

Conservation News

October/November 2017



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Britta Haseman
Conservation Soil Tech

Matt Rose
WRP Contract Tech

Erickson named Outstanding Conservationist



Congratulations to Jason Erickson of Chokio for being selected as Stevens County's Outstanding Conservationist for 2017. Jason has been farming in Stevens and Synnes Townships since 1994. He returned home to farm with his dad Orville after earning a degree in Farm Operations and Ag Business from Willmar Technical College. His dad retired in 2016 but Jason continues to farm their cropland in a rotation of corn, soybeans and hay.

Jason also has a cow/calf operation and rents out hog barns he no longer uses. His cattle are primarily Angus and Simmental which he runs on a rotational grazing and cover crops setup. He has fenced the cropland adjacent to his pasture to allow his cattle to graze crop residue and cover crops with the intent to improve soil quality. He believes this diversity is a key to the success of his operation.

Jason has implemented numerous conservation practices on his farm through NRCS programs such as EQIP, CRP, and CSP. Jason's farm includes shelterbelts and wildlife tree plantings, water & sediment control basins, and integrated pest management, in addition to the use of the rotational grazing fence setup, cattle watering system, and cover crops. Stevens SWCD appreciates how Jason is always looking for ways to improve his operation while keeping conservation a top priority.

Jason will be honored at the 2017 Minnesota Association of Conservation Districts annual convention in Bloomington in December.

MN Buffer Law deadline November 1, 2017

The compliance deadline for buffer installations on public waters is only a few days away! Here are a few important things to keep in mind regarding the November 1, 2017 compliance deadline for public waters:

- If we have not heard from you, please contact our office to discuss your buffer compliance status or the buffer compliance options that are available to you.
- If you have already seeded your required buffer areas, please notify the SWCD so we can update our compliance records.
- If you are not able to seed the buffer areas before the **November 1, 2017** deadline, stop into our office and sign a "Conditional Compliance Waiver" which will allow the compliance deadline to be extended to **July 1, 2018**. This agreement **must** be signed **before November 1, 2017**.
- MN Buffer Law compliance is the landowner's responsibility, so if you are not certain whether you have met the compliance requirements, please contact Stevens SWCD for confirmation.
- Legal ditches (county ditches) have a later compliance date of November 1, 2018. Stop in this winter to discuss compliance options for these areas.

Stevens SWCD staff are available to:

- Discuss buffer compliance options: CRP, CREP, Partial Buffer Alternative Practices, Cost Share
- Complete a CRP Quote (no contract obligation)
- Discuss the MN Buffer Law and how it may impact your property
- Provide technical assistance for buffer establishment
- Convey MN DNR Buffer Map comments or concerns to the correct DNR staff



Thank you to everyone for working with our office to implement the MN Buffer Law in Stevens County.

Plan for 2018 tree planting!

It isn't too early to start thinking about trees for the spring of 2018. We are currently taking orders through March 15, 2018 for next planting season. Availability of some trees is limited so if you know a certain variety of tree that you would like, ordering soon is the best way to ensure we can get those varieties. We have shrubs, deciduous trees and coniferous trees available for your conservation needs. You can also purchase trees from us and plant them yourself.

Stevens SWCD can help develop a tree plan for your site, advise you on the best tree species suitable for your site based on soils. We also advise on possible cost-share options. The District provides services that include site preparation, machine tree planting, fabric installation for weed control and tree tubes to protect against wildlife damage. Watch for our tree open house coming up in December. If you are interested in planting a shelterbelt to protect your building site, a field windbreak to protect against wind erosion, a wildlife planting or any other type of tree planting, stop in to discuss your options.

For additional information, please contact John at 320-589-4886 ext 3.



WHO WE ARE...

Revolution Plastics collects ag and silage plastic from farms and dairies and recycles the material at its United States-based recycling facilities.

Our mission is to provide high-value, sustainable solutions to our customers through innovative closed-loop recycling systems that preserve our environment for future generations.



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- **AG PLASTICS**
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Benefit your farm with CSP!

The Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP) is the largest conservation program in the United States. Since 2010, the program has enrolled more than 70 million acres nationwide. Through CSP, agricultural producers earn payments for actively managing, maintaining, and expanding conservation activities. NRCS evaluates cropland, farmsteads, pastureland and non-cropland utilizing a conservation activity evaluation tool. Crop producers, livestock farmers, organic farmers and specialty crop farmers can all participate in the program. Applicants and NRCS staff work together to evaluate the producer's operation for conservation activities already in place. They also identify resource concerns that are not currently being addressed and discuss alternative conservation activities that can be implemented to address those resource issues. Ultimately, this helps the producer make decisions that best fit their conservation goals while addressing resource concerns.

Implementing cover crops after edible soybeans, small grains, into standing corn or after silage corn; grid/zone soil sampling to apply fertilizer via a variable rate application; split applied nitrogen applications; buffer strips; monarch habitat; and integrated pest management plans were some of the common activities participants applied for in 2017.

CSP is a 5 year program, with annual payments based on existing activities and additions made by the applicant. Payments involve an existing payment rate of \$350 per year per resource concern addressed at time of application and a \$7.50 per acre per year rate for cropland. The payment rates for additional activities depend on what the producer selects and how many acres they will implement that practice on.

NRCS is accepting applications for operators interested in applying for CSP in 2018. Stop by the Morris Service Center and talk to Cory about CSP.

Sign up today for Water Quality Certification Program

The Minnesota Agricultural Water Quality Certification Program (MAWQCP) is a voluntary program for agricultural landowners and operators to take the lead in implementing conservation practices that protect our water. Those who implement and maintain approved farm management practices will be certified. Certification gives the approved entity regulatory certainty for ten years. This means you are automatically in compliance with any new water quality rules or laws enacted during that time.



Additionally, you will receive both recognition to promote your business as protective of water quality and priority for technical and financial assistance. Producers seeking certification or those already certified can acquire specially designated technical and financial assistance to implement practices that promote water quality. Our local SWCD can work with you to help you find applicable conservation practices and funding pools for your water quality needs. To sign up contact us at the Stevens SWCD office (320) 589-4886 ext. 3 or check online at MyLandMyLegacy.com.



Stevens SWCD hosted a Family Fun Night at Pomme de Terre Park near Morris to learn about Aquatic Invasive Species and how to prevent the spread in lakes and rivers. Pictured are a few of the prize winners and SWCD staff.

Monitoring water quality

The Pomme de Terre River watershed is going through the second round of a 10-year cycle of intensive watershed monitoring, strategizing, and implementing. The information gained through the monitoring and strategizing will be put into a report called the Watershed Restoration and Protections Strategy (WRAPS). The goal of this process and report is to better understand our water quality, where priorities should be placed, and what can be done about the issues.

In 2017, the Pomme de Terre River Association (PdTRA) monitored 34 stream, river, and lake sites throughout the watershed for parameters such as nutrients, sediment levels, and *E. Coli*. To aid in this, the PdTRA was also able to obtain funds to hire a Seasonal Technician to complete sampling from May through September. State staff and other local volunteers have also been out monitoring stream and lake sites for chemical, biological, and geomorphic features that will be taken in account for the Pomme de Terre WRAPS report.

As the 2017 field season has ended, the PdTRA and partners will be examining the preliminary data and looking for any gaps in the data that will need to be filled in during following years, along with preparing for the continuation of monitoring in 2018.



In January of 2017, Stephanie Adams joined the Pomme de Terre River Association as the Watershed Project Coordinator. Stephanie aids in the coordination of water conservation efforts within the six counties of the Pomme de Terre Watershed (Otter Tail, Grant, Douglas, Stevens, Swift, and Big Stone). Most recently, the focus of the Watershed Project has been planning for One Watershed, One Plan and completing a cycle of intensive watershed monitoring.

To learn more about the watershed, contact the Pomme de Terre River Association's Project Coordinator at (320) 589-4886 Ext. 109 or stephanie.adams@pdtriver.org. Please LIKE and SHARE us on Facebook!

MN Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program open for sign-up

CREP gives landowners an opportunity to permanently protect environmentally sensitive cropland. The focus for this sign-up is buffer strips, wetland restorations, and drinking water wellhead protection areas.

- ◆ CREP is a federal-state natural resource conservation program that targets environmentally sensitive land across 54 counties in southern and western Minnesota.
- ◆ Through CREP, landowners voluntarily receive financial incentives from both the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) and Reinvest in Minnesota (RIM) to restore marginal cropland from agricultural production.
- ◆ The landowner retains ownership of the land, CREP does **not** open your land for public use.
- ◆ There is an 8 acre minimum to be considered for the current CREP sign-up, potential waivers are available for applications smaller than 8 acres.
- ◆ CREP offers a competitive flat rate payment that varies for each township.



Stop in to the Stevens SWCD office to discuss CREP options and see how it may work on your land. Additional information and updates on CREP can be found at www.bwsr.state.mn.us/crep.

Linow joins Stevens SWCD as Engineering Tech for WCTSA

Steve Linow is a Civil Engineering Technician that provides engineering services to 12 Soil and Water Conservation Districts in central Minnesota. He started his duties in May 2017 after 11 years of serving as a Civil Engineering Technician for USDA NRCS in Elbow Lake. Prior to NRCS, he worked for Ducks Unlimited. With over 16 years of experience, he works with private landowners getting conservation on the ground. Steve's main workload has been reducing soil erosion in cropland. He has experience in lakeshore/streambank erosion, ag waste facilities, and water retention. Steve is also interested in gaining experience with utilizing conservation within urban areas.

Steve grew up in Alexandria and currently resides near there. When he is not glued to a computer or survey rod, he enjoys being outdoors and spending time with family and friends.



Conservation Day & Water Fest always fun for students!

Over 600 students in both 5th and 6th grades from Stevens and Pope counties attended our Water Fest and Conservation Day events held in September. Water Fest for 6th graders was held at the Pope County fair grounds on Sept 16. The 6th graders learned about topics dealing with water quality and macro invertebrates, and played games that included learning about the water cycle, pollution, and more. The Science Museum was the feature presenter for the day. Conservation Day at SWELL for 5th grade students featured learning and hiking in the outdoors for the day. Sessions included waterfowl, mammals, mirrors of Minnesota, soils, wetlands, water quality, orienteering, and geocaching. The feature sessions came from the Audubon Center of the North Woods, who presented sessions on Raptors and Reptiles and Amphibians. Special thanks to our many sponsors in Stevens and Pope counties who have been making these special days possible for students for the past 12 to 14 years.





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Learn the latest from Stevens SWCD!

Visit us on the web at www.stevensswcd.org or look us up on Facebook!



Tree Sales Open House December 14, 1-5 pm

*Free conservation tree
design and planning*

*Order trees for 2018
planting*

*Ask your questions
about shelterbelt
planting, care and
maintenance*

**Stevens SWCD Office,
Next to Subway in Morris**



*Happy
Thanksgiving*

Stevens SWCD

320-589-4886 ext. 3