

**Stevens SWCD**

# Conservation News

**Fall 2023**

## SWCD

### Board of Supervisors

Debbie Anderson  
Dennis Feuchtenberger  
Greg Fynboh, Chair  
Troy Goodnough  
Dave Lonergan

## SWCD Staff

**Matt Solemsaas**  
Administrator

**John Lembcke**  
District Technician

**Brady Cardwell**  
Assistant Technician

**Chris Staebler**  
Office Manager

**Judy Johnston**  
Education & Promotion

## WCTSA Area 2

**Steve Linow**  
Civil Engineering Tech

## Pomme de Terre River Association

**Jared House**, Acting  
Watershed Project Coordinator

## NRCS Staff

**Britta Haseman**  
District Conservationist

## Contact Stevens SWCD

320-589-4886 ext. 4  
[www.stevensswcd.org](http://www.stevensswcd.org)

## *Congratulations, LAPA Farms LLP!*

The Stevens SWCD Outstanding Conservationists for 2023 are Lonnie and Pat Anderson of Morris. Lonnie grew up near Cyrus and stayed active in the family farming operation while going to college and working in crop insurance for a time. Lonnie and his son Mat continue the legacy his parents and uncle started before they passed on, farming nearly 600 acres in both the Pomme de Terre River and Chippewa River watersheds in Stevens and Pope counties. They plant no-till acres and use the CSP program to help with conservation planning. Lonnie and his sisters and cousins have also been developing a 230 acre CRP site.



Lonnie has planted a pollinator plot and is currently working with the Stevens SWCD on a 113-acre RIM Grassland easement along the Chippewa River. This land has virgin prairie and very highly erodible land along a hill side goes down into the river bottom. It's a prefect site to preserve forever.

LAPA Farms, with the help of Stevens SWCD, NRCS and the West Central TSA, also constructed a 3.2-acre lined grassed waterway designed to prevent gully erosion and protect a 12-acre area adjacent to Perkins Lake in the Pomme de Terre River watershed.

Stevens SWCD is proud to have the Andersons as our conservation partners and we appreciate their passion for protecting and preserving the land of Stevens County for years to come. We will be honoring them at the MASWCD Annual Convention in Bloomington in December.



## Brady Cardwell Joins Stevens SWCD

Hello, my name is Brady Cardwell, and I am the new Assistant Technician at Stevens SWCD. I grew up in Donnelly and graduated from Morris Area High School in 2019. I then attended South Dakota State University (SDSU), graduating in May 2023 with my bachelor's degree in Wildlife and Fisheries Sciences.

I have worked at Stevens SWCD the past five summers helping with various tasks. I started full time on May 15, 2023. During my free time I enjoy hunting, fishing, golfing, and most outdoor activities. I look forward to the new opportunities ahead. Please feel free to contact me at 320-589-4886 ext. 118.



## RIM/CREP in Stevens County in 2023



Stevens County has been assisting on multiple permanent easements this year. We are in the process of getting three new easements into the Reinvest in Minnesota (RIM) program. About 175 acres combined will be enrolled. Two of the sites are going to be enrolled into the RIM Wetland program, and the other site is going to be enrolled into the RIM Grassland program.

We have also been working with the Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP). Although we did not have any new applications in Stevens County this year, we have worked with landowners and the Minnesota Board of Water and Soil Resources (BWSR) to get some maintenance paid for on some sites. The maintenance consists of tree removal and repair of a wetland embankment.

## Project Spotlight: Protecting Against Gully Erosion

In the fall of 2021, a landowner approached Stevens SWCD with concerns about some active gully erosion in one of their fields. The field, located in Rendsville Township, is just over a mile from North Pomme de Terre Lake, which makes this a high priority project.

A site visit and topographic survey were scheduled to help determine what cost-share eligible practices would best correct the issue. The West Central Technical Service Area 2 (WCTSA2) assisted with survey and design and determined water and sediment control basins would be a great fit. A total of seven sediment basins with above ground risers and underground outlets were designed to handle approximately 200 acres of drainage area.

State cost share covering 75% of the project cost was approved. Construction started in fall of 2022 and wrapped up in summer of 2023.

Estimated pollution reductions are calculated to be:

**SEDIMENT (TSS):**

516.25 T/yr

**SOIL (est. savings):**

516.25 T/yr

**PHOSPHORUS (est. reduction):**

593.69 lb/yr



*Photo during construction shows the depth and severity of the gully erosion happening on this cropland.*



*Photo after construction shows how the gully has been leveled. The area will be farmable next year and the dams installed will prevent future erosion.*



Call us today to find out how you can receive cost share assistance to correct erosion issues on your farm!



## Plan Early to Plant Trees

Stevens SWCD is currently taking tree orders for the spring of 2024. Stevens SWCD sells trees and we also help design tree planting plans for rural sites. It is completely up to the customer whether they would like to plant the trees themselves or hire Stevens SWCD to plant the trees for them. We are available to help design a plan, order your trees, plant your trees, and install weed-barrier fabric and/or tree protection tubes.

**This year we are asking that you call the office if you want to order trees.** Some tree varieties are extremely hard to get, especially later in the winter months. We will do everything we can to accommodate you and try to get the trees you are wanting to plant, but the earlier you order, the better. Please order trees by February 16, 2024. Pick-up will be at the end of April.

We will start planting trees in May 2024, so please keep this in mind if you are planning to have us plant for you and have your site ready to go by then. Significant site prep is often necessary to ensure adequate soil coverage on roots. If you have questions about this or any other tree needs, please give us a call at (320) 589-4886 ext. 4.

## Important Tips for Rain Garden Maintenance

Early in the spring, you can remove all dead plant material from your rain garden, leaving a few inches of material above ground. Once plants start to grow in the spring, you can prune any plants you feel are becoming too large for the garden. This helps with crowding and keeps gardens looking nice. Cleaning the catch basins in the spring will also ensure proper water flow to the garden.

For the first three summers, you should water new rain gardens during dry periods to help with the establishment of plants in the garden. Weeding is also important to keep rain gardens looking their best. Weeding will be required more in the first few years after planting and isn't needed as much once the native plants are well established.

In the fall after the growing season, many of the tall grasses and seed heads can be left for wildlife in the winter months. Pruning of woody shrubs can be done during the fall or winter. Also inspect the garden overflow area to ensure that no erosion has taken place.

If you have any questions about rain gardens, contact John or Brady at Stevens SWCD (320) 589-4886 ext. 4



## USDA provides \$3 billion for Climate-Smart Practices on Ag Lands

As part of President Biden's Investing in America Agenda, the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) is making \$3 billion in funding available for agricultural producers and forest landowners nationwide who participate in voluntary conservation programs and adopt climate-smart practices in fiscal year 2024. The Inflation Reduction Act (IRA) funding will be distributed to producers enrolled in the Environmental Quality Incentive Program (EQIP) and/or the Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP). In fiscal year 2024, Minnesota expects to receive \$17 million and \$7.8 million dollars for EQIP and CSP contracts respectively. Practices eligible for IRA money include establishing pollinator habitat, cover crops, no till and reduced till practices, field borders, filter strips, grassed waterways, nutrient management practices, pasture and hay planting, prescribed grazing, and tree establishment. If you are interested in any of these or other conservation practices, please contact Britta Haseman at the NRCS office in Morris at (320) 589-4886 ext. 3.

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



## Walk In Hunting Access on Private Lands

Hunting season is here. Have you noticed yellow Walk-In-Access (WIA) signs on conservation acres and wondered what they mean? WIA is a voluntary program that allows landowners to enroll certain conservation acres and receive an annual payment for those acres. This is a great opportunity to help pay taxes on land that does not have income. Public hunting is allowed on enrolled acres, with no liability to the landowner. WIA is a great way to promote new hunting opportunities throughout the state.

This year, WIA is paying a flat rate of \$18.00 per acre. The land parcel must be a minimum of 40 acres or adjacent to other public hunting land if it does not meet the 40 acre requirement. The program is partially funded through a \$3.00 stamp that must be purchased to hunt on WIA areas. WIA landowners and family do not need to purchase the stamp.

If you have any questions about WIA, contact John or Brady at Stevens SWCD at (320) 589-4886 ext. 4



## MAWQCP Brings Benefits for Producers

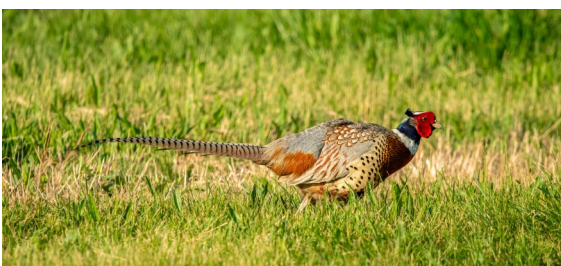
The Minnesota Agricultural Water Quality Certification Program (MAWQCP) is a voluntary opportunity for farmers and agricultural landowners to take the lead in implementing conservation practices that protect our water. Those who implement and maintain approved farm management practices will be certified and in turn obtain regulatory certainty for a period of ten years.

Through this program, certified producers receive:

- Regulatory certainty: certified producers are deemed to be in compliance with new water quality rules or laws during the period of certification.
- Recognition: certified producers may use their status to promote their business as protective of water quality.
- Priority for technical assistance: producers seeking certification can obtain specially designated technical and financial assistance to implement practices that promote water quality.

Through this program, the public receives:

- Assurance that certified producers are using conservation practices to protect Minnesota's lakes, rivers, and streams.

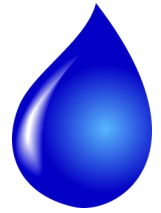


If you have any questions about the MAWQCP, contact John with Stevens SWCD at (320)-589-4886 ext. 4.



# Free Nitrate Testing Clinics

Stevens SWCD is offering the following opportunities to test your water for nitrates. We especially recommend testing rural wells.



**Testing available 8:00 a.m. -5:00 p.m.**

**Monday, November 20 and Tuesday, November 28**

Stevens SWCD Office, next to Subway at 12 Hwy 28 E Ste 2 in Morris

For more information and sampling details, call Judy at 320-589-4886 ext. 114

## *Stevens & Pope Water Fest for 6th graders*

*Our 19th year is in the books!*

Over 375 6<sup>th</sup> grade students got to learn about a variety of topics through hands-on interactive learning at the Pope County Fair Grounds in September. Sessions included: the water cycle, a rain fall simulator, water treatment plant, macro invertebrates, what water do you drink, and they even had a chance to be scientists for the day. Students also played a few games such as the fish journey and the incredible journey of a water drop.

Thanks to our many sponsors who made this day possible for our 6th grade students!



*Students learning  
about macro-  
invertebrates  
at the 2023  
Water Fest*



## *Stevens & Pope Conservation Day at SWELL*

5<sup>th</sup> grade students from Pope and Stevens counties experienced learning and hiking in the outdoors during the 2023 Conservation Day at SWELL early in September. Outdoor sessions included waterfowl, mammals, Mirrors of Minnesota, composting, wetlands, nature's stock market, nature journals, trees, and water quality. The feature sessions came from the Osprey Center of the North Woods, who brought with them reptiles and amphibians for students to see such as salamanders, frogs and snakes. Prairie Wetlands Learning Center did a new session on aquatic invasive species which was fun and interactive for the students.

Special thanks to our many sponsors from Stevens and Pope counties who have been making this event possible for our 5th graders for over 17 years.

Support from our outdoor conservation groups has been amazing!



*Aquatic Invaders*



*In the Woods*



*Wetlands*



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# Holiday Tree Open House

December 5, 2023

8:00 a.m.-5:00 p.m.

Order trees for 2024



Free conservation tree planting  
plan design

For more information call  
320-589-4886 ext. 113 and  
ask for John

