



2014 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 2014.

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, Conservation Education, Native Tree & Shrub Sale, Watershed Projects, Private Forest Stewardship, Wetland Conservation, and Conservation Engineering.

3. Listing of supervisors and their offices

<i>Dave Davis</i> <i>Chair</i> <i>Term of office</i> <i>2013 – 2016</i>	<i>Al Moline</i> <i>Secretary</i> <i>Term of office</i> <i>2011 - 2014</i>	<i>Hartley Sandstrom</i> <i>Treasurer</i> <i>Term of office</i> <i>2013 - 2016</i>	<i>Marcia Stromgren</i> <i>Member</i> <i>Term of office</i> <i>2011 - 2014</i>	<i>Debra Taylor</i> <i>Vice-Chair</i> <i>Term of office</i> <i>2011 - 2014</i>
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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>Tim Byrns</i> <i>Conservation Specialist</i> <i>(TSA – Shared Position)</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>Lisa McKhann</i> <i>Project Assistant</i>
<i>Matias Valero</i> <i>Engineering Technician</i> <i>(TSA – Shared Position)</i>	<i>Alice Yonke</i> <i>Conservation Specialist</i>	<i>Julien Babel</i> <i>Conservation Specialist</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
Lake Superior Coldwater Coalition

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 repair erosion damage caused by the June 2012 Flood.
 - Oversaw completion and payment/reimbursement for approximately 15 erosion projects
 - Began surveys, designs and project management for dozens of larger projects
- 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
 - As of year's end, we spent over \$1.29M of these funds, completing about 1/2 of 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 provide 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. This included Total Maximum Daily Load projects when appropriate.
- Partnered with the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency to complete Major Watershed Restoration and Protection Project activities for the St. Louis River and Lake Superior South Watersheds.

Activities included:

- Engaging and educating the public about the MPCA’s new WRAPS process for assessing and restoring Minnesota’s rivers and streams
- Water quality monitoring at dozens of sites
- Geomorphic surveys and data workup for over 10 permanent study sites
- GIS reconnaissance and analysis of the St. Louis River and Lake Superior South watersheds
- Assistance to the MPCA in data analysis and report writing
- Supported the St. Louis River National Estuarine Research Reserve in implementing activities that protect and restore the St. Louis River Estuary.
- Worked on watershed protection and restoration projects in the four identified priority watersheds for 2014:

Miller Creek

- Completed the TMDL Implementation Plan for the MPCA.
- Continued progress on our 2011 Clean Water Fund project (channel restoration, riparian restoration and Stormwater BMP implementation).
- Completed temperature monitoring and a topographic survey of the Miller Hill Mall property for our 2014 Clean Water Fund project (stormwater management plan for the Miller Hill Mall).
- Utilized funding sources such as the Clean Water Fund, Great Lakes Restoration Initiative and other sources to complete projects to improve, protect, and evaluate water quality and habitat in Miller Creek.

Knife River

- Utilized funding sources such as the Clean Water Fund, Great Lakes Restoration Initiative and other sources to complete projects to improve, protect, and evaluate water quality and habitat in Knife River.
- Cooperated with Lake SWCD to make progress toward completing bank stabilization projects funded by a Great Lakes Commission grant.

Amity Creek/Lester River

- Restored 300 feet of flood-impacted stream as part of our GLRI grant. This work included re-aligning the channel to pre-flood conditions, creating a bankful bench to prevent damage from future high flows and restoring and enhancing the riparian corridor.
- Restored a gully that was contributing sediment to the creek as part of our GLRI grant.
- Utilized funding sources such as the Clean Water Fund, Great Lakes Restoration Initiative and other sources to complete projects to improve, protect, and evaluate water quality and habitat in Amity Creek.

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.
 - 220 WCA technical assistance contacts with landowners or consultants were completed. 27 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 topics that are SWCD priorities as requested.
- Attended and provided information to the public about SWCD programs at annual regional events including the South St. Louis County Fair, Lake Superior Zoo's Earth Tracks, and the Duluth Harvest Festival.
- Continued to communicate with other agencies to discuss district programs and services available.
- Promoted and supported the Envirothon Program.
- Judged the Northeast Minnesota Regional Science Fair.
- Continued participating in annual regional education events including DNR's Forestry Field Days and Stowe Elementary Environmental Professionals Day.
- In cooperation with the MPCA and the Lake County SWCD, conducted "focused community conversations" in the Lake Superior South and St. Louis River Major Watersheds regarding the ways that citizens, landowners and the general public can help the State and its cooperating agencies meet the objectives of the MPCA's Major Watershed Approach to assessing and restoring our State's water resources.
- Coordinated and participated in the NE Minnesota Civic Engagement Co-hort, an educational and networking program for professionals engaged in watershed work in Northeastern Minnesota.

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 native tree and shrub sale geared toward supplying native trees for conservation and education uses and programs.
- Continued to be available as First Detectors for the Minnesota Department of Agriculture's Emerald Ash Borer monitoring program and assist our partners with managing and preventing the spread of EAB in St. Louis County as requested.
- Continued to be a member of the Minnesota SWCD Forestry Association.
- Continued cooperating with NRCS to increase participation in the Environmental Quality Incentive/Conservation Assistance Programs directed at owners of forested land.

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 reimbursement for one property owner in 2014.

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.

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.

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 including the NE Minnesota Co-hort project for the MPCA.
- Completed plans and reports.
- Provided appropriate resources and time for staff and Supervisors to attend applicable training.