

Lac qui Parle Soil & Water Conservation District



122 8th Avenue South
Madison MN 56256

Phone 320-598-7321 x 3

FAX 320-598-3432

www.lacquiparleswcd.org

2013 Activities & Achievements

The Lac qui Parle Soil and Water Conservation District's VISION is *Lac qui Parle's natural resources wisely managed to provide a healthy environment for life.* The vision encompasses not only the natural environment but also the economic environment for the people of Lac qui Parle County.

The MISSION of the Soil and Water Conservation District is *to take available technical, financial, and educational resources, whatever their source, and focus or coordinate them so that they meet the needs of the local land user.* A degree of flexibility is needed to allow the District to use what resources become available to meet the needs of our local resource users as those needs arise.

The Lac qui Parle Soil and Water Conservation District was organized April 19, 1950.

District Supervisors

The LqP SWCD is governed by a five member Board of Supervisors who are elected by the voters of the County. The Board sets policy, hires employees, and is responsible to see that the operations of the District are run effectively and according to law and rule.

Ed RadermacherChairperson
Jeff JohnsonVice-chair
LeRoy SchuelkeSecretary
Bob Ludvigson....Treasurer
Tony Croatt...Publicity & Information



District Staff

Terry WittnebelDistrict Manager
Grant Bullemer/Jacob Payne....District Technician
Sheri Laechelt....Program Assistant
Curtis Nordaune....District Engineering Tech
Troy Dale/Gemma Schmitz.....PF Biologist

Assisted by NRCS Staff

Burton Hendrickson....District Conservationist
vacant....Soil Conservation Technician
Micah Meyer.....Wetland Specialist
Ginger Drobny.....Administrative Assistant



Not pictured: Curtis Nordaune

2013 Affiliate Memberships

With their financial support, these businesses and individuals supported LqP SWCD education/outreach activities this past year.

Business Memberships:

Farmers Co-op Elevator, Bellingham
Klein Bank, Madison
Lac qui Parle Co-op Oil, Dawson
Lund Implement
Madison Bottling Company
MinnWest Bank, Dawson
Northern Plains Tiling
United Prairie Bank, Madison
Farmers Mutual Telephone Company

Conservation Partners:

Bob & Julie Ludvigson
Jeff and Carla Johnson

Friend of Conservation Memberships:

Breberg Agency, Dawson
Peggy Crosby
Larry & Sonja Farmer
Paul & Lori Schwendemann
Steve & Robin Stamp
Warren Trygestad-Pioneer Seed

2013 District Manager's Report

Terry Wittnebel, District Manager

Lac qui Parle Water Plan Coordinator responsibilities for rewriting the LqP County Comprehensive Water Plan pushed some planned District activities to the back burner. While a short term loss of accomplishments, we look forward to implementing new actions identified in the Plan in upcoming years.

Staff from SWCD, NRCS, and FSA joined forces to Adopt a Highway. The 2 mile stretch of Highway 75 south of Madison gave up *many* of bags of trash, hubcaps, tires, and even a microwave during the spring cleanup which took place after work hours in late spring.



Jacob Payne joined the conservation team in October, filling the vacancy left by District Technician Grant Bullemer. Also moving closer to home was Troy Dale, Pheasants Forever Farm Bill Biologist, who was replaced by Gemma Schmitz. New staff, new plan, we anticipate a busy new year!

DNR Observation Wells

The District, in partnership with the DNR, has an agreement to monitor 7 wells across the county in order to obtain groundwater data throughout the growing season. This practice has been ongoing since 1944, and the data is utilized to determine long term trends of irrigation and climate for water management plans in the coming years.

In 2013 the DNR sealed 5 observation wells in Lac qui Parle County, three wells were replaced with new wells in adjacent positions, two wells were no longer being monitored by the District and were sealed as well.

Wetland Conservation Act

The Lac qui Parle Soil and Water Conservation District Technician is a member of the Wetland Conservation Act (WCA) Technical Evaluation Panel (TEP), as outlined in Minnesota statute. WCA regulations are administered by the county's Local Government Unit, the Yellow Bank Watershed District. The TEP is comprised of 4 representatives from different agencies and makes recommendations on technical matters such as road construction projects, wetland restorations, and WCA compliance regulations. The new District Technician attended 1 training course for program updates.

In 2013, there were 9 site visits with most of them interested in Ag Wetland Banking.

District Conservationist's 2013 Report

Burt Hendrickson, District Conservationist

The Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) had another very busy year serving the landowners and operators of Lac qui Parle County.

NRCS promoted and conducted another EQIP (Environmental Quality Incentives Program), WRP (Wetland Reserve Program), and the 4th CSP (Conservation Stewardship Program) signups during the year. This resulted in 32 applications in these programs with 21 obligated agreements (8 EQIP, 13 CSP). There were conservation plans applied for over 18,800 acres. We also continued to complete or apply projects that were funded in previous year signups. Applied practices resulted in improved soil quality on over 16,480 acres, and improved water quality on 16,917 acres. Grazing land benefited was 858 acres, and wildlife habitat improvements were on 3199 acres. Some examples of practices reported as applied were: conservation tillage (no-till, strip till, mulch till), conservation crop rotation, conservation cover, nutrient management, pesticide management, restoration of declining habitat (prairie plantings), windbreak/shelterbelt establishment, water and sediment control basins, wetland restorations, fencing, prescribed grazing, mid management on CRP, and well decommissioning.

NRCS continued to work with landowners wanting to pursue CRP in Lac qui Parle County. There were a lot of contracts due to expire and even with a major delay caused by the lapse of the farm bill for a while, a majority of people investigated their options related to re-enrollment. The CCRP (Continuous Conservation Reserve Program) has many options available on a year round basis for landowners to explore or pursue, and there was a General CRP signup in 2013. We completed 245 CCRP program eligibility determinations and developed conservation plans for 156 contracts overall. They involve practices such as filter strips, farmstead windbreaks, wetland restoration, and prairie restoration. The cover established and/or re-established conserves soil, improves water quality, and provides wildlife habitat. The 2014 workload for CRP could be extensive again with a lot of contracts due to expire in Lac qui Parle County, but we are again handicapped by a lack of a new Farm Bill.

We continue to try to work with multiple groups and agencies which can provide additional funding options and a wider range of options for people interested in programs to conserve resources. The Local Work Group process has allowed all interested parties to have input and make suggestions for the EQIP program. We also worked closely with the Clean Water Partnership which has provided a source of additional funds to apply practices that provide improved water quality. Depending on the location in the county this has provided additional incentives to establish filter strips, install alternatives to replace open tile intakes, and provide cost share for water and sediment control structures and stream bank stabilization. The SWCD has pursued additional grant applications to try and secure additional funding for conservation activities also. We are also cooperating with other agency staff and adjacent counties to provide technical assistance and promotion of options that help carry out the Minnesota Prairie Plan. Lac qui Parle County is blessed with some areas of remnant native prairie which is very rare, and this plan is trying to find ways to encourage landowners to preserve them if at all possible.

The swampbuster provisions of the Farm Bill still require a major part of our work effort. The need to complete a certified wetland determination for all signed 1026 forms proposing activity such as tiling, ditching, modifying drainage, clearing trees, land leveling, placing fill etc. has been difficult to keep up with, but with some added staff to work on this it has improved. By the end of the year we were nearly current, but new ones are coming in all the time. The incoming rate has seemed to slow this year, but it is advised that people start their 1026 process well ahead of their planned activity to give some time needed to respond to most 1026's.

The upcoming year looks to have considerable additional activity. We are all anxiously waiting to see if and what kind of new Farm Bill will be passed. The programs such as CSP and EQIP will have signups for interested people to apply for. Be aware of some new buzzwords for this year such as soil quality and drainage water management. There may be some special initiatives announced that will tie into this. There are a couple new staff people in the office, and we have a Soil Conservation Technician position to fill in the near future. We will all be learning together as the programs are unveiled, but we will continue to attempt to provide assistance to any or all interested landusers in Lac qui Parle County. We want to continue *Helping our People Help the Land*.

2013 Outstanding Conservationists



Lac qui Parle SWCD chose the Lac qui Parle Chapter of Pheasants Forever as this year's Outstanding Conservationists. Since 1986 this group has played a vital role preserving and restoring native grasslands in the county by acquiring over 1500 acres and transferring them for public use. Their financial support of two technical positions for the SWCD has been vital to the District's capacity to help process approximately 400 CRP/CCRP plans and modifications this year alone.

In addition to habitat projects, this chapter actively encourages the next generation to develop an appreciation of the

outdoors by creating opportunities such as youth trap shooting and youth/mentor hunts.



In December, PF Board members Warren Wollschlager and Mark Olson represented the Chapter at the SWCD State Convention, accepting the award sponsored by The Farmer Magazine.

With over 200 members, an active group of officers and a strong board, it is evident this Pheasants Forever chapter will continue protecting the natural resources of Lac qui Parle County well into the future. LqP SWCD supervisors and staff thank them for their efforts!

No Till Drill

Continuing the service to local producers, the District rented out our no-till drill for use on nearly double the acres this year in order to aid producers performing CRP and grassland maintenance. The drill is showing its age; the District is grateful to those producers who provided repair services!

Rentals.....16
Acres.....265

Engineering Projects 2013

PROJECT FUNDING SOURCES:

STATE – state cost share program, SWCD
 EQIP – Environmental Quality Incentives Program, NRCS
 Watershed – state & federal grants

Landowner - Project Type - Funding - Soil Saved/Year

Projects Completed

• A	3 WASCBs	EQIP/State	14.3 Tons
• B	1 WASCB	EQIP/State	14.5 Tons
• C	2 WASCBs	EQIP/Watershed	21.8 Tons
• D	2 WASCBs	EQIP/Watershed	13.5 Tons
• E	2 WASCBs	EQIP/Watershed	30.46 Tons
• F	Side Inlet/grade stabilization structure	EQIP	(add to side inlet below)
• G	Side Inlet/grade stabilization structure	EQIP	3.05 Tons
• H	1 WASCB	EQIP/State	13.6 Tons
• I	1 WASCB	EQIP/State	23.8 Tons
• J	1 WASCB	EQIP	63.75 Tons

Projects Started or Funded & Waiting Construction

• K	2 WASCBs	EQIP
• L	1 WASCB	EQIP

In addition to projects above, the office has 11 requests from landowners to do field checks for potential projects. Most of these requests have been field checked, and some surveying and or design work has been done.



Southwest Prairie Technical Service Area

As a member of the SWPrairie TSA, the LqP SWCD receives advanced engineering assistance for best management practice projects.

In 2013, SWPrairie engineers were not called to assist on new projects.

Tree Program

Snow lasted into May, resulting in a late tree planting season.

EQIP & CRP Plantings

Farmstead	2	
# of trees		573
feet of fabric		6570

State Cost Share

Farmstead Shelterbelts	6	
# of trees		770
feet of fabric		4702

Plantings with no Cost Share Assistance

Plantings	2	
# of trees		92
feet of fabric		2614

Totals

PROJECTS	10	
TREES PLANTED		1435
TREES SOLD		
FABRIC (feet)		13,886



LCCMR Granite Outcrop Grant

Legislative Citizen Commission on Minnesota Resources

103.1 acres of fragile Minnesota Valley Granite Outcrop rock ecosystems in Lac qui Parle County are protected with a permanent easement. A new grant application to expand eligible sites including remnant prairie was presented to LCCMR, but was not chosen for funding because of their policy to not fund projects more than 3 years.

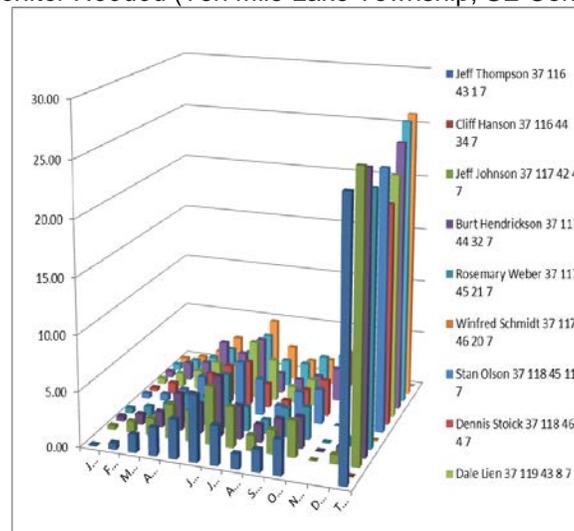
Rain Gauge Program

In 2013 the LqP Soil and Water Conservation District started out with 12 volunteer rain gauge monitors. We currently have one open positions in Lac qui Parle County. The monitors collect precipitation data daily and record it on their personalized data sheets. At the end of each month, the data sheets are sent to the LqP Soil and Water Conservation District, where the information is compiled and forwarded to the MN State Office of Climatology. The information is used for climate prediction and has a variety of uses, including crop disaster declarations. We are sincerely grateful to our dedicated monitors, who faithfully measure and record precipitation 365 days a year, through rain, sleet and snow.

2013 Precipitation Totals

MONITORS	Jan.	Feb.	March	April	May	June	July	Aug.	Sept.	Oct.	Nov.	Dec.	TOTAL
Jeff Thompson 37 116 43 1 7	0.11	0.55	1.62	2.51	3.53	5.96	3.53	1.34	2.01	3.17	0.06	0.66	24.33
Cliff Hanson 37 116 44 34 7													0.00
Jeff Johnson 37 117 42 4 7	0.33	1.00	1.56	3.07	2.82	5.28	3.70	1.41	2.19	3.29	0.00	0.82	25.47
Burt Hendrickson 37 117 44 32 7	0.43	0.92	1.41	3.36	2.70	5.47	3.04	1.59	2.40	2.84	0.04	0.71	24.91
Rosemary Weber 37 117 45 21 7	0.47	0.90	1.47	2.56	2.59	4.94	2.22	1.28	2.60	2.98	0.01	0.74	22.76
Winfred Schmidt 37 117 46 20 7													0.00
Stan Olson 37 118 45 11 7	0.44	0.65	1.35	2.81	2.62	4.68	3.36	1.11	2.68	3.16	0.00	0.71	23.57
Dennis Stoick 37 118 46 4 7	0.28	1.01	0.28	2.43	3.42	4.04	2.19	0.87	2.16	3.28	0.00		19.96
Dale Lien 37 119 43 8 7	0.49	1.27	1.76	2.81	2.79	5.24	3.79	1.48	2.41				22.04
Galen Jorgensen 37 119 45 10 7	0.49	1.59	1.88	4.09	3.28	4.84	1.85	1.47	2.04	2.97	0.00		24.50
Louisburg Elevator 37 120 44 33 7	0.54	1.21	1.73	2.81	2.68	4.59	2.39	2.32	3.18	3.56		1.01	26.02
Kipp Stender 37 118 45 36 7	0.49	0.88	1.68	3.25	3.04	5.38	3.05	1.94	2.27	3.24	0.10	1.00	26.32

Monitor Needed (Ten Mile Lake Township, SE Corner)



Education/Outreach Activities

DATE	AUDIENCE	TOPIC	# PRESENTATIONS
3/25	Annual Township Officers	living snowfence	1(15 min).
3/18, 19	all residents	3 Drainage Water Management Workshops	3(1 ½ hours)
4/9	LqP V 5 th	soil Soil Formation role play	3(45 min.)
4/18	all residents	Conservation Come 'n Go Open House (programs available)	all day
4/25	Earth Day Fun Run/Walk	watershed community, Earth Day	
4/28-5/5	all residents Where does your water shed?	Soil & Water Stewardship Week	continuous
5/1	Envirothon grades 9-12 from 11 county area - promoted but cancelled because didn't meet minimum # team registrations	natural resources	continuous
5/16	all 5 th /6 th graders	receive spruce trees (Chippewa field day)	
5/15, 16	Chippewa 5 th grade Field Day	trees Maple Seed mixup	16(25 min.)
5/20	MN Envirothon state competition, 22 winning teams from area competitions, grades 9-12	natural resources	
5/29	all kindergarteners	receive native species tree (red maple)	2(10 min.)
6/21	D-B Science Class Canoe Trip	local programs protecting water quality	1(15 min.)
8/6	all residents statewide	Farmfest	
9/5-8	LqP county fair SWCDs Deal a Winning Hand	environment+financial benefits	continuous
9/24-25	Environmental Fair 6 th graders from 11 county area	natural resources	continuous
11/12	2013 program participants	<i>thank you</i> mailing	

In addition, this information or assistance was provided: serve on LqP Valley Community Ed Advisory Council; area Envirothon coordinator; city of Madison tree replacement project; countywide Boy/Girl Scout environmental project.

News articles submitted to area newspapers are also used to inform the public on a variety of topics. A weekly live radio broadcast March through October was developed jointly with Water Plan, NRCS, LqPYB CWP, and the Environmental Office. The SWCD assumes the cost for NRCS broadcasts.



In February, supervisor Bob Ludvigson represented LqP SWCD at the MASWCD Legislative Briefing and Day at the Capitol where he discussed conservation concerns with Senator Gary Dahms and Representative Chris Swedinski.



Farm Bill Partnership

This initiative is a collaboration of the Board of Water and Soil Resources, DNR, Pheasants Forever, and the Minnesota Association of Soil and Water Conservation Districts. It helps fund the District technician for work implementing various federal and state conservation programs such as such as CCRP, CRP, WRP, WHIP, and RIM, that help improve water quality and increase wildlife habitat.



Pheasants Forever Farm Bill Partnership

Gemma Schmitz, Pheasants Forever Farm Bill Wildlife Biologist

As you are aware, a new Federal Farm Bill has not been passed yet, so I am unable to work on any new CRP contracts. My main focus has been on making sure our current Reinvest in Minnesota (RIM) applications are continuing through the application process. Currently, our office has submitted:

RIM applications (approved)..... 3
Total Acres.....130

I have also become involved in the Minnesota Prairie Conservation Plan. The purpose of this plan is to identify high priority areas that members of the Prairie Plan Working Group will target for prairie protection, enhancement, and restoration that can collectively be accomplished in five years. The state is broken up into several Local Technical Teams (LTT's) located within the prairie region. Agencies within these teams work cooperatively to implement conservation strategies. Each team is allotted money from the state which is to be used as the team sees fit in order to deliver protection, restoration, and enhancement locally. Lac qui Parle County is privileged in that it is included in two LTT's and I will hope to have good quality projects to submit to the teams in the future.



Walk In Access Program

This voluntary program is a great opportunity for hunters to have more hunting options available than public land alone. Enrollment is for all hunting seasons, one year at a time. Sites are posted with signs. Maps are available online and in the SWCD office.

Sites.....10
Acres.....1033

Clean Water Fund Grants

The District has two successful Clean Water Fund Grant applications, and is joint recipient of a third.

A **Clean Water Assistance Grant** in the amount of **\$53,533** was awarded to provide 75% cost share to retrofit well in pits with a pitless unit, fill the well pit with native soil material, move the pressure tank indoors, and allow the homeowner to continue using a serviceable well while safeguarding the source of their drinking water. Wells located in the floodplains were priority, and homeowners contacted by mail and phone followup. With only one completed application resulting from targeted individual contacts, and numerous individuals in the target area responding they had recently done this at their own expense, the program was opened county wide.

Eleven projects have been completed and 4 projects have been approved but are not yet completed. One application is pending, which will exhaust grant funds at project cost share of 56%.

An **Accelerated Implementation Grant** in the amount of **\$30,894** is being used to employ an individual to work with the County Feedlot Officer to complete a Level 3 Feedlot survey. The SWCD oversees grant administration, but staff is under day to day supervision of the Feedlot Officer.

Onsite visits have been made to 210 sites, and MinnFARM calculations completed. The remaining 20 will be seen by spring 2014. Updated manure management plans were reviewed, and information on various cost share funding programs to assist livestock producers was shared.

A **Targeted Drainage Water Management Grant** in the amount of **\$60,000** was awarded jointly to Yellow Medicine and LqP SWCDs to provide cost share or incentives for the installation of practices including denitrifying bioreactors, control drainage structures, and replacing open intakes with alternative inlets, and writing of drainage water management plans. Yellow Medicine is the fiscal agent. Applications from Lac qui Parle are below (not all practices have been installed). Additional interest has been expressed.

CAP plan.....	1 (plan complete)
Alternative intakes.....	6 applications.....33 units.....5 units installed
Control structures.....	1 application.....3 units.....0 units installed



Lac qui Parle Comprehensive Water Quality Management Plan

Terry Wittnebel, Water Plan Coordinator

The Lac qui Parle SWCD administers the Lac qui Parle County Comprehensive Water Quality Management Plan. The LqP SWCD District Manager serves as the Water Plan Coordinator. Water Plan activities are classed into three categories: Program Administration, Education Activities, and BMP Installation/Application.

Administration

Administrative funds cover the costs incurred by the SWCD for administering the County's Water Plan and the Ag Best Management Practices Low Interest Loan Program. Charges made by the SWCD are based on staff hours spent. Envelope and postage expenses are reported for payment, but the SWCD does not include copying costs, SWCD Board time, paper, labels, or other office supply costs.

The Water Plan expired May 2013. The LqP County Commissioners reappointed 2012 Resource Commission members to serve again for 2013. Resource Commission provides oversight of Water Plan activities. The group met 4 times in 2013, with additional small workgroup and online discussions, to provide consultant Matthew E. Johnson, Midwest Community Planning, LLC, with local input/concerns needed to write the new Plan. Plan development proceeded slowly, and to meet all requirements an extension until December 2013 was needed. The Water Plan Coordinator dedicated approximately 9 weeks of time to writing the Plan. The LqP County Local Water Management Plan 2014-2023 was approved by BWSR on December 18, 2013, (required update of Implementation section by December 18, 2018) and the LqP County Commissioners adopted the Plan at their January 7, 2014 meeting. Per diem and mileage are paid for Commission members who are not reimbursed by their agency or organization but serve as members at large.

There were several inquiries about the AgBMP loan program, but no applications received. The program was promoted as part of booth displays and on radio programs during the year.

The Water Plan Coordinator attended several sessions pertaining to Water Plan activities at the BWSR Academy 10/28-30 and participated in scheduled TEAM meetings and other collaborative sessions with the Clean Water Partnership/Watershed staff.

Education

Staff time supported the annual Environmental Fair for 6th graders, an 11-county environmental learning event, in both planning and presenting capacities (presented a Water Cycle activity). Other education/outreach activities: a weekly radio program March through October included numerous water quality topics including promoting prescription drug collection by sheriff's department; promotion of SWCD Clean Water Fund grants to retrofit then close well pits and install Conservation/Controlled Drainage BMPs ; SWCD booth at LqP County Fair on funding programs that assist with installation of BMPs protecting water quality; Water Plan booth used by LqPYB Watershed to share water quality information; "*Where does your water shed?*" bookmarks purchased for elementary & public libraries; staff assisted with Earth Day Fun Run; supported SWCD newsletter mailing.

BMP Application/Installation

Eighteen wells were decommissioned in 2013, another 3 were approved but projects not completed before the end of the year, and 5 are pending 2014 funds. One project was cancelled, having been completed before funding approval. Of those sealed with cost share, 8 were in well pits and/or subject to flooding and 10 were near a feedlot/barnyard or septic. Cost share is provided at 75% not to exceed \$500/well. The projects were reported electronically to the Board of Water and Soil Resources. \$177.50 unencumbered project funds will be carried over to 2013.