



2015 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 2015.

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

Dave Davis <i>Chair</i> <i>Term of office</i> 2013 – 2016	<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> 2015 - 2016	<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>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>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>Alice Yonke</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 12 flood repair projects
 - Began surveys, designs and project management for several (7) 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 projectsIn 2015, we disbursed almost \$1 M of these funds to complete 12 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, Lake Superior South, Lake Superior North, Cloquet River, and Duluth Urban 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 30 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.
- Served on the advisory committee for the Duluth WRAPS Major Watershed.
- Finalized 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.
- Worked on watershed protection and restoration projects in the four identified priority watersheds for 2015:

Miller Creek

- Restored a 350-foot channelized reach of Miller Creek just upstream of Haines Road under our 2011 Clean Water Fund grant.
- Completed the installation of a stormwater BMP (grassed swale) at Lake Superior College under our (now complete) 2011 Clean Water Fund grant.
- Continued to apply for funding to complete a 3,000 foot restoration downstream of the 2015 restoration site.

Continued development of the Miller Hill Mall stormwater management plan...

Knife River

- Continued to participate and support the various groups working to protect and restore the Knife River including the Advocates of the Knife River Watershed, the Coldwater Coalition and the Forest Hydrology/Knife River Watershed group.
- Worked with the Lake Superior Steelhead Association to complete a geomorphic assessment of two Knife River sub-watersheds. This project will be completed in 2016.

Amity Creek/Lester River

- Finalized and began implementing a contract with the MPCA to complete a stressor identification/ geomorphic assessment of the Amity Creek watershed. This project will be completed in 2016.

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 75 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.
 - 135 WCA technical assistance contacts with landowners or consultants were completed. 28 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 Continued to communicate with other agencies to discuss district programs and services available.
- Promoted and supported the Envirothon Program.
- Served as judge for 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.

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 a native tree and shrub sale geared toward supplying native trees for conservation and education uses and programs.
- 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 2015 .

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 skid steer - \$12,000.

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.
- Completed plans and reports.
- Provided appropriate resources and time for staff and Supervisors to attend applicable training.