Check Us Out Online

Pineswcd.com

And Follow Us on Facebook!

Paul Swanson, District Manager
(320)216-4241
paul.swanson@co.pine.mn.us

Erin Hoxsie, Administrative Coordinator
(320)216-4240
erin.hoxsie@co.pine.mn.us

Mara Jade, Water Resource Tech.
(320)216-4242
mara.jade@co.pine.mn.us

Heather Donoho, Ag Technician
(320)216-4247
heather.donoho@co.pine.mn.us

Eddie Johnson, District Forester
(320)216-4245
eddie.johnson@co.pine.mn.us

Nick Foss, Shared Services Forester
(320)216-4245
nick.foss@co.pine.mn.us

Shayna Vendela
PF Wildlife Biologist
cell (715)-821-4292
office (320)-280-4104
svendela@pheasantsforever.org

Pine SWCD
1610 Hwy 23 N
Sandstone, MN 55072

Species Highlight: Red-Osier Dogwood

Eddie Johnson

Red-osier dogwood is a very common shrub located throughout most of Minnesota. It is the by far the most common native dogwood in the state of Minnesota. It usually sticks out due to its color and the unique way the flowers present. Red-osier dogwood can grow anywhere from 3 to 9 feet tall and is part shade tolerant, meaning it doesn't need full sun to grow its best. It can grow in a large range of soil moisture levels from well-drained to wet soil. The soil type that this shrub likes the best are clay soils. They will tolerate sandy soils as long as it isn't dry for too long. It is a fast-growing shrub with growth of up to 2 feet in a year. There are many features that make the Red-osier dogwood a desired shrub in anyone's landscape. These features include bright red colored stems in the winter, its white flowers that appear in the spring and berries that start as white and transition to dark purple.

The Red-osier dogwood's flowers grow in cluster form, meaning it is not just one single flower on a stem. The cluster of flowers can range from 1 to 3 inches in width. Each flower has 4 petals. The leaves throughout the shrub usually have a dark shade of green and can grow up to 4 inches in length and 3 inches wide, making the leaves a great windbreak or privacy barrier. The fruit on a Red-osier dogwood start out white, turning to a green and then to a dark purplish red color. These berries are edible, but they are bitter when eaten alone. They can be used to make jams or other berry recipes you may desire.

The main feature of the Red-osier dogwood is the stem of the shrub. The stems are a reddish green when they are growing becoming a much deeper red during the dormant season. This makes it very easy to spot this shrub when walking or driving by. Older stems may turn grayer. If you have Red-osier dogwood and want to keep the shrub red in the winter, cutting the older stems will not hurt shrub.

The Red-osier dogwood will not only satisfy your sight seeing but it will also help out your birding. Many species of birds will eat the berries and use the shrub for shelter due to the way it grows. It doesn't grow straight and does a great job and filling up the space it is growing in.

The Red-osier dogwood is one of the highest sold shrubs we sell during our tree sale. It is one of the easier wildlife plants that you can grow quickly. It also makes an excellent replacement for buckthorn once it has been removed.

When it comes to caring for the Red-osier dogwood, there isn't too much you need to do. The shrub does well in most soils as long as the soil is moist. There are some pruning options if you would like to keep the shrub as red as it will grow. This includes cutting the older stems so new stems will continue to grow.

These shrubs can be planted at any spacing you would like. Plant them closer for a wind break or wider apart for a larger shrub. More information about the Red-osier dogwood can be found by contacting the Pine SWCD.

Top: Close up of Red-Osier's distinct color

Right: Red-Osier berries

Far Right: Red-Osier in winter

Photo Credit: Minnesota Wildflowers and UMN Extension

The Pine SWCD Newsletter

Pine County Soil & Water Conservation District

Volume 33 Issue 2 Fall 2024

Pine County Fully Covered by Watershed Based Implementation Funding- Mara Jade

Starting a little over a decade ago in 2013, the Board of Water and Soil Resources (BWSR) has been leading a transition away from water planning by county boundaries to planning by watershed boundaries. Along with this shift in policy has come additional funding above and beyond what Pine SWCD has received in the past.

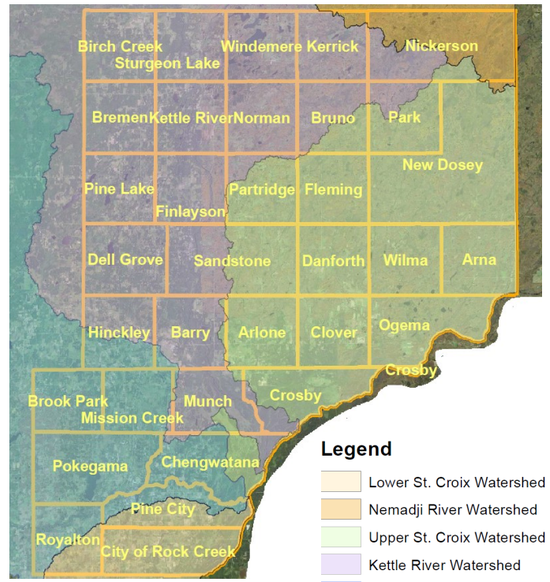
Pine County has 5 watersheds on the scale at which this state funding is being distributed. They are the Lower St. Croix River, Snake River, Kettle/Upper St. Croix River (combination of 2 of our watersheds), and the Nemadji River.

The plans took approximately 1 to 2 years to complete and each began and was approved at different times. A governing entity composed of SWCDs, Counties, and other local governmental partners, was then created to receive funds to implement each plan.

With the approval of the Kettle/Upper St. Croix plan on 6/26/2024, all of Pine County is in implementation stage of this planning process, meaning we have access to this new funding source for the entirety of the county.

The driving purpose behind these plans and the funds that come with them are to improve water quality. This will be accomplished through a wide range of work across our forests, farmland, lakes, and waterways.

Continued on Pg. 6...



Inside this issue:

Jack Frechette and Julie Kraft

"THE FRECHETTES WERE NOMINATED BECAUSE OF THEIR COMMITMENT TO PROVIDING THE BEST LIFE POSSIBLE FOR ALL ORGANISMS ON THEIR LAND, THEIR QUALITY FOOD, AND SUPPORT FOR THEIR LOCAL COMMUNITY"

Pine County SWCD 2024 Outstanding Conservationist of the Year - Heather Donoho

The Pine County Soil and Water Conservation District is thrilled to announce that the Pine County 2024 Outstanding Conservationist of the year is the Frechette Farms! In 2014, Jack Frechette and Julie Kraft Frechette began farming 234 acres of mostly low land in Hinckley Minnesota. Their farm has evolved with time and now they operate a diversified farm focused on heritage pork, Texas long horn and angus crossed cattle, in addition to a large vegetable garden. The Frechettes were nominated because of their commitment to providing the best life possible for all organisms on their land, their quality food, and support for their local community.

There is no doubt that the pigs at the Frechette Farm are living the best life possible as they forage and play in their pastures. Raising pigs on pasture is an uncommon practice because pigs usually root and turn over grasses, however, their heritage breed pigs will create one sacrifice area, or wallow, and graze the rest for up to 40% of their overall diet. This disturbance reduces the pressure of reed canary, an aggressive plant species that creates a monoculture, and increases the diversity of plant species on their pastures. This both improves the quality of forage and the soil biology, creating a more sustainable system.

In addition to the care they give living things on farm, the Frechettes are extremely active in their community. In 2020 the Frechettes started Meating the Need, which is a non-profit organization aimed at making local meat affordable for local people. This developed because they noticed that 75% of their customers were from outside the county and they wanted to reach more locals. They deliver a free bundle of meat cuts to families struggling to put quality food on the table in Pine County every December, calling the gift "Ham Santa". This year they're working to expand their garden and build capacity to pair vegetables with the meat bundles in the future.

Jack and Julie integrate conservation and fellowship into every aspect of their lives and farm. They rotationally graze their cattle, practice no-till in their garden, plant native species, and have a proposal to restore 80 acres of wetland. They are also active in their community through the Pine Center for the Arts, the Pine County Northern Lights Lions Club, A Place For You Shelter, and Pine County Farmer's Union. They've opened their farm to the public through several on farm events including a partnership with the Pine SWCD to promote conservation in agriculture called Cookout on the Farm in 2024. We are thankful for the care and commitment they show to all living things. Congratulations Frechette Farms the Pine County 2024 Outstanding Conservationists of the year!

Jack Frechette with some of his heritage pigs

BPLA Community Conservation Award - Paul Swanson

Pine SWCD would like to announce that they have nominated Big Pine Lakes Association for the Minnesota Association of Soil and Water Conservation Districts (MASWCD) Community Conservation Award.

Big Pine Lakes Association has worked hard to protect and improve both Big Pine and Pine Lake for over 40 years. By doing so, they are providing benefits to those that live on the lakes, those that visit the lakes, and the local communities in the area. They have helped advocate for policies that will not only help protect the lakes they serve, but all lakes in Pine and Aitkin Counties.

Continued on page 6...

Equipment Rental

Great Plains 1206 No-till Drill

Working Width: 12 feet
Travel Width: 16 feet
Rental Rate: $14/acre

1 Main box capable of seeding up to soybeans
1 Small seed box for grasses

3/4 ton truck for transportation, and at least a 75 horsepower tractor for use.

A 50% deposit of estimated acres is needed to hold your place.

Drill Rental:
Heather Donoho
(320)216-4247
Heather.donoho@co.pine.mn.us

Wildlife plot equipment

Can be used behind an ATV or small utility tractor, includes: Trailer to move equipment, small field disc, broadcast seeder, drag harrow.

Rental Rate is $80 per weekday $225 for the weekend

Wildlife Plot Equipment Rental:
Shayna Vendela
cell (715)-821-4292
office (320)-280-4104
svendela@pheasantsforever.org

Forestry equipment

We have backpack sprayers, Buckthorn pullers, and tree planting bars available for rent. They are available all year round for a small, fully refundable, deposit. We provide a dyed herbicide mix for backpack sprayers.

If you're interested, stop in at our office or contact our forestry team!

Eddie Johnson,
District Forester
(320)216-4245
eddie.johnson@co.pine.mn.us

Nick Foss,
Shared Services Forester
(320)216-4248
nick.foss@co.pine.mn.us

Paul Swanson,
Manager
(320)216-4241
paul.swanson@co.pine.mn.us

Pine SWCD Conservation Continuing Education Scholarship - Heather Donoho

Want to gain the knowledge and skills necessary to preserve your land and water resources for generations?

Check out the Pine SWCD Conservation Continuing Education Scholarship. The Pine SWCD has funding to assist Pine County Landowners who wish to attend events and trainings that will increase their knowledge and ability to implement sustainable conservation practices on their land.

Interested landowners can apply by filling out our application form and providing a description of why this event will further conservation in Pine County. The application form can be found on our website.

Please contact us at 320-216-4247 or email heather.donoho@co.pine.mn.us with questions.

Pine County Fully Covered by Watershed Based Implementation Funding

- Continued From Page 1

"PINE SWCD IS EXCITED TO TAKE THESE STATE FUNDS AND INVEST THEM LOCALLY WHILE ASSISTING LANDOWNERS CONSERVE OUR COUNTY'S NATURAL RESOURCES."

The first thing the Lower St. Croix, Snake, and Kettle/Upper St. Croix watershed entities did was hire on additional staff to help with the implementation of their plans.

The Lower St. Croix Watershed Partnership added an outreach focused employee to expand the range and audience of the people served by the Partnership's members. They also hired an agricultural focused employee to support existing staff with their increased workload.

The Snake River Watershed Plan Partnership recently added a Watershed Coordinator, housed in Kanabec SWCD, to aid existing staff in the management and implementation of the plan. Pine SWCD was also able to hire a full time Shared Services Forester thanks to funding from the Snake River Watershed Plan Partnership. Their role is to expand forestry services to previously underserved areas within the watershed.

The Kettle/Upper St. Croix Partnership will be adding a water resources focused employee to assist both Pine SWCD's and Carlton SWCD's staff with the increased workload.

The funds remaining in the plan budget will be used to implement conservation practices across the county based on the priority areas decided on in the planning process.

Pine SWCD is excited to take these state funds and invest them locally while assisting landowners conserve our county's natural resources.

BPLA Community Conservation Award

- Continued From Page 2

"BIG PINE LAKES ASSOCIATION HAS WORKED HARD TO PROTECT AND IMPROVE BOTH BIG PINE AND PINE LAKE FOR OVER 40 YEARS."

They provide educational materials to landowners around the lakes, and to those that visit for recreational purposes.

They have also taken conservation into their own hands. Since 2011 they have worked on a shoreline restoration and protection program that partners with professionals to design shoreline buffers. Not only do they provide this for lake home owners on their lakes, but they get association members together to learn and assist in the installation of the buffers. This helps impower the residents of the community to take action themselves and educates them on the importance of protecting shoreline and the health of our local water bodies.

In addition to this program, association members also participate in water sampling on both lakes to monitor lake health, monitor for invasive species like zebra mussels, participate in local water planning efforts, and are currently advocating and campaigning for funds to install boat cleaning stations at the landings of both Big Pine and Pine Lake.

Pine SWCD would like to comment Big Pine Lakes Association for their leadership and efforts in protecting our water resources, and providing opportunities for members of the community to take conservation into their own hands. Join us in congratulating them in their nomination for the MASWCD Community Conservation Award!

Grindstone Lake, Water Body Highlight - Mara Jade

Grindstone Lake is located 9 miles west of Sandstone. It is a long, narrow lake covering approximately 530 acres with 5 miles of shoreline. Grindstone lake has two major inlets and one outlet. This outlet is the beginning of the Grindstone River, named for the lake that is its headwaters. The lake's name is a translation from the Ojibwe *zhiigwanaabikokaa-zaaga'igan*, lake abundant with grind stones.

Grindstone Lake is unique among lakes in east central Minnesota in that it has a maximum depth of 150 ft. This significant depth is a result of the process which formed the lake. Grindstone Lake sits in a tunnel valley. A tunnel valley is a U shaped valley that is eroded out by meltwater running underneath a glacier. Approximately 15,000 years ago glaciers covered large portions of Pine County. As the earth warmed it caused these glaciers to melt. This meltwater had to go somewhere, and one path it travels is down through the glacier, along the bottom of the glacier, and then out from under the glacier wherever it ends. Glacial meltwater is powerful; it can erode out depressions as long as 62 miles, 2.5 miles wide, and 1,300ft deep. Grindstone Lake is one such depression.

Grindstone's unique depth allows the lake to support coldwater fish species such as trout as well as the more familiar warmwater species such as bass, panfish and the Northern Pike. In support of Grindstone's trout population, Brown Trout, Lake Trout, Rainbow Trout are stocked annually. Fingerlings (young trout that are about the size of a finger), yearlings (year old trout), and adult trout are all stocked. In 2023, 953 fingerling and 1,637 yearling Brown Trout were stocked; 6,000 yearling and 87 adult Lake Trout were stocked; and 9,000 yearling and 30 adult Rainbow Trout were stocked.

The watershed (the land area where rainfall flows into a body of water) of Grindstone Lake is diverse. 42% of the lake's watershed is protected in the form of wetlands and public water. 24% of the watershed is in agricultural production (4% crops, 20% pasture/hay), 25% is private forests, 5% is covered with herbaceous plants and shrubs. The remaining 4% of the lake's watershed is developed for urban uses such as private homes, towns, and businesses.

Thanks to a public access on the northern end of the lake, Grindstone is accessible to all boat owners, including kayakers and canoers! Osprey Wilds is another way for the public to access Grindstone and a frequent partner with Pine SWCD. They are an environmental learning center with a "focus on developing understanding, ethics, and responsibility regarding the environment and the role of humans through experiential learning that links nature and humans."

A bathymetric (lake depth) map of Grindstone Lake

Blooming Wildflowers! Large-leaved Aster- Shayna Vendela

Large-leaved or big leaved aster is one of the later blooming flowers you can find in Pine County, blooming from July-October. This is a woodland species, favoring part shade. As its name suggests, its best known for his large leaves 4-8" wide, sometimes even being referred to as lumberjack's toilet paper. This aster can provide excellent ground cover because of its size. It spreads by rhizomes and can quickly establish ground cover without being too aggressive. Its also noted as being deer resistant.

Next time your local store is out of TP, not to worry – your local woodland might just have some lumberjack's toilet paper.

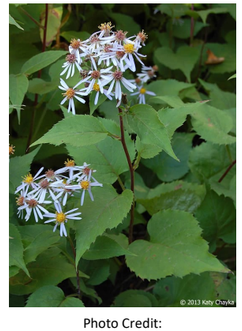


Photo Credit: Legislative-Citizen Commission on Minnesota's Resources

White Nose Syndrome in Pine County - Nick Foss

Photo Credit:
NPR News

"IN 2016 THE FIRST CASES OF WHITE-NOSE SYNDROME WERE DISCOVERED IN MINNESOTA, AND SINCE IT HAS SPREAD TO AT LEAST 15 COUNTIES IN THE STATE, INCLUDING PINE.

In 2006 a population of bats was discovered in upstate New York that was harboring a disease that had previously gone undocumented. Noteworthy and noticeable due to the white mold-like growth that could be seen on the noses, eyes and joints of the bats in this population, experts were dumbfounded. This disease, now known as white-nose syndrome (WNS) proceeded to decimate native bat populations across the eastern US. In 2016 the first cases of white-nose syndrome were discovered in Minnesota, and since it has spread to at least 15 counties in the state, including Pine. This disease is extremely deadly to all 8 of our native bat species. It has been reported that the bat population living in the Soudan mine north of Virginia, MN, once the largest bat population in the state, has fallen by over 90% since the occurrence of WNS in the mine was first recorded. This leaves us with a few questions; What is this disease? Why is it a problem? What can we do to help?

White-nose syndrome is caused by a non-native fungus that grows in cool, damp conditions like the conditions often found in caves. When a bat becomes infected by this fungus, it grows in, on and around the moisture-producing areas of the bat's body, like the nose, eyes, mouth, and joints. When this occurs, the fungus can enter the bat's body, and causes many health-related issues for the bat. The exact mechanism of the fungus disrupting the bat is currently unknown and is under intense study. One affect that is known is that the fungus will disrupt the bat's hibernation cycle, causing them to wake in the middle of winter when they otherwise would have remained dormant. This is life-threatening to the bat, as hibernation is an important resource preserving process and many bats may end up starving to death over winter due to being active more than they should be. In extreme cases, bats may even exit the cave or cavity that they are hibernating in in the middle of winter, causing death by frostbite or exposure. It has been theorized by experts in the field that the sudden explosion of cases of this disease is linked to climate change. They believe that warmer winter temperatures have made it possible for this fungus to survive through the winter when it normally would have been killed off by below freezing temperatures. Temperatures aren't going to fall by themselves anytime soon, so what can we do?

For now, the best we can do is to assist researchers in tracking and recording cases of WNS in the state. If you observe bat activity during winter months, find dead bats on your or someone else's property, or see other signs you believe may be and infected bat population you are encouraged to report these findings to the MN DNR through a bat observation report (which you can find online at https://www.dnr.state.mn.us/reportbats/index.html), by emailing the Minnesota Biological Survey at MCBS.e-report@state.mn.us or by calling the Minnesota Biological Survey hotline at 1-888-345-1730.

Oak Wilt - Eddie Johnson

Oak Wilt is a disease that affects Oak trees. It is a fungus that grows in the water conducting system of the tree. The fungus can spread through sap-feeding beetles as well as through tree roots. It is mainly found along the Wisconsin border, following the St. Croix River, as well as some of the Mississippi River up to St. Cloud. Here in Pine County, we are at its known northern edge which makes our conservation efforts extremely important to stop or slow the spread of Oak Wilt. A primary sign of the disease is leaves that turn brown from the edges inward. Another sign is green leaves falling off before they completely change colors. If Oak Wilt is suspected, never cut an Oak tree between April and September. Cutting the tree increases the chance of spreading through spores as well as beetles which are attracted to fresh wounds on trees. If you suspect you may have Oak Wilt, contact the DNR, Pine SWCD, or NRCS. There may be cost share available to help with controlling the spread of Oak Wilt. To learn more about Oak Wilt, check out our website or call 320-216-4240.

"OAK WILT IS A FUNGUS, WHICH CAN SPREAD THROUGH SAP-FEEDING BEETLES AS WELL AS THROUGH THE ROOTS."

Wildlife Trees - Eddie Johnson

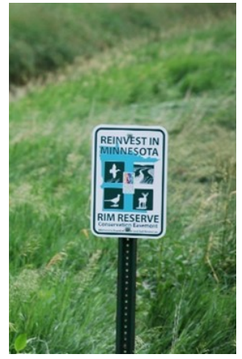
Wildlife trees are something everybody has probably seen before. They aren't the nicest looking trees in the forest, but they do serve an amazing purpose to the wildlife that surrounds us. Trees, alive or dead, that are still standing can serve as a shelter for many different species including birds, small animals like squirrels, racoons, and many more. These trees can also be a source of food for animals. Dead or dying trees can have an abundant amount of bugs moving throughout the tree which woodpeckers can target for food. Even though these trees may not be productive growing wise, they are very productive in providing the wildlife with what they need to survive. As long as the trees aren't a hazard and even though they may not look the best, it's important to keep as many as you can on the landscape. An added bonus to these wildlife trees is once they do fall, they become a habitat for new species that live on the ground. Critters like Grouse will use these logs for drumming. Down trees also serve as obstacles for animals. Animals that rely on hunting have to work harder to be successful when the forest isn't wide open. The down trees also serve has hiding opportunities for non-meat eaters.

Reinvest in Minnesota (RIM) - Shayna Vendela

Landowners interested in permanently protecting their land might consider the Board of Soil and Water Resources (BWSR) perpetual easement program, Reinvest in Minnesota or RIM. Since 1986, over $200 million state dollars has resulted in 6,000+ easements covering more than 250,000 acres. The program focuses on permanent wetland restoration, adjacent native grassland wildlife habitat complexes and permanent riparian buffers.

There are three main goals: to reduce soil erosion, to improve and protect water quality, and to enhance fish and wildlife habitat. Landowners are paid a percentage (60%) of the tax assessed value of the acreage enrolled, to enroll it in a conservation easement. In addition, RIM Reserve provides funds to help share the cost of establishing appropriate conservation or wildlife habitat practices on easement lands. A variety of land types are eligible, including wetland restoration areas, riparian agricultural lands, marginal cropland, and sensitive groundwater areas.

For more information, contact the Pheasants Forever biologist Shayna Vendela at the SWCD @ 320-280-4104 svendela@pheasantsforever.org



RIM Reserve Signage

Pine SWCD
Board of Supervisors

District 1 Supervisor
Doug Odegard
(320) 496-5266

District 2 Supervisor
Mike Cummins
(612) 490-4824

District 3 Supervisor
Brenna Doheny
(850) 797-1610

District 4 Supervisor
Dan Benzie
(218)380-1672

District 5 Supervisor
Jerry Telker
(218)343-0948