

Conservation News

Fall 2018



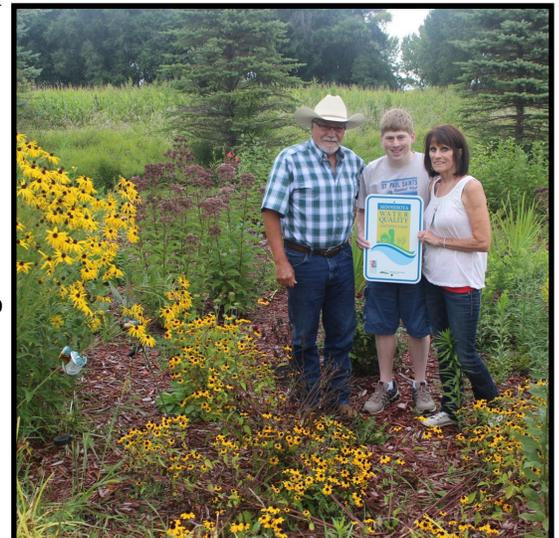
Howes are Stevens SWCD Outstanding Conservationists

Congratulations to Steve and Wanda Howe of Chokio for being selected as Stevens County's Outstanding Conservationists for 2018. They are pictured here with their son Levi in a rain garden on their property that was constructed by Stevens SWCD. Steve and Wanda have been part of his family farm for over 28 years. They have five children. His dad Richard started farming near Chokio in Baker and Stevens Townships in 1953, where his grandpa Gordon farmed prior to that. The family has nearly reached the century farm mark. Steve's mom Bonnie still lives on the home farm today. His dad was always conservation-minded and continued to plant trees year after year and set aside land for wildlife habitat and for his family to hunt and enjoy.

Today Steve and his brother have nearly 500 acres in WRP, CRP and CREP. He has converted his tillable land from corn and beans to alfalfa, implementing Forage and Biomass Planting and Forage Harvest Management plans as part of his participation in the NRCS Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP). These practices are designed to decrease soil erosion and increase soil health by adding a deep-rooted crop to decrease compaction. The land also provides wildlife cover over the winter and he can use the additional forage for his cattle. Steve was one of the first in the state to set up a grazing plan on a permanent Wetland Reserve Program (WRP) easement. He runs his cow/calf pairs on his WRP acreage using a grazing plan developed under NRCS standards. Grazing an easement area like this creates a light disturbance for wildlife and improves grassland health on his property. Howe has also installed a rain garden in his back yard to divert rain water away from his house and filter the runoff to improve water quality. He also enjoys the added benefits of beauty and increased wildlife and pollinators seen around his yard.

Howe and his brother John were recently certified in Stevens County through the MAWQCP (Minnesota Agricultural Water Quality Certification Program). Steve has plans for a shelterbelt renovation next year and is always looking for new ways to implement conservation on this farm. The Howes are committed to using their farm for wildlife habitat and as a place where their family can enjoy the outdoors and hunting for years to come.

Congratulations on making your farm a conservation legacy in Stevens County!



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Britta Haseman
Conservation Soil Tech

320-589-4886 ext. 4

13 farmers certified in MAWQCP in Stevens County

The Minnesota Agricultural Water Quality Certification Program (MAWQCP) has certified another eight participants in Stevens County over the summer and early fall. They include Randy Schmiesing, Mark and Susan Fitzgerald, Joe Fitzgerald of Organic Acres, Steve and Molly Woodke, Darin Woodke, and Derek Woodke.

Many participants implement new conservation practices on their farm operations to reduce soil erosion potential. Some of the practices these farmers might add to their operations include water and sediment control basins for gully erosion, French drains to close open tile intakes, cover crops, field windbreaks, native grass plantings, wetland restorations, and a multitude of other practices. All are meant to have a positive impact on water quality and soil health.

The MAWQCP is a voluntary program offered by MDA that works with landowners to identify and mitigate risks to water quality at a field level. Those who implement and maintain approved farm management practices can be certified and obtain regulatory certainty for 10 years as well as have access to cost share funds to aid in implementing new conservation practices.



MAWQCP newly-certified farmer Randy Schmiesing of Chokio



Joe, Susan and Mark Fitzgerald of Morris were recently certified through the MAWQCP



Darin, Derek, Molly and Steve Woodke of Morris, newly-certified in the MAWQCP program



MAWQCP Certifications as of September 2018

Stevens County:
13 farms, 10,778 acres

West Central Area:
146 farms, 81,733 acres

Statewide:
649 farms, 410,401 acres

It's never too early to think about planting trees

Stevens SWCD is currently taking orders and planning tree plantings for spring of 2019. Trees add many benefits such as energy savings, visual barriers, and air/water quality. We have a good variety of conservation trees that we offer at a low cost.

You can purchase trees and plant them yourself, or Stevens SWCD can do the planting for you. We will also help develop a planting plan for your site, and advise you on the best tree species suitable for your site based on your soils. The District provides services that include site preparation, machine tree planting, weed control fabric installation and tree tube installation to protect against wildlife damage.

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 conservation tree planting, stop in to discuss your options. Cost share available in some cases. For additional information, please contact John at 320-589-4886 ext. 4.



Native grass planting between the rows of a three-year-old tree planting.

Zebra mussels discovered in Stevens County

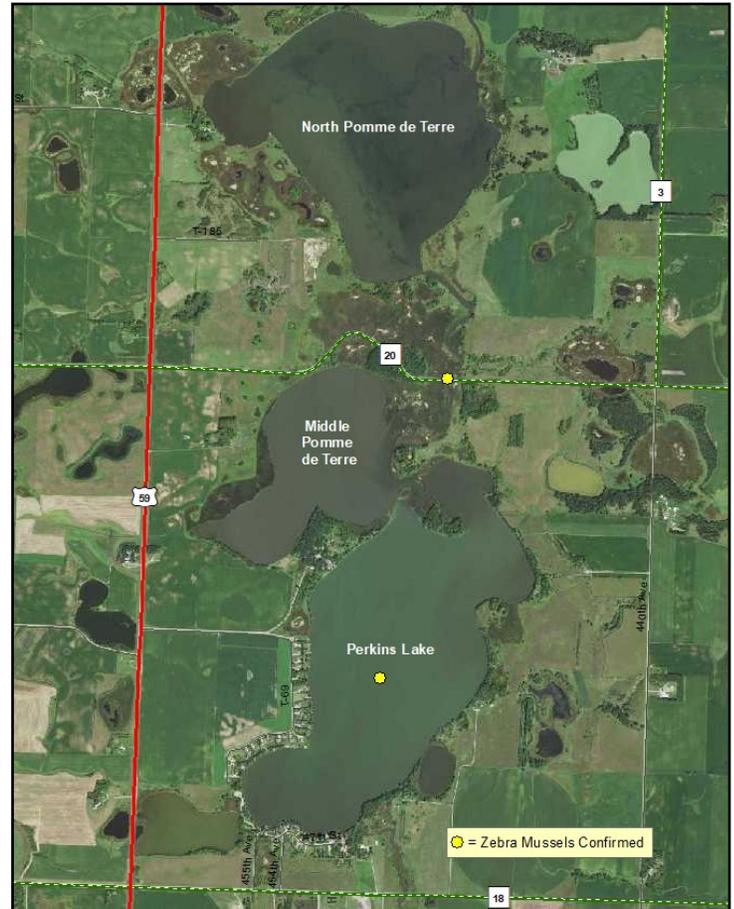
As lakeshore owners on Perkins Lake were removing their docks and lifts for the season, several reported finding zebra mussels on their equipment. The area DNR invasive species specialist confirmed the reports on October 8 in multiple locations of the lake. Additionally, they found one zebra mussel at the public water access site on County Highway 20 between North and Middle Pomme de Terre Lakes. No mussels were located during a search downstream at the Pomme de Terre Reservoir.

Carefully inspect your equipment coming out of the water for zebra mussels or any other invasive species. Look on the posts, wheels, and underwater support bars of docks and lifts, as well as any parts of boats, pontoons, and rafts that may have been submerged in water for an extended period.

If you believe you have found an invasive species in a Stevens County lake, send your report with a picture and location to the Stevens SWCD or the area DNR invasive species specialist (see below).

Remember when you leave the lake.

- Inspect and clean your boat and equipment before leaving the water access
- Drain water from boat, live-well, drain-bilge, etc. with water-draining devices or by removing drain plugs
- You may not transport aquatic plants, zebra mussels, or other prohibited species on any roadway



To remove or kill zebra mussels, take precautions before moving to another waterbody, especially after leaving infested waters:

- Spray with high-pressure water
- Rinse with very hot water (120°F for at least 2 minutes; or 140°F for at least 10 seconds)
- Dry for at least 5 days

Area DNR Invasive Species Specialist: Mark Ranweiler (218) 739-7576 ext.254 or mark.ranweiler@state.mn.us.

Fall seeding & field prep reminders

Here are a few things to consider while making plans for fall harvest and tillage:

If the SWCD will be seeding: soybean/small grain stubble is best or till area this fall and have the area rolled prior to planting. On small sites, the cornstalks could be baled or raked off the seeding area and no tillage would be needed. Seeding usually takes place after November 1 in the fall and between May 15 and June 30 in the spring.

Please contact us now if you plan to have the SWCD flag CRP contract boundaries, buffers or other conservation practice areas. We encourage landowners to till areas with heavy residue (ie. corn stalks) and have the site prepped before flagging. If the site will be no-tilled give us a few days notice to try and get the area flagged before tillage. Otherwise try to leave the approximate seeding area with a little extra room and we will flag as soon as we can.

If you have established a buffer on your own, make sure you notify the SWCD so that we can update our compliance records.

EQIP sign-up open now through January 2019

The NRCS is currently accepting Environmental Quality Incentive Program (EQIP) applications for projects being implemented in 2019. The deadline to sign up for this program will occur in January 2019. EQIP is a voluntary conservation program that provides technical assistance and incentive payments to assist crop, livestock, and other agricultural producers with environmental, conservation, and energy improvements to their operations. Common practices in Stevens County are cover crops, water and sediment control basins, conservation crop rotation, strip-till, no-till, grassed waterways, terraces, nutrient management, pest management, closure of waste impoundments, tree and shrub establishment, seasonal high tunnels, drainage water management, pollinator plot seeding, and rotational grazing systems.

If you have any questions about EQIP, please contact Cory Walker or Britta Haseman at the NRCS office in Morris at (320) 589-4886 ext. 3.

USDA is an equal opportunity provider, employer, and lender.



EQIP field planted to a cover crop mix of turnips, radishes, and rapeseed.

MN Buffer Law update

County wide buffer compliance numbers continue to climb as winter draws near. Once again mother nature has provided us a challenging fall! If you think you will have trouble meeting the November 1 deadline, please contact the SWCD to discuss your options.

There is Buffer Cost-Share available to cover establishment costs at a rate of \$200/ ac. for conventional grass mixes, \$300/ ac. for native grass mixes and 75 % cost share on structural practices. There would need to be a signed contract in place before any of the work takes place, contact the SWCD for details. Stevens SWCD staff are always available to help answer any buffer implementation questions or we can meet in the field to do a site-specific review.

With any of the information we provide, it is always helpful for you to pass the message along to absentee landowners or others that may not receive our newsletter.

As a reminder, please let the SWCD know if you have established your buffer so we can update our compliance records. Thank you for your

continued patience and cooperation while implementing the MN Buffer Law in Stevens County!



Happy Thanksgiving!



The Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP) has been growing in popularity statewide due to the program incentives that were introduced over the summer of 2018.

Local interest is up as well! We welcome questions and enjoy sitting down with people to discuss what their expectations are for the land that they own. Maybe CREP isn't the program you are looking for, but it is a good program to get that conversation started. Although the CREP signup is currently waiting on the pending 2018 Farm Bill, we can answer your questions at any time.

Stop into the Stevens SWCD office to see how a CREP easement may benefit your property.

Additional CREP information can be found at www.bwsr.state.mn.us/crep.



Conservation Education for Kids!

Water Fest was held for Stevens and Pope County 6th grade students at the Pope County Fair Grounds in September.

Over 350 students got to learn about a variety of topics through hands on interactive learning activities. The areas of learning included: the Water Cycle, Rainfall Simulator, What Floats your Boat, Water Treatment Plant, Macro invertebrates, and What Water do you Drink. They even had a chance to be scientists for the day. Students also played games called The Fish Journey and The Incredible Journey of a Water Drop.

Thank you to the Stevens and Pope County businesses who make this event possible!



St. Mary's School 6th graders enjoy learning through conservation games at the Stevens and Pope SWCD Water Fest.



Stevens SWCD Program Technician Kasey Jenc shows 5th graders the benefits of wetlands at the Stevens and Pope SWCD Conservation Day.

Conservation Day at SWELL for Stevens and Pope 5th grade students featured learning and hiking in the outdoors for a day. This year over 325 5th grade students attended Conservation Day. Sponsors include: Stevens County Local Water Plan, Pope Land and Resource Management, Glenwood Fire Department, Stevens County Pheasants Forever, Lawn and Driveway Service, Bremer Bank, North Fork Crow River Watershed District, Donnelly Rod and Gun Club, Engebretson & Sons Disposal Service, Eco Water, and Karl and Linda Retzlaff.

The National Envirothon was held in Pocatello, Idaho in July of 2018, at Idaho State University. Judy Johnston, of Stevens SWCD, is the Minnesota State Envirothon Coordinator and had the chance to attend the national competition with the Minnesota team from Hopkins. This was Johnston's first time attending the national event and it was an outstanding opportunity to learn more about how the National Envirothon operates, which will be valuable in planning for future Minnesota State Envirothons. Idaho is rich in agriculture and rangeland management was the current issue focus for the year.

The sponsors that made it possible for the team and Johnston to attend were: MASWCD, Cargill, Smithfield Foods, MACDE, MECA and Stevens SWCD.



Hopkins High School won the MN State Envirothon and represented Minnesota at the National Envirothon in July 2018 at Idaho State University, shown here with Judy Johnston, State Envirothon Coordinator & Stevens SWCD Education and Promotion Coordinator.

Water Quality is priority for the work of the Pomme de Terre River Association

2018 was the second year in a two year study of water quality within the Pomme de Terre watershed. The Pomme de Terre River and contributing streams were being monitored for Total Phosphorus and Nitrates (an indicator of how much fertilizer is in the water), chlorophyll-a (an indicator of algae levels), E.coli, dissolved oxygen, temperature, pH, and Secchi disk readings (an observational measure of water clarity). In Stevens County, three sites along the Pomme de Terre's main stem, two on Muddy Creek, and two other contributing streams to Muddy Creek were monitored over the last two years. For the 2018 season, PDTRA hired a seasonal worker, UMM student Mitch Fox, to help collect biweekly samples for lab analysis as well as take observational measures of water levels and site potential sources of contributing sediments and nutrients.

Currently, the Pomme de Terre River, where it intersects with Muddy Creek below Morris, down to the mouth of the river in Appleton is considered "impaired" for Total Suspended Solids (partials in the water – usually associated with sediment runoff or contributing erosion). This means that levels surpass state standards for the selected parameters. Another method of measuring water quality is through fish and macroinvertebrate surveys.

Scores are given to a section of stream based on the quantity, diversity, and quality (some species are more tolerant of pollutants than others) of the species found along that stretch (surveys conducted by DNR). Scores can indicate the overall health of a water body. If scores dip below a certain threshold, it is a biological impairment. The Pomme de Terre River is considered to be biologically impaired for fish populations from Barrett Lake in Grant County down to Appleton.

As we wrap up the two year monitoring study, the MN Pollution Control Agency will help assess the data collected and will provide a report that details its outcomes. This will be the second report on the Pomme de Terre's water quality. The previous report was completed in 2012. The PDTRA hopes that this new round of monitoring will bring more information to light about where we are in terms of watershed health and where we should focus our efforts and resources in protecting and improving water quality through education, outreach, and voluntary best management practice implementation.



At left: Photo monitoring is another way PDTRA keeps track of what's happening in the river; clarity, depth, flow, and other potential landscape changes can be documented through photos.

Below: Mitch Fox, UMM student and PDTRA seasonal worker, out monitoring lakes located in the northern portion of the watershed.



Stevens SWCD Services

- CRP conservation planning
- Mowing & spot spraying
- Native grass & buffer seeding
- Rain garden design & installation
- Tree planting & fabric installation





12 Hwy 28 E Ste 2
 Morris MN 56267
 (320) 589-4886 ext. 4
 www.stevensswcd.org

2019 Order Form

Prices subject to change. Order by March 15 to ensure availability.

Date: _____ Name: _____ Phone: _____
 Address: _____ TWP: _____ Sec: _____

Tree Species

	Unit Cost	Quantity	Total Price		Unit Cost	Quantity	Total Price
Shrubs				Potted Trees			
American Cranberry	\$ 1.50			Black Hills Spruce	1 gallon	\$ 10.00	
American Hazelnut	\$ 1.50			Colorado Blue Spruce	1 gallon	\$ 10.00	
Buffaloberry	\$ 1.50			Techy Arborvitae	1 gallon	\$ 10.00	
Chokeberry	\$ 1.50			Ponderosa Pine	1 gallon	\$ 10.00	
Common Lilac	\$ 1.50			Black Hills Spruce	4x4 in.	\$ 7.00	
Cotoneaster	\$ 1.50			Bare Root Evergreens			
Nanking Cherry	\$ 1.50			Black Hills Spruce		\$ 1.50	
Redosier Dogwood	\$ 1.50			Colorado Blue Spruce		\$ 1.50	
Silky Dogwood	\$ 1.50			Ponderosa Pine		\$ 1.50	
Villosa Lilac	\$ 1.50			Techy Arborvitae		\$ 1.50	
Small Trees				<i>Other species and sizes may be available upon request. Bare root trees should be ordered in multiples of 25 trees per variety.</i>			
American Plum	\$ 1.50			Related Products & Services			
Chokecherry	\$ 1.50				Unit Cost	Quantity	
Juneberry	\$ 1.50			5 foot tree tube	\$ 4.00		
Midwest Crab	\$ 1.50			Tree stake (min. 4')	\$ 2.00		
Nannyberry	\$ 1.50			3x3 Fabric mat & 8 staples	\$ 2.00		
Red Splendor Crab	\$ 1.50			Tree fabric roll (500'x6')	\$ 185.00		
Large Trees				Custom cut fabric, per foot	\$ 0.50		
American Linden	\$ 1.50			Metal staples for tree mats	\$ 0.10		
Bur Oak	\$ 1.50			Plantskydd Repellent, 1 qt. spray	\$ 21.95		
Cottonwood Male	\$ 1.50			Plantskydd Repellent, 1.32 gal. spray	\$ 54.95		
Golden Willow	\$ 1.50						
Hackberry	\$ 1.50						
Hybrid Poplar cutting	\$ 0.50						
Hybrid Willow cuttings	\$ 0.50						
Laurel Willow	\$ 1.50						
Paper Birch	\$ 1.50						
Silver Maple	\$ 1.50						

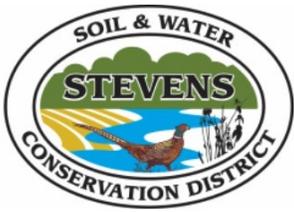
**Thank you
for your order!**

*We can design & plant your trees &/or install fabric mulch for you.
 We also perform site prep/tillage, mowing/weed control between tree rows,
 and native grass planting including rain gardens.
 Just give us a call!*

SUB TOTAL \$ _____
 Sales Tax 6.875% if applicable _____
 Grand Total \$ _____

Signature: _____ Date: _____

All tree orders & pricing are subject to species availability. Trees must be used for conservation purposes only.
 Due to numerous factors beyond our control, the Stevens SWCD is unable to provide a guarantee on the trees we sell.
 Payment due when ordering. We will notify you when trees are available for pick-up (late April).



12 Hwy 28 E Ste 2
Morris MN 56267

Tree Sales Open House December 14, 12-5 pm

Free conservation tree
plan design & planning

Order trees for 2019

Ask your questions
about shelterbelt design &
planting and tree care &
maintenance



Call 320-589-4886 ext. 4
for more info!

Stevens SWCD is located
on the frontage road next to Subway in Morris

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

