

ENVIRONMENTAL FAIR

Developed by the SWCDs of Southwestern Minnesota, the Environmental Fair is a learning event in the “outdoor classroom” for sixth grade students from a 14-county area. Students in classroom-size groups are scheduled into sessions of hands-on activities and presentations on a variety of topics including trees, soil, water quality, wetlands, recycling, household hazardous waste, native prairie, watersheds and creatures that share our environment. The Environmental Fair provides a unique, interactive learning experience for students to understand the importance of our resources and realize that what people do affects all aspects of the environment.

The first Environmental Fair was held in September 1992, at the Lyon County Fairgrounds in Marshall. The one-day event was attended by 1,280 students from the 14-county area. Over the years, the Fair has grown into a two-day event, with attendance as high as 2,700 students. By collaborating and combining resources of the 14 SWCDs, the fair provides well-rounded, hands-on learning experiences mixed with large group “professional” presentations in a bigger and better event than could be provided to rural schools individually. The Southwest Minnesota Environmental Fair has received the “Education Award” from the Minnesota Association of Conservation Districts, and the “Trainer of the Year” award from NRCS. Educators from the Science Museum of Minnesota, Minnesota Zoo, Soil and Water Conservation Districts, counties, University of Minnesota Extension, Department of Natural Resources, U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service and Natural Resources Conservation Service are among the presenters. Teachers preregister in the spring; the Environmental Fair is usually held the third week of September.