



2017 Report

Narrative of the year's activities

I. Introduction

The mission of the South St. Louis Soil & Water Conservation District is to provide technical, educational, and financial resources to land occupiers in order to implement practices and projects that preserve, protect, and enhance water quality and other natural resources.

The purpose of this report is to briefly discuss items that were completed in 2017.

2. Description of services provided by the District

All SWCD services are designed to achieve our mission. Services provided by the SWCD include the following: Technical & Financial Assistance, Native Tree & Shrub Sale, Watershed Assessments, Watershed Projects, Private Forest Stewardship, Sediment and Erosion Control, Wetland Conservation, Conservation Education, and Conservation Engineering.

3. Listing of supervisors and their offices

Dave Davis <i>Chair</i> <i>Term of office</i> 2017 – 2020	<i>Al Moline</i> <i>Secretary/Treasurer</i> <i>Term of office</i> 2015 - 2018	<i>Michael Lindgren</i> <i>Member</i> <i>Term of office</i> 2017 - 2020	<i>Marcia Stromgren</i> <i>Member</i> <i>Term of office</i> 2014 - 2018	<i>Debra Taylor</i> <i>Vice-Chair</i> <i>Term of office</i> 2015 - 2018
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4. Office personnel and cooperating agencies

Staff

<i>Keith Anderson, P.E.</i> <i>Conservation Engineer</i> <i>(TSA – Shared Position)</i>	<i>Tim Beaster</i> <i>Conservation Specialist</i>	<i>R.C. Boheim</i> <i>District Manager</i>	
<i>Kate Kubiak</i> <i>Conservation Specialist</i>	<i>Mary Krueger</i> <i>Engineering Technician</i> <i>(TSA – Shared Position)</i>	<i>Ben Larson</i> <i>Engineering Technician</i> <i>(TSA – Shared Position)</i>	<i>Crystal Payment</i> <i>Conservation Engineer</i> <i>(TSA – Shared Position)</i>
<i>Ann Thompson</i> <i>Conservation Specialist</i>	<i>Matias Valero</i> <i>Engineering Technician</i> <i>(TSA – Shared Position)</i>	<i>Paul Vartmann</i> <i>Engineering Technician</i> <i>(TSA - Shared Position)</i>	<i>Beth Kleinke</i> <i>District Forester</i> <i>(shared position with North St. Louis)</i>

Cooperating Agencies

Area 3 SWCD Technical Service Area
Saint Louis County
USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service
Minnesota Board of Water and Soil Resources
Minnesota Pollution Control Agency
Minnesota Department of Natural Resources
Minnesota Association of Soil and Water Conservation Districts
Laurentian Resource Conservation and Development Council
Regional Stormwater Protection Team
Minnesota Trout Unlimited
City of Duluth
Duluth Cooperative Invasive Species Management Area
Minnesota Forestry Association

II. Annual Objectives – Soil and Water Conservation Problems

June 2012 Flood Recovery

A. Annual Objectives

- To provide financial and technical assistance to land occupiers to assist with the recovery from the June 2012 Flood Disaster. The first priority will be to assist private landowners.

B. Actions

- Applied technical and financial assistance for the installation of best management practices that repaired erosion damage caused by the June 2012 Flood.
 - Oversaw completion of and payment for 3 flood repair projects on Tischer Creek, Amity Creek and Coffee Creek.
- Obtained financial assistance from Minnesota Recovers Task Force, including:
 - Phase 2 allocation, \$1.9M, for 21 projects
 - Phase 3 (2b) allocation, \$1.5M, for 45 projects
 - Phase 4 allocation, \$673K, for 29 projects

Lake and Stream Protection

A. Annual Objectives

- To protect, preserve, and enhance streams, inland lakes, and Lake Superior.
- To work to implement projects and encourage practices that correct situations that are causing, or could cause, these waters to be impaired.

B. Actions

- Provided technical, educational, and financial assistance for land occupiers to install and use best management practices.
- Provided assistance for Lake Superior shoreline erosion problems.
- Reviewed DNR water permits and provided input to help limit negative impacts.

- Implemented the St. Louis County Water Management Plan.
- Worked to meet the State’s framework for water quality assessment and improvement by monitoring, assessing, setting goals, and implementing projects within target watersheds.
- Partnered with the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency to complete Major Watershed Restoration and Protection Project activities for the St. Louis River, Lake Superior South, Lake Superior North, Cloquet River, and Duluth Urban Watersheds.

Activities included:

- Engaging and educating the public about the MPCA’s WRAPS process. The results of this process in the St. Louis River, Lake Superior South and Cloquet River Major Watersheds were presented.
- Water quality monitoring at dozens of sites.
- Detailed geomorphic assessment of the Sucker River watershed within Lake Superior South
- GIS reconnaissance and analysis of the Lake Superior North and Cloquet River major watersheds.
- Assisting the MPCA in stressor identification data collection, data analysis and report writing in the Lake Superior North and Cloquet River major watersheds
- Serving on the Duluth Urban WRAPS advisory committee (DUWAC).
- Continued working on three, multi-year stream restoration grants with the MN DNR for Mission Creek, Chester Creek and Sargent Creek, which together equal over \$3M in grant funding with no match requirement.
- Secured funding for and oversaw the removal of a fish passage barrier and the required associated stream restoration work on the French River.
- In cooperation with Minnesota Trout Unlimited, worked toward a 2018 restoration project in the upper part of Chester Creek.
- Worked on watershed protection and restoration projects in the four identified priority watersheds for 2017:

Miller Creek

- Continued to work with the MN DNR to secure funding for restoring 3,500 feet of the creek downstream of Haines Rd. (behind Kohl’s Department Store).

Chester Creek

- With funding from the MN DNR, and in cooperation with the City of Duluth and the Chester Park Improvement Club, restored approximately 750 feet of creek through Chester Park, which included the removal of the dams.

Knife River

- In cooperation with Lake County SWCD, continued to support activities related to the Knife River Implementation Plan for the Knife River Sediment TMDL.

Amity Creek/Lester River

- In cooperation with UMD and a private landowner, restored an approximately 250 foot flood-damaged reach on the East Branch of Amity Creek.

- Secured a Conservation Partners Legacy Grant to remove buckthorn and improve woodlands along easement-protected reaches of Lester River.
- Continued to work with local partners to create a detailed plan outlining prioritized stream restoration and protection activities.

Reducing Environmental Impacts

A. Annual Objectives

- To reduce, mitigate, or eliminate environmental impacts caused by development-related activities.

B. Actions

- Remained a member of the Regional Stormwater Protection Team (RSPT) and provided technical assistance for implementing their educational programs. Continued to serve as their fiscal agent.
- Reviewed construction erosion control and stormwater plans for the City of Duluth and completed more than 50 site inspections.
- Completed Minnesota Wetland Conservation Act responsibilities:
 - Completed administrative-type aspects of WCA through an agreement with St. Louis County, Proctor and Duluth.
 - Served on all required Technical Evaluation Panels.
 - 134WCA technical assistance contacts with landowners or consultants were completed. 19~~XX~~ WCA applications were processed.

Outreach and Education

A. Annual Objectives

- To educate youth and adult audiences about high priority SWCD soil and water conservation topics.

B. Actions

- Worked with the media to publicize SWCD programs and policies.
- Developed and maintained the district website, electronic newsletter, print newsletter, and social media to increase public awareness of SWCD programs.
- Gave presentations to schools and community groups about various water quality, forestry and soil – related topics, as requested., including the Arrowhead chapter of Wildones, and the St. Louis County Master Gardeners
- Attended and provided information to the public about SWCD programs at annual regional events including the South St. Louis County Fair.
- Continued to communicate with other agencies to discuss available district programs and services.
- Participated in and supported the Area 3 Envirothon Program.
- Continued participating in annual regional education events including DNR’s Forestry Field Days and Stowe and Lakewood Elementary’s Field Days.
- Conducted a series of Civic Engagement meetings in the St. Louis River Watershed regarding the recently completed WRAPS document and associated TMDLs.
- Served on the Duluth Urban Watershed Advisory Committee, which included educating and engaging local township leaders about water quality, wetlands and other SWCD priorities.

Forestry

A. Annual Objectives

- To provide assistance to private landowners to enable healthy forests on private lands.
- To provide technical assistance to limit negative environmental impacts from forest harvesting and management activities.
- To provide a source of conservation-grade trees and shrubs.

B. Actions

- Held our annual native tree and shrub sale to provide affordable native trees and shrubs to private landowners for conservation and education uses.
- Continued to work with North St. Louis SWCD to support a shared District Forester, which included the following activities:

~Completed Forest stewardship plans for 8 landowners and NRCS project plan applications for 3 landowners.
~Provided in-person site visits and consultation for 40+ landowners with tree and land management questions.
~Held two workshops on forestry-related topics, attended by a total of 50 individuals
~Continued to assist the Aspenwood condo association with long-term planning., including the developing an inventory of over 1,000 urban trees.
~Reviewed 6 tree replacement plans for the City of Duluth under a shared services agreement.
~ Assessed 16 White Cedar Stands for potential restoration projects.
~Certified 1 tree farm.

Ground Water

A. Annual Objectives

- To protect and improve ground water quality.
- To protect ground water quality in areas where land occupiers rely on private wells for water supply, particularly in developing suburban and rural areas.
- To protect ground water that contributes critical base flows for streams, especially streams that support cold-water fish species.

B. Actions

- Provided well-sealing cost-share assistance to three property owners in 2017.

Protection of Natural and Community Resources

A. Annual Objectives

- To protect and preserve critical lands and maintain existing ecological integrity.
- To enable the continued enjoyment and use of public resources and minimize negative impacts.

B. Actions

- Utilized the tree and shrub sale and related technical assistance to support community resource restoration and protection projects.

Agricultural

A. Annual Objectives

- To provide financial and technical assistance to agricultural operations to minimize negative environmental impacts.
- To support sustainable agricultural initiatives and operations that protect the environment, preserve family farming, and conserve energy.

B. Actions

- Maintained agricultural best management practice revolving loan funds for animal waste practices and equipment. One loan was issued for a skid steer.
- IN cooperation with St. Louis County, provided assistance for the implementation of the State Buffer Law, as needed.

Wildlife Management

A. Annual Objectives

- To protect and enhance wildlife habitat.

B. Actions

- Continued to offer selections of native trees and shrubs through the annual sale that benefit wildlife.
- Routinely include trout and other aquatic species habitat in all stream restoration project designs.

III. Annual Objectives – Administration

A. Objective

- Ensure efficient administration and fiscal management of SWCD.
- Effectively utilize SWCD technical resources.
- Provide administrative support for multi-district organizations, partners, and grant projects.

B. Actions

- Maintained financial, personnel, and management policies and procedures that ensure efficient and effective SWCD operation.
- Carried out all administrative functions for TSA #3.
- Acted as fiscal agent for the Regional Stormwater Protection Team.
- Performed administrative, fiscal, and management functions for current watershed and other special projects.
- Completed plans and reports.
- Provided appropriate resources and time for staff and Supervisors to attend applicable training.