2019 legislative session underway

The Minnesota State Legislature officially reconvened yesterday to begin the 2019 legislative session. Minnesota is now the only state in the country with a divided legislature: Democrats regained control of the House in the 2018 midterm election and have a 75-59 majority, while Republicans currently hold control of the Senate by a margin of 34-32, with one vacant seat to be filled in a February 5 special election. This vacancy is due to former Senator Tony Lourey being appointed to serve as the new Commissioner of Human Services.

MASWCD’s top priority this session is working on SWCD capacity funding as a general fund appropriation. We look forward to working with lawmakers and SWCD supervisors and staff to ensure budget decisions made this session do not adversely affect conservation work in Minnesota.

Save the date for MASWCD’s Legislative Briefing and Day at the Capitol!
March 5-6, 2019

Best Western Capitol Ridge
161 S. Anthony Avenue
Saint Paul, MN 55103

The annual Legislative Briefing and Day at the Capitol is a critical opportunity for SWCDs to visit the Capitol, hear from lawmakers, and advocate for our priorities. We hope to see you there!

Click here for more information and to register today!
Representing Minnesota at the National Association of Conservation Districts Annual Meeting

The National Association of Conservation Districts (NACD) represents more than 3,000 conservation districts and 17,000 members of local governing boards across the country. When NACD kicks off its Annual Meeting in San Antonio, Texas next month, Minnesota will be well-presented! Kurt Beckstrom, Mille Lacs SWCD Supervisor and MASWCD Past President, as well as Paul Krabbenhoft, Clay SWCD Supervisor and MASWCD Vice President, will be in attendance - along with several other Minnesota SWCD staff and supervisors. Kurt and Paul serve as Minnesota's representatives to the NACD board and will be voting on grassroots conservation policy.

In addition, Ian Cunningham, former MASWCD President and current NACD Executive Board member for the North Central Region, will be running for the NACD Secretary-Treasurer position. Please join us in wishing him good luck!

“The NACD Annual Meeting is an invigorating opportunity to meet new people and have exciting conversations about the future of soil and water conservation in the United States,” said Cunningham. “I encourage all local SWCD Supervisors to consider attending an NACD event in the future!”

NACD has created a smartphone app for those interested in receiving the latest news and updates. Search for “National Association of Conservation Districts” in your app store.

Video spotlight: Restoring wetlands in Renville County

Is land currently being used in the best way? In Renville County, SWCD supervisors and staff helped landowners answer this question by restoring wetlands and hydrology to land that was formerly marginal crop land.

Click here to watch a short video about this project in Olivia, Minnesota!
This project was also featured in MASWCD’s new educational video about the work of SWCDs across Minnesota. (To watch that full video, click here!)

**SWCDs in the news**

MASWCD continues to focus on helping to share news about local conservation work and supporting SWCDs around the state. The association was pleased to recognize several award winners during the 2018 Annual Convention in December. Click here to read news releases and learn more about the winners!

Check out these recent stories:

- [Le Sueur County project protecting lake: Farmers join to clean up Lake Volney](https://mankatofreepress.com/) | Mankato Free Press
- [State association of conservation districts honors local efforts](https://brainerddispatch.com/) | Brainerd Dispatch
- [Kandiyohi SWCD names outstanding conservationists](https://westcentralt.com/) | West Central Tribune
- [Dassel family receives outstanding conservationists](https://litchfieldindependentreview.com/) | Litchfield Independent Review
- [Donna Rasmussen named Minnesota 2018 Outstanding SWCD Employee](https://fillmorecountyjournal.com/) | Fillmore County Journal
- [Greenspace: Rasmussen’s involvement is a watershed event for Fillmore](https://rochesterpostbulletin.com/) | Rochester Post Bulletin
- [Wadena farmer, Andy Dombeck, named Conservationist of the Year](https://wadeneapioneerjournal.com/) | Wadena Pioneer Journal