

Lac qui Parle Soil & Water Conservation District



122 8th Avenue South
Madison MN 56256

Phone 320-598-7321 x 3
FAX 320-598-3432

2008 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



2008 Affiliate Memberships

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

Business Affiliates

Northern Plains
KleinBank
Lac qui Parle Co-op Oil Company
Farmers Mutual Telephone Company
Farmers Co-op Elevator, Bellingham
United Prairie Bank
MinnWest Bank, Dawson

Friends of Conservation

Deborah Breberg, Breberg Agency
Peggy Crosby
Canby Farmers Grain, Dawson
Larry and Sonja Farmer
Milo and Marvell Moen
Paul and Lori Schwendemann

Education/Outreach Activities



Project WILD teacher workshop



Students discover polluted water isn't easy to clean!



Water is used many ways

DATE	AUDIENCE	TOPIC	# PRESENTATIONS
2/2	Dawson Winterfest storytime	water	1(1hr.)
2/9,10	Great W MN Get-Together	What's your eco-footprint? (alternative energy, RRR, water quality/quantity)	continuous
3/19	LqP V 6th	water quality Sum of the Parts	2(45 min.)
3/27	ECFE Family Night	Reconnecting Children with Nature	continuous
4/17	LqP V 5th	soil Soil Formation role play	3(45 min.)
4/26-27	Lac qui Parle Outdoor Expo	Reconnecting Children with Nature	continuous
4/27-5/4	all residents <i>Water is Life, 23 pastors @ 31 churches</i>	Soil & Water Stewardship Week	continuous
5/15	LqPV 7th - 8th <i>Service Learning workshop for 160 students</i>	Unless.... <i>The Lorax</i>	7(35 min.)
5/21	Bellingham 6th	water pollution in your backyard	1(1 hour)
5/16,21	all 6th graders	receive spruce trees	4(20 min.)
5/16,19,21	all kindergarteners	receive native species tree(serviceberry)	5(20 min.)
6/27	Dawson Riverfest storytime	water water stories & activities	2 hours
8/21	Early Childhood Project WILD workshop <i>supplemental environmental curriculum, 48 preschool teachers & assistants, 6 CEU</i>		6 hours
9/7-10	LqP county fair	Reconnecting Children with Nature	continuous
9/23-24	Environmental Fair <i>6th graders from 14 county area</i>	natural resources	all day
12/3-31	Madison Public Library Hall of Trees	helping bring you clean water	continuous

In addition, information or assistance was provided: serve on LpP Valley Community Ed Advisory Council; speaker for LqP Manure Management workshop; city of Madison tree replacement project; teacher information for National Environmental Education Week (nature deficit disorder web survey); Area Envirothon; classroom sets of 5th grade magazine from USDA Forest Service; LqP Environmental Office/LqPYB CWP fair booth; invasive buckthorn removal; grant application for free MN Science Museum presentations; 2 Early Childhood tree trunk requests

2008 saw a higher than average number of planned/prepared projects cancelled due to extenuating circumstances: Lac qui Parle Outdoor Expo; Chippewa SWCD 5th grade field day (includes LqPValley); women's workshop *Harmony in Harvest*.

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. News articles submitted to area newspapers are also used to inform the public on a variety of topics.

Engineering Projects 2008

Landowner

Project Type - Funding - Soil Saved/Year

Projects completed

• A	1 – Diversion	EQIP/CWP	70 Ton
• B	1 – WASCB	EQIP/CWP	29 Ton
• C	2 – WASCBs	EQIP/CWP	16 Ton

Projects started but not completed (tile & underground outlet installed)

• D	3 – Diversions	EQIP/State
	6 – WASCBs	EQIP/State
	1 – Terrace	EQIP/State
• E	2 – WASCBs	EQIP/State
• F	1 – WASCB	EQIP/State
• G	2 – WASCB	EQIP/State

* *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 1998 – 2008

1998 State Cost-Share -----	\$ 28,113
(1998 DNR Partners Grant for \$ 10,000)	
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 -----	<u>\$ 30,673</u>
State Cost-Share \$'s from 1998 to present -----	\$304,367

Native Buffer Cost Share Program

The Native Buffer Program is a state cost share program that uses native grasses from the local eco region to improve water quality while providing an enriched mixture of native prairie grasses and flowers. Existing RIM easements also qualify under this program which will improve the existing grass stands to a mixture of 25 species of grasses and forbs. We have \$25,000 for this program and looking forward to get some projects started. These funds must be spent by June 2010.

Clean Water Legacy Project

A riverbank protection project was completed in spring of 2008 on the Lac qui Parle River just before it crosses County Highway 31 in Lac qui Parle Township. The river was eating toward the right of way on the west side of the highway, washing tons of soil to Lac qui Parle Lake in the process. The riverbank was protected and stabilized with rock j-hooks, rootwads, field-rock covered mesh, and willow plantings. Together they will do the job but maintain a natural appearance.

It was a big project with multiple benefits for the public including the County's highway system, the water quality in Lac qui Parle Lake, and wildlife and fish habitat. The SWCD applied for the \$122,000 special Clean Water Legacy grant, which was matched with various local funds, and coordinated the project.



embedding a root wad



some of the rocks used in the project



stabilized bank

LCCMR Granite Outcrop Grant

Legislative Citizen Commission on Minnesota

Lac qui Parle SWCD along with Renville, Redwood, Chippewa, and Yellow Medicine SWCD have applied for and received \$1,500,000 for protecting granite outcrops and their unique eco systems. The money will be used to acquire and enhance perpetual easements in the Minnesota River Valley where the exposed granite is found. Lac qui Parle County has several very unique granite outcrops that should qualify for protection within this new grant.

Tree Program

CRP Plantings	Projects	Acres
CP 16a (Farmstead Shelterbelts)	3	8.5
CP 17a (Living Snowfence)	1	6.3
<i># of trees</i>		2055
<i>feet of fabric</i>		17940
EQIP Plantings		
Wildlife Plantings	1	2.14
<i># of trees</i>		546
<i>feet of fabric</i>		4500
State Cost Share		
Farmstead Shelterbelts	3	3.2
<i># of trees</i>		530
<i>feet of fabric</i>		5150
Plantings with no Cost Share Money		
Farmstead Shelterbelts	5	5.2
Wildlife Plantings	1	2.98
<i># of trees</i>		1572
<i>feet of fabric</i>		14777
RIM (Reinvest In Minnesota)		
Wildlife Plantings	1	2
<i># of trees</i>		408
<i>feet of fabric</i>		4000
Totals		
PROJECTS	15	
TREES PLANTED		5111
TREES SOLD		7565
FABRIC (feet)		46367
ACRES		30.32



A severe windstorm moved across the county July 30, 2008. In addition to the trees within several communities, many farmstead windbreaks were damaged beyond saving. Cost share and workload will be stretched to the limits for the next several years.



At the height of CRP and CREP programs, landowners who wanted to do their own plantings had difficulty finding equipment for rent. The District purchased a no-till drill and rented it out for a nominal maintenance fee.

No Till Drill

Program	# Projects	Acres
CRP	5	26
EQIP	2	28
Producer Rental	10	31.5
<hr/>		
Totals		
Rentals	17	
Acres		85.5



Rain Gauge Program

The District has 13 volunteer rain gauge monitors across the County collecting 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.

Outstanding Conservationists

Each year the SWCD recognizes an individual for outstanding accomplishments in protecting the resources of Lac qui Parle County. Jim & Denise Connor of rural Madison have been named SWCD Outstanding Conservationists for 2008.

Not only does Jim practice good stewardship, he is willing to provide youth the opportunity to learn about conservation first-hand. As old groves were removed, tree habitat was replaced. Madison Girl Scouts planted trees for a wildlife planting while learning about the function of different kinds of tree plantings. The Connor's also welcomed an elementary Arbor Day celebration, allowing students to plant the trees in their farmstead windbreak renovation.

Over the years Jim worked with the District to install 7 water and sediment control basins, and is currently exploring the possibility of a joint project

with a neighbor. As an elementary science fair judge, Jim gave high points to a student project demonstrating how these basins help keep sediment out of surface water!



Lac qui Parle Comprehensive Water Quality Management Plan

The Lac qui Parle SWCD administers the Lac qui Parle County Comprehensive Water Quality Management Plan. Water Plan activities are classed into three categories: Administrative (which includes educational activities), Clean Water Partnership in-kind and Land and Water Treatment.

Administrative funds cover the costs incurred by the SWCD for administering the County's Water Plan and the Ag Best Management Low Interest Loan Program. 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 or other supply costs.

Funds were granted to the Southwest Minnesota Environmental Fair for 6th graders, willow stakes for the Clean Water Legacy Special Project, mailing costs of the SWCD quarterly newsletter, and cost share for sealing 25 abandoned wells. To date, 858 abandoned wells have been sealed in the County through this program. The Water Plan contributed \$6,000 to the Clean Water Partnership. The Plan Coordinator serves on the CWP TEAM and assists the CWP on various educational projects such as a booth at the Great Western Minnesota Get-Together ("What's Your Eco-Footprint?") and several water-related storytime/activity events. The CWP and Environmental Office use the Water Plan County Fair booth in the Wildlife Building.

Direction and oversight of Water Plan activities is provided by the Lac qui Parle Resource Commission. The Water Plan Coordinator met with the County Environmental Officer, the SWCD, Clean Water Partnership Coordinator and the Watershed District Executive Director to develop a list of potential members for the County Commissioners to appoint to the Resource Commission. The Resource Commission serves as the core of a Local Work Group that sets local priorities for the funding of applications for EQIP incentives payments or cost-share for best management practices to protect/enhance water quality. That meeting was held in November, one of the year's four meetings.

2008 District Manager's Report

Terry Wittnebel, District Manager

After nearly 25 years working for the Lac qui Parle SWCD, and almost 20 of them as the District Manager, Sonja Farmer decided it was time to retire effective May 31. Those months were hectic for us all. While we pondered job descriptions and the process of a new hire, Sonja's time was focused on writing the update for the Lac qui Parle County Water Management Plan. (I was very grateful she managed to finish before she left!) We rearranged work loads, and hired Debbie Hoffman as Program Assistant. In addition to "front desk" duties, the rain gauge program, and various reporting requirements, Debbie's primary responsibility is accounting/finances. I assumed the position of District Manager (administration, program planning, and LqP County Water Plan Coordinator) but retained education/outreach responsibilities from my previous position as Administrative Assistant.

Les, Debbie and I finished projects and met deadlines and fine-tuned administrative processes. The best word I can think of to describe the past year is "solid", giving us a good base to meet the challenges in the year ahead.



District Conservationist's 2008 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 49 applications, and 45 obligated agreements to apply conservation practices. The amount of funding for these programs exceeded \$257,000.00 this past year. There were conservation plans written for 9000 acres. We also continued to complete or apply projects that were funded in previous year signups. Applied practices resulted in conserving impacts on over 13,000 acres. These practices will help maintain, conserve, or restore local natural resources such as soil and water quality and quantity, wildlife habitat, air quality, and pasture resources. Some examples of practices reported as applied were: conservation tillage (no-till, strip till, mulch till) – 3350 acres, nutrient management – 3969 acres, pesticide management – 2665 acres, fencing – 25,205 ft., pipeline – 5355 ft., prescribed grazing – 937 acres, well decommissioning – 14.

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 95 program eligibility determinations and had 27 new agreements signed before the end of the fiscal year. These conservation plans were for over 1000 acres. They involve practices such as filter strips, farmstead windbreaks, wetland restoration, and prairie restoration. CRP rental rates were reviewed and updated late in the year, which can make the CRP option a better deal on some of the marginal land that has problems economically producing annual crops. The cover established also 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 over 400 tracts of land during the year. We are also heavily involved in doing certified wetland determination on a landowner request basis.

The upcoming year looks to have considerable additional activity. The new Farm Bill is now the item. What changes will it make to our existing programs, or what additional options will become available? We know EQIP and WHIP will still be available, but there are likely some rule changes that will impact these programs. The CSP (now Conservation Stewardship Program) may become a new option available this year. We are waiting to hear, and will try to keep everyone informed on updates. We will continue to attempt to provide assistance to any or all landusers that are trying to conserve the precious natural resources we have in Lac qui Parle County.