

AITKIN COUNTY SOIL AND WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICT



2008 Annual Report

The Aitkin County Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD) was established in 1957 through citizen requests,

for the purposes of assisting landowners with erosion control, project design and other land-use opportunities.

AITKIN COUNTY SWCD MISSION AND PURPOSE

OUR MISSION IS TO APPLY CONSERVATION PRACTICES TO THE LAND AND PROVIDE EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES TO LANDOWNERS AND GROUPS. WE STRIVE TO DEVELOP COMMON SENSE, COOPERATIVE PROGRAMS TO ADDRESS RESOURCE NEEDS. OUR PURPOSE IS TO WORK WITH OTHERS TO ACHIEVE SOUND MANAGEMENT OF OUR NATURAL RESOURCES.

AWARDS/RECOGNITION RECENTLY RECEIVED:

Department of Natural Resources - WATERS APPRECIATION AWARD, DECEMBER 2004 (Presented annually to one of 91 SWCD's statewide)

Lone Lake Property Owner's Association Dedicated Service Award, June 2005

North Central Minnesota Lakes Certificate of Appreciation October 20, 2006

Forest Stewardship Bonus Awards for high quality forest stewardship plans (eight \$100 awards earned annually)

DUTIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE SWCD INCLUDE:

LOCAL WATER PLANNING

- The SWCD is the coordinating agency for the Aitkin County Water Plan
- The water plan funds projects, lake association newsletters and organization activities, education and water quality monitoring
- We received a grant from the McKnight Foundation to fund the Healthy Lakes and Rivers Program for Big Sandy, Fleming/Wilkins, Round and Lone Lakes
- We assist lake and river landowners with planning and watershed resident education
- We lead and coordinate a 25-member citizen water planning task force

- Assist the Snake River Watershed JPB through membership on the Citizen's Advisory Committee
- We helped keep Mille Lacs County involved as a JPB member by entering into an agreement to provide Forest Stewardship assistance to Mille Lacs County residents in the Snake River Watershed
- We are helping to establish the Aitkin County Lakes and Rivers Association

EDUCATION/INFORMATION

- The SWCD sponsors tours and field days in Aitkin County
- Recent tour and educational activities include:
 - 2005 Logger's Workshop at LLCC
 - Tree identification class through community education
 - Education field day at Aitkin School Forest for fifth and sixth graders
 - Coordinating 4 statewide "Light on the Land" logging demonstrations
 - Small lot stewardship workshop
 - Forest Stewardship Plan writer training
 - Trees given to all 3rd graders in McGregor, Palisade, Hill City and Aitkin schools
 - Aitkin County Rivers and Lakes Fair in June
 - Grazing/pasture management workshop, McGregor area

MONITORING/DATA COLLECTION

- We coordinate the Mille Lacs Watershed Management Project
- Collection of water samples from 15 area lakes and 10 streams
- 6 groundwater level monitoring wells
- Snake River monitoring, 2 sites near McGrath
- Big Sandy watershed projects including:
 - newsletters, education, erosion control, livestock fencing, and other projects
- Mille Lacs watershed monitoring, 11 stream sites and 4 lakes
 - Mille Lacs watershed workshops, newsletters cluster septic systems and other projects
- Fiscal agent for Mille Lacs and Big Sandy Watersheds

AGRICULTURAL PROJECTS

- Green Shores livestock exclusion and critical area stabilization design and funding, well-sealing cost-share
- Environmental Quality Incentives Program
- Conservation Reserve Program
- Coordinate with MPCA Feedlot program to provide information to landowners on feedlot issues
- Pasture management assistance
- Livestock watering facilities
- Grassed waterway design
- Re-invest in Minnesota spot-checks
- Tree sales for windbreaks and general plantings
- Very low-cost tree planter rental
- We coordinate engineering and design assistance for numerous projects

TECHNICAL STAFF SERVICES

- Advise landowners about options for their property that will maintain compliance with Aitkin County ordinances
- Provide design and cost-share of re-vegetation, erosion control and abandoned well sealing
- We serve on the County Land Classification Committee
- Review of development proposals on the EAW Review committee
- Wetland delineations
- Shoreland site reviews
- Shoreland performance worksheet for landowners and the Board of Adjustment
- Provide tree planting and species selection advice to landowners

WETLAND CONSERVATION ACT

- SWCD chairs the Technical Evaluation Panel (TEP)
- SWCD and Planning and Zoning share the implementation of the Wetland Conservation Act. P&Z is the Local Governmental Unit and shares field work and TEP Panel responsibilities with SWCD
- We review wetland banking applications and wetland sites
- We coordinate with P&Z and DNR Conservation Officers to ensure necessary WCA enforcement

LOCAL SHORELAND ADMINISTRATION

- SWCD and Planning and Zoning share the implementation responsibilities
- Field site reviews are handled primarily by SWCD, permitting and enforcement are handled by P&Z and SWCD
- Conduct compliance checks on 100% of the Shoreland Alteration permits

FORESTRY AND TREE SALES

- We provide Forest Stewardship Plans for owners of private forestland
 - 32,400 acres since 1998
- We have a tree sales program that offers trees in multiples of 25 (about 12,000 trees each year)
- Our Forester is certified as a Tree Farm Inspector
- Our Forester certifies private lands for the Sustainable Forest Incentive Act tax credit
- Member of the County Forest Advisory Committee
- Chair the Aitkin County Private Woodlands Committee
- Work with the Northwoods Forestry Cooperative
- Inspect and advise landowners on hazard tree removal
- Diagnose insect and disease problems
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The Aitkin County SWCD provides services to an estimated 4,000 landowners annually. We serve as a contact to numerous State and Federal groups and agencies. We also work with many county departments including: Planning and Zoning, the County Land Department, Long Lake Conservation Center, Aitkin County Assessor’s office, Sheriff’s Department, Road and Bridge, MN Extension, County Surveyor, GIS Coordinator, Recorder’s office, Attorney’s office, the Aitkin County Administrator’s office and the Aitkin County Board of Commissioners.

AITKIN COUNTY SWCD SUPERVISORS

CHAIRMAN	Frank Turnock
VICE-CHAIRMAN	Bob Janzen
SECRETARY	Russell Ruud
TREASURER	Mike Lentz
REPORTER	Donna Rae Asp

AITKIN COUNTY SWCD STAFF

DISTRICT MANAGER	STEVEN R. HUGHES
DISTRICT SECRETARY	LORI M. NELSON
DISTRICT TECHNICIAN	JANET L. SMUDE
DISTRICT FORESTER	DENNIS J. THOMPSON

IF YOU HAVE QUESTIONS OR COMMENTS PLEASE CONTACT:

ANY OF THE SWCD SUPERVISORS LISTED ABOVE, OR:

STEVE HUGHES
DISTRICT MANAGER
(218) 927-6565

The proposed 2008 SWCD budget is included as part of this report.