

ISANTI SOIL AND WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICT

2013 ANNUAL REPORT

Contact Information

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Introduction

The Isanti Conservation District is a legal Subdivision of State Government organized under provisions of Minnesota Statute 103C. The District is governed by a Board of Supervisors composed of five members nominated by the voters of Isanti County, and who are responsible for directing all District activities. The board meets monthly on the third Tuesday of the month.

Mission Statement

“To provide technical, financial and educational resources to land occupiers in order to implement practices and projects that preserve, protect and enhance the soil, water quality and other natural resources.”

District Supervisors

Wayne Calander-Chairman
Roger Larsen-Public Relations
Barb Kilpatrick-Secretary
Al Koczur-Treasurer
Ryan Carpenter-Vice Chairman

Area of Representation

District 5: North Branch, Isanti Twp
District 1: Maple Ridge, Stanchfield, Springvale, Dalbo Twp.
District 2: Bradford, Athens, Oxford Twp.
District 4: Cambridge Twp.
District 3: Spencer Brook, Wyanett, Stanford Twp.

Office Personnel

Annette Swanson, Administrative Assistant
annette.swanson@mn.nacdnet.net

Jamie Schurbon, District Manager (began July 2013)
jamie.schurbon@anokaswcd.org

Cooperating Agencies

Board of Water & Soil Resources

Jason Weinerman, Board Conservationist

Isanti County Zoning

Tim Anderson, Zoning Administrator
Holly Nelson, Wetland Specialist/Water Plan Coordinator

Natural Resources Conservation Service

Josh Bork, District Conservationist
Jason Rehn, Soil Conservation Technician

Pheasants Forever, Isanti County Chapter

Isanti County Farm Service Agency

LeRoy Sandven, Executive Director

Minnesota Department of Natural Resources

Ted Dick, Area Wildlife Manager

2013 Activity Summary

2013 was a year of transition for the Isanti SWCD in terms of staffing, priorities, and finances.

Staffing - At the end of 2012 the long-time manager retired. Lacking funds to hire a new full time manager, the Isanti SWCD elected to contract a staff person from the Anoka Conservation District to serve as manager on a part time basis. That manager, Jamie Schurbon, started at the end of July 2013 and worked 1-3 days per week. As a result of staff shortage, work focused on only the highest priority projects and correcting past administrative deficiencies. The SWCD seeks to grow its project installation capacity in the coming years.

Priorities – Historically, the Isanti SWCD has primarily provided habitat planting services. The change in staff and sale of the district tractor provided an opportunity to revisit priorities. In 2013 the SWCD has maintained its ability to advise and coordinate habitat projects, but outsourced most of the planting. This has freed the district to pursue other priorities including surface water quality and groundwater sustainability.

Finances – Historically, habitat planting had been a large revenue source. After retirement of the previous district manager at the end of 2012 the SWCD found itself with depleted fund reserves, which was temporarily corrected by selling a district property with pole barn and a tractor. The SWCD has begun pursuing new funding options, including:

- A renewed partnership with the county has begun wherein the SWCD serves as a more beneficial partner. Increased financial support from the county has been requested.
- The SWCD has begun to build relationships with lake associations and lake improvement districts, finding ways we can better serve these parties. These partnerships can lead to future funding opportunities as well.
- The SWCD is now participating in the Metro Conservation Districts technical service area joint powers organization. Certain Clean Water Legacy dollars are distributed through this group.
- The SWCD applied for about four grants, primarily for water quality improvements, in 2013.

Services Provided

District Tree Program

The Isanti SWCD offers for sale tree and shrub species native to Minnesota for conservation practices. The scale of planting ranges from small backyard habitat projects to large forestry restoration projects. The District sold over 30,000 trees in 2013.

Cost-Share Program

The District receives funds from the State Cost Share Program to encourage conservation practice installation. In 2013 these funds were used for project technical assistance.

District No-Till Seeding Program

The Isanti SWCD owns a native grass seed drill. This drill is rented to landowners for habitat projects.

Pheasants Forever Cost Share Program

The Isanti County Chapter of Pheasants Forever offers cost sharing grants to landowners for habitat enhancement and maintenance. Isanti SWCD serves as the point of contact and administrator of these grants. We advise landowners, scrutinize project applications, plan installation and manage maintenance.

The SWCD also provides substantial coordination services to the Pheasants Forever annual banquet fundraiser, including handling registrations and serving as guest speaker.

Groundwater and Precipitation Monitoring Program

Five DNR groundwater wells are monitored to track hydrological changes.

The SWCD has 8 volunteer precipitation recorders throughout Isanti County. Working with the State Climatology office, the data collected provides citizens and the State of Minnesota with important precipitation information and weather history.

County Geologic Atlas

In 2013 the Isanti SWCD joined with the county and municipalities to initiate a county geologic atlas project, and is serving as the project lead. Groundwater sustainability is a topic of high concern regionally, and Isanti County is one of the last in our region to start an atlas which will provide a wealth of information about geology and groundwater hydrology. This information will be used in groundwater planning, well locating, permitting, etc. Work on the atlas will begin in 2014.

Subwatershed Assessments

Through Clean Water Legacy Funding via the Metro Conservation Districts the Isanti SWCD has begun conducting subwatershed assessments, also known as stormwater retrofit assessments. The purpose of these studies is to identify opportunities to better treat stormwater before discharge into priority waterbodies. In 2013 we began such a study for the area immediately draining to Green Lake.

Water Quality Project Coordination

In partnership with municipalities, other agencies and landowners we coordinate projects that benefit lake, stream and river water quality. In 2013 we applied for a grant for a new stormwater pond in the City of Isanti and began assisting a landowner with stabilization of a ravine into the Rum River.

Wetland Conservation Act

The Isanti SWCD staff serve on Isanti County's Wetland Conservation Act Technical Evaluation Panel (TEP). We also advise landowners with respect to the law.

County Water Planning

Isanti County serves as the county water planner. The Isanti SWCD serves on the County Water Planning task force which advises water quality efforts county-wide.

The Isanti SWCD is a partner in the Sunrise River Watershed Restoration and Protection project (WRAP), which is coordinated by the Chisago SWCD.