

Lac qui Parle Soil & Water Conservation District



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2009 Activities & Achievements

The Lac qui Parle Soil and Water Conservation District's VISION is *Lac qui Parle's natural resources wisely managed to provide a healthy environment for life*. The vision encompasses not only the natural environment but also the economic environment for the people of Lac qui Parle County.

The MISSION of the 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*. A degree of flexibility is needed to allow the District to use what resources become available to meet the needs of our local resource users as those needs arise.

The Lac qui Parle Soil and Water Conservation District was organized April 19, 1950.

District Supervisors

The LqP SWCD is governed by a five member Board of Supervisors who are elected by the voters of the County. The Board sets policy, hires employees, and is responsible to see that the operations of the District are run effectively and according to law and rule.

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



2009 Affiliate Memberships

With their financial support, these businesses and individuals supported LqP SWCD education/outreach activities this past year.

Business Affiliates

Northern Plains
Lac qui Parle Co-op Oil Company
Farmers Mutual Telephone Company
Farmers Co-op Elevator, Bellingham

Friends of Conservation

Peggy Crosby
Canby Farmers Grain Company
Larry & Sonja Farmer
Jim & Denise Connor
Stan Olson
Paul and Lori Schwendemann

Education/Outreach Activities

DATE	AUDIENCE	TOPIC	# PRESENTATIONS
2/7	Dawson Winterfest storytime	water Incredible Journey	1(1hr.)
2/14-15	Great W MN Get-Together	Rain Gardens	continuous
2/18	Contractors' Workshop		
3/23	Annual Township Officers	living snowfence program	1(15 min).
3/24	Madison Kiwanis	SWCD program overview	1(25 min).
3/26	ECFE Family Night	Unless...The Lorax, safer alternative cleaning recipes	continuous
4/22	Administrative Professionals	Earth Day, how green can you go?	2 hours
4/26-5/3	all residents <i>Dig It! The Secrets of Soil</i>	Soil & Water Stewardship Week	continuous
4/30	LqP V 5 th	soil Soil Formation role play	3(45 min.)
5/5	LqP V 6 th	water quality Sum of the Parts	2(45 min.)
5/14	LqPV 7 th Service Learning workshop	<i>Unless....</i> The Lorax	4(35 min.)
5/13, 15	all 5 th /6 th graders	receive spruce trees (Chippewa field day)	
5/13, 15	Chippewa 5 th grade Field Day	trees Maple Seed mixup	12(25 min.)
5/26, 28	all kindergarteners	receive native species tree(Arrowwood)	5(20 min.)
6/14	Bellingham School Reunion Parade	SWCD (prevent erosion, protect water, education all) Water Plan (helping bring YOU clean water!)	
6/19	Dawson Girl Scout Day Camp	water quality several activities	morning
6/19	D-B Science Class Canoe Trip	local programs protecting water quality	1(15 min.)
6/26	Dawson Riverfest	river nature walk	afternoon
7/1	Marietta Anniversay Parade	SWCD (prevent erosion, protect water, education all) Water Plan (helping bring YOU clean water!)	
9/11-13	LqP county fair	recommended tree species to replace ash	continuous
9/22-23	Environmental Fair 6 th graders from 14 county area	natural resources	all day
12/3-31	Madison Public Library Hall of Trees	trees for habitat	continuous

In addition, information or assistance was provided: serve on LpP Valley Community Ed Advisory Council; speaker for LqP Manure Value workshop; city of Madison tree replacement project, workshop and distribution event; Area Envirothon; groundwater presented by MN Science Museum to 8th grade classrooms in Dawson-Boyd & LqPValley; all 5th & 6th graders received spruce trees; assist with LqPYB CWP fair booth; Rain Garden workshop; household hazardous waste collection; LqP River cleanup in Dawson; tour of conservation practices and resource concerns for Rep. Andrew Falk

A quarterly newsletter is a joint effort between the SWCD, Farm Service Agency (FSA) and Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), and includes articles from the Water Plan, County Environmental Office, Lac qui Parle - Yellow Bank Watershed District and the Clean Water Partnership. Due to FSA's budget constraints in 2009, there were only 3 issues of the newsletter. News articles submitted to area newspapers are also used to inform the public on a variety of topics. A weekly live radio broadcast April through November was developed jointly with Water Plan, NRCS, LqPYB CWP, and the Environmental Office.

Engineering Projects 2009

Landowner

Project Type - Funding - Soil Saved/Year

Projects completed

• A	1 WASCB	CWP	25 tons
• B	Terrace 900'	EQIP/State	12.8 tons
• C	1 WASCB	EQIP/State	34 tons
• D	7 WASCB	EQIP/State	170 tons
	550' Diversion		14.2 tons
	1725' Terrace		28 tons
• E	2 WASCB	EQIP/State	29.4 tons

Projects funded and/or started but not completed

• F	1 WASCB	State	
• G	1 WASCB	EQIP/State	
	Waterway	EQIP	
• H	1 WASCB, Diversion	EQIP	
• I	1 WASCB	EQIP/State	
• J	3 WASCB	CWP	
• K	Terrace	CWP	

* FUNDING SOURCES:

EQIP – Environmental Quality Incentives Program, NRCS
 CWP – Lac qui Parle/YellowBank Clean Water Partnership
 STATE – state cost share program, SWCD

State Cost-Share Dollars for Conservation Practices 1999 – 2009

1999 State Cost-Share	\$ 28,849
(1999 Special MNRiver Basin CS w/ YM SWCD totaling \$82,000)	
(1999 FEMA grant w/ LqP County for living snowfences)	
(1999 secured funding for LqP Lake shoreline stabilization)	
2000 State Cost-Share	\$ 20,062
2001 State Cost-Share	\$ 28,324
2002 State Cost-Share	\$ 27,467
2003 State Cost-Share	\$ 26,941
2004 State Cost-Share	\$ 27,050
2005 State Cost-Share	\$ 26,788
2006 State Cost-Share	\$ 29,427
(2006 DNR ReLeaf grant for city of Madison)	
2007 State Cost-Share	\$ 30,673
(2007 Clean Water Legacy Special Projects grant [Hwy 31] for \$122,000)	
2008 State Cost-Share	\$ 30,673
2009 State Cost-Share	<u>\$ 30,673</u>
State Cost-Share \$'s from 1999 to 2009	\$306,927

Active cost share years show \$ available for projects; corrections made showing actual \$ spent when c-s year is closed.

Clean Water Legacy Project



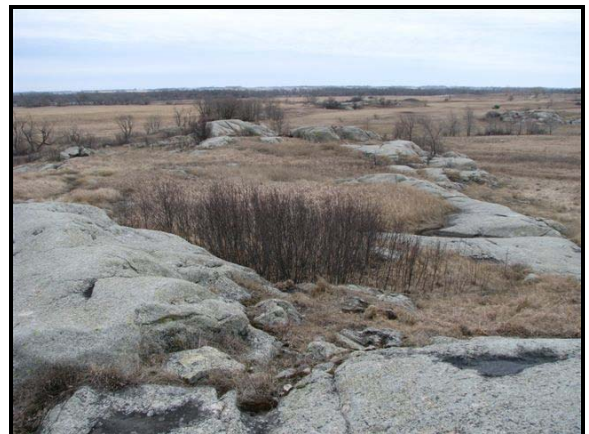
The SWCD applied for a \$122,000 special Clean Water Legacy grant, matched with various local funds, and coordinated the project protecting a section of the Lac qui Parle River bank just before it crosses County Highway 31 in Lac qui Parle Township. The project was completed in spring of 2008, keeping tons of soil out of the river and consequently Lac qui Parle Lake.

Unfortunately in spring 2009 an area of sloughed bank was discovered at the project site. Necessary repair included some reshaping and reseeding covered by erosion control blanket, a small amount of rock at the edge of the riprap, and dogwood and plum planted on the lower shelf. Using funds remaining from the original grant, the repair was completed in June 2009, with only \$4.05 to spare!

LCCMR Granite Outcrop Grant

Legislative Citizen Commission on Minnesota Resources

Minnesota Valley Granite Outcrops that are among the oldest rock formations in the world. With their unique land forms and rare vegetation, these rock formations are worth protecting. These areas contain many rare and endangered species including many plant species, birds, and amphibians. Lac qui Parle SWCD along with Renville, Redwood, Chippewa, and Yellow Medicine SWCD received \$1,500,000 from the Legislative Citizens Commission on Minnesota Resources Grant, LCCMR, to acquire and enhance perpetual easements in the Minnesota River Valley where the exposed granite is found. In LqP County, over 75 acres of these fragile rock ecosystems have been entered into this program.



Tree Program

CRP Plantings	Projects		Acres
CP 16a (Farmstead Shelterbelts)	2		4.5
CP 22 (Riparian Buffer)	1		3.4
		# of trees	1338
		feet of fabric	11,540

EQIP Plantings			
Wildlife Plantings	3		5.9
Farmstead	4		5.8
		# of trees	1785
		feet of fabric	25,443

State Cost Share			
Farmstead Shelterbelts	9		10.8
Field Wbrk	1		.4
		# of trees	2090
		feet of fabric	22,722

Plantings with no Cost Share Money			
Farmstead Shelterbelts	7		3
Wildlife Plantings	1		1
		# of trees	1126
		feet of fabric	6015

Totals			
	PROJECTS	28	
	TREES PLANTED		6339
	TREES SOLD		1916
	FABRIC (feet)		65,720
	ACRES		34.8



Native Buffer Cost Share Program

The Native Buffer Program is a state cost share program that uses native grasses to improve water quality while providing an enriched mixture of native prairie grasses and flowers. Although this program was promoted in every issue of the District newsletter and the live radio program, there have been no applications.

No Till Drill

As a service to producers, the District continues to rent out a no-till drill for a nominal maintenance fee. Purchased at the height of CRP and CREP enrollments when producers had difficulty accessing a no-till drill, there are no plans to replace the drill when it is no longer feasible to repair.

<u>Program</u>	<u># Projects</u>	<u>Acres</u>
CRP	1	30
Producer Rental	16	158
<hr/>		
Totals		
Rentals.....	17	
Acres.....		188



Rain Gauge Program

The LqP Soil and Water Conservation District has 12 volunteer rain gauge monitors (and one open position), located across the county. The monitors collect precipitation data daily. This data is forwarded to the MN State Office of Climatology where the information is used for climate prediction. Locally the information has a variety of uses, including crop disaster declarations.

MONITORS	Jan.	Feb.	March	April	May	June	July	Aug.	Sept.	Oct.	Nov.	Dec.	TOTAL
Burt Hendrickson 37 117 44 32 7	0.66	0.50	3.27	1.35	0.45	2.15	2.12	3.22	2.84	7.61	0.17	1.71	26.05
Jeff Johnson 37 117 42 4 7	0.58	0.81	2.43	1.16	0.41	2.32	2.70	2.75	3.35	6.92	0.29	1.97	25.69
Cliff Hanson 37 116 44 34 7	1.41	1.07	2.86	0.76	0.31	2.43	2.76	2.74	2.98	7.35	0.09	2.73	27.49
Louisburg Elevator 37 120 44 33 7	0.48	1.58	3.73	1.39	0.34	1.98	2.18	7.52	4.16	6.98	0.15	2.89	33.38
Dennis Stoick 37 118 46 4 7	0.28	0.45	2.81	1.20	0.58	2.36	3.41	4.34	2.40	6.87	0.30	1.08	26.08
Jeff Thompson 37 116 43 1 7	0.42	0.61	2.12	1.37	0.68	1.86	3.46	2.77	3.99	7.15	0.15	1.91	26.49
Stan Olson 37 118 45 11 7	0.39	0.72	4.31	0.59	0.34	1.83	2.40	4.20	2.59	7.15	0.30	1.79	26.61
Winfred Schmidt 37 117 46 20 7	0.60	0.93	2.96	0.80	1.78	0.53	2.51	3.60	2.11	6.19		0.17	22.18
Gary Wollschlager 37 119 45 10 7	1.05	1.39	4.02	0.78	0.57	2.14	2.40	6.74	3.05	8.50	0.20	2.79	33.63
Rosemary Weber 37 117 45 21 7	0.39	0.56	3.48	0.86	0.34	2.12	2.58	2.77	2.65	7.43	0.16	2.11	25.45
Doug Haas 37 117 45 35 7	0.85	0.60	3.07	1.21	0.57	2.07	2.30	3.84	2.15	7.45	0.22	1.76	26.09
Dale Lien 37 119 43 8 7	0.54	0.72	4.10	0.68		2.20	2.69	5.11	4.36	7.15	0.20	2.05	29.80

Outstanding Conservationists

The Patzer Family – Stan, Todd, Tim and their families – has been named the Lac qui Parle SWCD 2009 Outstanding Conservationists.



The family farming operation converted to ridge-till 25 years ago, and over the years has adapted and evolved to fit what works for their land. Today they are virtually a no-till system, and the terraces installed years ago still function efficiently. Natural buffers are left between cropland, livestock,

and surface water. The combination of wetlands, non-program native grasslands, woody cover plantings, farmstead shelterbelts, and numerous food plots, along with undisturbed crop residue & waste grain create a year-round haven for wildlife. They control both wind and water erosion, maintain a healthy soil profile, and provide abundant wildlife habitat.

The Patzer's say their love of conservation and wildlife gives them a good feeling knowing they're doing what's best for the land and at the same time making a living for their families. Stan told us they don't need an award to reinforce what they believe, but the SWCD believes the family deserves recognition for a farming system that protects soil and water resources while using fewer inputs and less fossil fuel.

2009 District Manager's Report

Terry Wittnebel, District Manager

What a hectic year – but I believe it's just a foretaste of things to come. As I reviewed my 2009 calendar, there were meetings, activities, training, and deadlines almost daily, with little time left over in which to prepare for those scheduled events! In January the SWCD Board of Supervisors spend a day brainstorming local resource needs for the 2009 SWCD annual plan of work. District staff continued to implement our traditional programs, such as assisting landowners to plan and plant trees with funding from appropriate sources, design engineered practices for erosion control, and provide assistance to partner agencies on resource protection programs. Water levels in DNR monitor wells were measured monthly April through November. In-kind support provided to the Lac qui Parle YellowBank Clean Water Partnership included taking water samples at monitor sites 8 times, acting as a sounding board for CWP projects, participating on TEAM committee, and collaborating on education materials and activities. Wetland Conservation Act responsibilities were 3 Technical Evaluation Panel meetings and writing/follow up one wetland restoration order. Routine workload also includes Water Plan responsibilities (Resource Commission meetings, cost share program to seal wells) and Ag Best Management Practices Revolving Loan administration. LqP SWCD has always had an active education/outreach program, and the past year was no exception. Various factors resulted in a shift from mostly individual classroom presentations to more group events and adult programs.

There were new programs to promote including the Granite Rock Outcrop and Native Buffer programs. The District website at www.lacquiparleswcd.org has been an exciting new tool to inform/report on programs and activities. Updates are added to the District website regularly, so check it out! New opportunities await in the form of partnering with neighboring SWCDs on special project grant applications. The existing economic situation will have an impact on the future of the District and programs we provide. We hope in spite of that, we are up to the challenge of continuing our mission *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* for the protection of Lac qui Parle's soil and water resources.

District Conservationist's 2009 Report

Burt Hendrickson, District Conservationist

NRCS promoted and conducted another EQIP (Environmental Quality Incentives Program) and WHIP (Wildlife Habitat Incentive Program) signup during the year. This resulted in 51 EQIP and 3 WHIP applications, with 40 obligated agreements to apply conservation practices. The amount of funding for these programs exceeded \$400,000.00 this past year. There were conservation plans written for over 10,000 acres. We also continued to complete or apply projects that were funded in previous year signups. Applied practices resulted in improved soil quality on over 11,600 acres, and improved water quality on 13,700 acres. Grazing land benefited was 1895 acres, and wildlife habitat improvements were on over 3600 acres. Some examples of practices reported as applied were: conservation tillage (no-till, strip till, mulch till) – 2514 acres; nutrient management – 4428 acres; pesticide management – 2561 acres; windbreak/shelterbelt establishment – 18,200 feet; prescribed grazing – 584 acres; well decommissioning – 18.

NRCS continued to work with landowners wanting to pursue CRP. The continuous CRP (Conservation Reserve Program) has many options available on a year round basis for landowners to explore or pursue. We completed 68 program eligibility determinations and had 40 new agreements signed before the end of the fiscal year. These conservation plans were for over 1600 acres. They involve practices such as filter strips, farmstead windbreaks, wetland restoration, and prairie restoration. The cover established conserves soil, improves water quality, and provides wildlife habitat.

We continue to try to work with multiple groups and agencies which can provide additional funding options and a wider range of options for people interested in programs to conserve resources. The Local Work Group process has allowed all interested parties to have input into setting priorities for the EQIP funding. We also worked closely with the Clean Water Partnership which has provided a source of additional funds to apply practices that provide improved water quality. Depending on the location in the county this has provided additional incentives to establish filter strips, install alternatives to replace open tile intakes, and provide cost share for water and sediment control structures and stream bank stabilization.

The swampbuster provisions of the Farm Bill still require a major part of our work effort. The Madison NRCS processed 1026's pertaining to around 300 tracts of land during the year. We are also heavily involved in doing certified wetland determination on a landowner request basis.

The first signup for the Conservation Stewardship Program was conducted in September. The Madison Field Office processed 9 applications during this learning experience. The agreements have not been finalized, but the results indicate that more people may become interested in this program which will have another signup in early 2010.

Lac qui Parle Comprehensive Water Quality Management Plan

Terry Wittnebel, Water Plan Coordinator

The Lac qui Parle SWCD administers the Lac qui Parle County Comprehensive Water Quality Management Plan. Water Plan activities are classed into three categories: Program Administration, Education Activities, and BMP Installation/Application.

Administration

Administrative funds cover the costs incurred by the SWCD for administering the County's Water Plan and the Ag Best Management Practices Low Interest Loan Program (2 loans were processed, both for ag waste management). Charges made by the SWCD are based on staff hours spent. Envelope and stamp purchases are reported, but the SWCD does not include copying costs, SWCD Board time, paper, labels, or similar supply costs. Direction and oversight of Water Plan activities is provided by the Lac qui Parle Resource Commission. Per diem and mileage are paid for Resource Commission members who are not reimbursed by their agency or organization but serve as members-at-large. (The Water Plan Coordinator met with the County Environmental Officer, the SWCD, Clean Water Partnership Coordinator and the Watershed District Executive to develop a list of potential members for the County Commissioners to appoint to the Resource Commission.) The Resource Commission met two times in 2009. The Water Plan contributed \$6,000 (as directed by the Resource Commission) to the Clean Water Partnership. The Plan Coordinator serves on the CWP TEAM.

Education

To help achieve a coordinated resource protection message within the county, the Water Plan Coordinator twice met in 2009 with the County Environmental Officer, the SWCD, Clean Water Partnership Coordinator and the Watershed District Executive for program updates. The Water Plan assisted with the mailing costs of the SWCD newsletter. The newsletter is a joint effort between the SWCD, Farm Service Agency (FSA) and Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS). Intended to be a quarterly printing, it is not always possible to meet this goal due to varying agency workloads and budgets. The newsletter includes articles from the Water Plan, County Environmental Office, Lac qui Parle – Yellow Bank Watershed District and the Clean Water Partnership promoting programs and practices protecting water quality. The Water Plan Coordinator had a booth at the ECFE Family night (safer alternative cleaning products), did several classroom presentations and a workshop, and participated in two parades with the SWCD (“helping bring YOU clean water”). The Water Plan coordinator assisted the CWP on various educational projects such as a booth at the Great Western Minnesota Get-Together (“Raingardens”), several water-related storytime/activity events, an Earth Day event, Girl Scout Day camp (water quality at the LqP River), a local high school science class canoe trip (local programs protecting water quality). The CWP used the Water Plan County Fair booth in the Wildlife Building. With the CWP and SWCD, a weekly live radio program was aired from April through November. Topics from NRCS and the Environmental Office were also included. \$500 was granted to the Southwest Minnesota Environmental Fair for 6th graders, held in Marshall in September. It is a special cooperative event sponsored by SWCDs and Water Plans from the 11 counties in southwestern Minnesota. Water plan funds were used to purchase some education materials and signage for a CWP rain garden demonstration site.

BMP Application/Installation

Water Plan funds sealed 20 abandoned wells in 2009. Applicants were encouraged to apply for USDA Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) funding also. EQIP provided practice payment of \$343/well decommissioning. Local Water Plan money was added to bring cost-share up to 75% with a \$500/well cap. Input from the Resource Commission changed prioritization to be in the order the applications were signed unless well information provided on the application indicated it was an immediate hazard. The application form was also updated to allow for pen and ink update of the sealing estimate after 18 months. The projects were reported electronically to the Board of Water and Soil Resources. Twelve applications for well decommissioning are waiting for 2010 funds.