



ISANTI SWCD EROSION CONTROL AND WATER MANAGEMENT POLICY

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Isanti SWCD Cost-Share Program Policies

The Isanti SWCD offers grants for projects that provide benefits to water quality. The following are local guidelines for the use of grant funds and are specific to Isanti Soil and Water Conservation District. These guidelines will be reviewed and edited and/or amended on an annual basis.

Financial Assistance:

General Funding Information

- All funding program contracts and requests for payment require the approval of the Isanti SWCD Board of Supervisors.
- All funding programs are subject to fund availability and may be discontinued or subject to program policy revisions by the SWCD Board as it deems appropriate.
- A list of projects/interested parties will be kept on file at the District and will be reviewed, ranked, and selected on a first come first serve basis . The District Staff will prioritize projects based on local and state priorities and the potential to provide water quality benefits (See Local Priorities & Local Ranking Criteria in Appendix A).
- 50% of annual State Cost Share will be available for non-structural Best management practices (Cover Crops and Residue/Tillage Management). If additional funds (over and above the 50%) remain in the cost share pool on August 1st of the expiring year, the funds will be made available to the waiting list for non-structural practices.

Cost Share Rates

Generally, the Isanti SWCD will provide up to 75% cost-share to landowners for approved State practices (See [Design Standards](#)). The cost-shared rates are specific to the funding source. See [Program Specific Guidelines](#) (pg. 3). The SWCD Board reserves the right to set a limit on funding at their discretion.

Eligible Expenses

Eligible expenses are those expenses that are eligible for grant reimbursement or, if provided by the landowner, count toward the landowner's required project contribution. Only expenses identified as necessary to successfully complete the project for its designed use are eligible for reimbursement. Once the project has been verified complete by the SWCD any further expenses are exempt from reimbursement.

Materials:

- Native plants and seed (See [Project Requirements](#)-Vegetation)
- Erosion control blankets and bio-logs
- Shredded Wood Mulch
- Landscaping fabric
- Stakes or anchors
- Herbicide
- Tool or machine rental
- Lawn edging
- Soil amendments
- Retaining wall block (rain gardens only)
- Drainage materials (rain gardens or other applicable infiltration practice only)

- Rock, if deemed necessary (See [Project Requirements](#)-Hard-Armor)
- Others as approved by the District Board.

In-kind Labor: Unless specified otherwise by Minnesota prevailing wage statutes, the value of labor, equipment, materials and/or services that are proposed to be provided by the applicant to complete the project, shall be estimated using the best available information and periodically updated using sources such as the Iowa Farm custom Rate Survey. The rates below are subject to change:

- General Labor rate of \$28.64 per hour. (Date, times and activity must be documented)
- Labor rate of \$52 per cubic yard for concrete work.
- Heavy equipment operation such as skid steers, tractors, backhoes, and scrapers (including labor) at \$62 per hour. (Date, times and activity must be documented)
- Materials: \$8 per ton for gravel, \$5 per yard for sand.
- Professional or semi-professional services, such as engineering, labor rate at \$77 per hour. (Date, times and activity must be documented)
- Others as approved by the District Board or Supervisors

NOTE: In-kind labor is non-reimbursable. This is to be used ONLY as match for the grant.

Eligible Conservation Practices

The primary purpose of projects funded is to assist with structural, vegetative, or non-structural land management practices to correct existing water quality problems. The following elements must be met to be eligible for cost share.

Design Standards

All eligible projects must be designed according to the following technical standards: USDA Field Office Technical Guide, MPCA Stormwater Manual, MPCA Protecting Water Quality in Urban Areas, NPDES General Stormwater Permit for Construction Activity, Minnesota Urban Small Sites BMP Manual, and applicable local, state and federal regulations. Design standards for all practices must include specifications for operation and maintenance for the effective life of the given practice, including and inspection schedule and procedure.

Project Specific Requirements

Design Assistance: Prior to offering design assistance—all heads of the household (i.e. both husband and wife or partners) must be present for the initial on-site meeting (a phone call by a head household member may substitute). Additionally, if the SWCD is using a grant to pay for design assistance, the landowner MUST agree to install the project. See Design Assistance contract.

Vegetation: For certain practices including but not limited to shoreline buffers, riparian buffers and various stormwater infiltration practices where native vegetation is recommended: no exotic species or nursery-derived cultivars will be eligible for cost-share reimbursement, vegetation practices must follow BWSR Native Vegetation Establishment and Enhancement Guidelines: www.bwsr.state.mn.us/nativevegetation/seedingguidelines.pdf

Hard-Armor: Riprap should only be used where necessary and never to replace stable, naturally vegetated shoreline. The District will consider funding hard armoring such as rock rip-rap if it is determined by all applicable parties to be the best solution. Should riprap be approved, the site must be enhanced with a vegetative buffer.

Iron Enhanced Buffers: For shoreline projects that opt for installation of an iron-enhanced filter least 20% of the total project area must be planted as native vegetation for habitat. At least 10% of the area should be directly adjacent to the shoreline. An additional 10% should be within 100 feet of the water.

Violation or Permit Requirement: Projects to repair violations or projects that are required, such as stormwater treatment required by local ordinances or repair/replacement of wetlands under the MN Wetland Conservation Act are NOT eligible.

Contractor Work: The applicant may be required to obtain three quotes for the proposed conservation work if the total project cost exceeds \$25,000 prior to contract approval by the board.

Project Maintenance: Applicants must complete a project maintenance workshop OR request a one-on-one maintenance session with the SWCD within three years of project installation.

Ranking: SWCD will rank projects based upon numerous pre-determined criteria including level of environmental benefit, pollution reduction, proximity to water or sensitive resources, and others. SWCD staff and Board of Supervisors reserve the right to promote specific projects beyond the pre-determined ranking criteria if they fit within priorities identified within the Local Water Management Plan or other strategic guidance document.

Program Specific Guidelines

State-Cost Share and Clean Water Fund Grants:

Generally, the Isanti SWCD will provide up to 75% cost-share to landowners for approved State practices (See [Design Standards](#)).

Lakeshore buffers: The Isanti SWCD will provide up to 75% cost-share to landowners installing a lakeshore buffer. State and non-state funds combined may not exceed 100% of the project cost.

Eligibility Requirements:

1. Unless specified differently in a grant, the minimum requirement is an average of 15 feet deep. Buffers must target the treatment of stormwater runoff and reduce erosion. For State-Cost share projects the minimum recommended average is 25 feet deep and must cover 75% of the waterfront. The SWCD recognizes the fact that a 15-25-foot buffer is not always practical or cost efficient. Technical staff can decide to waiver from the minimums on a project-by-project basis.
2. Projects are ranked and selected based whether they are in a priority area and on cost effectiveness to reduce phosphorus.

Well Sealing: Well sealing cost-share will provide up to 50% cost-share not to exceed \$500 per well.

Eligibility Requirements:

1. Wells eligible for cost share must be located within Isanti County. First priority is given to wells located within a delineated well head protection area.
2. Landowner must receive bids from at least two (2) licensed well contractors which will be submitted with the cost-share application.

3. Well sealing must be completed by a Minnesota licensed water well or limited licensed well sealing contractor in accordance with MN Statutes Chapter 1031 and Minnesota Rules Chapter 4725.
4. The contractor sealing the well must file a well and boring sealing record with the Minnesota Department of Health.

State-Cost Share and BWSR Capacity

Non-structural practices: Non-structural practices must be developed in accordance with the requirements of the NRCS conservation practice standard.

Contract lengths are three years and are subject to yearly inspections.

Operation and Maintenance: Each practice will have an Operations and Maintenance Plan developed to meet the applicable practice standard that is specific to the site and practice installed. Inspections will continue to occur per BWSR Grants Administration Policy for nonstructural land management practices; inspection will be completed annually to ensure that the practice has been incorporated. Non-compliance with the program will follow BWSR's Grants Administration Manual guidelines with the goal of bringing the land occupier into compliance. If there is a failure to maintain compliance, the land occupier is liable to the SWCD for up to 150% of the flat-rate payment received.

After the completion of the contract, follow up with the landowner will allow the SWCD to gauge whether adoption of non-structural practice continues to occur after financial assistance ceases.

Non-structural cost-share Rates:

340 (Cover Crops)

Funding rate: SINGLE SPECIES rate \$30/acre; 2 OR MORE SPECIES rate \$40/acre. No other program funding will be paid on the practices. Rates are based on available funding.

Multi species mixture qualification: must be a mixture of two or more cover crop species from different plant families to achieve one or more of the following: (1) species mix with different maturity dates, (2) attract beneficial insects, (3) attract pollinators, (4) increase soil biological diversity, (5) serve as a trap crop for insect pests, or (6) provide food and cover for wildlife habitat management.

A one-time payment will be made after successful completion of the first year of the installation of the practice.

329 & 345 (Residue and Tillage Management)

Funding rate: \$20/acre No other program funding will be paid on the practices. Rates are based on available funding.

A one-time payment will be made after successful completion of the first year of the installation of the practice. No other funding will be paid on practices.

Eligibility Requirements: Non-Structural program participants are selected and prioritized based on scoring related to 1) whether or not the majority of the land is located in a sensitive groundwater area (cover crop only), 2) whether or not the majority of the land is located in a watershed with a completed water quality study, and 3) proximity to surface water. Ranking sheet and map updated annually.

Land occupiers who are already incorporating the requested nonstructural land management practice in their farming operation are not eligible.

For cover crops, a second application is eligible if cover crop species or acreage is enhanced.

Harvesting Sunshine Cover Crop Program- Private Funding (county-wide):

The purpose of this program is to increase the use of cover crops throughout Isanti County by Identifying why cover crops are not a widely used practice and what the barriers are to adoption.

Design Standards: All eligible projects must be designed according to the USDA Field Office Technical Guide or other recognized standard.

Cost-share:

1. 3-year contract rates: \$45/acre single species; \$55/acre multi-species; \$60/acre for interseeding (per-year) up to a maximum of 200 acres per operator.

Multi species mixture qualification*: must be a mixture of two or more cover crop species from different plant families to achieve one or more of the following: (1) species mix with different maturity dates, (2) attract beneficial insects, (3) attract pollinators, (4) increase soil biological diversity, (5) serve as a trap crop for insect pests, or (6) provide food and cover for wildlife habitat management.

2. 1-year contract rates: \$20/acre single species; \$30/acre multi-species; \$35/acre for interseeding (per year) up to a maximum of 100 acres per operator.
3. Contract length:1-3 years; Maximum of three 1-year contracts per operator.
4. Payment: Annual payments made upon completion of annual site visits as described in these guidelines. Funds can be paired and stacked with EQIP funds.

Eligibility Requirements:

1. Funding available to producers in Isanti County only.
2. Cost share agreement must be signed and approved BEFORE seed purchase.

3. Invoices, seed tags, and field inspections are required before payment is made.
4. Producer will follow an Operation and Maintenance Plan.
5. Producer will allow staff to complete soil health monitoring as described in this document.
6. The field to be planted with a cover crop must be planted to an annual crop the following year.
7. For rented land-the landowner must sign a Statement of Control of Land.

Required Soil Health Monitoring:

Annual soil health monitoring to be initiated before 1st cover crop planting.

- I. Annual collection and analysis of soil sample at certified lab- parameters to be measured include phosphorus, nitrogen, potassium, organic content and pH
- II. Annual measure of infiltration rate using infiltration ring
- III. Bury a piece of cotton cloth at each site and annually dig to show rate of degradation, which will illustrate changes in soil biology

Selection:

- 1) length of contract i.e. 1-3 years (3 yr is priority);
- 2) location within county (to scatter cover crop projects around the county in different soils);
- 3) crop type (to include diversity of crop types);
- 4) landowner willingness to allow staff to conduct monitoring and provide outreach using their cover crop plot.

Green Lake 319 Program-Federal Funding (Green Lake Watershed):

The purpose of this program is to delist Green Lake from the impaired waters list.

Rates are based on available funding. Rates listed are the maximum.

Design Standards: All eligible projects must be designed according to the USDA Field Office Technical Guide or other recognized standard.

Cover Crops:

1. 3-year contract rates: \$45/acre single species; \$55/acre multi-species; \$60/acre for interseeding(per-year) up to a maximum of 200 acres per operator.
2. 1-year contract rates: \$20/acre single species; \$30/acre multi-species; \$35/acre for interseeding (per year) up to a maximum of 100 acres per operator.
3. Contract length:1-3 years; Maximum of three 1-year contracts per operator.
4. Payment: Annual payments made upon completion of annual site visits as described in these guidelines. Funds can be paired and stacked with EQIP funds.

No-till/Reduced Till:

1. STANDARD rate \$30/acre.
2. Contract length 3 years.
3. Payment: made after successful completion of 1st year.

Water and Sediment Control Basins (WASCOBs):

5. Up to 100% of the actual cost to install the project (excluding landowner labor).
6. Contract length is 10 years.
7. Payment: made after successful installation verification.

Filter Strips:

1. \$450/acre for NRCS minimum width (Native Species).
2. \$370/acre introduced species.
3. \$100/acre beyond minimum up to 75'.
4. \$150/acre harvestable.
5. Contract length is 5 years.
6. Payment: made after successful completion of the 1st year.

Grassed Waterways:

1. Up to 100% of the actual cost to install the project (excluding landowner labor).
2. Contract length is 10 years.
3. Payment: made after successful completion of the 1st year.

Wetland Restorations:

4. Up to 100% of the actual cost to install the project (excluding landowner labor).
5. Contract length is 10-25 years- length dependence on restoration cost.
6. Payment is made after successful installation verification.

Eligibility: Program participants are selected and prioritized based on proximity to surface water, cost-effectiveness to reduce pollution, leveraged funding, and funding availability.

Lower St. Croix Watershed Based Implementation Funding (approved by SWCD Board 6/21/2022)

Non-structural BMPs will be planned and implemented according to the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) standards and specifications found on the Electronic Field Office Technical Guide (EFOTG). However, seeding dates for cover crops will follow the Midwest cover crop council seeding guide recommendations. Design standards for all practices must include specifications for operation and maintenance for the effective life of the given practice, including an inspection schedule and procedure.

Nonstructural Ag BMPs (management BMPs) must be an enhancement of existing management practices that will reduce soil erosion, improve soil health from existing levels, and have a benefit for water quality. A practice must implement a higher level of conservation than what has been implemented on the field in the past 3 years.

The following practices may be implemented on the same acres for the three-year period alternating practices per year: Cover Crops, Residue and Tillage Management – No-Till & Strip Till, and Residue and Tillage Management – Conservation Tillage.

Contracts:

- Incentives to install or adopt land management practices must have a minimum duration of 3 years.
- Applicants are responsible to submit application forms, project plans and cost estimates as requested by the District in sufficient detail for the District to complete its review.
- The applicant is responsible for full installation of the project before the project installation deadline listed on the cost share contract. If a deadline extension is required to complete the project, the applicant must make the request no less than 30 days prior to the project installation deadline. All contract deadline extension request require approval by the District Board.
- Upon approval by the District Board, the applicant will receive a letter with copy of executed cost share contract stating details of the practice that has been approved, the funding amount, and time schedule to start and complete the project, and a copy of the Operations and Maintenance Plan.
- The landowner and applicant shall allow District staff access to property for which the installed conservation practice is located during the life of the contract. The installed practice will be subject to periodic inspections by District staff.

Reimbursement:

- The applicant must certify, by signing the Flat Rate Voucher, and Practice Certification form, that the practice was completed according to plans and specifications developed by the district.
- The technician with the proper Job Approval Authority shall verify if the practice is complete and meets standards and specifications before final payment is issued.
- The Landowner/Applicant is responsible to pay, in full, all receipts and invoices directly to the contractor or vendor.
- A one-time payment will be made after successful completion of the first year of implementation of the practice.
- A cost share reimbursement payment will be approved by the District Administrator and certified by the District Board upon certification that the project has been installed and completed to specifications.

Practice specific policies:

- **Cover Crops** - Must follow NRCS Practice Standard 340
 - Three-year contract
 - 1-2 species \$50/acre/year
 - 3+ species \$60/acre/year
 - Implementation can occur on different acres within the three-year contract or on the same acres consecutively but must be implemented on the same amount or greater acres in years 2 and 3.
 - Must follow NRCS Practice Standard 340 (except for the seeding date which will follow the Midwest Cover Crop Council Seeding Guide recommendations)

- Seeding dates will follow the Midwest Cover Crop Council Seeding Guide recommendations (the latest date allowed to plant a cover crop is November 20th).
- Three-year contract
- 100 acres maximum per person, entity, or corporation
- Cover crop must be applied to an annual crop, eligible crops include corn, soybeans, or small grains.
- Prevent plant acres are not eligible for this program.
- Cover crop cannot be terminated until after January 1 of the following year.

- **Nutrient Management** - Must follow NRCS Practice Standard 590
 - \$20/acre/year
 - Implemented on the same acres annually

- **Prescribed Grazing** - Must follow NRCS Practice Standard 528
 - \$40/acre/year
 - Implemented on the same acres annually

- **Residue and Tillage Management – No-Till & Strip Till**
 - Must follow NRCS Practice Standard 329 for No-Till/Strip-Till
 - Three-year contract
 - \$20/acre/year
 - Implementation can occur on different acres within the three-year contract or on the same acres consecutively but must be implemented on the same amount or greater acres in years 2 and 3.
 - 100 acres/year maximum per person, entity, or corporation.

- **Residue and Tillage Management - Conservation Tillage**
 - Must follow NRCS Practice Standard 345 for Conservation Till
 - Three-year contract
 - \$10/acre/year
 - Residue cover following a corn crop at the time of planting the subsequent crop must be 60% or greater.
 - Residue cover following a soybean crop at the time of planting the subsequent crop must be 30% or greater.
 - Residue cover following a small grain crop at the time of planting the subsequent crop must be 60% or greater.
 - 100 acres/year maximum per person, entity, or corporation.
Implementation can occur on different acres within the three-year contract or on the same acres consecutively but must be implemented on the same amount or greater acres in years 2 and 3.

Project Ranking Criteria:

Non-Structural program participants will be selected and prioritized based on whether the majority of the land is located in an ag priority location as identified in the Lower St. Croix comprehensive

Watershed Management Plan. Reference Section VII.B of the Lower St. Croix Comprehensive Watershed Management Plan for targeting process and scoring projects.

Isanti SWCD will further prioritize based on criteria such as: 1) criteria defined in Section VII.B. of the Lower St. Croix Comprehensive Watershed Management Plan (targeting and scoring); 2) whether the proposed practices will be implemented on the same acres for three consecutive years and 3) proximity to surface water.

Operation and Maintenance:

Each practice will have an Operations and Maintenance Plan developed to meet the applicable practice standard that is specific to the site and practice installed.

Non-compliance:

Inspections will occur per BWSR Grants Administration Policy for nonstructural land management practices; inspection will be completed annually to ensure that the practice has been incorporated. Non-compliance with the program will follow BWSR's Grants Administration Manual guidelines with the goal of bringing the land occupier into compliance. If there is a failure to maintain compliance, the land occupier is liable to the SWCD for up to 150% of the flat-rate payment received.

Technical Expertise:

The following is a documentation of staff skills, training, credentials along with description of other means the District will use to ensure projects meet the requirements of local guidelines and are installed and maintained according to standards and specifications. This document should be reviewed and updated annually.

Matthew Remer: Was assigned Job Approval Authority to design, install, and sign off on ecological practices relating to Cover Crops (NRCS Practice340) on January 3, 2022, by John Crellin, Area Resource Conservationist with NRCS.

In a case where staff does not have existing JAA or does not have adequate experience as detailed and approved above, we will utilize staff from neighboring SWCDs and the USDA NRCS.

Local Priorities

1. Priority issues and resources are identified in the Lower St. Croix and Rum River Comprehensive Watershed Plans.

Strategic planning by the SWCD Board identified that water quality restoration and projection is favored. The following criteria are used as a first-level method for prioritizing funding.

- a. Projects identified in completed or underway subwatershed analyses (aka stormwater retrofit analyses),

- b. Projects beneficial to a lake, stream, or river that meet standards and/or are in satisfactory condition to the residents and the larger population of county citizens.
- c. Projects identified in completed or underway TMDLs.

Noncompliance:

At its discretion, the board may consider compliance to the terms of the previous Cost-share contract as a subsequent cost Share contract with an applicant.

Technical Expertise

The following is a documentation of staff skills, training, credentials along with description of other means the District will use to ensure projects meet the requirements of local guidelines and are installed and maintained according to standards and specifications. This document should be reviewed and updated annually.

Tiffany Determan: Was assigned Job Approval Authority to design, install, and sign off on ecological practices relating to stabilizing shoreland on June 21st, 2016 at the regular board meeting.

Todd Kulaf: Was assigned Job Approval Authority to design, install, and sign off on ecological practices relating to stabilizing shoreland (critical area planting 342) on November 18th, 2020 by John Crellin, Area Resource Conservationist with NRCS. On January 14, 2021 Todd was given TAA for Streambank and Shoreline restoration (580 engineering practice).

Matthew Remer: Was assigned Job Approval Authority to design, install, and sign off on ecological practices relating to Cover Crops (NRCS Practice340) on January 3, 2022 by John Crellin, Area Resource Conservationist with NRCS.

Ecological Practices: In a case where staff does not have existing JAA or does not have adequate experience as detailed and approved above, they should consult with other SWCD or NRCS staff to determine if another person has adequate experience to do so. In the case that the project requires engineering, the SWCD will oversee the plans to make sure they meet local requirements, and the engineer will sign off on the completed project.

Engineering Practices: When professional engineering is required or specific conservation practices require expertise above current District technical capacity, the District will utilize professional engineers or staff from the Washington Conservation District, private consultants, local municipalities, Minnesota Board of Water and Soil Resources or the USDA NRCS.