

Murray SWCD Annual Report 2020



Murray Soil and Water Conservation District
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District Staff

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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.

2020 Board Meetings

January 09
February 13
March 12
May 14
June 11

July 09
August 13
September 10
October 08
November 12
December 10

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 helped to 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 25 years at a local fairgrounds in southwestern Minnesota educating area youth about natural resources. In 2020 the Environmental Fair was canceled due to the pandemic.

Stewardship Week:

The Stewardship Week was April 26th- May 3rd, 2020. The theme was "Where would we BEE without Pollinators?" Pollinators form the foundations of a healthy and sustainable future for food and the environment, but in recent years, they have shown concerning signs of decline. It's important that we work to help them prosper by enhancing native pollinator habitats and protecting against pollinator declines.

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, 2020 - December 31, 2020

January- Murray SWCD started off the new calendar year with the development of the District's 2020 Annual Work Plan. The Board approved the 2020 Contract for services for the District Administrator to be the Financial Coordinator/Administrative Assistant for the Southwest Prairie Technical Service Area (SWPTSA). A Ag Certification contract was approved by the Board.

February- No Murray SWCD meeting

March- Lewis reported on 24 grants that were completed in the eLink reporting system. The Board approved 4-Rock Intakes. The Flood Recovery Grants are all spent and completed. The Board approved a contract for conserving use acres. The Murray SWCD 2020 Annual Plan was reviewed and approved by the Board.

April- No Murray SWCD meeting

May- The CSP program has 80 applications and 6 renewals in Murray County. Murray County has 80 applications for the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP). The following Districts are up for election: District III, IV, and V. The Board approved 2 cost-share applications for Basins and waterways. The Board approved the Memorandum of agreement for the Des Moines River Watershed One Watershed One Plan.

June- The SWCD Board reviewed and approved the 2021 Murray SWCD budget. The Board approved a Ag Certification contract & payment authorization. The 2020 Environmental Fair will be canceled do to the pandemic. A cost-share application for a Grade Stabilization was completed.

July- The Board approved a Capacity Cost-Share application for a Water and Sediment Control Basin (WASCB). The SWCD Board reviewed and approved the Murray SWCD 2021 budget. The SWCD approved the Local Partners Agreement between the Murray SWCD and Pheasants Forever, Inc. The Board approved 2 contracts & payment authorization for the Ag Certification Program.

August- The Board approved the FY2021 State of MN Board of Water and Soil Resources CREP Outreach and Implementation Program Grant Agreement. The Board approved a Ag Certification contract. The SWCD Board approved two cost-share contracts for waterways, one cost-share contract for a pond, and two cost-share contracts for basins. The Memorandum of Agreement between the Natural Resource Conservation Service and the Murray SWCD was approved by the Board.

September- The Memorandums of Understanding between the Murray SWCD and other agencies were reviewed by the Board. The Board approved the Resolution to allow the Murray SWCD to have Wetland Conservation Act (WCA) authority of towns which included City of Currie, Fulda, Lake Wilson, and Slayton.

October- The Board approved a Ag Certification contract and payment. The FY2021 Soil and Water Conservation District Local Capacity Grant work plan was approved by the Board. The Board approved tow cost-share contracts for a waterway and basins. The District Administrator was nominated to be on the Minnesota Association of Conservation District Employees State Committee. The Board approve a Capacity Cost-Share contract for a WASCB.

November- The Board approved the 2019 Murray SWCD audit. An amendment to extend the install date of a Cost-Share Contract was approved by the Board. A Cost-Share contract for a waterway was completed and approved for payment.

December- Supervisors and staff attended the Annual Minnesota Association of Soil and Water Conservation Districts (MASWCD) Convention via Zoom. The SWCD's volunteer rain gauge monitors were recognized with a token of appreciation. The Board approved 2 Ag Certification Contracts.

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.

Murray SWCD, NRCS, and SWPTSA:



Back: Aaron Crowley, Mike Skoglund, Craig Christensen, Lindsay Clauson

Front: Shelly Lewis, Allisa Wendland, Nancy Sauder