



October 17, 2008

For immediate release

Contact: Sheila Vanney, MASWCD, 651-690-9028

EIGHT NAMED AS FINALISTS FOR STATE'S 2008 OUTSTANDING CONSERVATIONIST AWARD

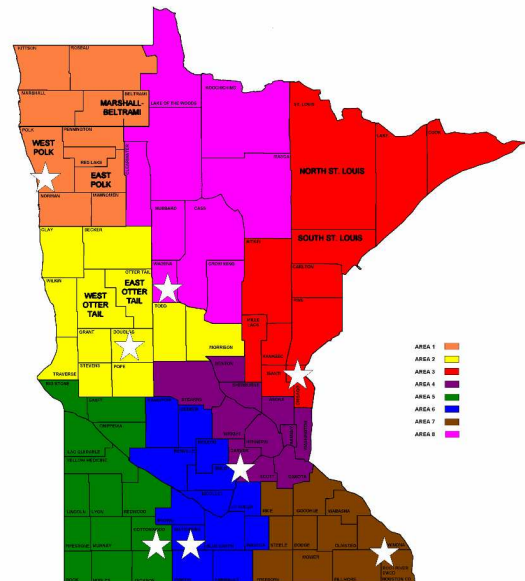
ST. PAUL — The Minnesota Association of Soil and Water Conservation Districts (MASWCD) has named the finalists for the state's 2008 Outstanding Conservationist Award.

The winner will be announced at the 72nd annual MASWCD Annual Meeting, set for Dec. 7-9 at the Crowne Plaza Riverfront in St. Paul, Minn. The awards program recognizes farm families, individuals, conservation organizations, and other groups for their accomplishments in implementing conservation practices and improving Minnesota's natural resources.

The program is sponsored by MASWCD, with support from *The Farmer* magazine. Editors and news directors are encouraged to follow up with the Soil and Water Conservation District contacts listed for feature and interview opportunities. The information was gathered from the nomination forms submitted to MASWCD by individual conservation districts.

The finalists are:

Area 1	<u>Harlow and Peggy Grove, Climax</u> nominated by West Polk SWCD SWCD contact: Nicole Bernd, (218) 281-6070
Area 2	<u>Verna Peterson, Farwell</u> nominated by Douglas SWCD SWCD contact: Jerome Haggemiller, (320) 763-3191
Area 3	<u>Eugene and Brenda DePalma, North Oaks</u> nominated by Chisago SWCD SWCD contact: Craig Mell, (651) 674-2333
Area 4	<u>Jean Williams, Cologne</u> nominated by Carver SWCD SWCD contact: Mike Wanous, (952) 442-5101
Area 5	<u>Tony Thompson, Windom</u> nominated by Cottonwood SWCD SWCD contact: Kay Clark, (507) 831-1153
Area 6	<u>Don and Karen Davis, St. James</u> nominated by Watonwan SWCD contact: Jack Krech, (507) 375-3104
Area 7	<u>The Olson Family, Rushford</u> nominated by Root River SWCD SWCD contact: Ralph Tuck, (507) 724-5261
Area 8	<u>The Runyan Family, Verndale</u> nominated by Wadena SWCD SWCD contact: Malinda Dexter, (218) 631-3195



-More-

Area 1 **Harlow and Peggy Grove, Climax**
nominated by West Polk SWCD
SWCD contact: Nicole Bernd, (218) 281-6070

Background on the Groves:

Harlow and Peggy Grove of Grove Farms raise wheat, sugar beets and beans. Harlow and Peggy reside on the original homestead where the production of sugar beets has been ongoing for over 70 years.

Grove Farms has participated in conservation programs such as the EQIP, Red River Valley Set-Aside and State Cost Share. They conducted a grade stabilization project that was engineered by the Northwestern Minnesota Joint Powers Board and cost shared through the Red River Valley Set-Aside program. Construction consisted of a rock riprap grade stabilization structure and stabilization of slopes on an existing upstream channel.



Quote from West Polk SWCD: West Polk SWCD is proud to have Harlow and Peggy Grove of Grove Farms as their 2008 Outstanding Conservationist!

Area 2 **Verna Peterson, Farwell**
nominated by Douglas SWCD
SWCD contact: Jerome Haggemiller, (320) 763-3191

Background on Ms. Peterson:

Verna farms 250 acres as a dairy/beef and grain farmer. She milks 32 cows and has 45 Beef Cows/calves. Verna has farmed for 53 years with the farm in her family since 1920. She has an EQIP Contract for Nutrient and Pest Management. Topography on Verna's land includes a crop rotation of corn, soybeans, oats and alfalfa, scattered among wetlands. Rotational grazing and Forage management are used, along with an annual food plot.

Verna attends college classes to keep abreast of new farm advances and visits the SWCD/NRCS often to learn about new programs.



Quote from Douglas SWCD: Verna sets a great example for "Women in Agriculture" by being a top farmer and conservationist while working continually to improve her skills.

Area 3 Eugene and Brenda DePalma, North Oaks
nominated by Chisago SWCD
SWCD contact: Craig Mell, (651) 674-2333

Background on the DePalmas:

Eugene and Brenda DePalma have owned and operated their farm in Chisago County since 1972. Eugene focuses his efforts on managing his 160 acres for high quality timber production. Over the past 35 years the DePalma’s have planted 1,000’s of trees and shrubs on their property, including this black walnut seedling in 2007. The DePalma’s work hard to promote a healthy forest – they have treated numerous oak wilt infection centers on their property and replanted these areas with 1,000’s of young trees.

Eugene also restored a 55 acre wetland that had been drained by a previous owner. The wetland project took years to restore, but now is home a wide variety of wildlife.



Quote from Chisago SWCD: The DePalma’s truly are excellent stewards of their land.

Area 4 Jean Williams, Cologne
nominated by Carver SWCD
SWCD contact: Mike Wanous, (952) 442-5101

Background on Ms. Williams:

The Carver District has partnered with Jean Williams for almost 50 years. Jean has implemented numerous conservation practices with the District, and many other conservation agencies. She takes pride in those practices, and chose to have both her photos display “on the ground conservation” rather than herself.

Jean has restored 78 acres to prairie, 43 acres of wetlands, and completed 6 acres of tree plantings. To stabilize her stream bank, 4 cross vane rock weirs have been installed, as well as 3 cedar tree reventments. Jean enrolled all of her wooded acres into the Big Woods Heritage Forest Stewardship program, and a portion into RIM.



Quote from Carver SWCD: Jean realized that her extensive conservation efforts should be preserved, and has a DNR conservation easement, and a Permanent Protection Easement through the Minnesota Land Trust over her entire farm.

Area 5 **Tony Thompson, Windom**
nominated by Cottonwood SWCD
SWCD contact: Kay Clark, (507) 831-1153

Background on Mr. Thompson:

Tony Thompson farms 3,500 acres in a ridge-till corn soybean rotation in Cottonwood County. Tony initiated and hosted the Agro-Ecology Summit on the Willow Lake Farm for the last nine years. This years Summit included information and a tour of a Woodchip Bio-Reactor seen here under construction. This project will serve as a Nitrogen removal filter for the tile drainage system before the water outlets in the lake.



Over 90 participants enjoyed dinner at the Summit held in August 2008. The Willow Lake Farm has also been host to numerous college and high school students over the years. In one summer on the farm Tony estimates there were over 3,000 student days for Environmental and Agricultural education.



Quote from Cottonwood SWCD: Tony Thompson is a leader in conservation education and continues his wise use of the land in all his farming practices. The Cottonwood SWCD is proud to recognize Tony for the 2008 Outstanding Conservationist

Area 6 **Don and Karen Davis, St. James**
nominated by Watonwan
SWCD contact: Jack Krech, (507) 375-3104

Background on the Davis Family:

The Davis' have raised corn, soybeans, alfalfa and small grains. The livestock raised has been hogs, cattle, and horses. The whole family has been very active in conservation. The conservation areas provide a place to hunt with their Brittany Spaniels.



Their love for conservation was instilled in them by Don's Grandmother. Over the years they have planted field windbreaks, shelterbelts, and have established filter strips and riparian land. (photo 2) Don is shown here in one of his many filter strips that provide benefits for wildlife and the environment.



Quote from Watonwan SWCD: The Davis' see the value of conservation practices to promote wildlife and protect the environment. They are a great example of good stewards of the land for their community.

Area 7 **The Olson Family, Rushford**
nominated by Root River SWCD
SWCD contact: Ralph Tuck, (507) 724-5261

Background on the Olsons (Ken, Clair and Patty, and Jared Olson):

The Olsons operate a 125 head dairy system along with a feeder cattle business. The Olson farm has been in the family for 112 years. Clair & Patty have operated the family farm for the past 25 years.

The Olson's farm has a detailed contour strip layout which provides protection for the steep slopes. Other conservation practices include mulch tillage, pasture management, grade stabilization structures, wildlife enhancement projects, nutrient management plan, filter strips, series of diversions, and many other good stewardship practices.



Quote from Root River SWCD: The Olson's take extreme pride in enhancing and protecting the natural resources around them.

Area 8 **The Runyan Family, Verndale**
nominated by Wadena SWCD
SWCD contact: Malinda Dexter, (218) 631-3195

Background on the Runyan Family:

Jim Runyan together with his father Marvin operate Runyan Family Farms of Verndale. Runyan Farms is a Black Angus beef operation in addition to a crop production operation. Jim is continuing his father's conservation ethic by enrolling the family farm into the Conservation Security Program and continuing many of the Best Management Practices implemented by his father.

The soils on the Runyan farm are wind erosion prone soils and the Runyan's have used caragana windbreaks in their fields for many years minimizing many tons of soil loss.



Quote from Wadena SWCD: Jim and his wife Betty, as well as Jim's parents Marvin and Mary Runyan continue to manage their acres as wise and ethical stewards of the land.