

Renville SWCD

2009 Annual Report

Introduction

The following is a summary of the programs, personnel and accomplishments of the Renville Soil & Water Conservation District (SWCD) for 2009.

Renville SWCD was established in August 1955. It is governed by a five member elected Board of Supervisors. Supervisors are elected from the County Commissioner District where they reside, but are elected countywide during the general election. Supervisors serve four year terms.

The financial health of the SWCD can be evaluated by referring to the Document entitled *Financial Statements* which is posted separately on the website. Financial Statements are completed in accordance with the requirements set forth by the Board of Water & Soil Resources (BWSR). The SWCD is audited by an outside CPA as required by State Statute. The most recent audit was completed for the period ending December 31, 2008 and is available under separate cover.

The Renville SWCD is housed in the Ag Services building in Olivia and is co-located with the USDA Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) and the Farm Service Agency (FSA). SWCD staff work cooperatively with the USDA staff on Federal Farm Bill Conservation Programs including CRP, CCRP, WRP, WHIP, and EQIP.

The SWCD staff also partner with Renville County to provide feedlot inspections as required by MN Statutes Chapter 7020. This partnership has been instrumental in helping landowners obtain cost-share for feedlot upgrades. Through co-location with USDA, and because of involvement with several watershed projects, the SWCD staff are in a position to acquire funds from a variety of sources which can assist landowners fund their large Ag Waste projects.

The SWCD is designated by Renville County as the Wetland Conservation Act (WCA) LGU. SWCD staff also assist the Renville County Environmental office with technical assistance for mining reclamation plans, rain garden design and installation, and other environmental activities.

The SWCD administers the State Cost-Share program and actively seeks out projects to fund in accordance with program priorities and guidelines (see 2010 Annual Plan for list priorities). In addition to the use of the regular cost-share program, the staff regularly apply to the State as additional funds and programs become available. In 2009 additional funding was acquired through the State of Minnesota Native Buffer Cost-Share program & the Feedlot Water Quality Management Program.

In the fall of 2009 the BWSR introduced a new Buffer Easement Program to enroll land in perpetual conservation easements along streams and ditches. The SWCD is promoting this program which has been well received by local landowners. Nearly 30 applications were submitted in December of 2009.

The SWCD discontinued the sale and planting of trees for the 2010 season. Customers are being referred to the Redwood SWCD for tree purchases and planting. Staff are still available to assist landowners with tree questions and with designing tree plantings.

SWCD staff regularly present educational programs and are available to work with any school or community groups. Staff & Supervisors are involved in area, state and national conservation organizations and are actively involved in the political process at all levels.

Staff also cooperate with other agencies and other SWCD offices as need arises and as program opportunities present themselves. An extensive list of cooperating agencies and offices is listed at the end of this report. Also listed are specific accomplishments for the year.

2009 Annual Report

Renville Soil & Water Conservation District

1008 West Lincoln Avenue

Olivia MN 56277

Phone: 320-523-1559 Fax: 320-523-2389

Website: www.renvillewcd.com

Board of Supervisors

The Board meets the second Thursday of each month at 7:00 a.m. at the Ag Services Building, 1008 West Lincoln, Olivia MN.

Marc Iverson, Chair
420 Pine Ave.
Bird Island MN 55310
District 3

Kathryn K. Kelly
302 South 4th
Olivia MN 56277
District 4

Loyal Fisher, Vice Chair
321 NW Bryant
Renville MN 56284
District 5

James Schafer
51777 780th Ave.
Hector MN 55342
District 1

Dave Guggisberg, Sec/Treas.
50427 640th Ave.
Fairfax MN 55332
District 2

District Staff:

Karen Flom, Office Manager
kmflom@yahoo.com

Thomas Kalahar, District Technician
kalahar@yahoo.com

Taralee Latozke, District Technician
tara.latozke@mn.nacdnet.net

Jason Beckler, Pheasant's Forever
Farm Bill Biologist
jbeckler@pheasantsforever.org

NRCS Staff:

Jeff Kjorness, District Conservationist
jeff.kjorness@mn.usda.gov

Mike Anderson, Technician
Michael.anderson@mn.usda.gov

Others Assisting the Renville SWCD

Renville County Farm Service Agency (FSA) Committee & Staff

Rick Schmidt
Cliff Willhite

Gloria Gunderson, COC Advisor
Tom Gruendemann

Byron Hogberg, CED
Kay Precht
Lynn Zieske
Cindy Haubrich
Greg Kodet, Field Reporter

Tom Anderson, Farm Loan Manager
Stacy Lindahl
Jiselle Pfaff
Heidi Rauenhorst (resigned 1/10)
Joe Serbus, Field Reporter

Renville County Board of Commissioners

Ralph Novotny, District 1
Paul Setzepfandt, District 3
Lamont Jacobson, District 5

Bob Fox, District 2
John Stahl, District 4

Renville County Administrator

Sara Folsted

Renville County Public Works

Larry Zupke, Ditch Inspector

Renee Hannah, Admin. Asst.

Renville County Office of Environment & Community Development

Mark Erickson

Scott Refsland

Renville County Household Hazardous Waste & Water Management

Diane Mitchell

Julie Kohout, Admin. Asst.

Minnesota Department of Natural Resources

Jeff Zajac, Wildlife Manager
Rob Collett, Waters

Lee Sundmark, Fisheries
Joe Stangel, Private Lands Specialist

Prairie Country Resource Conservation & Development Council

Randy Nelson

Hawk Creek Watershed Project

Cory Netland, Project Coordinator
Stephanie Klamm, Water Quality & Outreach Technician

Dean Dambrotten, Planner/Field Tech

Crow River Organization of Waters

Diane Sander, Coordinator

Jenny Gieseke, Watershed Spec.

High Island Watershed Project

Joel Wurscher, Coordinator

Ron Otto, Technician

Renville Soil & Water Conservation District

2009 Accomplishments

Completed Projects

- State Cost-Share
 - 7 new contracts approved in 2009
 - 8 contracts were completed
 - \$15,221.31 in State Cost-Share was paid to Renville County landowners
 - FY10 allocation was reduced to \$10,026 due to State budget cuts
- Native Buffer
 - 3 contracts were completed in 2009
 - \$31,964.75 in Native Buffer Cost-Share funds were paid to Renville County landowners in 2009
 - A grant request for \$90,318.00 was approved and will be available in 2010
- Feedlot Water Quality Management/Clean Water Grants
 - A Renville SWCD request for 2009 Funds was not funded
 - Renville SWCD was notified late in 2009 that a 2010 request for \$109,423 was approved. That money is earmarked for 3 ag waste projects.

Education/Promotion

- WALK—4 Renville County Schools participated. WALK was held on 3 dates in May with approximately 160 sixth grade students attending. All SWCD staff were involved in planning & in the presentations. Topics included wise land use, watersheds & water quality, wildlife & wildlife habitat.
- Classroom Education –All the staff presented numerous times at RCW High School on various topics including the economics of conservation, career exploration, buffers, wildlife habitat & water quality issues.
- Two staff manned an information booth at Farmfest.
- Attended MASWCD Legislative Day at the Capitol & maintained frequent contact with elected officials at local, state & federal levels.
- Attended MASWCD Convention. Tom Kalahar was a presenter at an educational mini-session. Kathryn Kelly continues to serve as MASWCD Vice President.
- State Conservation Plan meetings, TMDL meetings, Working Lands Initiative Meetings, DNR Shoreland meetings.

Feedlot Inspections

- Renville SWCD Staff continue to fill the role of Renville County Feedlot Inspector. 70 feedlots were inspected in 2009.
- Worked with landowners & engineers to determine best solutions for noncompliant feedlots. Assisted those landowners with obtaining cost-share from all available sources. In 2009, \$358,723 in cost-share payments to landowners from the various sources.
- As noted above, SWCD staff wrote a Feedlot Water Quality Management Grant which was funded for \$109,423 to assist 3 landowners correct existing pollution problems.

Conservation Reserve Program (CRP & CCRP)

- 60 new contracts were signed enrolling 552.6 acres into CRP. SWCD contracted with Pheasants Forever for a Farm Bill Biologist. This person is employed to promote CRP & other USDA Farm Bill conservation programs.

Easement Programs

- Roadbank – restoration was completed on a 152.8 acre easement.
Staff continued well monitoring on two easements from prior years.
Staff continued to work with landowners & BWSR on maintenance of easements
- LCCMR Granite Rock Outcrops —\$1.5 million from the Environmental & Natural Resource Trust Fund was approved by the 2009 Minnesota State Legislature and available July 1, 2009. The money will fund 14 easements totaling 540 acres in four counties. The LCCMR recommended an additional \$1.8 million to the 2010 Minnesota State Legislature. If approved, the funding will be available in July 2010 and will fund 12 easements totaling 702 acres. These grants are in addition to the \$563,000 funded in 2007 which enrolled 212 acres into 4 easements. Renville SWCD staff act as grant manager for the NRETF grants. The eligible area includes portions of Redwood, Renville, Chippewa, Lac qui Parle & Yellow Medicine Counties.
- RIM/WRP – 3 applications were submitted and one 272 acre project was accepted for \$1,274,538.
- RIM/CREP Site Inspections – about 175 site inspections completed in 2009
- RIM/CREP maintenance – used NRCS WHIP & the State Native Buffer Cost-share & DNR programs to assist landowners with maintenance & enhancement of existing easements.
- With 381 conservation easements in the county, workload remains high

Wetland Conservation Act (WCA)

- 275 tiling requests were reviewed for compliance with WCA rules.
- A total of 6 WCA applications were approved including 1 replacement plan, 2 exemptions, and 3 boundary or typing applications.

Working Lands Initiative (WLI)

- In 2008 Renville SWCD partnered with Chippewa SWCD & MN DNR Section of Wildlife on a WLI project covering 11,004 acres. The project protected/enhanced 152.4 acres in 2009 with four landowners receiving a total of \$108,040.71 from the project.
- In 2009 a new WLI area was approved in Renville County. This area covers 10 square miles. Currently \$90,000 is earmarked for a 196.6 acre RIM/WRP project.

Living Snow Fence

- Partnered with MN DOT on a Living Snow Fence project along US HWY 71.

Local Water Management

- 6 contracts were completed and landowners were paid \$8,551.33 in cost-share for those projects. An additional \$15,000 was obtained for future projects.
- The six-creeks invertebrate survey was completed in 2009 and data presented to several groups

Mining Permits Reviewed

- 6 mining reclamation plans were reviewed and approved.

Rain Garden Plan Review

- Worked with 3 landowners on voluntary rain garden design & installation

Partnerships

BWSR * DNR * NRCS * FSA * MASWCD * Renville County * MnDOT * Hawk Creek Watershed Project * Crow River Organization of Waters * High Island Watershed Project * Pheasants Forever * Chippewa SWCD * Redwood SWCD * Yellow Medicine SWCD * Lac qui Parle SWCD * Upper Sioux Agency * Lower Sioux Agency * US Fish & Wildlife