

Lac qui Parle Soil & Water Conservation District



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2011 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.

Ed RadermacherChairperson
Jeff JohnsonVice-chair
LeRoy SchuelkeSecretary
Bob Ludvigson....Treasurer
Paul Scwendemann...Publicity & 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
Gary Hoffman....Soil Conservation Technician



Not pictured: Curtis Nordaune

2011 Affiliate Memberships

A big thank you to the following businesses and individuals for their support of LqP SWCD education/outreach activities this past year.

Business Memberships:

Farmers Co-op Elevator, Bellingham
United Prairie Bank, Madison
Lac qui Parle Coop Oil, Dawson
Minnwest Bank Central, Dawson
Madison Bottling
Farmers Mutual Telephone
KleinBank, Madison
Lund Implement

Friend of Conservation Memberships:

Dawson Truck Parts
Erickson Chevrolet, Dawson
Erickson Chevrolet, Madison
Paul & Lori Schwendemann
Peggy Crosby
Sonja & Larry Farmer
Bob & Julie Ludvigson
Jeff Johnson
Breberg Agency, Dawson

2011 Outstanding Conservationists

The Lac qui Parle Soil and Water Conservation District is pleased to announce Joe Radermacher, Glen Radermacher, and Paul Radermacher as the LqP SWCD 2011 Outstanding Conservationists.



Joe, Glen and Paul each farm individually, sharing a common base, of farming land that was once their father's. They initially worked with their dad, but as time passed they all went on their own. Over the years, they purchased, leased, or rented additional land, where they had the opportunity to install conservation practices to increase production while making use of the programs available to protect our soil and water resources. Although the Radermachers farm separately and make their own decisions, they discuss practices, and ideas with one another.

All three of the Radermachers practice no-till, and plant a variety of crops, including corn, beans, and alfalfa. Joe is the only one who has raises livestock, and he currently maintains at least 14 Black Angus. The cropland management for the three producers is varied, with testing done every fall, or every other year. The tests sometimes involve grid samples, as they move to becoming more precise. They regularly use GPS devices, and use technology to calculate and apply variable rate fertilizer. Some of the practices they are involved in include: crop rotation; minimum tillage; spraying for aphids and weeds; and tracking yield history.

Between the three: They have installed over 20 basins and terraces, working by themselves

or with neighboring producers. They have worked to install terraces along fence lines to benefit their sites, and those adjacent to them. They have plans underway to install additional water sediment control basins, with other landowners, and have expressed appreciation to landowners for allowing them to install the practices. As they reflect on gullies and erosions of the past, and how that has changed with the terraces and basins, they no longer see black water running into the clear water, and for that they are grateful. There are additional projects currently underway, and planned for the future.

Paul recently enrolled some acres into a CRP Contract, where he planted native grasses, forbs, and other upland plants, to benefit wildlife. In addition to CRP, the Radermachers include other wildlife practices, including no-till and strip, and they leave ground undisturbed for deer and turkeys. Leaving grass along some of the fence lines, and implementing wetland restorations also allow for prime nesting areas for wildlife.

We think Joe, Glen and Paul are unique, as they are individual farmers, in a world where many farming operations are incorporating and becoming bigger. They have all retained a part of the family farm, and have continued to enhance it, by installing conservation practices, resulting in the preservation of our natural resource. They take pride in their work and farming practices, and maintain beautiful farmsteads, from well manicured lawns, to showplace flower gardens. Thank you to Joe Radermacher, Glen Radermacher, and Paul Radermacher, for their care of the soil and water in Lac qui Parle County!



Farm Bill Partnership

This initiative is a collaboration of the Board of Water and Soil Resources, DNR, Pheasants Forever, and the Minnesota Association of Soil and Water Conservation Districts. It helps fund a staff position to accelerate the implementation of various federal and state conservation programs which address soil and water quality by creating areas of grassland and wetlands to improve water quality and increase wildlife habitat. This staff person helps develop conservation plans on acres enrolled in programs such as CCRP, CRP, WRP, WHIP, and RIM, and works with landowners to ensure practice implementation and continued compliance.



Engineering Projects 2011

The fall of 2011 was another excellent season for construction of conservation practices. Lack of rain through late summer and fall enabled contractors and farmers to complete their work without stopping. Even though the summer and fall became so dry, the extremely wet spring, ensured adequate subsoil moisture for good compaction. A few more projects could have been completed in 2011 if the demand for tiling wouldn't have been so great.

The lifetime of most practices is 10 years, although the majority continue to function much longer. A better understanding of the importance of these practices might be to multiply the tons of soil saved per year by 10.

PROJECT FUNDING SOURCES:

STATE – state cost share program, SWCD

EQIP – Environmental Quality Incentives Program, NRCS

CWP – state & federal grants, Lac qui Parle/YellowBank Clean Water Partnership

Landowner - Project Type - Funding - Soil Saved/Year

Projects Completed

• A	2 WASCBS	EQIP	11.2 Tons
• B	5 WASCBS	EQIP/State	28.5 Tons
• C	3 WASCBS	State	19.8 Tons
• D	2 Terraces	CWP	35.0 Tons

Projects Ongoing

- | | | | |
|-----|------------|------------|--|
| • E | 1 Waterway | EQIP | |
| • F | 2 WASCB | EQIP | |
| • G | 3 WASCBS | EQIP/State | |
| • H | 1 WASCB | EQIP | |
- 20 requests additional requests from landowners to do field checks for potential projects. Most have been done. Some survey work has also been completed on 8 of these sites, with cost estimates completed for 6. We expect as many as 10 of the 20 inquiries to be signed up this winter for EQIP or state cost share.

Tree Program

The tree program had a challenging year. Heavy rainfall in May made it difficult at best in many locations. An extension was granted by NRCS in order to finish cost-shared plantings after the June 1st deadline. Due to wet conditions, some projects did not get fabric mulch installed until well into July!

EQIP/CRP Plantings

Wildlife Plantings	4		5.7
Farmstead	6		8.6
<i># of trees</i>		1387	
<i>feet of fabric</i>		18,400	

State Cost Share

Farmstead Shelterbelts	4		5.7
<i># of trees</i>		1479	
<i>feet of fabric</i>		7985	
<i>tree mats</i>		382	

Plantings with no Cost Share Assistance

Farmstead Shelterbelts	2		1.3
Wildlife Plantings	2		1.0
<i># of trees</i>		481	
<i>feet of fabric</i>		3625	

Totals

PROJECTS	17		
TREES PLANTED		3347	
TREES SOLD		2004	
FABRIC (feet)		30,010	
ACRES			22.3

DNR Observation Wells

The DNR provides funds to the LqP SWCD to monitor water levels in 7 wells across the county. The purpose is to record ground water data during the growing season across the state. The information has been gathered since 1944 and is used to help determine long term trends and impacts of pumping and climate so plans can be made to manage the water resource in the future.

No Till Drill

As a service to producers, the District continues to rent out a no-till drill for a nominal maintenance fee. The drill was 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	13	272.5
Producer Rental	15	31
<hr/>		
Totals		
Rentals.....	28	
Acres.....		303.5



Rain Gauge Program

The LqP Soil and Water Conservation District has 11 volunteer rain gauge monitors (and two open positions), 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. We are sincerely grateful to our faithful monitors, who check their gauges and enter data on a regular basis.

2011 DATA

MONITORS	Jan.	Feb.	March	April	May	June	July	Aug.	Sept.	Oct.	Nov.	Dec.	TOTAL
Jeff Thompson 37 116 43 1 7	1.21	1.64	2.26	1.98	3.06	3.26	5.27	1.15	0.75	0.86	0.18	0.14	21.76
Cliff Hanson 37 116 44 34 7	1.34	2.05	3.07	1.34	4.40	5.23	3.34	0.54	0.52	1.07	0.34	0.12	23.36
Jeff Johnson 37 117 42 4 7	1.38	2.93	2.54	1.99	2.91	4.60	4.50	0.88	0.25	1.13	0.09	0.17	23.37
Burt Hendrickson 37 117 44 32 7	2.54	2.46	2.30	1.80	4.28	4.11	5.30	1.16	0.36	1.21	0.1	0.18	25.88
Rosemary Weber 37 117 45 21 71.42	1.42	1.53	1.91	1.74	4.27	4.19	4.74	1.02	0.27	1.83	0.24	0.19	23.35
Winfred Schmidt 37 117 46 20 7	1.44	3.20	2.84	1.55	3.85	5.38	5.28	0.86	0.27	0.69	0.33	0.25	25.94
Stan Olson 37 118 45 11 7	1.38	1.62	1.33	1.72	4.11	4.97	7.20	0.75	0.18	1.27	0.50	0.17	25.20
Dennis Stoick 37 118 46 4 7	1.70	1.50	1.32	1.69	3.03	6.18	5.30	0.61	0.20	0.51	0.24	0.17	22.45
Dale Lien 37 119 43 8 7	1.55	1.77	1.81	1.19	4.28	4.37	4.85	1.68	0.34	1.39	0.35	0.13	23.71
Gary Wollschlager 37 119 45 10 7	2.81	2.55	2.29	1.94	4.88	6.24	5.05	1.58	0.25	0.88	0.34	0.30	29.11
Louisburg Elevator 37 120 44 33 7	2.91	1.43	2.44	0.84	4.55	5.70	4.50	1.34	0.24	0.85	0.18	0.18	25.16
<i>Monitor Needed (Ten Mile Lake Twshp, SE Corner)</i>													
<i>Monitor Needed (Garfield Twshp, SE Corner)</i>													

Education/Outreach Activities

<u>DATE</u>	<u>AUDIENCE</u>	<u>TOPIC</u>	<u># PRESENTATIONS</u>
3/24	ECFE Family Night	trees products, bark rubbings, etc.	continuous
3/28	Annual Township Officers	living snowfence program	1(15 min).
4/24-5/1	all residents	Soil & Water Stewardship Week	continuous
5/10	LqP V 6 th	water quality Sum of the Parts	3(45 min.)
5/11	LqP V 5 th	soil Soil Formation role play	2(45 min.)
5/19	Blue Thumb Garden Party	rain barrels, rain gardens, compost	1 ½ hours
5/5	Envirothon grades 9-12 from 11 county area	natural resources	all day
5/25, 27	all 5 th /6 th graders	receive spruce trees (Chippewa field day & classroom)	
5/25, 27	Chippewa 5 th grade Field Day	trees Maple Seed mixup	16(25 min.)
5/31	all kindergarteners	receive native species tree (black current)	3(10 min.)
5/26	Trees for Babies give-away	value of trees	all day
6/8,10	Bible School, Garfield church	trees, environment	2(45 min.)
6/17, 18	Canoe, Cook, Camp Gal's Get-Away	Adventure on LqP River - natural resources	
6/29	Living Green, Grace Lutheran	green choices	1 evening
7/27	all residents	Nitrate Testing Clinic	all day
8/17	all residents	Conservation Drainage Workshop	1 (2 hour)
9/8-11	LqP county fair	Conservation Pays	continuous
9/20-21	Environmental Fair 6 th graders from 11 county area	natural resources	all day
11/14	2011 program participants	thank you	mailing
11/15	Outstanding Conservationist Recognition event		

In addition, this information or assistance was provided: serve on LqP Valley Community Ed Advisory Council; served on both Envirothon and Environmental Fair committees; plan Farmfest booth (statewide); city of Madison tree replacement project; assist LqPYB CWP with 10 Year Milestone Celebration; assist LqPYB CWP with street cleanup campaign; rain garden maintenance; 4 teacher contacts regarding water quality, rain barrels, & SWCD website resource list. The SWCD organized and hosted a Local Work Group meeting to provide the local input used by NRCS in the EQIP scoring process.

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. A weekly live radio broadcast April through October was developed jointly with Water Plan, NRCS, LqPYB CWP, and the Environmental Office. The SWCD assumes the cost for NRCS broadcasts.

Walk-In Access

Lac qui Parle County is one of 21 counties in Southwest Minnesota chosen to be part of a pilot project to enroll private land for open public hunting. Landowners receive financial payment for allowing the public to hunt on suitable wildlife areas. The program is a joint effort between the Minnesota DNR, BWSR, and the local Soil and Water Conservation Districts. Lac qui Parle County had seven landowners sign up allowing open hunting on 1,030 acres.

The Walk-In Access Program was to be a three year program, but budget cuts shortened the funding to two years. Options for alternative funding are being explored to continue the program.

Wetland Conservation Act

The Lac qui Parle Soil and Water Conservation District Technician is a member of the WCA Technical Evaluation Panel (TEP), as specified in Minnesota statute. In Lac qui Parle County, WCA is administered by the Lac qui Parle Yellow Bank Watershed District. The TEP provides recommendations to the Watershed on technical matters such as restoration orders and compliance with WCA regulations as needed.

In 2011 there were 6 site visits & 2 road project reviews. The Technician attended 2 training sessions for program and administrative updates.

LCCMR Granite Outcrop Grant

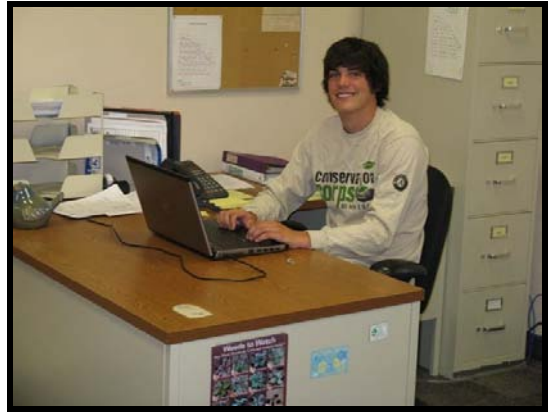
Legislative Citizen Commission on Minnesota Resources

Lac qui Parle SWCD along with Yellow Medicine, Renville and Redwood SWCDs are protecting fragile Minnesota Valley Granite Outcrop rock ecosystems, among the oldest rock formations in the world, with grant funding from Legislative Citizens Committee on Minnesota Resources. LqP has one completed easement and two more which will be done in early 2012. These three easements will protect 103 acres of unique granite outcrops, their specialized plants and associated wetlands.

Conservation Corps Apprentice

The District was successful in applying to Conservation Corps Minnesota for a grant placing an apprentice here for the summer. In addition to help with remaining tree plantings and fabric mulch application, participate in survey and design of BMPs, and complete status reviews of prairie grass plantings, the apprentice completed a research project assembling data for the next Clean Water Fund grant application.

This program is designed to introduce the next generation of conservation leaders to our field of expertise and at the same time provide them with skills and experience. Stephen Enger, a familiar face from summer 2010, took advantage of this program to return here for the summer.



2011 District Manager's Report

Terry Wittnebel, District Manager

I am one of those people who believes birthdays and anniversaries are special days, and if a milestone number is involved there should somewhere, at the very least, be a candle lit. The fact that my 25th anniversary of employment with the District passed unnoticed by me illustrates how hectic the past year has been!

I was hired by the District primarily for education and outreach; providing office support was secondary. LQP SWCD continued a strong education/outreach program over the years, but today new programs added to existing staff workloads plus increases to planning and reporting requirements, while necessary for the transparency required by the legislature and the public (just how are we spending your tax dollar?), has taken time away from our education activities. Some good projects had to be moved to the back burner, but when time/budget allows

Grant applications are very time consuming, as is the required reporting (transparency again). I hope you will agree the projects funded are worth the weeks invested researching and writing I received notice in December that we will receive two grants from the Clean Water Fund, and implementation will begin in spring 2012. One grant will provide a staff person to complete a Level 3 feedlot inventory for the County. The other grant will protect our groundwater by retrofitting and closing well pits.

District Conservationist's 2011 Report

Burt Hendrickson, District Conservationist

The Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) had another very busy year serving the landowners and operators of Lac qui Parle County.

NRCS promoted and conducted another EQIP (Environmental Quality Incentives Program), WHIP (Wildlife Habitat Incentive Program), GRP (Grassland Reserve Program), WRP (Wetland Reserve Program), and the second CSP (Conservation Stewardship Program) signups during the year. This resulted in over 30 applications in these programs with 22 obligated agreements (14 EQIP, 4 CSP, 4 GRP). There were conservation plans written for over 14,000 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 11,850 acres, and improved water quality on 13,650 acres. Grazing land benefited was 1300 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), nutrient management, pesticide management, windbreak/shelterbelt establishment, water and sediment control basins, wetland restorations, prescribed grazing, mid-management on CRP, and well decommissioning.

NRCS continued to work with landowners wanting to pursue CRP. The CCRP (Continuous Conservation Reserve Program) has many options available on a year round basis for landowners to explore or pursue, and there was a General CRP signup in 2011. We completed 55 CCRP program eligibility determinations and developed conservation plans for 60 contracts overall. 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. Updated CRP soil rental rates have also helped maintain interest in the CRP program. The 2012 workload for CRP could be even bigger with a lot of contracts in Lac qui Parle County due to expire.

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. A policy change in August now requires NRCS to complete a certified wetland determination for all signed 1026 forms proposing activity such as tiling, ditching, modifying drainage, clearing trees, land leveling, placing fill etc. This will significantly increase the workload and time needed to respond to most 1026's. It is advised that people start their 1026 process well ahead of their planned activity.

There were some state administrative changes in Minnesota also. The state has been reduced from 7 areas to 6 and some re-alignment has taken place. Lac qui Parle County now has area office assistance provided by the Fergus Falls office, and we are part of Area 2. We are adjusting to new supervisor and support staff.

The upcoming year looks to have considerable additional activity. We will continue to attempt to provide assistance to any or all interested landusers in Lac qui Parle County. We want to continue our "Helping People Help the Land".

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. The LqP SWCD District Manager serves as the Water Plan Coordinator. 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. 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 other office supply costs.

Again in 2011 the LqP County Commissioners suspended appointing the Resource Commission, although a recommendation was sent in November to reorganize the Resource Commission for 2012. This year's Water Plan funding was less than 2010. The focus for work plan implementation activities remained the same as 2010, with the budget for each category reflecting a proportionate reduction. The LqP SWCD Board of Supervisors approved the well sealing cost share activities at their monthly board meetings, and provided other direction/oversight as needed.

In spite of program promotion efforts only 2 AgBMP loans were conveyed, although there were multiple inquiries. One producer commented that the low interest was nearly the same as that charged by his bank, so he was thinking he's save himself some paperwork & simply use a bank loan for his project.

The Water Plan Coordinator attended the BWSR Academy 10/25-27/11. Of special interest were the sessions pertaining to writing Water Plan revisions. The Coordinator and the LqP County Feedlot Officer continued to advocate readily-available assistance for small livestock producers. The Coordinator collaborated with LqPYB CWP on several grant applications, attended scheduled TEAM meetings, and assisted with writing TMDL implementation plan. Postage was purchased with administration funds. As directed by the last Resource Commission, \$3,000 (less than before due to grant period ending) was used to support the Lac qui Parle Yellow Bank Clean Water Partnership.

Education: A water quality activity was presented to LqPValley 6th graders 5/10/11. \$500 supported the annual Environmental Fair for 6th graders, an 11-county environmental learning event.

The Water Plan partnered with the LqPYB CWP to develop & present Blue Thumb Garden Party (workshop featuring rain barrels, rain gardens, & compost). This partnership also developed Canoe, Cook, Camp; A Gal's Get-Away Adventure on the Lac qui Parle River planned for 6/17-18, but the event had to be cancelled due to low registration. In addition, the Water Plan helped the CWP with a community spring street cleanup campaign (bag it; don't let it go down the storm drain) and community rain garden maintenance.

The Water Plan had a booth of "green choices" in Dawson at Grace Lutheran church's "Living Green" event 6/29. A free Nitrate Testing Clinic was held 7/27. Several residents had readings below the safety threshold, yet high enough that residents will continue regular monitoring, one discovered his water treatment system wasn't functioning, and two residents were referred to a certified lab for retesting. A Conservation Drainage Workshop on 8/17 shared local research on the benefits of controlled drainage. A weekly radio program April through October, and a newsletter sent to landowners and operators were also cooperative outreach efforts. The CWP used the Water Plan County Fair booth located in the Wildlife Building.

BMP Application/Installation: Eighteen wells were decommissioned in 2011. Of those, 4 were a hazard to animals or humans falling in, 5 were in well pits and/or subject to flooding, 1 was adjacent to the septic and 2 were near a barnyard, 1 had collapsed, and 5 were within ½ mile of a public water supply. Decommissioning wells remains a local priority, identified in the LqP County Water Plan *Priority Issue: Groundwater Protection, Objective A: Help all landowners act to protect the County's groundwater quality.* Cost share is provided at 75% not to exceed \$500/well. The projects were reported electronically to the Board of Water and Soil Resources. Eleven new applications are pending 2012 funding.