

# Murray SWCD Annual Report 2019



**Murray Soil and Water Conservation District**  
2740 22nd St.  
Slayton, MN 56172  
507-836-6990

## District Staff

### **District Administrator**

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### **Program Manager**

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### **District Technician**

Aaron Crowley  
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### NRCS Staff

Cheryl Heard  
District Conservationist

Allisa Wendland-  
Soil Conservation Technician

### SWPJO Staff

Mike Skoglund-Southwest Prairie  
Technical Service Area  
Civil Engineering Technician

Ben Matthys-Southwest Prairie  
Technical Service Area- Junior  
Technician

### Farm Bill Assistant

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.**

### 2019 Board Meetings

January 10  
February 15  
March 14  
April 29  
May 09

June 13  
July 11  
August 08  
September 10  
October 10  
November 14  
December 12



## **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 required 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.

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

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## ***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.

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# **Year's Highlights January 1, 2019 - December 31, 2019**

**January-** Murray SWCD started off the new calendar year with the development of the District's 2019 Annual Work Plan. The Oath of Office was signed by Paul Posthuma and Gary Brinks. The Board approved the 2019 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 2019 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 22, 2019. The Board approved the grant agreement for the Walk In Access program. Lewis attended the SWCD managers meeting in St. Cloud on February 26-27.

**March-** Lewis attended the Legislative Days in St. Paul on March 5-6, 2019. The Employees attended the SWMACDE Training on March 21, 2019 in Marshall. The Board approve payment for Buffer Cost-Share Contract. The Board accepted the resignation of the District Technician. The Murray SWCD currently has 2 people attending the Long Lake Conservation Camp. The Murray SWCD had a PRAP Level II Review (Performance Review and Assistance Program). The Murray SWCD is commended for meeting 9 of 14 high performance standards for SWCDs. There are 56 applications for the EQIP program. Cheryl Heard will be the new DC in Murray County starting March 17, 2019. She will also be the Team Lead covering Murray, Nobles, Rock & Pipestone counties.

**April-** The Board reviewed the District Rental Rates for 2019. The Murray SWCD put their annual report in the newspaper. Cooperators picked up trees they had ordered for their conservation tree practices. The Board approved 2 applications for Flood Recovery Cost-Share, 2 applications for District Capacity Cost-Share, and 1 application for regular cost-share. The Local Work Group Meeting was held on April 11, 2019 at the USDA Service Center, Slayton, MN. The Murray SWCD hired Aaron Crowley as their District Technician.

**May-** The Murray SWCD signed the Missouri River One Watershed Joint Powers Agreement. The CSP program has 17 renewals from 2014. The Murray SWCD approved the submittal of the Missouri River One Watershed One Plan to BWSR. The Board discussed a pond clean out request. The SWCD approved signing the RCRA Join Powers Agreement.

**June-** Lewis attended the MCIT Managing the Human Resource Training in St. Cloud on June 19-20, 2019. Supervisors and Staff attended the South West Minnesota Association of Soil and Water Conservation District (SWMASWCD) Area V meeting on June 21, 2019. The Board set the FY19 State Cost-Share reimbursement rate at 75% of the total cost. The Board approved signing the FY20 Ground Water Level Monitoring Agreement with the DNR. The SWCD Board reviewed the 2019 Murray SWCD income vs budget through June 2019. The Murray SWCD submitted a resolution to ask for funding from BWSR for project repairs. The Board approved a conserving use acres agreement for 10 acres.

**July-** Arrangements were made for a fair booth at the Murray County Fair. Doug Goodrich from BWSR updated the Board on upcoming Grants. The Board approved a Capacity Cost-Share application for a pond repair. The SWCD Board reviewed and approved the Murray SWCD 2020 budget. The SWCD approved the FY19 MN CREP Outreach and Implementation Grant Agreement.

**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 2020 Capacity grant workplan. The Board approved a Capacity Grant Cost-Share application for Basins. Posthuma and Lewis presented the 2020 Murray SWCD Budget to the County Commissioners. The Murray SWCD purchased a Drone with the Buffer Grant. It will be used to check all the Buffers in Murray County. The Murray SWCD nominated Ryan Verlinde as their Outstanding Conservationist. The Board approved 2 Flood Recovery Cost-Share contracts for Basins and Waterways.

**September-** Lewis attended the Governance 101 Training in Bloomington on September 12-13, 2019. The staff helped

with the Environmental Fair for sixth grade students, which was held at the Lake Shetek Bible Camp with 1500 kids attending from 23 different schools. The Slayton NRCS office was funded 33 out of 187 application for cover crops. The Board approved the Local Partners Agreement between Murray SWCD and Pheasants Forever, Inc.

**October**– Lewis attended the MASWCD Awards Committee meeting in St. Paul on October 25, 2019. The Board reviewed the Memorandums of Understandings that the district has with other organizations and agencies. Lewis and Christensen attended the Board of Water and Soil Resource (BWSR) Academy on October 29-31, 2019. Lewis attended the State Soil and Water Conservation Districts Managers Meeting in Baxter on November 19-20, 2019. The Board approved the FY2020 SWCD Local Capacity & 2020 Buffer Law Grants. The SWCD Board approved 2 cost-share applications for a grade stabilization and a waterway. Lewis, Christensen, and Henkels attended the County Commissioners meeting on October 15, 2019 to request the 3rd quarter allocation.

**November**- Supervisors and Staff attended the Southwest Minnesota Association of Soil and Water Conservation District (SWMASWCD) Area V meeting in Marshall, MN on November 21, 2019. The Board approved the 2018 Murray SWCD Audit as presented.

**December**– Three Supervisors and one staff attended the Annual Minnesota Association of Soil and Water Conservation Districts (MASWCD) Convention in Bloomington, MN on December 8-10, 2019. The SWCD's volunteer rain gauge monitors were recognized with a token of appreciation. The SWCD staff attended the Southwest Minnesota Association of Conservation District Employees meeting in Marshall on December 4, 2019.

**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.**

# 2019 Accomplishments

## *State Cost-Share*

**3 -Contracts completed**

- **Waterways**
- **Basins**
- **Grade Stabilization**

## *Flood Recovery State Cost-Share*

**6-Contracts completed**

- **Basins**
- **Waterways**

*EQIP-\$1,031,369 Obligated-11,565 acres*

**53 Contracts**

*CSP-\$749,337 Obligated*

- **8 New Contracts**
- **4,215 Acres (Cropped, Pastureland, Associated Ag Land, and Farmstead)**

## *Farm Bill Assistance Activity*

- **wrote 56 CRP contracts**
- **2 CREP contracts recorded for a total of 128.36 acres**
- **3 walk in access sites enrolled**
- **4 haying/grazing plans**
- **1 pollinator interseeding**
- **4 seed a legacy applications**
- **78 RIM inspections**
- **One permanent easement for 66.75 acres within the Prairie Coteau**
- **One grant submitted for NWCA funding for propagation of hard to find prairie reconstruction species.**
- **1 podcast focused on modern day prairie reconstruction**

## *CRP*

- **842 Acres- 54 Contracts**



***Murray SWCD, NRCS, and SWPTSA:***



***Back: Craig Christensen, Ben Matthys, Aaron Crowley  
Front: Mike Skoglund, Allisa Wendland, Shelly Lewis, Cheryl  
Heard, Nancy Sauder***