

Lac qui Parle Soil & Water Conservation District



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2012 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
Paul Scwendemann...Publicity & Information



District Staff

Terry WittnebelDistrict Manager
Grant Bullemer....District Technician
Sheri Laechelt....Program Assistant
Curtis Nordaune....District Eng. Tech

Assisted by NRCS Staff

Burton Hendrickson....District Conservationist
Gary Hoffman....Soil Conservation Technician



Not pictured: Curtis Nordaune

2012 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
Farmers Mutual Telephone, Bellingham
Klein Bank, Madison
Lac qui Parle Co-op Oil, Dawson
Lund Implement, Madison
United Prairie Bank, Madison
Minnwest Bank, Dawson
Northern Plains Tiling Company
Madison Bottling Company

Friend of Conservation Memberships:

Peggy Crosby
Erickson Chevrolet, Madison & Dawson
Larry & Sonja Farmer
Jeff and Carla Johnson
Breberg Agency, Dawson
Bob & Julie Ludvigson
Paul & Lori Scwendemann
AMPI

2012 District Manager's Report

Terry Wittnebel, District Manager

What stands out about 2012? Lots of new faces, and successful application for two Clean Water Fund grants! Both District Technician, Les Kvidera, and Program Assistant, Debbie Hoffman, left the District in March and July respectively for opportunities closer to home. New faces in these positions belong to Grant Bullemer and Sheri Laechelt. Through the accelerated implantation CWF grant, the District hired Matthew Brehmer to help complete a Level 3 feedlot survey for the County. Conservation Corps Apprentice Jacob Payne (that's a third successful grant application) was here for the summer helping with tree planting and the wellpit retrofit grant program (the other CWF grant). Troy Dale, Pheasants Forever Farm Bill Biologist, joined the team in October. NRCS additions came in November (Micah Meyer, Wetland Specialist) and December (Amy Estling, Administrative Assistant). As these new staff gain confidence in their knowledge of programs and responsibilities, they will increase our ability to get conservation on the ground in Lac qui Parle County.

District Conservationist's 2012 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), GRP (Grassland Reserve Program), WRP (Wetland Reserve Program), and the third CSP (Conservation Stewardship Program) signups during the year. This resulted in 42 applications in these programs with 28 obligated agreements (17 EQIP, 11 CSP). There were conservation plans applied for over 14,000 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 10,400 acres, and improved water quality on 11,800 acres. Grazing land benefited was 750 acres, and wildlife habitat improvements were on over 1300 acres. Some examples of practices reported as applied were: conservation tillage (no-till, strip till, mulch till), nutrient management, pesticide management, windbreak/Shelterbelt establishment, water and sediment control basins, wetland restorations, 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 a majority of people investigated their options related to re-enrollment. The CCRP (Continuous Conservation Reserve Program) had many options available on a year round basis for landowners to explore or pursue, and there was a General CRP signup in 2012. We completed 190 CCRP program eligibility determinations and developed conservation plans for nearly 200 contracts overall. They involve practices such as filter strips, farmstead windbreaks, wetland restoration, and prairie restoration. The cover established conserves soil, improves water quality, and provides wildlife habitat. The 2013 workload for CRP could be even bigger with a lot of contracts due to expire in Lac qui Parle County, but a lack of a new Farm Bill has cast a cloud over where CRP will be going.

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 into setting priorities for the EQIP funding. 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.

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 very difficult to keep up with. There were nearly 600 1026 requests during the fiscal year, and with extra staff being assigned and assistance from the Area Office we have completed a lot of them. There are still a number of pending ones, and new ones coming in all the time. It is advised that people start their 1026 process well ahead of their planned activity as the process will significantly increase the workload and 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. We will continue to attempt to provide assistance to any or all interested landusers in Lac qui Parle County. We want to continue our "Helping People Help the Land".



2012 Outstanding Conservationists

Lac qui Parle SWCD 2012 Outstanding Conservationists are brothers Curtis Melby and Bruce Melby of rural Canby. Their cash grain farm is located in the southwest corner of the county where the elevation drops 40 feet per mile. As wildlife advocates they provide diverse habitat with 3 wetland restorations and a shelterbelt in CRP, and a Pheasants Forever foodplot that also serves as a living snowfence.

Continuing the stewardship ethic learned from their father, the brothers have installed approximately 2800 feet of grass waterway, 8 water & sediment control basins, and have plans to build terraces. Together, practices installed on their land have kept an estimated 1000 tons of soil in place, most functioning well beyond practice lifetime.

The Melby's are good stewards of the land, making use of programs available to protect their soil and water resources. LqP SWCD supervisors and staff thank them for their efforts!



Engineering Projects 2012

Lack of rain through summer and fall of 2012 marked the second consecutive dry year. Reports from local contractors of very little if any soil moisture down to 4 feet or more assured us in recommending not building any earthen conservation structures this fall. A few more projects may have been completed if the necessary soil moisture were present. There is a continuing problem of the increased demand for tiling making it difficult for landowners to acquire Tiling Contractors for conservation practices.

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 Started/Completed*

- | | | | |
|------|----------|------------|-----------|
| • A* | 1 WASCB | EQIP | 4.0 Tons |
| • B | 3 WASCBs | EQIP/State | 14.3 Tons |
| • C | 1 WASCB | EQIP/State | 14.5 Tons |

Projects Funded & Waiting Construction

- | | | | |
|-----|--|------------|--|
| • D | 2 WASCBs | Watershed | |
| • E | 2 WASCBs | Watershed | |
| • F | 2 WASCBs | Watershed | |
| • G | Side Inlet/grade stabilization structure | EQIP | |
| • H | Side Inlet/grade stabilization structure | EQIP | |
| • I | 1 WASCBs | EQIP/State | |
| • J | 1 WASCBs | EQIP/State | |

In addition, the office has several requests from landowners to do field checks for potential projects. Most of these requests have been field checked. Some surveying has been done on 6 of these sites, with cost estimates needing completion. We expect as many as 5 of these sites to be signed up for cost-sharing assistance this winter.

Tree Program

The tree program saw a year with a relatively low number of plantings compared to recent years. The planting season was complicated by a wet spring putting pressure on the cost share planting deadline. Fabric application however, was not hindered by rain, as this summer will be remembered for widespread drought, no doubt causing landowners to water fresh plantings more often. The technician attended 1 training session on plant selection.

EQIP & CRP Plantings

Farmstead	2	
<i># of trees</i>		612
<i>feet of fabric</i>		6115

State Cost Share

Farmstead Shelterbelts	5	
<i># of trees</i>		730
<i>feet of fabric</i>		9271

Plantings with no Cost Share Assistance

Wildlife Plantings	3	
<i># of trees</i>		575
<i>feet of fabric</i>		5700

Totals

	PROJECTS	10	
	TREES PLANTED		1917
	TREES SOLD		
	FABRIC (feet)		21,086



No Till Drill

Continuing the service to local producers, the district rented out our no-till drill at a steady rate this year in order to aid producers performing CRP and grassland maintenance.

Rentals.....13
Acres.....122.1

LCCMR Granite Outcrop Grant

Legislative Citizen Commission on Minnesota Resources

100 acres of fragile Minnesota Valley Granite Outcrop rock ecosystems in Lac qui Parle County are protected with a permanent easement. One easement begun in 2011 was completed in 2012. There were no new applications. Work has begun on a new grant application to expand eligible sites to also include remnant prairie.



Rain Gauge Program

In 2012 the LqP Soil and Water Conservation District started out with 11 volunteer rain gauge monitors. In April, Kipp Stender of Garfield Township joined the program, leaving only one open position 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.

2012 Precipitation Totals

MONITORS	Jan.	Feb.	March	April	May	June	July	Aug.	Sept.	Oct.	Nov.	Dec.	TOTAL
Jeff Thompson 37 116 43 17	0.19	1.15	0.68	2.65	5.17	2.83	0.83	1.82	0.33	1.36	.39	1.39	18.79
Cliff Hanson 37 116 44 34 7	0.41												0.41
Jeff Johnson 37 117 42 4 7	0.21	1.37	0.77	2.69	4.80	2.64	0.63	1.57	0.33	0.99	0.34	1.97	18.31
Burt Hendrickson 37 117 44 32 7	0.20	1.29	1.07	3.03	4.53	2.13	0.25	1.61	0.33	1.30	0.41	1.74	17.89
Rosemary Weber 37 117 45 21 7	0.25	1.22	0.91	3.51	4.82	1.99	0.68	1.58	0.32	1.40	0.26	1.57	18.51
Winfred Schmidt 37 117 46 20 7	0.25	1.35	1.75	3.61	4.75	1.67	0.63	1.37	0.62	1.36	0.32		17.68
Stan Olson 37 118 45 11 7	0.33	1.26	1.21	2.85	4.91	2.17	0.72	2.11	0.36	1.35	0.18	1.45	18.90
Dennis Stoick 37 118 46 4 7	0.37	1.28	0.35	3.35	4.49	2.37	0.54	1.94	0.30	1.30			16.29
Dale Lien 37 119 43 8 7	0.27	1.06	1.47	3.20	4.87	4.29	0.51	2.28	0.23	1.07	0.40		19.65
Gary Wollschlager 37 119 45 10 7	0.20	1.82	1.93	3.79	5.48	4.65	0.35	2.20	0.37	1.45	0.25	1.58	24.07
Louisburg Elevator 37 120 44 33 7		1.47	1.67	2.76	5.40	5.95	0.88	2.54	0.41	0.97	0.24	1.53	23.82
Kipp Stender 37 118 45 367				2.84	5.08	2.00	0.37	1.70	0.25	1.58		1.58	15.40

Monitor Needed (Ten Mile Lake Township, SE Corner)

Education/Outreach Activities

DATE	AUDIENCE	TOPIC	# PRESENTATIONS
3/15	ECFE Family Night	environmental stewardship	continuous
3/26	Annual Township Officers	water plan	1(15 min).
4/22	Earth Day Fun Run/Walk	watershed community, Earth Day	
4/29-5/6	all residents <i>Harmony-Connecting Food Back to the Soil</i>	Soil & Water Stewardship Week	continuous
5/1	LqP V 5 th	soil Soil Formation role play	2(45 min.)
5/2	Envirothon	natural resources	continuous
5/16	grades 9-12 from 11 county area LqP V 6 th	water quality Sum of the Parts	3(45 min.)
5/23	all 5 th /6 th graders	receive spruce trees (Chippewa field day)	
5/23, 25	Chippewa 5 th grade Field Day	trees Maple Seed mixup	16(25 min.)
5/29	all kindergarteners	receive native species tree (pin cherry)	2(10 min.)
6/1	Trees for Babies give-away	value of trees	continuous
5/18, 19	Canoe, Cook, Camp Gal's Get-Away Adventure on LqPRiver	- natural resources	
6/8	D-B Science Class Canoe Trip	local programs protecting water quality	1(15 min.)
6/27	all residents	Nitrate Testing Clinic	continuous
7/25	livestock producers	manure management workshop	1 (1/2 hour)
7/11	YellowBank Friendship Tour	protecting YellowBank River	continuous
8/31	all residents	Conservation Drainage Workshop	
9/6-9	LqP county fair	supervisor elections/lifetime+ soils savings of practices	continuous
9/26-27	Environmental Fair 6 th graders from 11 county area	natural resources	continuous
11/13	2012 program participants	thank you mailing	
11/26	Outstanding Conservationist Recognition event		

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; LqPYB CWP sponsored Yellow Bank Watershed Friendship Tour; Chippewa SWCD Women's Day (used PA system); Yellow Medicine SWCD Conservation Drainage Workshop; provided support LqPV art contest.

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

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

Troy Dale, Pheasants Forever Farm Bill Wildlife Biologist

In early October 2012, Pheasants Forever, through an agreement with the local NRCS and SWCD in Lac Qui Parle County, created a new position based out of the Madison Conservation Office. This new position, Farm Bill Wildlife Biologist, was made possible through generous contributions from the local NRCS, SWCD, Lac Qui Parle County Pheasants Forever Chapter, and Pheasants Forever National Office. Through this position, I am able to assist conservation-minded landowners in achieving their land management goals. Whether those goals include creating hunting habitat, ensuring clean air, erosion control or clean water; the programs we promote at the Conservation Office vary greatly in structure but all have the same core outcome: natural resource conservation. With the expiring Federal Farm Bill, I am unable to work on any new Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) contracts, but can assist with existing contracts. In the mean time, I have been focusing my efforts on state programs like Reinvest In Minnesota (RIM). This is a unique program in which landowners are compensated for permanently removing their land from production and devoting it to resource conservation.

In the past two months our office has submitted:

RIM applications.....	3
Total Acres.....	263



Southwest Prairie Technical Service Area

As a member of the SWPrairie TSA, the LqP SWCD receives advanced engineering assistance for BMP projects. In 2012, SWPrairie engineers worked with District staff on two projects – one feedlot and one a complex soil erosion site.

Walk In Access Program

The Walk In Access pilot program has been shifted from its three year pilot status to a traditional DNR program. Funding sources have changed but the program shows promise of continuing to be a great opportunity for hunters who utilize public land to have more options available. The technician has attended 3 web training sessions as the program went through various changes throughout 2012, with the transition from pilot to permanent.

Sites.....8
Acres.....880

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. Find a link to the DNR Ob Well website by visiting www.lacquiparleswcd.org for data information.

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 District Technician attended 3 training courses for program updates.

In 2012, there were 3 site visits, and 2 road construction project reviews.



Conservation Corps Apprentice

A successful grant application to Conservation Corps Minnesota & Iowa, AmeriCorps Individual Placement Programs, provided Jacob Payne as a Conservation Corps Apprentice for the summer. Jacob was originally from Faribault, and assisted with programs including tree planting and fabric installation, well pit retrofit grant program, inventory of best management practices, and a water testing clinic.



2012 Clean Water Fund Grants

The District had two successful Clean Water Fund Grant applications, and was 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, the program was opened county wide. One more application has been completed and two more are being processed. **Four applications** may indicate lack of interest, but we are being told numerous individuals have already done this at their own expense in recent years.

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 person hired is Matthew Brehmer, a college student from the Bellingham area. A Manure Management Workshop was held both to share BMP information and introduce the Level 3 survey process. With training from the Feedlot Officer, Matt worked daily over the summer assembling and organizing necessary data, and began the required farm visits. He completed additional farm visits over Christmas break. The SWCD oversees grant administration, but Matt is under day to day supervision of the Feedlot Officer.

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 (both approved and pending) are below. Additional interest has been expressed.

CAP plan..... 1
Alternative intakes.....1 application.....4 units

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 existing Water Plan expires May 2013. The LqP County Commissioners appointed 21 individuals representing a cross section producer groups and local government units to the 2012 Resource Commission to provide direction and oversight of Water Plan activities and to assist with the process of writing a new Plan. The County contracted with consultant Matthew E. Johnson, Midwest Community Planning, LLC, from Willmar, to oversee development and writing of the Plan at a cost of \$5500 from Water Plan funds. Few changes were made to work plan implementation activities; activities necessary for a new Comprehensive Water Quality Plan were added. Per diem and mileage are paid for Commission members who are not reimbursed by their agency or organization but serve as members at large. The Resource Commission met 3 times and began working with the consultant on the water planning process. The Coordinator and consultant gathered water resource concerns from the public at an Open House held 7/30.

Two AgBMP loans were conveyed for ag waste handling practices. There were several additional inquiries early in the year. The program was promoted at SWCD workshops and displays during the year.

The Water Plan Coordinator attended several sessions pertaining to Water Plan activities at the BWSR Academy 10/29-31 and participated in scheduled TEAM meetings and other collaborative sessions with the Clean Water Partnership/Watershed staff.

Education

A water quality activity was presented to LqPValley 6th graders 5/16/12. Staff time supported the annual Environmental Fair for 6th graders, an 11-county environmental learning event.

The Water Plan partnered with the LqPYB CWP to offer Canoe, Cook, Camp; A Gal's Get-Away Adventure on the Lac qui Parle River planned for 5/18-19, but the event had to be cancelled due to low registration.

Other education/outreach activities included: a free Nitrate Testing Clinic held 6/27 for the second year; a Manure Management Workshop on 7/25 promoted techniques benefiting water quality; a Conservation/Controlled Drainage Field Day in Yellow Medicine county 7/31 was promoted in LqP County; a weekly radio program April through October included numerous water quality topics; promotion of SWCD Clean Water Fund grant to retrofit then close well pits; booth on water quality at the LqP County Fair, located in the popular Wildlife Building; promotional key rings purchased jointly with LqP SWCD; an open house to gather public input for the Water Plan rewrite.

BMP Application/Installation

Nine wells were sealed in 2012 and another 5 were approved but projects not completed before the end of the year. One well was sealed at the landowner's expense. Of those sealed with cost share, 3 were in well pits and/or subject to flooding and 6 were near a feedlot/barnyard. The Resource Commission validated decommissioning wells as a local priority until such time as there is a successful Clean Water Fund or other grant. Cost share is provided at 75% not to exceed \$500/well. The projects were reported electronically to the Board of Water and Soil Resources. \$116.50 will be carried over to 2013. Five new applications are pending 2013 funding.