

2015 Annual PROGRESS REPORT

LAC QUI PARLE SOIL AND WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICT



**122 - 8th Avenue South
Madison, Minnesota 56256**

**PERIOD COVERED
January 1, 2015 to December 31, 2015**

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 local land users to help them protect Lac qui Parle's natural resources.

II. Goals, Objectives, Strategy and Actions

Objectives, strategies and action items have been taken from the Lac qui Parle County Local Water Management Plan 2014 – 2018, followed by additional objectives and actions identified by the Lac qui Parle Soil and Water Conservation District Board of Supervisors. (Refer to the Lac qui Parle County Local Comprehensive Water Management Plan for the full scope of action items planned for the County.) The SWCD will partner with other local entities to accomplish other action items.

GOAL 1: PROTECT AND IMPROVE SURFACE WATER QUALITY BY REDUCING PRIORITY POLLUTANTS

Objective A: TMDL Implementation - proactively work to get waters off MPCAs 303d List of Impaired Waters.

1.A.3. Target BMP Programs that address bacteria along North Fork Yellow Bank River, from the MN/SD Border to the Yellow Bank River (Assessment Unit # 07020001-510) and the South Fork Yellow Bank River, from the MN/SD Border to North Fork Yellow Bank River (Assessment Unit # 07020001-526).

1.A.4. Target BMP Programs that address bacteria and turbidity along Florida Creek, MN/SD Border to West Branch Lac qui Parle River (Assessment Unit # 07020003-521), the West Branch Lac qui Parle River, from Lost Creek to Florida Creek (Assessment Unit # 07020003-516), and the North Fork Yellow Bank River to the Minnesota River (Assessment Unit # 07020001-525).

1.D.3. Mud Creek. Target erosion and sediment control BMPs along Mud Creek, from Marietta to West of Dawson.

1.D.4. Cobb Creek, Crow Creek, West Branch Lac qui Parle River. Target erosion and sediment control BMPs along Cobb Creek, Crow Creek, West Branch Lac qui Parle River (segment not included in the TMDL).

Objective D: Erosion & sediment control to protect the County's long-term soil resources and surface water quality.

ACTIONS:

- 5 producers increase residue by adopting no till or strip till through program such as EQIP.

15 producers applied 772 acres no till within target watersheds

4 producers applied 193 acres no till in other watersheds

- 5 producers adjust tillage to increase residue by 10-15%.

52 producers applied residue management to 3182 acres within target watersheds

13 producers applied residue management to 796 acres in other watersheds

- Work with producers to maintain existing CRP filters/buffers.

125 producers applied 496 acres filter strips within target watersheds

186 producers applied 1043 acres no filter strips in other watersheds

- Target areas where buffers are needed but don't exist. Use one-to-one contacts and establish cover on 5 sites.

Accept responsibilities of new Buffer Law

- Work with 1 producer on the EQIP cover crop initiative.

50 acres applied with 1 contract

6 EQIP applications for FY16

Worked with 2 individuals non-program

- Fund and install 10 alternative tile intakes.
- Promote the use of drainage management BMPs such as restore/create wetlands, saturated buffers, biofilters, etc. – 1 producer install 1 practice from BMP list

117 producers restored 1599 acres within target watersheds, mostly all CRP

Additional 29 producers restored 400 acres, mostly CRP

- Install 5 water and sediment control basins.

3 projects with total of 9 water and sediment control basins installed (3 included diversions)

- Install 2 grade control structures (i.e. side inlets, etc.)
- Work with landowners to preserve/enhance native vegetation.

93 people restored 912 acres

- Target floodplain acres in Mud Creek watershed for new enrollments in long-term grassland programs.
- Target BMP application using tools such as Digital Elevation Model data and Terrain Analysis, SPI (Stream power Index) signatures, Environmental Benefits Index, BWSR Ecological Ranking Tool website, MPCA Nitrate in Surface Waters Study, and others as they become available.
- Continue the SWCD no-till drill program.

32 producers planted 711 acres planted

- Target marginal land to promote grassland programs i.e. CRP, RIM, CREP.

88 CRP plans on 1323 acres

1 RIM grassland easement recorded on 177.4 acres

- Administer MN Department of Ag low interest loan program

5 applications (3 ag wastes, 2 well construction)

- Ensure adequate administrative & technical staff to deliver SWCD, watershed, & other LGU BMP programs, ensuring Water Plan goals & objectives are effectively implemented.

**Applied for & awarded Conservation Corps apprentice for summer
District Technician resignation in June, hired replacement in August**

- Continue fabric mulch program for SWCD conservation tree plantings.

12,996 feet installed for 11 customers

Objective B: Reduce or minimize the negative impacts of animal manure and fertilizers on surface water quality.

ACTIONS:

- Work with producers and provide technical & engineering assistance through SWCD & TSA to properly address waste management issues.

\$159,187 AgBMP loan funds available for ag waste practices

Objective C: SSTS – Work with landowners on proper installation and maintenance.

ACTIONS:

- Secure MDA funding to provide low interest loans to upgrade noncompliant systems.

\$21,583 AgBMP loan funds available to upgrade noncompliant septic

Education/Outreach for Goal 1

ACTIONS:

- 1 article in each SWCD quarterly newsletter promoting BMPs
- 4 radio programs per year promoting BMPs

**5-20-15 AgBMP loan program - Terry
(Burt & Jon - not documented)**

- 1 workshop/field day/demonstrations site promoting BMPs.

11-4-15 NRCs assisted with cover crop demo at Bud Radermacher's (Walter twnshp)

- Use one to one contacts in target areas to promote program availability & BMP adoption.
- Promote application of BMPs that reduce potential impact of pesticides and other chemicals as well as nutrients.

included as part of 40 CSP enhancements

- Promote soil health BMPs quarterly using print or electronic media.

News 2-2-16 CSP

News 2-26-15 Soil Health workshop

News 3-17-15 cover crops

News 6-3-15 soil loss

News 7-9-15 cover crops

News 8-12-15 soil health

Radio 9-2-15 dormant seeding - Clean Water Partnership

- Promote BMPs as identified in MN Prairie Conservation Plan to provide benefits for both water quality and prairie eco-systems.

Radio 4-29-15 pollinators – Burt

Radio 4-22-15 Earth Day – Clean Water Partnership

Radio 6-17-15 pollinators – Camille (apprentice)

News 7-24-15 native grasses & forbs – Burt

News 9-18-15 buffers – Michelle

News 12-11-15 buffers - Michelle

- Provide youth activities including classroom, field days, tours, competitions (local, area, state levels) 10 activities annually

Area 2 Envirothon 4-22-15

State Envirothon 5-18-15

Chippewa 5th grade field day 5-28/29-15

LqPValley summer school field day 6-25-15 (soil, trees, macroinvertebrates, water cycle, prairie/wildlife)

D-B science class canoe trip 6-24/25-15

Environmental Fair (committee & 1 day of presentations) 9-22/23-15

GOAL 2: GROUNDWATER QUALITY & QUANTITY: TO PROTECT THE COUNTY'S AQUIFERS

Objective F: Ensure there is an adequate supply of safe drinking water

Objective G: Implement Best Management Practices to protect the quantity of groundwater.

ACTIONS:

- Promote & secure funding to implement groundwater BMP projects. Prioritize sensitive groundwater recharge areas. Install 2 projects annually.

AgBMP loans – 2 wells replaced

Water Plan cost share – 18 wells sealed

- Reduce nitrogen leaving cropped field root zones
- Improve management of nitrogen – Implement BMP with one (1) landowner annually.

- Increase use of cover crops – Implement BMP with one (1) landowner annually.

1 landowner on 50 acres

- Increase perennials in crop rotation – Implement BMP with one landowner annually.
- Sponsor campaign to test private well water for nitrates, fecal, or other contaminant of concern. Secure funding to offer financial assistance to landowners for use of certified lab testing.

News 3-25-15 well sealing

News 4-27-15 groundwater

News 5-4-15 landscaping around a well

Radio 5-6-15 test well water for contaminants

Radio 5-20-15 seal unused wells

- Monitor 7 DNR observation well test sites.

10 wells sealed in March, April, June, August, September, October, November

- Hold more water on the landscape with wetland protection/ restoration, retention structures, grass plantings, etc., using available federal, state, and/or local programs - Target one (1) subwatershed annually.

Great Western MN Get-Together booth 2-14/15-15 “wetlands aren’t always wet”

GOAL 3: EFFECTIVELY MANAGE SURFACE WATER RESOURCES

Objective H: Ensure that surface water resources are managed properly for multiple uses and flood damages are minimized.

- 3.H.1. Agricultural Drainage.** Work with landowners to help ensure that agricultural drainage is functioning properly and that both water quality and quantity issues are addressed.
- 3.H.2. Stormwater Management.** Work with landowners to help ensure that stormwater is managed properly and that both water quality and quantity issues are addressed.
- 3.H.3. Wetlands and Water Storage/Retention.** Administer WCA and work with landowners to help ensure that wetlands and water storage/retention are managed properly and that both water quality and quantity issues are addressed.

ACTIONS:

- Increase number of stream miles protected by riparian buffers – 1 mile per year.

18 acres riparian buffer

311 producer applied 1239 acres filter strip

- Water & sediment control basins – install 5 per year

6

- Terraces – install 1 per year

1 terrace repair

- Residue management – apply to 500 acres per year

4943 acres applied

- Long term vegetation including filter strips (CRP, CCRP, CREP, RIM) – install 25 acres per year; 100 acres per year in floodplains

3418 acres CRP established, about 140 acres floodplain

- Field windbreaks – establish 1 every other year
- Farmstead shelterbelts – install 5 per year

10 farmstead shelterbelts

- Wildlife plantings – establish 1 per year
- Living snowfence – install 1 per year
- Seek funding to encourage adoption of new practices such as cover crops – work with 2 landowners annually.

Cover crop field day 11/4/15

6 EQIP applications for cover crops

- Participate in the MN Department of Climatology Rainfall Monitoring program.

Data gathered from 10 monitoring sites

- Provide technical & financial assistance to landowners through RIM, WRP, RIM/WRP, CRP, USFWS & DNR programs, Wetland Banking and Ag Wetland Banking.

All programs have been used

(3 wetland banking applications)

- Assist implementation of MN Prairie Plan. Prioritize sites within County, promote, assist landowners with program options

PF Biologist on staff – attends Prairie Plan meetings

Projects completed through Prairie Plan

3 prescribed burns on 387.5 acres

1 interseeding on 85 acres

Administers CRP/CCRP/CREP

10 WIA contracts enrolled/re-enrolled for 1186 acres

- Landscape Analysis. Create an inventory using LiDar, terrain analysis, and other tools as they become available to identify the most important landscapes for wetland restoration for the purpose of water storage, sediment/nutrient reduction downstream, flood storage, and/or metering water flow.

Tools under development

provided matching grant funds to SW Prairie TSA for this purpose

Education/Outreach for Goal 3

ACTIONS:

- Educate producers on the need for nutrient management plans, how to develop, how to use, etc.
- Target promotion of applicable BMPs in critical areas of the landscape, encouraging use of federal, state, or other BMP implementation funds.

County Fair booth 9-10/11/12-15 “use the right tool from your toolbox”

- Target promotion of BMPs in critical areas of the landscape, encouraging use of federal, state, or other BMP implementation funds through the use of newsletter, news releases, radio, workshops, booth/display, personal contacts, or other means – 1 activity annually.

“You Hold the Key” workshop for women planned for 6-16-15 (cancelled, low registration)

GOAL 4: TO EFFECTIVELY ADMINISTER THE LAC QUI PARLE WATER PLAN

Objective 1: Engage the Citizens and Stakeholders on key water planning issues and implementation opportunities.

ACTIONS:

- Maintain the County Water Plan Coordinator position.
- Provide training to increase knowledge and skills

(See Goal 5, same action)

- Prepare required plans and reports

Met requirements & deadlines

- Assist MPCA comprehensive monitoring efforts as part of the watershed approach.

Yellow Medicine River watershed WRAP\$ meetings:

1-22-15 4-2-15 5-7-15 5-21-15

LqP River watershed WRAP\$ meetings:

3-10-15 5-19-15

Upper MN watershed WRAP\$:

2-5-15 3-2-15 4-8-15 5-13-15 11-24-15

- Assist in development of priorities and implementation strategies.

Yellow Medicine River 1 Watershed 1 Plan:

1-14-15 2-2-15 2-18-15 3-1-15 4-29-15
6-10-15 9-9-15 10-7-15 webex 10-14-15 webex
10-21-15 11-4-15 11-10-15 11-17-15 12-9-15

- Provide financial and/or technical assistance to partners.

Participated on WCA TEP

Provided maps to WCA LGU

6-9-15 assisted CWP with transect survey & water sampling for WRAPS

8-5/6-15 assist CWP with water sampling for WRAPS

12-14-15 plan Buffer Law meeting with LqPYB Watershed District

9-2-15 Assisted CWP with filter strip meeting at Walter Town Hall

- Use LIDAR or innovative technologies as they become available to target BMPs to the most critical landscapes.

- Participate in local work group and other partner meetings.

TEAM	3-10-15	5-19-15	12-22-15
LqP WRAPS	3-10-15	5-19-15	
1W1P	3-10-15	5-19-15	
Local Work Group	8-13-15		
LqPYB Watershed District Advisory Committee	11-16-15		
SAM development/1w1p	11-17-15		
Upper MN WRAPS	11-24-15		

- Assist with civic engagement activities

1W1P kickoff meeting, Minnesota, 3-11-15

Township Officials Meeting 3-30-15 public input requests for WRAPS & 1W1P

The additional Objectives and Actions identified by the District Board of Supervisors for the 2015 Annual Plan are:

Goal 5: Lac qui Parle Soil & Water Conservation District Administration:

ACTIONS:

- Fund necessary staff to maintain District capacity and provide effective administration

Begin development of application for fy16 District Capacity Grant available from Clean Water Funds - \$100,000 – salary increases to attract & keep qualified staff

- Provide for effective District operation with training for supervisors, regular monthly meetings, supervisor review of policies and memorandums of understanding, and development of annual budget, work plan, annual reports.

11 monthly meetings held in 2015

Signed MOUs reviewed Board meetings – see agendas

2014 Annual Report approved February

2015 Annual Plan reviewed by Plan Committee prior to approval at Feb. board mtg

2016 Budget Committee 9-10-15

Employee policy update sent in October to all supervisors;

changes discussed/approved at December board meeting

- Provide training to increase the staff's capabilities in engineering, computer, program administration, and related skills.

1-28-15 Sheri, MCIT

3-5-15 Brian, WCA

5-28/29-15 Terry, MCIT (HR)

8-19-15 Terry, groundwater

8-11-15 Terry, AWQC

8-11-15 all tech staff, toolkit

9-28-15 Terry/Michelle, terrain analysis

9-30-15 Terry/Michelle, SAM

10-26/27/28-15 Terry/Michelle/Sheri, BWSR Academy

11-2-15 Sheri, GASB

11-17-15 Michelle, SAM

12-6/7/8-15 Terry/Michelle/Sheri, annual convention

8-11-15 Toolkit training all technical staff

- The LqP SWCD will annually conduct staff evaluations and update job descriptions if appropriate

November staff evaluations, met with personnel committee 12-3-15

Program assistant had slight changes to priority activities

A second technician will be hired; District Technician job description split; new programs added to both

- Secure and administer funding for best management practice application/installation

AgBMP loan program 2015 \$559,339

State cost share FY15 \$20,521

EQIP 2015 \$87,512

CSP \$481,434

- Increase public understanding of "Who We Are and What We Do"

News 4-10-15 Get to Know Your Local Conservation District

News 4-24-15 Soil & Water Stewardship Week

Plan committee suggested better signage on building – visit Big Stone SWCD

Served on Farmfest plan committee

"SWCDs Through the Decades" display & brochures in county museum during county fair

November - Thank-you campaign – cards sent to everyone working with us this past year

- Supervisors and staff will review plan progress quarterly.

Program activity discussed at staff meetings held approximately monthly

All staff report program area accomplishments at each board meeting

Goal 6: Promote Quality and Quantity of Conservation Tree Plantings:

ACTIONS:

- Raise public awareness of the benefits of species diversity and native species in tree plantings

Discussed with each landowner in the course of ordering trees

- Distribute native species tree or shrub to all kindergarten students in Lac qui Parle County schools including native species information to share with parents

Redosier dogwood distributed in May

- Raise public awareness of the effectiveness of quality tree plantings (energy savings, living snow fence, etc.) through the use of electronic means, radio, newspapers, or demonstrations

News 3-4-15 Benefits of Tree Windbreaks

Goal 7: Special Project Grant Administration: Effectively Deliver the Aquatic Invasive Species Program and CWF13 Targeted Drainage Water Management Program:

ACTIONS:

- Maintain District capacity to effectively administer, implement, and report Clean Water Fund and other Special Fund Grants

DRAINAGE WATER MANAGEMENT ACTIVITIES:

Status reviews completed

AIS ACTIVITIES:

AIS presenter 1 day at Environmental Fair (Michelle)

Chippewa 5th Grade field day 2 days (Brian)

Meeting at RDC 2-25-15

Meeting at RDC 3-24-15

Training 1-20/21-15 (Brian)

Newspaper ads aimed at hunters (items like decoys can transport invasives) October

AIS signs created & posted at stream fishing sites and waterfowl-hunters wetlands

Special Implementation Projects for the District are:

Local Aquatic Invasive Species Prevention Program

LqP SWCD accepted responsibility from the County to administer the local Aquatic Invasive Species Prevention Program. This new program is designed to prevent the introduction and spread of AIS that are threatening Minnesota's waters. \$19,852 will be used to increase public awareness and participation in prevention, assess the County's resources and risk of AIS introduction, broaden knowledge of and participation in early detection and rapid response activities.

Drainage Water Management for LqP & Yellow Medicine Counties

Yellow Medicine SWCD serves as the fiscal agent for this \$60,000 2013 Clean Water Fund Grant that provides up to 75% cost share for Drainage Water Management Plans, replacing open tile intakes with alternative inlets, and installation of control drainage structures and denitrifying bioreactors. In 2014 all funds were spent or encumbered until one project was cancelled. An extension was granted allowing those funds to be used this year.



Lac qui Parle County Comprehensive Local Water Plan

122 – 8th Avenue South, Madison MN 56256
320-598-7321 x 3

2015 Annual Report

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 LqP County Commissioners reappointed 2014 Resource Commission members to serve again for 2015. Resource Commission provides oversight of Water Plan activities. The group met once to set budget and approve work plan. 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 in August as part of a Local Work Group to provide input for NRCS's programs.

Four AgBMP loan applications were processed, two for ag waste handling equipment and two for well replacement. There were several additional inquiries, and the County was approached about a joint program for replacing failing septs. This program was promoted as part of booth displays and on radio programs during the year.

The Water Plan Coordinator attended a groundwater workshop and several sessions pertaining to Water Plan activities at the BWSR Academy 10/26-28. She also participated in scheduled Clean Water Partnership/Watershed TEAM meetings as well as other collaborative planning sessions for the Yellow Medicine River Watershed One Watershed One Plan Pilot, Lac qui Parle River watershed WRAPS, and Upper MN River watershed WRAPS.

Education

Water Plan funds were used to support the annual Environmental Fair for 6th graders, an 11-county environmental learning event with a variety of water sessions, Dawson-Boyd High School science class canoe trip in June, and Field Day for LqPV K-6 summer school students. Other education/outreach activities: a weekly radio program March through October included numerous water quality topics; office open house showcasing programs; Water Plan booths at LqP County Fair and Great Western MN Get-together. A workshop for women, *You Hold the Key, Unlocking the Mystery of Soil and Water*, cancelled in 2014 because of low registration, was tried again in June, but also cancelled.

BMP Application/Installation

Eighteen wells were decommissioned in 2015 with several additional inquires. Of those sealed with cost share, one was subject to flooding, 2 were hazardous, 1 subject to flooding, and 4 were near a feedlot/barnyard or septic. One additional application (near septic) was approved but not sealed before the end of the year. Cost share is provided at 75% not to exceed \$500/well. The projects were reported electronically to the Board of Water and Soil Resources. \$798.50 project funds will be carried over to 2016.



Lac qui Parle Soil and Water Conservation District

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www.lacqui-parleswcd.org

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AQUATIC INVASIVE SPECIES 2015 ANNUAL REPORT

The County delegated administration of the Aquatic Invasive Species Grant to the LqP SWCD. A plan was written and submitted to DNR, identifying education and inventory as priority concerns for action in Lac qui Parle County. The SWCD received \$41,910.00 in 2015. Funds have been used for staff training, staff time both for grant administration and outreach activities, outreach materials, and promotional advertising.



Two different signs were designed & posted – one at walk-in fishing spots on streams and the other for wetlands to warn of AIS transportation on decoys.



Students learned about AIS at three different field day events.

The Lac qui Parle Lake Association inquired about using funds for pavement at Boyd's Landing, making it easier for fishermen/boaters to crawl under their water craft and pull the plug. Engineering design and DNR permits are still being investigated. A major portion of 2015 funds were reserved for this project.