Local conservation leaders visit Washington, D.C., for MASWCD Leadership Program

A group of 17 conservation leaders from across Minnesota visited Washington, D.C., last month as part of a leadership development program sponsored by the Minnesota Association of Soil and Water Conservation Districts (MASWCD). While in Washington, the group met with several Minnesota congressional members, representatives from federal agencies including the United States Department of Agriculture and the Natural Resource Conservation Service, and non-governmental organizations that work in conservation and agriculture.

The Washington, D.C., seminar is one of seven sessions that are part of MASWCD's Leadership Program led by the University of Minnesota Extension. The yearlong program is designed to strengthen the leadership skills and capacity of local natural resource agencies to better serve the public and address the complex natural resource conservation issues found in communities throughout Minnesota. Check out these photos of the MASWCD representatives meeting with partners at the state and federal level.

Clay SWCD hosts “Pollinators and Pints”

The Clay Soil and Water Conservation District collaborated with Junkyard Brewing Company, Pheasants Forever, Three Bears Honey Co. and Clay County to spark a conversation about pollinators and habitat at its “Pollinators and Pints” event last month. About 300 people gathered to enjoy beers, plant native forbs and talk about urban conservation. The event was targeted toward people in the county that might not otherwise participate in conservation projects.

The SWCD is trying to build a more urban conservation program that can provide
support for the urban centers of the county, in addition to opportunities for conservation on rural farmsteads.

Junkyard Brewing developed a special brew with honey donated from Three Bears Honey Co. called “Money Honey.” A portion of the proceeds from the sale were earmarked to help offset costs of the Clay County Pollinator Habitat Project managed by the Clay SWCD with support from Pheasants Forever and other local partners.

The brewery sold all its “Money Honey” beer and community members left with their own native pollinator plugs with seed, soil and supplies provided by the Clay SWCD.

Get to know the MASWCD Board: Doug Schoenecker

Metro Area IV Director Doug Schoenecker got his start in local conservation as an employee of the Scott SWCD. A New Prague resident, he was recently elected to serve on the statewide board. Learn more about Doug, who manages habitat for wood ducks and mallards, in this month’s Q&A.

Click here to read a Q&A with Doug.

Improving water quality with the Stillwater Country Club

The Washington County Soil and Water Conservation District found a unique partner to implement water quality practices in the St. Croix watershed – the Stillwater Country Club. This summer, the Middle St. Croix Watershed Management Organization, the City of Stillwater and the Stillwater Country Club will construct a bioretention basin on the golf course property to treat 9.4 acres of residential drainage and prevent untreated water from discharging directly into Lake St. Croix.

Initial education and outreach about water quality practices through the East Metro Water Resource Education Program helped build the relationship between members of the country club and the watershed organizations surrounding it. Over the years, they’ve worked in partnership with watershed management organizations to implement native buffers to stabilize stream banks and rain gardens to capture water from impervious surfaces at the country club.

“Building trust with landowners is a long-term process. Proving success on smaller-scale projects over time leads to large-scale projects,” said Mike Isensee, a watershed specialist with the Washington County SWCD who serves as the administrator for the Middle St. Croix watershed. Read more here.
SWCDs in the news

Soil and water conservation districts from around the state are making headlines!

Check out these recent stories:

- **Connecting with groundwater** (Pipestone SWCD) | Pipestone County Star
- **Marilyn Bernhardson reflects on 46 years at Redwood Soil and Water Conservation District** | Redwood Falls Gazette
- **Grateful for region’s natural resources** (Meeker County SWCD) | Hutchinson Leader
- **Public comment being accepted on collaborative, comprehensive watershed management proposal** (Jackson SWCD) | Jackson County Pilot
- **Test your drinking water at free nitrate testing clinic** (Dakota County SWCD) | Hastings Star Gazette
- **Sherburne SWCD expands EAB detection partnerships** | National Association of Conservation Districts

If you know someone who might be interested in receiving our updates, share this sign up link.