

Minnesota Association of Soil and Water Conservation Districts - 2009 Annual Award Program
NEWS RELEASE



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BENTON SWCD HONORED AT STATE CONVENTION

St. Paul, Minn. — The Benton Soil and Water Conservation Districts (SWCD) recently received the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources Division of Waters Appreciation Award. The award was one of several awards presented during the 73rd annual convention of the Minnesota Association of Soil and Water Conservation Districts (MASWCD), held Dec.6-8 at the Duluth Entertainment Convention Center, in Duluth, Minnesota. Chisago SWCD was a co-recipient of this year's DNR Waters Appreciation Award.

Each year the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources Division of Waters honors an SWCD that has implemented innovative conservation activities, demonstrated leadership and achieved significant results in the protection of Minnesota's water resources.

While presenting this year's award, Dan Lais, Area Hydrologist with the DNR Division of Waters stated, "Benton SWCD has 'stepped up' their ability to influence others concerning the importance of water quality/quantity issues within the County by taking initiative to lead several TMDL projects within the County. This has resulted in increased funding opportunities, and has also improved the understanding of these issues throughout the County. In particular the Benton SWCD has provided excellent project management for the Little Rock Creek TMDL project (phases 1 and 2 completed) and the Little Rock Lake TMDL."

Benton SWCD also led the recent effort to update the Comprehensive County Water Plan. The updated plan has an emphasis on development issues and protection of groundwater quantity/quality within the County. "These efforts were important to spear head the creation of the County Geologic Atlas, which is currently under development," noted Lais. "Additionally, the Benton SWCD has been very instrumental in maintaining an actively engaged Water Resource Advisory Committee, which is responsible for implementing the water plan goals and objectives."

Benton SWCD's efforts also include implementation of a native buffer cost share program to help address water quality issues within the Little Rock Lake watershed, as well as developing a lakescaping demonstration area in conjunction with the Little Rock Lake Association and County Zoning Department. The SWCD developed partnerships with other organizations to promote best management practices, including the Environmental Quality Incentive Program (EQIP) administered through the USDA Natural Resource Conservation Service, and worked directly with farmers to address feedlot issues to achieve voluntary compliance with state regulations.



Pictured during the award ceremony (from left to right) are Dan Lais (DNR), Annie Felix (SWCD Water Plan Technician), Katie Evans (SWCD Technician) and Joseph Jordan (SWCD Supervisor). For more information about the Benton SWCD, log on to www.soilandwater.org.

MASWCD is a non-profit organization that represents the Soil and Water Conservation Districts across Minnesota. For more information about MASWCD and SWCDs, please visit www.maswcd.org.

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