NEWS RELEASE - For immediate release
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Contact: Sheila Vanney, MASWCD Assistant Director, 651-690-9028

JOHN AND MARY WHIPPS NAMED MINNESOTA’S 2012 OUTSTANDING CONSERVATIONISTS

ST. PAUL — The Minnesota Association of Soil and Water Conservation Districts (MASWCD) has named John and Mary Whipps of Jordan as the state winner of 2012 Outstanding Conservationist Award.

The award was announced at the 76th MASWCD Annual Meeting, held Dec. 2-4 at the Doubletree by Hilton Bloomington - Minneapolis South. 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, and the award ceremony receives sponsorship from Minnesota Corn Growers Association. The Whipps were one of eight finalists from across the state, nominated by local Soil and Water Conservation Districts. The finalists were:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>MASWCD Area</th>
<th>Finalist</th>
<th>Nominating SWCD</th>
<th>SWCD Contact</th>
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</table>
| Northwest Area 1 | Neil and Nicole Peterson  
St. Hilaire MN | Pennington SWCD | Bryan Malone  
(218) 683-7075 |
| West Central Area 2 | Anderson Family Farms  
Jim, Sue, John, Shirley, Grant and Noah Anderson  
Belgrade MN | Stearns SWCD | Dennis Fuchs  
(320) 251-7800 |
| Northeast Area 3 | Jeffrey Fossland  
Milaca MN | Mille Lacs SWCD | Susan Shaw  
(320) 983-2160 |
| Metro Area 4 | John and Mary Whipps  
Jordan MN | Scott SWCD | Troy Kuphal  
(952) 492-5425 |
| Southwest Area 5 | Wayne and Bonnie Oftedahl  
Hanley Falls MN | Yellow Medicine SWCD | Lou Ann Nagel  
(320) 669-4442 |
| South Central Area 6 | Bryan and Linda Gregor  
Fairmont MN | Martin SWCD | Kathy Smith  
(507) 235-6680 |
| Southeast Area 7 | Duschee Hills Dairy LLC  
Pat and Chris Troendle  
Bea and Darla Taylor  
Lanebosor MN | Fillmore SWCD | Donna Rasmussen  
(507) 765-3878 |
| North Central Area 8 | Mike and Shanna Tuinstra  
Verndale MN | Wadena SWCD | Darren Newville  
(218) 631-3195 |

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Background on the Petersons:

The Petersons and their 5 children operate a 1,000 acre livestock farm raising 100 head of Angus cow/calf pairs. Crops grown include alfalfa, soybeans and oats. They also have 5 vegetable gardens where they sell produce at the local farmers market.

Through EQIP, a windbreak was installed, complete with matting and protector tubes. Also a prescribed grazing plan was developed and implemented. Six paddocks were created with cross fencing. Pipeline and water tanks were needed to complete the system on 140 acres of pasture. The back bone of the farm is cows and pasture. Because of their conservation practices, they were accepted into the Conservation Stewardship Program in 2010.

Background on Anderson Family Farms:

Their farming operation includes a 2500 sow farrow to finish facility, 2600 steers and 6150 acres of cropland where they grow corn, kidney beans, sugar beets, small grains and hay. In 2008, they completed a Waste Storage Facility project to bring their feedlot into compliance by abandoning an open lot and constructing a roof structure to house the cattle. Andersons are participants in the Conservation Stewardship Program and the Conservation Reserve Program.

Along with the conversion of numerous irrigation systems to low pressure, they have installed many conservation practices over the years including: two waste storage facilities, irrigation water management, animal mortality composting facility, upland wildlife habitat management, cover crops, several shelterbelts, filter strips, wildlife foodplots, nutrient management, pest management and crop residue management.
Background on Jeffrey Fossland:

Jeff started working with NRCS as a beginning farmer in 2009. Since then he has installed a rotational grazing system, water and sediment basins, pollinator habitat, wildlife corridors, wetland buffers and has worked to control buckthorn on his property.

Jeff has worked to increase his awareness of pesticide usage and has reduced his carbon imprint by producing most of the feed for his livestock using nutrients available on the farm. Jeff and his family work tirelessly and are active participants in several NRCS programs. The Fossland farm is an excellent example of many conservation practices working together to protect our natural resources while producing quality products for the local market.

Background on John and Mary Whipps:

John and Mary Whipps of Jordan, along with daughters Hayley and Rebecca, are fourth-generation owners of 80 acres along Sand Creek in beautiful Scott County.

In 2011, they repaired a deeply eroding ravine with a grade control structure designed by the SWCD and also restored 16 acres of erodible cropland to native prairie. The family repaired a second eroding ravine 8 years ago and maintains a 60-year-old structure on a third. They have also worked over the years to improve their woodlands through extensive invasive species removal and planting hundreds of native trees and shrubs. Always cognizant of the impact their decisions can make on the quality of land, water and wildlife resources, the Whipps have been great conservationists who believe “naturalizing” their land is an important investment in the future and the environment.

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Background on Wayne and Bonnie Oftedahl:

The Oftedahls operate a grain farm, producing primarily corn and soybeans. On top of operating nearly 600 acres of their own land, Wayne and Bonnie also farm in a partnership with Wayne’s brothers and sister. The partnership operates nearly 4,500 acres between the four families. Since 1980, Wayne and Bonnie have installed and established multiple conservation practices to their operation.

These practices include terraces, water and sediment control basins, farmstead windbreaks, alternative tile intakes, wildlife habitat, filterstrips, and conservation farming including multiple practices through the Conservation Stewardship Program. The Oftedahls are also starting to incorporate no-till farming into their farming operation. The Oftedahls are a prime example of good stewards both to the land and in the community.

Background on Bryan and Linda Gregor:

The Gregors are committed stewards, extremely active in conservation and exceptional leaders in the community. Between Bryan and Linda they are actively involved in 12 organizations throughout Martin County. The Gregors have planted farmstead shelterbelts and restored marginal land into native prairie and wetland restorations. The Gregors’ see first-hand benefits of conservation on their land.

Native grasses and trees provide valuable habitat for wildlife. The Gregor’s are outstanding stewards of the land and believe in making what they have better for future generations to enjoy.
Background on Duschee Hills Dairy LLC:

Duschee Hills Dairy is a fourth-generation farm near Lanesboro. The Troendles and Taylors milk 200 Holstein and Crossbred cows and have 200 young stock. Heifers and dry cows are rotated on 70-80 acres of pasture.

They also operate 530 acres of cropland, of which 300 acres has greater than 6% slope and nearly 80 acres are in the floodplain. They protect these sensitive areas in their corn-hay rotation with 250 acres of hay in contour strips connected to an extensive network of waterways and buffers. Minimum tillage, cover crops, nutrient management, and integrated pest management ensure that the land will remain productive for future generations. Combined with their commitment to educating the non-ag community about agriculture, they are leaders in the conservation community.

Background on the Tuinstras:

Mike and Shanna Tuinstra with their daughter Haylee manage a crop production operation on the 580 acres they operate. They are willing to try innovative ideas by applying them to the land and are willing to share their knowledge and experiences with others in the community.

Conservation practices completed include buffer strips, conversion of two irrigators from high to low pressure, nutrient management and tree plantings. One of the more innovative tools they have begun to use in the past two years is the Adaptive Nitrogen Management Program to help them increase the nitrogen efficiency of their crops. Corn basal stalk samples are taken from the south 200 acres to determine nitrogen uptake, using the test results to make nitrogen management changes for the upcoming year.