

Background:

Pine Soil & Water Conservation District has been around for 51 years. Board meetings for Pine SWCD are typically the 4th Tuesday of each month at 4:30pm. Due to our new location, they are now held in the county board room of the Pine County Health & Human Services Building.

Board of Supervisors:

District 1: Doug Odegard
District 2: Kelly Osterdyk
District 3: Skip Thomson
District 4: Jeffrey Waldhalm
District 5: Paul Olesen



Skip, Paul, JJ, Doug, Kelly

District Staff:

Jill Carlier, District Manger
Sam Martin, Water Management Specialist
Tim Olson, Office Assistant
Robin Poppe, Wetland Specialist



Tim, Robin, Jill, Sam

District:

The District Manager and Office Assistant work on many projects throughout the year. Bookkeeping, year-end reporting, Resource Tour, District Retreat, Fresh Water Festival, and the Envirothon just to name a few. Below are 3 of our biggest projects that we deal with each year.

2009 Tree Program

The district sells approximately 35,000 trees each year. Last year we received and filled over 350 orders. Trees were sold in bundles of 25 for a price of \$24.00/bundle. All 4 district staff work at the 'tree shack' to bag the orders that have come in. This takes approximately 2 ½ - 3 days. People then come to the tree shack to pick up their orders and have the option to buy any leftover trees from us.

Pine County Platbooks:

The district 'sponsors' the Platbook publication. We typically work with Cloud Cartographics, who publishes the book; however the economy has taken its toll on Cloud Cartographics and they were forced to go out of business. We have started researching other companies to publish the next edition of the Pine County Platbook. We hope to start working on a new book by mid-2010. If you have any ideas of maps or information that should be in the Platbook, please let Jill know and we can incorporate that into the next book.

Platbooks are sold at our office along with several other locations throughout the county: Auditors office, First National Bank of the North (all branches), Duxbury Store, Moose Lake Coop, and Pety's Bait.

2009 Area III Envirothon

Pine SWCD has been the coordinator for the Area III Envirothon for the 15 years of its existence. This is a high school competition for students in grades 9-12. There are 9 counties in Area III, and we have participation from almost all of the 9 counties. We seek out donations from businesses in each county to help fund and support the event. The 2007 event was such a large event that it forced the planning committee to split the area into 2 regions. There will now be 2 Envirothons in Area III – a northern region consisting of Lake, Cook, St. Louis, and Aitkin counties, and a southern region consisting of Carlton, Pine, Mille Lacs, Kanabec, Isanti and Chisago. Both events will be held on the same day, at different locations. This event takes months of planning and preparation to be successful. The district manager and office assistant are involved in the planning and preparation, along with staff from all of the other SWCD's in Area III. Approximately 300 students participate in the Envirothon in Area III. It takes between 75-100 volunteers to run the event. We have been very fortunate to have people volunteer to help us with the event over the years.

2009 was a year of many changes for our district. Two new board members joined our team in January. Skip Thomson represents District 3, replaced long-time supervisor Norman Nelson; and Jeffrey (JJ) Waldhalm represents District 4, replacing former supervisor Basil Serfin. It has been interesting to see how our new board works together to get things done.

Funding

- Due to constant rising costs, the district changed health insurance companies. We are now with Preferred One. The employees seem to be happy with the new plan, and our monthly premiums have dropped considerably; which were our two biggest concerns.
- The district relocated its offices in late September. Our offices are now located in the Pine County Veteran Services building in Sandstone. We hope it will benefit the district as well as the county. The district will continue to look for other areas to cut spending in the future.

Water Plan

The Waters Newsletter.

This publication is sent out twice a year to all landowners in the county – both residents and non-residents. Approximately 23,000 people receive this newsletter. Articles are submitted for the newsletter from SWCD and NRCS staff, and DNR (Fisheries, Forestry, Waters, and Wildlife-whoever has articles). This is a great way for us to get information out to Pine County residents and landowners.

Pine County Water Plan.

The district administers the Pine County Water Plan for the county. We hold an annual Task Force meeting where we review the past years' accomplishments, and discuss concerns and possible projects for the future. The Water Plan must be updated by August 28, 2010. The updating process has gone very smoothly thanks to the volunteers on our Water Plan Working Group. The Scoping Document was presented to a BWSR committee in August, and approved. The Working Group is now working on writing the actual water plan, and will start sending it through the approval process in early 2010.

Cost-Share Projects

Below is a list of all cost-share projects that the district assisted with in 2009.

Robert Sahlen Jr (Askov): Feedlot Runoff Control. *Total Project Cost: \$49,533.00*

Robert Kraft (Pine City): Grass Waterway. *Total Project Cost: \$1,600.00*

Terry Hanlon (Birch Creek Township): Abandoned Well Sealing. *Total Project Cost: \$990.00*

We also have approximately 13 projects that we starting working on, and hope to bring to life in 2010-2011.

Surface Water Monitoring Grant

In 2008, Pine SWCD applied for and received a \$43,580.70 Clean Water Legacy Surface Water Assessment Grant from the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency to monitor ten lakes and nine streams over a two year period. This grant was to be completed in 2009; however due to the local drought, several streams were not able to be monitored. This grant will be extended into 2010 to obtain the needed information on these streams.

A new Surface Water Assessment Grant application was submitted to monitor the Kettle River Watershed. Oak Lake will be one of the lakes being monitored. Other lakes to be monitored have not been defined by MPCA at this time, but will be by the end of this month. The streams being monitored are the Pine River, the Moose Horn River, the Willow River, the Grindstone River and the Kettle River. The goal of the grant is to obtain water quality information on lakes and streams where there is not much information already collected. Lakes will be sampled for total phosphorus and chlorophyll, along with the secchi disk. 10 - 12 samples will be collected over two years. The streams will be sampled for total phosphorus, total kjeldahl nitrogen, total suspended solids, chloride, nitrite plus nitrate, nitrate-nitrogen, total chlorophyll and E. coli. The streams will be monitored 20 times over 2 years. The grant was set up to have volunteers do the sampling. The data that is collected will be put into the MPCA's STORET Database. *This grant application is on hold with MPCA until the first SWAG is completed.*

Wetlands

Below is a summary of work with the Wetland Conservation Act (WCA) in 2009:

594 Landowners were provided with wetland related technical assistance.

1 Replacement Plan applications were approved (0 were denied, 0 were withdrawn)

13 Exemptions were issued (2 were denied, 3 were withdrawn)

1 No-Loss Applications were approved (2 were denied, 0 were withdrawn)

2.5 acres of wetland to be impacted by approved replacement plans

4 Potential violation sites were investigated

1 Enforcement actions were taken under local ordinances and/or that did not result in DNR-issued cease & desist, restoration, or replacement orders (including formal resolution of violations)

0 Local appeals were heard

3 Staff days spent on WCA training