Sherburne SWCD celebrates 75 years of growing conservation

For three-quarters of a century, Sherburne Soil and Water Conservation District has worked hand-in-hand with Sherburne County landowners to implement conservation practices designed to protect and preserve the area's natural resources. They celebrated this milestone August 2 at Sherburne History Center in Becker.

To mark the anniversary, Sherburne SWCD sponsored a free Conservation Discovery Day. The education event provided information on the importance of conservation and brought out the adventurous, curious and compassionate side of conservation to more than 70 people in attendance.

The event started with five different stations where SWCD employees shared their expertise on soil health, forestry, aquatic invaders and native plants while local farmers shared information about their sustainable produce operations. Each station included a small presentation along with fun and educational activities for all ages. Read more.

Grassroots policy grows from summer 2019 area meetings

Eight MASWCD area meetings were conducted earlier this summer to begin policy conversations around local soil and water conservation needs. Members of the MASWCD Board of Directors work to strengthen the eight MASWCD areas and maintain effective relationships with the associations and districts in their respective regions. As part of their role, the
MASWCD Board of Directors conduct area meetings to guide the grassroots policymaking process.

Here are a few resolution highlights from the policy discussions that were submitted for further deliberation at the regional and state level:

- Increasing coordination at a regional and national level to support Ecosystems Service Markets and the expansion of soil health best management practices.
- Integrating USDA’s Local Work Group Process into SWCD Watershed Planning Work.
- Requesting partners to create procedures to share data at a watershed scale for programs, practice activities, and watershed conditions to SWCDs and other local government partners.
- Developing program standards and research for upland water storage.

The resolutions highlight a diversity of natural resource programs and policies. The resolutions are voted on by locally elected SWCD supervisors and will be part of the MASWCD Annual Convention on December 8-10, 2019, in Bloomington.

Beyond local policymaking, the area meetings also provide valuable opportunities for districts and supervisors to meet with conservation partners, like the Board of Soil and Water Resources (BWSR) and USDA’s Natural Resources Conservation Service, about programs and practices of interest. Read more.

Carlton SWCD program aims to reduce water pollution through clean storm drains

An “adopt a drain” program launched this May by the Carlton Soil and Water Conservation District aims to pair city residents with nearby storm drains to better manage pollution and protect water quality. Adopt a Drain relies on volunteers to clean and maintain storm drains in their communities, while educating them about the influence stormwater has on local and downstream water sources.

The program is available in the county’s larger cities with storm drain systems – Carlton, Moose Lake, Cloquet and Scanlon – and powered by an interactive map that allows residents to identify and sign up for storm drains near them. Read more.

Find SWCDs at Farmfest 2019: Booth #4103

Soil and water conservation districts from southwest and south central Minnesota will be exhibiting at Farmfest 2019 on August 6-8 in Redwood County. The Soil Health Coalition will also demonstrate a cover crop test plot during the festival to provide education about soil health practices and cover crops. Thank you to Renville SWCD District Manager Holly Hatlewick and Redwood SWCD Resource Conservationist Brian Pfarr for their leadership on soil health!

Get to know the MASWCD Board: Bill Thompson

This month, we’re highlighting Area 7 Director Bill Thompson, a Dodge County SWCD supervisor who also works on water quality
Learn more about Bill, who admits he’s not a very good angler, in this Q&A.

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**Water quality milestone: 500,000 acres enrolled in the Minnesota Agricultural Water Quality Certification Program!**

More than 500,000 acres of Minnesota farmland are now enrolled in the Minnesota Agricultural Water Quality Certification Program (MAWQCP). MASWCD celebrated this milestone on August 1 with farmers and partners at Jon and Carin Stevens’ Maple Grove Farm in Pine County.

The MAWQCP is a voluntary program for farmers and landowners to implement conservation practices that protect Minnesota’s waters. To date, more than 772 farms and 500,000 acres have been certified. Soil and water conservation districts play a vital role in working with farmers and landowners to become certified in the program from education and outreach to technical assistance on conservation practices. Thanks to our members’ locally-led efforts and expertise, we have helped farmers understand their impact on water quality.

MASWCD Board President Roland Cleveland joined Governor Tim Walz and Department of Agriculture Commissioner Thom Petersen to mark the occasion.

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**SWCDs in the news**

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

- **River association looks to sustain water quality** (Swift SWCD) | Fergus Falls Daily Journal
- **Forestry field day brings farmers and bluebird enthusiasts together** (Fillmore County SWCD) | Spring Valley Tribune
- **Cunningham called to Washington** (Pipestone SWCD) | Pipestone County Star
- **Wind farm resolution gains traction** (Pipestone SWCD) | Pipestone County Star
- **Stakeholders gather to discuss future of drinking water** (East Otter Tail SWCD) | Perham Focus
- **Mower SWCD seeks more permanent conservation acres by August 25** | Austin Herald
- **After a year-long wait, the Little Rock Lake drawdown is almost here** (Benton SWCD) | Morrison County Record
- **Challenges in karst country farming** (Olmsted SWCD) | Agri News
If you know someone who might be interested in receiving our updates, share this sign up link.