MASWCD receives $2.53 million from NRCS to support conservation practices in SWCDs

In January, the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) announced the selection of its 2018 Regional Conservation Partnership Program projects, including a $2.53 million investment in the Minnesota Association of Soil and Water Conservation Districts (MASWCD) for its “One Watershed, One Plan Accelerated Implementation”. This project is a collaborative effort between MASWCD and the Minnesota Board of Water and Soil Resources (BWSR).

The $2.53 million will be used as Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) funding for landowner financial assistance within the five pilot “One Watershed, One Plan” watersheds, which brings together soil and water conservation districts (SWCDs), counties, watershed districts, and cities to work collaboratively through a locally-led process. The goal of this project is to accelerate the implementation of conservation practices to improve water quality faster than current efforts.

Lessons learned from our annual convention

Keynote outlines why conservation of Minnesota’s soil and water resources is a global necessity

MASWCD’s annual convention, held this past December, featured a keynote session by Dr. Richard Cruse from Iowa State University on the importance of water quality and soil health efforts in the face of projected increases in the demand for food supply and quality. He shared that an expected three billion people will enter the middle class in the next 20 years, leading to an increased demand for meat, dairy products, and consequently grain. Dr. Cruse explained that as populations rise, so do the economic incentives to convert farmland to other purposes. In a time of uncertainty, conservation measures are often the first to be sacrificed, but he argued that this is when soil and water resources are needed the most. MASWCD is grateful to Dr. Cruse for his inspiring keynote on the importance of SWCDs role in conserving Minnesota’s soil and water resources.

Legislative preview: What to expect from the 2018
Historically, even-year legislative sessions are shorter and are thought of as “bonding sessions,” since the two-year state budget passes the year before. The 2018 session begins on February 20 and several large hurdles are awaiting Minnesota’s elected officials when they return to the State Capitol.

The first priority will be the legislature’s operational budget, which was line-item vetoed by Governor Dayton this spring to leverage further budget negotiations.

With the appointment of Tina Smith to the United States Senate, the controversy surrounding acting Lieutenant Governor/Senator Michelle Fischbach remains unresolved. Republican leaders have argued that Fischbach can simultaneously serve as both State Senator and Lieutenant Governor, while Democrats have raised legal concerns and may try to force a special election in her Senate seat. This matter will now be solved by the courts, prolonging its resolution and associated political rancor into the legislative session.

Click here to read more on the other topics expected to create a buzz during the 2018 legislative session.

Remembering Bob Albrecht

We are saddened to share that Robert “Bob” Albrecht recently passed away. Bob was the Area Director for the North Central Area and served the Crow Wing SWCD for more than 29 years. With a profound passion for improving and preserving the land, his motto was “do the right thing because it’s the right thing to do.” In his spare time, Bob maintained other positions at AmVets and his church, and was an avid fisherman, hunter, and gardener.

We’re incredibly thankful to Bob for his decades of devotion to conservation in Minnesota. Click here to read Bob’s obituary.

Reminder: 2018 MASWCD Legislative Briefing and Day at the Capitol

March 12-13, 2018

Mark your calendar for the 2018 MASWCD Legislative Briefing and Day at the Capitol to learn how state policy and bonding proposals could affect you and how your story can positively impact state investment in SWCDs.

Held at the Embassy Suites in downtown Saint Paul, participate in an afternoon briefing and evening reception with legislators on March 12, and schedule meetings with your legislators on March 13 to discuss your local issues.

SWCDs in the news

Soil and water conservation districts from around the state are making headlines! Check out these recent stories:

- Clean Water grant awarded to Le Sueur County SWCD | Le Center Leader
- Crow Wing SWCD receives award | Pine and Lakes Echo Journal
- Congrats, Carlton County landowners | Pine Journal
- ‘Cover Crops 101’ heading to Adams | Austin Daily Herald
If you know someone who might be interested in receiving our updates, share this sign up link.