

Murray SWCD Annual Report 2018



Murray Soil and Water Conservation District
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District Staff

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Technical Service Area- Junior
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Megan Howell- Farm Bill Assis-
tance Technician

Mission & History of the Murray Soil and Water Conservation District

Vision: The vision of the Murray Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD) is Helping People Help the Land.

Mission: The Mission of the Murray Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD) is to protect, enhance and conserve the natural resources of Murray County.

History: The Murray SWCD was established in 1954 to address the Natural Resource Protection needs of land users in the area and encourage the preservation and conservation of the resources. Today, the SWCD assists not

only rural but urban land-owners with various programs and information needed to protect the soil, water and air quality. The importance of these goals and the accomplishment will be easily measured in the future through a sound and healthy economy and resources both human and wildlife.

SWCD's are political subdivisions of the State established under Minnesota Statute 103C. Each SWCD is governed by a board of elected supervisors. The SWCD Board and Staff are unique in that they live & work in the county and watersheds. The work and decisions that are made affect

themselves, their families, their neighbors and friends. With these ties, the decisions made are for the good of the local resources, economy and future generations. In making sound guidelines for our programs, we are protecting the county, watersheds, and ultimately our state and nation. The SWCD's partner with other resource agencies to ensure that programs and funds are best utilized and actions are coordinated to best suit the needs of the area.

Murray SWCD Board Meetings are held every 2nd Thursday of the Month at 1:30 p.m. at the USDA Service Center located at 2740 22nd St. Slayton, MN.

2018 Board Meetings

January 11
February 08
March 08
April 12
May 14

June 14
July 12
August 09
September 13
October 11
November 08
December 13

Murray SWCD Services

State Cost-Share

The State Cost Share Program was established in 1977 and is administered locally by the Murray Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD). The State Cost Share Program provides financial assistance to landowners for installing conservation practices that protect and improve water quality by controlling soil erosion and reducing sedimentation.

The program provides up to 75% of the total eligible costs of a practice

District Tree Program

Available to landowners in Murray County. Conservation grade trees can be purchased from the district. SWCD staff also provides a tree planting program for those who are interested.

Farmstead shelterbelts, field windbreaks, living snow fences and other wildlife plantings can be designed and planted by SWCD staff.

For more information on tree plantings please contact our office at 507-836-6990 ext.3

Tree matting currently available in Murray County

Murray SWCD has a tree mating machine that lays a continuous layer of six foot wide black fabric over your new trees rows. The fabric resists tearing, puncturing and weed penetration, while allowing air and water to get to the tree roots. When the fabric is used properly, it prevents weeds from growing around the trees reducing weed competition, so you may see better growth rates and tree survivability. Using the mat reduces the need for mowing, tilling and pulling weeds by hand.

Ground Water Level Monitoring Program:

The Murray SWCD measures the water level (monitor) in a total of 4 non-irrigation observation wells at an interval of once monthly.

Well Sealing

The Murray SWCD works with the Murray County Environmental Services Office and with the Watershed Districts of Murray County for cost-share funding for the sealing of unused wells.

Please Contact our office for more information on well sealing at 507-836-6990 ext.3

Precipitation Monitoring

The SWCD in conjunction with the State Climatology Office monitors site specific precipitation throughout Murray County. The data collected provides citizens and the State of Minnesota with important precipitation information and weather history

Wetland Conservation Act Program

When most people think of wetlands, they think of swampy, marshy areas complete with ducks and cattails. While those areas are in fact wetlands, there are many other wetlands that look very different, and can be completely dry for the majority of the year. Some wetlands support trees and shrubs, while other wetlands may even be farmed. Murray Soil and Water Conservation District staff provides technical support for local governments, county departments, and citizens with wetland and water related questions.

An estimated 11 million acres of wetland areas have been lost over the past 100 years, leaving only about 7.5 million acres, which represents a 60% loss. Wetlands provide many important benefits, which have become more apparent as wetland numbers have decreased. Some wetland benefits include:>

- Storage areas for excess waters during floods.
 - Filtering of sediments and nutrients before they enter lakes, rivers, and streams
 - Fish and wildlife habitat
 - Public recreation
- Commercial uses

The SWCD assists cities, townships, citizens, and County departments in the administration of the Minnesota Wetland Conservation Act. The SWCD staff provides technical assistance and acts as the clearing house for wetland and water related activities throughout Murray County.

Minnesota Department of Agriculture — Agricultural Water Quality Certification Program

The District has a working partnership with the MN Department of Agriculture to help promote the MN Agricultural Water Quality Certification Program to all landowners/operators throughout Murray County.

This is a voluntary opportunity for farmers and agricultural landowners to take the lead in implementing conservation practices that protect our water. Those who implement and maintain approved farm management practices will be certified and in turn obtain regulatory certainty for a period of ten years.

Buffer Initiative

A monumental turning point in protecting Minnesota's waters occurred in June 2015 with the passing of the Buffer Initiative by the Minnesota Legislature and Governor Dayton. This statute will require landowners to have a 50-foot buffer on all public waters by November 2017 and 16.5-feet on all public ditches by November 2018.

What are the options for our landowners? There are several program opportunities that are available for our landowners to receive payment for these buffers, such as CRP, possibly RIM, EQIP, CSP, State Cost-Share, etc. Or a landowner can choose to install their own buffer.

The Murray SWCD is here to help we can help identify potential waters, program opportunities, and provide technical advice.

Murray SWCD Education

Environmental Fair:

The 5th and 6th Grade Environmental Fair has been held every fall for 22 years at a local fairgrounds in southwestern Minnesota educating area youth about natural resources. In 2018 the Environmental Fair was held at the Murray County Fairgrounds in Slayton, Minnesota with 1500 students attending the fair.

Stewardship Week:

The Stewardship Week was April 29th- May 6th, 2018. The theme was "Watersheds: Our Water, Our Home", encouraging citizens, schools and communities to develop and maintain habitat areas using good conservation practices.

Newsletters:

A Newsletter is mailed countywide to Murray County landowners and operators in December. Newsletters include current available programs, special announcements, staff changes, and much more.

Murray County Fair Booth:

Check us out each year at the fair! We usually have drawings and information about soil and water conservation at our fair booth held at the Murray County Fair in Slayton, Minnesota in August.

Year's Highlights January 1, 2018 - December 31, 2018

January- Murray SWCD started off the new calendar year with the development of the District's 2018 Annual Work Plan. There are 25 applications for Environmental Quality Incentive Program (EQIP) and 244 contracts for the Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP). The Board approved the 2017 Contract for services for the District Administrator to be the Financial Coordinator/Administrative Assistant for the Southwest Prairie Technical Service Area (SWPTSA).

February- The Murray SWCD 2018 Annual Plan was reviewed and approved by the Board. The Murray SWCD Supervisors and Staff attended the Southwest Minnesota Association of Soil and Water Conservation District (SWMASWCD) meeting in Marshall on February 15, 2018. The Board approved payment of 5 Rock Intakes.

March- Christensen, Lewis and Radke attended the Legislative Days in St. Paul on March 12-13, 2018. The Board approved one MN Ag Quality Certification Program contract. The Employees attended the SWMACDE Training on March 27, 2018 at the Murray County 4H Building in Slayton. The Board approve payment for Buffer Cost-Share Contract. The Murray SWCD Board approved a Flood Recovery Cost-Share Applications for a waterway. Christensen, Lewis and Henkels attended the Murray County Commissioners meeting on March 20, 2018 to give an update and request their allocation.

April- The Board reviewed the District Rental Rates for 2018. The Murray SWCD put their annual report in the newspaper. Cooperators picked up trees they had ordered for their conservation tree practices. The District Administrator will be serving on the Minnesota Association of Soil and Water Conservation District (MASWCD) Awards Committee. The Murray SWCD will be receiving additional cost-share funds for Flood Recovery Program. The Board approved 2 applications for Flood Recovery Cost-Share. The Biennial Budget request was submitted to BWSR.

May- Lewis attended the MCIT Managing the Human Resource Training in St. Cloud on May 9-10, 2018. The Board approved sponsoring up to 4 kids to attend the Long Lake Conservation Camp. The Board approve a Murray SWCD Cost-Share application for a rock intake. The Board added Cover Crops to the Murray SWCD cost-share policy. There are 244 active CSP contracts and 25 active EQIP contracts.

June- Supervisors and Staff attended the South West Minnesota Association of Soil and Water Conservation District (SWMASWCD) Area V meeting on June 21, 2018. The Board set the FY19 State Cost-Share reimbursement rate at 75% of the total cost. The Board approved signing the FY19 Ground Water Level Monitoring Agreement with the DNR. The SWCD Board reviewed the 2018 Murray SWCD income vs budget through June 2018. The Board approved the Local Partners Agreement between the Murray SWCD and Pheasants Forever, Inc. The Board approved payment for 2 people for Buffer Cost-Share. The SWCD nominated George and Mike Erbes as the Murray SWCD outstanding conservationist.

July- Lewis attended the MCIT Sidestep Risks when Conducting SWCD Business on July 18, 2018 in St. Cloud. Arrangements were made for a fair booth at the Murray County Fair. The Buffer Cost-Share Program Grant Agreement was approved. An Operational Agreement between the Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) and Murray SWCD was approved. The Board approved a Capacity Cost-Share application for a pond repair. The SWCD Board reviewed and approved the Murray SWCD 2019 budget. A cost-share application for a water way was approved.

August- Supervisors and staff worked in the fair booth which displayed information on the Buffer Program at the Murray County Fair. The Board discussed the 2019 Capacity grant workplan. The Buffers are 91% complete in Murray County. There were a total of 2,120 parcels that needed Buffers. Christensen attended the SWCD managers meeting on July 24-25 in St. Cloud. The SWCD staff and supervisor attended the Locally Led Workshop meeting in Marshall on August 2, 2018.

September- The staff helped with the Environmental Fair for sixth grade students, which was held at the Murray County Fairgrounds in Slayton, MN with 1500 kids attending from 23 different schools. The Board approved the 2019 Local

Capacity and Buffer Grant. The District Administrator attended the Local Water Plan meeting on September 27, 2018 to request capacity grant matching funds.

October– Lewis attended the MASWCD Awards Committee meeting in St. Paul on October 26, 2018. The Board reviewed the Memorandums of Understandings that the district has with other organizations and agencies. The Board approved signing the amendment to extend the date of the FY2016 State of Minnesota Flood Relief Phase 2 grant. The Farm Bill Assistant renewed 12 sites in the county for the Walk In Access Program and added 2 new sites. There are 6 applications funded for the Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP). Lewis and Radke attended the Board of Water and Soil Resource (BWSR) Academy on October 29-31, 2018.

November- Supervisors and Staff attended the Southwest Minnesota Association of Soil and Water Conservation District (SWMASWCD) Area V meeting in Marshall, MN on November 15, 2018. The Murray SWCD purchased a Great Plains No-Till Drill.

December– Three Supervisors and one staff attended the Annual Minnesota Association of Soil and Water Conservation Districts (MASWCD) Convention in Bloomington, MN on December 9-11, 2018. The SWCD's volunteer rain gauge monitors were recognized with a token of appreciation. The Board approved payment for 6 Buffer Cost-Share contracts. The Murray SWCD will be having a Level II Performance Review and Assistance Program (PRAP) which is used as a means to monitor and assess the performance of local water management entities. The Board signed the FY2019 State of Minnesota Board of Water and Soil Resources MN Farm Bill Assistance program grant.

The Murray SWCD would like to say THANK YOU to the Murray County Commissioners, NRCS, FSA, DNR, Heron Lake Watershed District, the County Environmental Service staff and the Murray County Local Chapter Pheasants Forever for the tremendous amount of support, commitment, and leadership demonstrated towards the grass roots level of conservation being achieved through the Murray SWCD.

2018 Accomplishments

State Cost-Share

5 -Contracts completed

- **Waterway**
- **Basins**
- **Pond Repair**

Flood Recovery State Cost-Share

2-Contracts completed

- **Basins**
- **Sediment Basins**

EQIP-\$32,000 Obligated-212 acres

3 Contracts

- **1-Rotational Grazing**
- **2-Erosion Control**

CSP-\$3.5 Million Obligated

- **28 New Contracts**
- **17,000 Acres (Cropped, Pastureland, Associated Ag Land, and Farmstead)**

Farm Bill Assistance Activity

- **3-Haying contracts on RIM land**
- **6-CREP Applications accepted**
- **12-Walk In Access renewals**
- **2- New Walk In Access Sites**
- **2-LCCMR Pollinator Projects**
- **2-Walk In Access Habitat Enhancement Projects completed**
- **1-Wetland Restoration**

CRP

- **430 Acres- 133 Contracts**

Murray SWCD, NRCS, and SWPTSA:



Left to Right– Allisa Wendland (NRCS Soil Conservationist Tech), Craig Christensen (Program Manager), Cheryl Heard (NRCS Soil Conservationist), Shelly Lewis (District Administrator), Ben Mathys (SWPTSA Technician), Donna Knapp (NRCS Contract Employee), Travis Radke (District Technician), Mike Skoglund (SWPTSA Senior Technician)