



Who is Pine SWCD?

by Jill Carter, District Manager

Have you ever wondered "who, or what is Pine County Soil & Water Conservation District? What do they do? How can they help Pine County landowners?"

Pine County Soil & Water Conservation District (SWCD) administers many different conservation practices and programs in Pine County. We work with landowners, farmers, and lake associations; to help them protect their land from erosion and protect the water quality and quantity of the county.

Background:

Pine SWCD is technically a state agency, not county, as many people believe. We are not county employees, nor are we a department of the county like the auditor or recorder. We are a separate entity entirely. We have an elected board, which is divided into 5 districts, much like the county board. We have a staff of 4 people: District Manager, Office Assistant, Water Management Specialist, and the Wetland Specialist. Our monthly board meetings are typically held on the 4th Tuesday of the month, in the county board room of the Health & Human Services Building in Sandstone.

Our operations regarding the water plan, cost share program, and administration of WCA are closely regulated by the Board of Water and Soil Resources (BWSR). Refer to MN Statute 103C for information about Soil and Water Conservation Districts.

Education:

We work with several different educational programs to try to educate children about conservation issues. Teaching kids about the environment can make a huge difference in the way they think about conservation issues both now and in the future.

Pine SWCD is the coordinator for the Area 3 Envirothon. This is a high school educational event that promotes environmental awareness, creativity, and

resourcefulness, along with the possibility of a college scholarship. This event covers 7 counties and brings in approximately 300 students each year!

We also participate in other educational events and programs such as the Pokegama Waters Festival. This event is for 5th grade students in Pine County. It is held at the Pine County Fair Grounds, and usually has 700-800 students in attendance.

Trees:

Each year, we sponsor a tree program, where we sell tree seedlings to Pine County landowners. Anyone can order trees from us - no matter where they are from. Typically, we have many people from other counties purchase trees from us due to either price or location of where the trees will be planted. Our list of order form recipients grows each year. 5 years ago we sent order forms out to approximately 700 people. Currently our list is at about 1300! Our tree program has us distributing approximately 35,000 trees each year!

Well Water Testing:

We are a drop-off location for well water testing kits. People can pick up test kits at our office, take them home, collect the sample, and bring them back to us on Wednesday mornings. East Central Water Testing picks up kits that people have dropped off with us. They test samples for things like bacteria, nitrates, nitrites, lead, iron, and many other contaminants. Many people throughout the county use this service for real estate transactions, daycare, foster care or just to find out how good their water really is.

Rainfall Monitoring:

We administer a "Rainfall Monitoring Program" in Pine County. We have approximately 35 volunteers throughout the county that monitor all forms of precipitation and send in the forms to us. We then forward the information on to the State Climatology Office.

Newsletter:

We publish a newsletter that is sent to every landowner in the county two times a year. "The Waters" is an international newsletter that tells people what we are doing, what programs are available, and how they can live lighter on the land. Approximately 24,000 newsletters are sent out with each edition. Articles are submitted from SWCD staff, NRCS, DNR, County Zoning, Extension, and other sources as applicable. This newsletter is a great way for us to get the word out about new developments, programs, and regulations.

Pine County Platbook:

We sponsor the "official" Pine County Platbook. What does this mean? We coordinate the organization of the book with the printing company. We go all over the county (and beyond) to sell ads to businesses who wish to advertise in the book. We sell the book at our office, and also have several other businesses in the county selling them for us as well.

Water sampling:

We do water sampling for MPCA to determine TDMl which will assist in locating waters in Pine County that are degraded, so clean up efforts can be implemented to eliminate polluted lakes, rivers in our county. Mention swag's here.

Community:

We work with the Minnesota Extension Office to hold Rain Garden and Shoreline Erosion Workshops off and on throughout the year. These workshops have become increasingly popular. Pine SWCD staff also participate in the Hindkley-Frailyson High School Science Fair, judging the students projects. It is always interesting to see what the kids have put together.

Pine County Local Water Management Plan:

Pine SWCD administers the Pine County Local Water Management Plan (LWMA). This plan outlines ways to protect, restore and improve the water quality and quantity of Pine County. We are very fortunate to have so many lakes, rivers and streams in our county; but if we don't take care of them now, they won't be around for our children to enjoy. We have set up a Water Plan Task Force made up of county citizens who care about the water resources of the county, and how we take care of them. This group meets once each year to discuss future goals and objectives, as well as past accomplishments. This group has grown considerably over the past few years. We currently have approximately 40 members!

Currently, Pine SWCD staff is in the process of updating the LWM Plan. BWSR has outlined the process and procedures for the update process that must be followed. The current LWM plan expires in August 2010. Our goal is to get the new plan completed and formally approved and adopted before that August deadline.

Wetland Conservation Act:

We administer the Wetland Conservation Act for Pine County, assisting citizens with projects that will affect wetlands protected by the 1991 Wetland Conservation Act (WCA). The WCA is a state law that is passed down to counties to either administer, or pass on to the SWCD to administer. The Pine County Board delegated the Pine SWCD to administer the WCA for Pine County. Pine SWCD is obligated to administer the program by following MN rule and statutes. BWSR oversees all WCA activities handled by the district.

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And did we mention the cost share programs?

Pine SWCD brings in a large amount of state and federal money to Pine County. More than \$22,000 comes in the form of cost-share dollars. We solicit landowners to participate in cost-share practices on their land. Many are erosion projects on lake and streambanks in the county. We cost-share on abandoned well sealing, filter strips, feedlot runoff systems, and pipeline watering systems. These projects are based on 50 - 75% cost-sharing to the landowner. Below is a chart showing the amount of cost-share dollars counties in our area bring in.

Name of County and 2009 Cost-Share Dollar Amounts.	Cost-Share Dollars
Carlton	\$13,000
Kanabec	\$16,000
Millie Lacs	\$11,025
Pine	\$22,424

As you can see, Pine County receives more cost-share dollars than any county in the area. The State of Minnesota passes cost-share dollars down to the SWCD's through BWSR. SWCD's are required to do extensive reporting and monitoring on these projects to make sure they perform as expected, and stay in place for a minimum of 10 years. Some of our cost-share contracts are eligible to be piggy-backed with NRCS



(Natural Resource Conservation Service) cost-share programs to get even more money for the landowner. NRCS is a federal agency that works directly with landowners on installing and maintaining conservation practices on their land, while partnering with the Soil and Water Conservation Districts. In 2008, the NRCS office in Pine County signed EQIP contracts totaling \$398,549.00. The WHIP contracts totaled \$2,778.00. That is a total of \$421,327.00. These dollars would not be in Pine County if it wasn't for the SWCD.

These dollars go to landowners who pay contractors, feed stores, farmers, seed companies, nurseries, etc. Which means the money stays in the area.

\$421,000.00 is a lot of money being spent in Pine County in one year.

Partnerships:

We work cooperatively with several agencies, organizations and citizens. Listed are some of the agencies we have partnerships with: the Natural Resource Conservation Service, Minnesota Pollution Control Agency, Board Water Soil Resources, Department Natural Resources, RC&D, Army Corps of Engineers, Pine County Lake Associations, as well as Pine County.

Pine SWCD is here to help. If you have any questions, please give us a call. (320) 216-4240

ENVIROTHON NEWS

By Jill Cartier, Envirothon Co-Coordinator



The 16th Annual Area III Envirothon will be held at Camp Miller in Sturgeon Lake on May 3, 2010. This is an environmental learning event held outdoors for high school students grades 9-12. The Southern Region Soil and Water Conservation Districts from Area III sponsor the Envirothon. Area III includes the counties of Carlton, Pine, Kanabec, and Millie Lacs.

Students attend five stations in which they are given a short presentation and complete 20 short-answer questions at each station. This year's stations include

forestry, wildlife, water quality, soils, and a current events station in which the topic is Protection of Groundwater through Urban, Agricultural, and Environmental Planning. Students also attend a sixth station and give an oral presentation on the current events topic - Protection of Groundwater through Urban, Agricultural, and Environmental Planning.

The top three teams will go on to attend the State Envirothon which will be held at Clearwater Forest, in Deerwood, MN on May 17, 2010 to compete with other teams from across the state. The winner from the State Envirothon is then sent on to the National Envirothon which

will be held at the California State University, Fresno, California, August 1-7, 2010. College tuition scholarships are awarded by Canon U.S.A. at the National Envirothon totaling \$30,000. First place finishers will be awarded \$3,000 per student, second place \$2,000 per student, and third place \$1,000 per student. There will also be additional prizes for the top 10 teams.

Last year's Area III winners were teams from Cronwell High School and Two Harbors High School. The Teams worked very hard to prepare for the State Envirothon.

The Soil and Water Conservation Districts coordinate the Area III Envirothon and are always looking for volunteers to help with the event. Area III districts do not receive any designated funding to put on this event and anyone who would like to donate funding, time, or supplies to this event is invited to call their local soil and water conservation district or the Envirothon Coordinator at the Pine SWCD office at (320) 216-4241 for more information.

ONE MORE YEAR OF GRANT FUNDS AVAILABLE FOR PROJECTS IN THE SNAKE RIVER WATERSHED

by Sam Martin, Water Management Specialist

Two years ago, the Snake River Watershed Management Board received a 319 Implementation Continuation Grant from the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency. The \$500,000 received is being used for project implementation, education, monitoring, and administration. \$150,000 of the grant is being used for project implementation. Possible projects include lakeshore, streambank, and gully stabilization, agriculture, and forest stewardship plans are some of the possible projects. The waste systems, and forest stewardship plans are designed by an engineer that works for SWCDs in the area. Projects that are approved can receive cost share funds that

cover up to 75% of the cost of the project. The projects are prioritized based on erosion reduction and water quality improvement. There is just one more year left in the three year grant period. If you have a project like this, please contact Sam Martin at 320-216-4242.



INTERESTED IN CONSTRUCTING A POND?

by Robin Poppe, Wetland Specialist

A lot of folks in Pine County are interested in excavating wetlands to construct ponds. Sometimes, excavation of wetlands is not regulated. Wetland excavation regulation varies depending on wetland type, depth of excavation and where the excavated soil will be placed.

The 1991 Wetland Conservation Act regulates excavation in type 3, 4 and 5 wetlands. These wetland types typically have surface water during all or part of the growing season. The most familiar wetland is a type 3, commonly recognized as the cattail marsh. You must receive authorization to excavate type 3, 4 or 5 wetlands.

Excavation of type 1, 2, 6, 7 and 8 wetlands is not regulated unless the depth of excavation exceeds six and a half feet and/or the excavated soil is placed in a wetland. Because unregulated excavation can occur in these wetland types if the above standards are followed the Pine SWCD has a form that provides guidance for these

projects. The form is called a Ponds Project Authorization Release Form.

The form includes information on wetland regulation and how you should proceed. You will also receive a fact sheet on pond excavation in wetlands, as well as a wetland type identification fact sheet, National Wetland Inventory aerial photo and Contractor Responsibility and Landowner Statement Form.

One advantage to the Ponds Project Authorization Release Form is that no fee is required when submitting this form to the Pine SWCD. Another benefit: no application review period, so construction can begin after completion of the form. But keep in mind that other agencies and local government units may have jurisdiction and it is your responsibility to contact them.

The process for submitting the form is simple. Return a completed Ponds Project Authorization Release Form

with a completed National Wetland Inventory aerial photo. To complete the National Wetland Inventory aerial photo, you must mark on the photo the location of the excavation and the location of where the excavated soil will be placed. The location of the excavated soil must be marked within upland areas on the photo and the location of the excavation must be marked within upland areas or type 1, 2, 6, 7 or 8 wetlands on the photo. If the area you want to excavate is shown on the photo as a type 3, 4 or 5 or if you wish to place the excavated soil in a wetland this form cannot be used. You must submit a Minnesota Local/State/Federal Application Form for Water/Wetland Projects.

The Ponds Project Authorization Release Form and fact sheets provide you with the opportunity to make a determination of wetland types and upland areas rather than submit a Minnesota Local/State/Federal Application Form for Water/Wetland projects.

If you would like more information on the Ponds Project Authorization Release Form please contact our office at 320-216-4243

You acknowledge on the form that you are responsible for determining wetland type and staying within the guidelines provided. Because the Pine SWCD does not make a decision regarding wetland type and excavated soil placement no verbal or written acknowledgement or decision from the Pine SWCD will be provided to you regarding the determination you made. You are fully responsible for your decision should the project be in violation of the 1991 Wetland Conservation Act. If you are unsure of the accuracy of the NWI map or would prefer a decision be made by the Pine SWCD you can submit a Minnesota Local/State/Federal Application Form for Water/Wetland Projects.

If you would like more information on the Ponds Project Authorization Release Form please contact our office at 320-216-4243

WHAT DOES IT TAKE TO BE A SOIL AND WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICT SUPERVISOR?



Soil and Water Conservation Districts (SWCD) are local units of government that manage natural resource programs. Minnesota's 91 SWCD's cover the entire state, their boundaries usually coincide with the county lines. Each SWCD is run by a board of five elected Officials.

To be a supervisor, you need:

Knowledge:

- Supervisor's must have, or be willing to learn, some basic knowledge to effectively carry out their responsibilities. They must understand:
- Some of the fundamentals about the environment and how it works.
- The relationship between land use decisions and the environment.
- The effect environmental decisions have on other aspects of our lives.
- Local concerns, attitudes and needs.

Concern:

- Supervisor's must be concerned about:
- Our environment and natural resources. Maintaining and improving water quality
- Protecting our soil.

Leadership:

- Supervisor's must be willing to take a proactive leadership role in the community. This can involve:
- Setting local conservation priorities.
- Educating friends and neighbors about the environment.
- Working with local units of government, state and federal agencies, and other elected officials
- Setting an example.
- Taking unpopular stands. Balancing economic needs with environmental concerns.
- Sacrificing short-term gains for long-term benefits.

Do you have what it takes? Being a supervisor involves one board meeting a month and many incidental responsibilities. Supervisor's receive no salary, although they do get per diem and expenses. For more information, contact your local SWCD at (320) 216-4240, or email: jncarlie@co.pine.mn.us