

*Steele County Soil & Water
Conservation District*

**ANNUAL
PLAN
OF
WORK**

2011



STEELE COUNTY SOIL AND WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICT

ANNUAL PLAN OF WORK - 2011

Introduction:

The purpose of this plan is to isolate those goals of the Comprehensive Plan that will be concentrated on during the time period, January 1, 2011 through December 31, 2011.

Objectives:

I. Maintain and improve surface and ground water quality through promotion and application of conservation practices which reduce soil erosion by water to tolerable levels on all land in the county.

Actions Planned:

- A. Reduce erosion by water, by installing 1,000 feet of terraces, 10 water and sediment control basins and 10 acres of grassed waterways.**
- B. Control sedimentation to streams, ditches and lakes by installing 1 gully control structure and 2 side inlet drainage ditch structures.**
- C. Will promote the application of 40 acres of filter strips adjacent to drainage ditches, streams and wetlands.**
- D. Assist with the implementation of the Steele County Comprehensive Water Management Plan.**
 - 1. Assist landowners with manure storage and management plans to ensure that surface and groundwater will not be impacted by animal waste.
 - a. Will utilize available program funding to assist landowners with animal waste runoff from feedlots.
 - 2. Participate in the Cannon River Watershed Partnership.
 - 3. Continue the Observation Well Program in cooperation with the Department of Natural Resources.
 - 4. Continue coordination of the Precipitation Gauging Network by submitting monthly reports and soliciting new reporters as needed.

5. Will participate in the State Revolving Loan Fund Program, and the SE Technical Joint Powers Board.
 - a. Loan Applications for best management practices will be reviewed for certification.
 - b. Facilitate JPB engineering assistance on projects that exceed local technical staff job approval authority.

E. Implement the following Board of Water and Soil Resources grants by the assigned deadlines.

1. 2010 Cooperative Weed Management Area Grant.
2. Clean Water Buffer Incentive Grant.
3. 2010 Flood Control Grant.

F. Assist landowners with all aspects of the current Federal Farm Program.

1. Promote the Continuous Conservation Reserve.
 - a. Will employ a farm bill Technician in cooperation with Rice County's SWCD to promote the Continuous CRP, and other Farm Bill programs.
 - b. Will facilitate the new Clean Water Fund Buffer Incentive Program by assisting landowners with enrollment of 40 acres of buffers.
2. Promote the Environmental Quality Incentive Program focusing on high priority practices including: no-till, strip-till, cover crops, animal waste control systems, and other high priority conservation practices.
3. Promote the Reinvest in Minnesota - Wetland Reserve Program focusing on marginal wet farmland.

G. Administer the Wetland Conservation Act in cooperation with the County Environmental Services Department.

1. The SWCD will act as the clearinghouse for all wetland related activities.

H. Continue to sponsor the Straight River Marsh Wetland Restoration Project.

1. Promote enrollment of key parcels within the wetland basin. APW-2
2. Assist landowners with maintenance of existing easements.
 - a. Will offer a SWCD Spraying Program to address invasive species growing on easement lands.

- I. Will make available to cooperators a no-till drill for seeding CRP, RIM, and WRP projects.

II. Reduce wind erosion to tolerable levels on all land.

Actions Planned:

- A. Will sponsor a Tree and Shrub Program, making available conservation grade planting stock for use in windbreaks, wildlife habitat, and erosion control plantings.
 1. Will sponsor a Tree Day Open House.
- B. Install 5 acres of farmstead and field windbreaks throughout the county.
 1. Will promote the CRP Continuous Sign-up for windbreaks on cropland and the EQIP Program for windbreaks on non-cropland areas.

III. To adequately drain wet cropland for efficient crop production and successful operation of all conservation practices.

Actions Planned:

- A. Assist 2 drainage groups with the planning and design of tile mains. Encourage the groups to establish legal recorded agreements.

IV. To inform all people of the County about soil and water resource programs.

Actions Planned:

- A. Will maintain the SWCD website including monthly updates.
- B. Will publish a Conservation News twice a year – February, and September. The newsletter will be distributed to all landowners, cooperating agencies and news media.
- C. Sponsor soil and water conservation awareness programs for students including:
 1. Sponsor the Steele County Outstanding 4-H Conservation Trophy.

2. Will promote the Southeast Minnesota Envirothon in schools throughout Steele County.
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 3. Will make presentations about Conservation Programs to schools and groups as requested.
 4. Will sponsor tree planting days at elementary schools.
- D. Recognize an Outstanding Conservation Farmer, Wildlife Conservationist and Outstanding Windbreak.
- E. Maintain contact with legislators and inform them of soil and water conservation needs and priorities.
1. Will attend the MASWCD Legislative Day at the Capitol.
- F. Promote Soil and Water Conservation by:
1. Submitting monthly news articles to the county news papers.
 2. Sponsoring a booth in the Izaak Walton Building at the County Fair.
 3. Observing Soil Stewardship Week by furnishing material to county churches and schools.
- G. Publishing a 2012 Conservation Calendar in December.
- H. Promote the use of the Land Use Model in schools and other educational events.
- I. Develop District By-Laws.

V. Improve wildlife habitat so that adequate wildlife populations exist for recreational enjoyment.

Actions Planned:

- A. Inform landowners about the wildlife programs available through the Department of Natural Resources, MN Pheasants Group, Steele County Spurs Wild Turkey Federation Group, and the US Fish and Wildlife Service.
1. Will Implement the DNR Conservation Partners CREP Grant.
- B. Promote planting native grasses, trees and food plots on CRP, WRP, and RIM Reserve and other land to improve the wildlife value of those lands.

VI. Cooperate with other agencies to promote soil and water conservation awareness, and to research solutions for related resource problems.

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Actions Planned:

- A. Work closely with the County Commissioners, County Highway Department, and Environmental Health and Zoning Department to solve local resource problems.
- B. Work with the County Extension Office to promote information and education about soil and water conservation.
- C. Participate in the Steele County Zoning Ordinance revision process.
 - 1. Encourage the County to adopt a soil erosion ordinance.
 - 2. Promote protection of prime farmland, natural areas and open space in the county.
- D. Will address storm water runoff concerns within the City of Owatonna, in cooperation with the City Storm Water Technician.

VII. Increase efficiency of District office operations by utilizing current computer technologies.

Actions Planned:

- A. Will incorporate the new LIDAR two foot contour layer into the conservation planning efforts.

VIII. Cost-Share Program.

- A. The District will utilize the State Cost-Share funds by assisting landowners with the application of conservation practices on land with High Priority Erosion Problems. "High priority erosion problems" means areas where erosion from wind or water is occurring equal to, or in excess of, 2 x T tons per acre per year or is occurring on any area that exhibits active gully erosion or is identified as high priority in the comprehensive local water plan or the conservation district's comprehensive plan. In addition, the District will assist landowners with application of conservation practices on land with High Priority Water Quality Problems. "High priority water quality problems" means areas where sediment, nutrients, chemicals, or other pollutants discharge to Department of Natural Resources designated protected waters or to any high priority waters as identified in a comprehensive local water plan or the conservation district's comprehensive plan, or discharge to a sinkhole or groundwater. The pollutant delivery rate to the water source is in amounts that will impair the quality or usefulness of the water resource.
 - 1. Due to a budget deficit the regular 2011 state cost-share funds (\$10,273) will be utilized for District Operations. This funding will

be utilized to leverage funding from Federal Programs including: EQIP, CRP, and WRP.

2. The District will utilize the 2010 Flood Damage Grant (\$50,000) for repair of conservation practices damaged by the 2010 flood. In addition, the District will implement new conservation practices that will result in erosion control and reduction of downstream flooding.

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