Minnesota Association of Soil and Water Conservation Districts - NEWS RELEASE
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EIGHT NAMED AS FINALISTS FOR STATE’S 2009 OUTSTANDING CONSERVATIONIST AWARD

ST. PAUL — The Minnesota Association of Soil and Water Conservation Districts (MASWCD) has named the finalists for the state’s 2009 Outstanding Conservationist Award.

The winner will be announced at the 73rd annual MASWCD Annual Meeting, set for Dec. 6-8 at the Duluth Entertainment Convention Center in Duluth, Minn. The award 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:

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<tr>
<th>MASWCD Area</th>
<th>Finalist</th>
<th>Nominating SWCD</th>
<th>SWCD Contact</th>
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<tr>
<td>Northwest Area 1</td>
<td>Curt and Marilyn Swanson</td>
<td>Pennington SWCD</td>
<td>Bryan Malone (218) 683-7075</td>
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<td>Thief River Falls MN</td>
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<td>West Central Area 2</td>
<td>Brian and Glen Kaschmitter</td>
<td>Benton SWCD</td>
<td>Gerald Maciej (320) 968-5300</td>
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<td>Sauk Rapids MN</td>
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<td>Northeast Area 3</td>
<td>Ron Weber</td>
<td>South St. Louis SWCD</td>
<td>R.C. Boheim (218) 723-4867</td>
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<td>Edina MN</td>
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<td>Metro Area 4</td>
<td>The Jesse and Judy Theis Family</td>
<td>Scott SWCD</td>
<td>Peter Beckius (952) 492-5425</td>
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<td>Belle Plaine MN</td>
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<td>Southwest Area 5</td>
<td>The Patzer Family</td>
<td>Lac qui Parle SWCD</td>
<td>Terry Wittnebel (320) 598-7321</td>
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<td>Marietta MN</td>
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<td>South Central Area 6</td>
<td>Curt and Gladys Carlson</td>
<td>Waseca SWCD</td>
<td>Marla Watje (507) 835-4800</td>
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<td>Waseca MN</td>
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<td>Southeast Area 7</td>
<td>Dan and Sherry Hanson</td>
<td>Fillmore SWCD</td>
<td>Donna Rasmussen (507) 765-3878</td>
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<td>Peterson MN</td>
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<td>North Central Area 8</td>
<td>Daniel and Rose Middendorf</td>
<td>Wadena SWCD</td>
<td>Malinda Dexter (218) 631-3195</td>
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<td>Verndale MN</td>
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Background on the Swansons:

Curt and Marilyn Swanson of Thief River Falls are from the Pennington District. The Swansons operate a 2,600 acre grain farm where they raise wheat, soybeans and sunflowers. Some of their farmland has been in the family since 1882. Curt and Marilyn started their farming operation 30 years ago. Many conservation practices have been accomplished through the Environmental Quality Incentives Program.

About 5,700 feet of coulee that meanders through the farm was restored. Almost 1,000 acres drain into this grassed waterway that includes a one rod buffer on each side. They also renovated their field and farmstead windbreaks. Residue, Pest and Nutrient Management plans were developed along with sealing a 95 foot well. Curt says, "Land is too valuable. It's in my best interest to take good care of it.”

Quote from Pennington SWCD: “There is a reason this farm has been operated for 125 years by the same family… their conservation ethic.”

Background on the Kaschmitters:

Brian and Glen Kaschmitter manage a 16 cow/calf beef herd and have 150 sows in a farrow-to-finish operation. They sell 2,000 to 2,500 market hogs annually.

The Kaschmitters manage their livestock and grain farm in a manner that allows them to achieve the highest level of productivity while still maintaining a strong resource base. The practices they have installed and the farming system they have adopted protects the soil resource, maintains a high level of water quality, provides a diverse plant community, and supplies food, water, and cover for wildlife. In addition, they share their time, knowledge, and conservation ethic with others through community service.

Quote from Benton SWCD: “Brian and Glen represent what it truly means to be conservationists and stewards of the land in every way.”

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Background on Ron Weber:

The South St. Louis SWCD selected Ron Weber as Outstanding Conservationist for 2009. Mr. Weber has worked with the SWCD, the University of Minnesota Duluth, and other partners to establish the Weber Stream Restoration Initiative.

The Weber Stream Restoration Initiative was started with a major financial gift to UMD’s Natural Resources Research Institute from Mr. Weber. Through the seed money provided by Mr. Weber, at least nine stream-related projects have been completed, with costs totaling over $750,000. Mr. Weber has also provided the South St. Louis SWCD with $25,000 to complete a stream stabilization project on Amity Creek for construction in the fall of 2009.

Quote from S. St. Louis SWCD: “Mr. Weber’s actions have provided the community with a positive example of what good can be accomplished through individual efforts. This is the best kind of leadership – leadership by example.”

Background on the Theis Family:

The Scott SWCD honors The Jesse and Judy Theis Family, with Jake, Sam and Zach, of Blakeley Township. They are a farm family with local roots back to 1848. Full-time farmer, Judy oversees their registered Angus herd. Jesse is a biomass advocate at Rahr Malting. His work contributes to the creation of markets for landowners who plant native grasses along streambanks and hillsides, resulting in cost savings when generating power and heat.

Together, the family believes in healing and enhancing the natural landscape -- wildlife windbreaks, seedling/native plantings, ravine repair, nutrient management, feedlot runoff control, filters, crop rotations, soil test plots and wetland enhancements. “We need to look at long-term sustainability - our farming practices - understanding the impact of each, doing the right thing with opportunities we’re given,” Jesse noted. The Theises -- passionate, visible stewards in Scott County.

Quote from Scott SWCD: “Whether at work or on their land, the Theis family is conservation-minded with an eye on the future preservation and restoration of water and land resources.”

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Background on the Patzer Family:

Representing Lac qui Parle SWCD are the Patzers: Todd, Stan, Tim, and their families. The corn/soybean farming operation converted to ridge-till 25 years ago, and has adapted and evolved to fit what works for their land. Today they are virtually a no-till system, and terraces installed years ago still function efficiently. Their practices maintain high surface residue and a healthy soil profile.

Natural buffers are left between cropland, livestock, and surface water. The combination of wetlands, non-program native grasslands, woody cover plantings, farmstead shelterbelts, and numerous food plots, along with undisturbed crop residue & waste grain creates a year-round utopia for wildlife. The Patzer’s say their love of conservation and wildlife gives them a good feeling knowing they’re doing what’s best for the land while making a living for their families.

**Quote from Lac qui Parle SWCD:** “This is well-deserved recognition for the Patzers. They have a farming system that protects soil and water resources, uses less fossil fuel and fewer inputs, and leaves a smaller carbon footprint on the earth.”

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Background on the Carlsons:

The Carlson's third generation farm was homesteaded in 1872. "Preserve and conserve" is the motto the Carlsons live by. Over the years, they have planted trees, installed windbreaks, maintained waterways, enrolled 55 acres in to the CRP program, established riparian buffers along Whitewater creek, and restored a wetland where the native prairie thrives. They have also implemented a forest management plan for 120 acres of native forest.

Curt and Gladys operate a beef cow/calf operation. A cropping rotation including 5 years of hay on the highly erodible cropland is established and maintained. Recently they moved toward rotational grazing with their herd and constructed a 17 paddock rotational grazing system on 100 acres. It appears that Minnesota also has happy cows.

**Quote from Waseca SWCD:** “Curt and Gladys Carlson have consistently demonstrated a strong commitment to conservation and environmental protection, not only in their farming operation, but also in every aspect of their lives.”
Background on the Hansons:

Dan and Sherry Hanson of Peterson, MN, are shown at right with their daughter, Ellie. Dan started farming in the late 1970s with his father. The Hansons raise corn, soybeans and hay on 613 acres and have a 150-head cow-calf operation.

They still have 183 acres of contour strips, including 80 acres of hay, that were laid out when Dan’s grandfather developed a conservation plan with the Soil Conservation Service in 1944. Over the years, 6,875 feet of terraces and 10 acres of grassed waterways have been installed. Nutrient and pest management, no-till, and thousands of trees on CRP for wildlife food and habitat further enhance conservation on their farm. The Hansons have also done work on their feedlot to control and filter runoff and improve efficiency for feeding and manure handling.

Quote from Fillmore SWCD: “The Hansons exemplify the land stewardship ethic that SWCDs promote. They are proactive in their farming practices, being among the early adopters of practices that not only benefit them, but also the community at large.”

Background on the Middendorfs:

Daniel and Rose Middendorf operate a 160 acre grass-based dairy farm with 180 milk cows and 100 dry cows and heifers using a combination of rotational grazing, systematic out-wintering, and the use of manure, irrigation, and legume crops. These have increased the organic matter of the soil since they purchased the non-operating dairy farm in 2000.

They have shared their experience, knowledge and skills with many others through farm tours, pasture walks, and media interviews as well as being featured in “Successful Farming,” “Agri-News,” and “Graze” publications.

Quote from Wadena SWCD: “Conservation on the land has been an important part of their farming operation. This, in addition to their leadership in the community, makes it easy to choose the Middendorf’s as the Outstanding Conservationists of Wadena County.”

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