soil types can maintain <2T soil losses with a corn-soybean rotation and approximately 20% crop residue left after planting. Concentrated flow control will require additional actions such as grass waterways or water and sediment control structures.

To maintain USDA program eligibility you must meet the minimum, but for the sake of your soil resources we urge you to try for better than that. If you are farming HEL fields, have brought HEL CRP land back into production, or have acquired land that has HEL fields identified on it, please review your conservation plan and update if needed. Stop in the NRCS office this winter to discuss your plan options.

Don't forget – the Wetland Conservation Act applies to EVERYONE!
Before starting **any** project, check at the Environmental Office to see if your proposed project may impact a wetland.

Livestock Producers - Did you participate? *Value of Manure Workshops* – January 20 & January 21

sponsored by U of M Extension & LqP Environmental Office
320-598-3132 for information or to request additional workshops

Now is the time to order trees for spring

Many shelterbelts have damage from the storm that came through last July. Some of these shelterbelts need only a few replacement trees while others may require more extensive renovation.

We have programs available to help with the cost of replacing an existing shelterbelt. Stop in the office for planning assistance, or any questions you may have. Don't delay!

Why plant trees?

1. Improve air and water quality

Trees filter water and provide oxygen

2. Save energy

Reduce heating and cooling costs

3. Protect livestock

Trees provide protection from winter winds and shade in the summer

4. Homes for wildlife

Provide food and shelter for many types of birds and mammals

5. Living snow fence

Keep snow off driveways and highways while providing additional wildlife habitat

Funds from the LQP County Water Plan help sponsor the mailing of this newsletter.

3% Loans available for projects that improve water quality

The purpose of the Ag Best Management Practices Loan Program, administered by the MN Department of Agriculture, is to provide funds for practices that reduce or prevent water pollution and other environmental problems. Locally determined priorities are ag waste control facilities and/or manure management systems, erosion control/conservation practices, upgrades to existing rural septic systems, sealing abandoned wells, and conservation tillage equipment.

If you have applied for either EQIP or state cost share to install an erosion control practice, remember you may also apply for this loan for your share of installing that practice. Stop by the Conservation Office for more information on the Ag BMP Loan Program.

State Acres for Wildlife Enhancement (SAFE)

Back Forty Pheasant Habit, CP38E

Do you have a portion of a field that is more of a hassle than it is worth, or would like to square off the field next to a wetland or stream? This CRP practice might be worth checking out. The Back Forty CRP practice offers a CRP contract with incentives and cost share assistance on eligible cropland to provide additional acres for wildlife while offering an annual rental payment. If this sounds like a program you may be interested in call or stop in and we can see if it will work for you. Food plots and trees may also be planted as part of this contract, if it meets the requirements in the SAFE program.

CSP & the New Farm Bill

CSP, Conservation Security Program, is becoming CSP, Conservation Stewardship Program within the new Farm Bill. Many people have been waiting several years to have a chance to apply for this program. The rules are currently under development, but it sounds like when it is announced the sign-up will be available to all. Keep your eyes and ears open for upcoming CSP announcements.

Environmental Quality Incentives Program

The EQIP program is alive and well. The new Farm Bill retained this program which provides an excellent opportunity for agricultural producers to receive financial assistance for applying conservation practices. The assistance can be in the form of cost share (50%) or incentives to commit to new conservation practices.

NRCS has not announced an actual signup or scoring period for applications (the local Resource Commission prioritizes county resource concerns used as part of the scoring system), but it typically has been during the winter months, so be ready. Examples of projects that can qualify for cost share are well sealing, terraces, grass waterways, water and sediment control structures, ag waste control (to correct existing pollution), farmstead windbreak restoration or establishment (note what the July 31, 2008 storm did to windbreaks!), conversion of irrigation to low pressure nozzles, invasive species control, native pollinator enhancement, wildlife habitat development, fencing and water development for pastures, to name a few. Incentives may be paid to agricultural producers to adopt conservation practices like no-till or strip till tillage, prescribed grazing management of pastures, irrigation water management plans, nutrient management plans, pesticide management plans, and conversion to organic systems. These incentives involve a per acre payment on a set limit of acres, for up to three years.

Lac qui Parle County has obligated funding to projects that totaled nearly \$300,000 for the past few years. We don't know how much funding will be allocated to us this year, so if you have questions or projects in mind, stop by to get on the list of interested producers as soon as possible!

CONTRACTORS – coming February 19 –

**We're planning a workshop just for you! *updates on federal as well as local procedure*
Watch your mailbox for more information, or call us at 320-598-7321 x 3**

Planning for Pollinators

Many crops need outside pollinators to produce or increase a yield. People think only of honey bees, but there are others. With the problems confronting honey bees, these "others" are becoming more important. To have pollinators around when you need them to pollinate your crop, there must be a source of food available during the rest of the growing season. With different plant species providing flower period overlap, these pollinators will be available to pollinate the crop you are trying to grow.

Conservation practices that can provide pollinator habitat include windbreaks, living snow fences, filter strips, field borders, prairie restorations, upland and wetland wildlife habitat management, CRP plantings, and critical area plantings. Backyard practices such as native shade gardens, rain gardens, flower/vegetable gardens can also be planned to enhance pollinators. By taking the plant species flowering period into consideration, your conservation practice can provide a secondary benefit (pollinator habitat) while still accomplishing its primary function. With the size of crop fields increasing all the time, any odd corner, grove, or marginal area becomes more critical in providing much needed habitat for crucial pollinators. Don't pass up an opportunity to do your part to provide pollinator habitat, which is a priority in the new Farm Bill. Visit the DNR and the U of M Extension web sites for information on native species, or stop by the Conservation Office for a copy of the NRCS booklet "Native Pollinator Plants for Conservation Practices in Minnesota".

Affiliates 2008

A huge *THANK YOU* to the individuals and businesses who supported the District education/outreach activities last year by participating in our Affiliate Program. They are: Canby Farmers Grain Company; LqP Coop Oil Company; Farmers Coop Elevator, Bellingham; Deb Breberg, Farmers Union Insurance; Minnwest Bank; Farmers Mutual Telephone Company; KleinBank; United Prairie Bank; Northern Plains Tiling; Peggy Crosby; Larry & Sonja Farmer, Paul & Lori Schwendeman. For information on how YOU can help the District promote wise use of the resources here in Lac qui Parle County, contact us at 320-598-7321 x3.

