

Brown-Marshall Conservation District (No. 02)

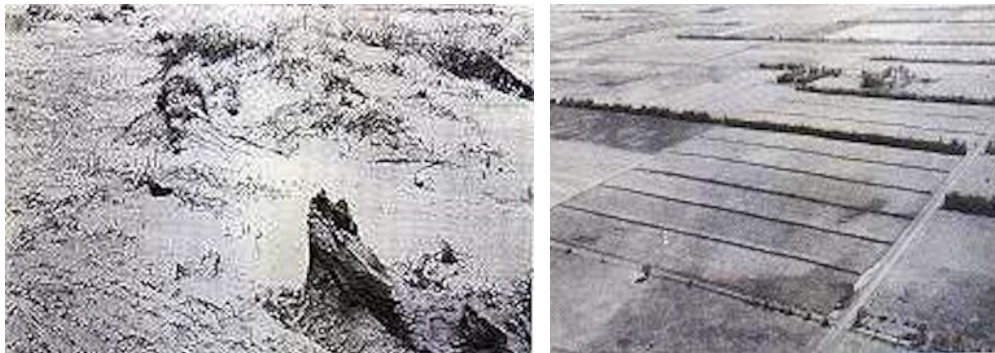
History from 1969 publication:

The area that comprised the Brown-Marshall Conservation District in 1937 was the northeast part of Brown County (five townships) and the northwest part of Marshall County (six townships). It included approximately 253,440 acres of land.

When the first settlers came to this area, they found the land mostly level and covered with a heavy growth of grass. The soil was black, a little sandy, and looked like a good cropland area. The James River flowed through the area with clean pure water, inviting settlers to make their homes here. The native sod was broken, and planted to grain, which was mostly wheat at the time. Later the soil proved to be very good corn land, and corn became an important crop.

After many years of this type of farming, the soil began to blow. As the years passed, the soil blowing became more and more prevalent. The Dirty Thirties came along with heavy winds, and no rain. The soil drifted badly, blew out crops, covered fences, and formed hummocks and sand dunes over most of the land.

December 5, 1935, a group of farmers inquired about the possibility of a Soil Survey for the area. After hearing about a conservation project at Wolsey, they visited in 1936. They came home and proceeded to organize a voluntary association of their own, called the James Valley Voluntary Soil Conservation Association, covering the Hecla and Claremont communities, and also the western portion of Marshall County. The men who comprised this group were J.S. McGraw, M.C. Chamberlin, Robert Pierson, Dan Tschappat, H.W. Johnson, Frank E. Bowles, Frank Feser, V.O. Terry and Roy Freeland. Later other local people were instrumental in creating the first Soil Conservation District in South Dakota. They were Earl Bagley, Myron Caspers, Howard Cutler, Homer Cutler, Alba Scott, Albert Severin, Homer Swanson, Fred Dinger, Ed Donovan, Bert Gibbs, Lars Herseth, Ralph Herseth, William Scott, Mike Stehly, Cy Spurr, Herbert Treeby, Ray Jarrett, A.M. Mitchell, Ed Miller, Hugo Pearson, W.W. Thorp, Harold Treeby, and Percy Wallace.



These pictures were taken in the identical location, 4 miles north of Claremont. The first picture was taken in 1937; note the severe erosion. The second picture was taken in 1967; note the one row and multiple row field windbreaks of trees.

On April 8, 1937, a shipment of seed, alfalfa, sweet clover, and brome grass was received from the Soil Conservation Service in Huron, SD. In the beginning, fence rows were cleaned and leveled, fields were tilled at right angles to prevailing winds, and strip cropping was established. These efforts were mostly ineffective.

In 1937, the South Dakota Soil Conservation District Law was passed, which provided for the organization of soil conservation districts. In September, the Voluntary Association started proceedings to set up a soil conservation district. Meetings were held, petitions circulated, and a hearing was held in October. Officers elected at that time were; Frank Fesser, Chairman, F. L. Farrar, Vice Chairman, George Lane, Treasurer. In early October, the boundaries for the Conservation District were set, and in December, a field headquarters was established in Hecla, with L.M. Sloan assigned as the Project Manager. As a result, an "official" Conservation District was organized in December 1937.

On April 28, 1938, the first trees planted by the Conservation District were planted on the Joe G. Lamport Farm. The Conservation District was also managing some cropland at this time.

In 1939, strip cropping began, with strips not to be less than 3 rods nor more than 20 rods in width. At this time, the Conservation District owned a press drill, rental fee of \$.15 per acre, over 15 acres, \$.10 per acre. Also in 1940, the cost of having 4 acres of trees planted was \$18.11 (2600 trees @ \$13, plus tractor and labor costs). In August of 1941, the Conservation District purchased a combine and a caterpillar. (Rental rates were; \$1.25/acre for combine, and \$3/acre for caterpillar, including labor, fuel and service materials.) In 1942, treeplanter wages were; \$15.00/week, or \$3/day, and \$.50/day for caterpillar tractor operator. The Conservation District also owned a Reo Truck, which was sold in 1944, for \$380. Handplant trees sold for \$.50/100 at that time, and seed cleaning and treating by the Conservation District was done for \$.06/bushel, and \$.05/ bushel for just cleaning. Tree seedlings were heeled into the ground until they could be planted. Dues to the State Association at this time were \$5/year. In 2011, State dues are \$900.

In 1945, the Conservation District purchased a warehouse from the Herther Estate for \$50. At this time, treeplanting was \$10/acre, including trees, labor, and machinery. At this time, the Conservation District owned: Straw spreader, 3 6'disks and trailers, Allis Chalmers combine, Road blader, Swather, W-30 tractor, Row crop harvester, and 1935 pick-up. Other concerns of the Conservation District at this time were; weed control, flood control, especially in the Sand Lake and James River areas, road building, and buying and selling grass seed.

In 1946, 209 acres of trees were planted in the Conservation District. The Conservation District also received a Government Grant for 1 drill, 1 harrow, and 2 grape hoes. A 1936 ½ ton Ford pickup was purchased for \$236.

In 1947, Frank Fesser was elected Chairman of the State Association. A uni-tiller and a corn cultivator were purchased.

In 1948, all townships lying in Marshall County joined the Marshall County Conservation District. All assets in the present Brown-Marshall Conservation District will remain as is, and the Brown-Marshall name will be retained. The Conservation District is now handling fertilizer, and purchased a weed sprayer.

In 1955, the dirt moving business ended, as the jobs could now be done readily by private contractors. A lean was added on to the warehouse to house the seed cleaning equipment.

In 1957, the Conservation District marked 20 years as a Conservation District: 8500 acres of trees had been planted, 90,000 acres of cropland stripped cropped, along with 100 dugouts in place. Conservation practices included; contour furrowing pasture land, wildlife management, rotation grazing/grass management, and started the Crow Creek Watershed.

Updated information provided in 2012:

Over the last several decades many changes have taken place. We have gone from the planting of many trees, to help reduce soil erosion, to tree removal to allow for larger farm equipment, and erosion control is done by no-till farming. Planting in the area has gone from predominately small grain, to increased corn and soybean acres. Larger equipment has led to less manual labor, with many farmers choosing to hire custom farmers. We also have more chemical control of weeds, and an increase in use of fertilizer. Government payments and price supports have become a big part of the farming industry.

In 1971, the Brown-Marshall Conservation District office in Hecla closed, and it was decided that the office would then be housed in the Conservation District Managers home. This decision has resulted in the office being located in Frederick, rural Hecla, rural Houghton, and for the past 25 years, back in Hecla City. The Conservation District warehouse remained in Hecla, and all treeplanting services have been conducted from there.

In the 1980's, the Conservation District added a tree cultivating service for cooperators, and also offered a chemical applicator for rent for granular weed control in trees.

A "Half Century of Progress" celebration was held in Claremont in 1985. The official planting of the 150 millionth tree in South Dakota by a Conservation District was held, along with the 250,000 acre of trees planted in South Dakota by a Conservation District.



Planting of the 150 millionth tree in South Dakota by a Conservation District.
Robert Gab, SDACD; Marc Goldhammer, SDACD; LaVerne Swanson,
BMCD Supervisor; Steve Cutler, SD State Representative;
Verl Cutler, former BMCD Supervisor; Sid Dronen, USDA-SCS Forester.

In 1990, a grass drill was purchased for lease to cooperators. This was funded with help from Ducks Unlimited and Pheasants Forever. The tree cultivating service was discontinued, and a fabric application machine was added.

In 2003, a new grass drill, and an updated fabric machine were purchased, along with a used John Deere Tractor in 2004.

In 2005, the Conservation District planted a record breaking season, with 258 acres of trees planted. Two planting and fabric crews were used for this season. A much needed treeplanter, pick-up and trailer were purchased at this time.

In 2008, the old warehouse building was sold, and a new storage building/office was constructed at 304 Main Street in Hecla. The storage building houses all Conservation District equipment, has a large walk in cooler, and an office area that is used during the tree planting/fabric season. During the off-season, the Conservation District Office operates from the Conservation District Managers' home, which is currently also in Hecla.

The Mission of the Brown-Marshall Conservation District is to promote conservation stewardship in Brown County through education, conservation services, and technical assistance.

The Conservation District priorities in 2011 included:

Excess/insufficient water - ponding, flooding, seasonal high water table, seeps and drifted snow

Soil quality degradation - concentration of salts or other chemicals

Soil erosion -concentrated flow erosion

Livestock production limitation - inadequate feed and forage

Livestock production limitation - inadequate livestock shelter

The Conservation District currently provides the following services; tree planting, tree fabric installation, handplant sales, and grass drill rental, and miscellaneous tree products to the producers of Brown-Marshall Conservation District. The Conservation District also supports the youth in the Conservation District by contributing to Ag in the Classroom, hosting Arbor Day and Poster Contests, promoting various scholarships, including a Brown-Marshall Scholarship. The Northern Prairie Water Festival also receives monetary support from the Conservation District, along with volunteer assistance from the Conservation District Manager.

TOTAL ACRES OF TREE PLANTING THROUGH THE DECADES

Decade	Field Windbreak	Farmstead Livestock	Renovation	Wildlife	Other	Total	Farms
1944-1949	541.0	500.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	1041.0	348
1950-1959	1489.7	987.5	0.0	0.0	259.8	2737.0	471
1960-1969	866.8	529.9	0.0	0.0	101.8	1498.5	521
1970-1979	335.5	536.9	5.8	0.0	176.8	1055.0	352
1980-1989	307.7	408.4	44.3	19.0	97.9	877.3	299
1990-1999	199.8	217.0	15.1	170.1	137.0	739.0	281
2000-2009	282.7	151.9	8.0	187.2	100.3	732.1	147
2010-2011	5.7	16.1	2.7	14.7	0.0	39.2	13

Current BMCD Board of Supervisors: Dana Dennert, Mahlon Spurr, Robert Cutler, Lynn Ruenz, Rory Mikkonen
 Conservation District Manager, Judy Skoglund, District Conservationist, Doug Farrand.

The following is a list of Supervisors of the Brown-Marshall Conservation District to date:

George Lane	1937 – 1952	J.W. Widstrom	1956 – 1962
Merle Grupe	1937 – 1949	Verl Cutler	1957 -
Frank Feser	1937 – 1956	Robert Hixon	1962 –
Anton Fanger	1937- 1945I	Ramon Stensland	1962 –
Frank Farrar	1937 – 1945I	William Ackerson	1963 –
Howard Cutler	1942 – 1948	Merrill Hemen	1964 –
Harold Treeby	1942 – 1957	Hubert Dinger	1966 –
Sam Hastings	1942 – 1948	Thomas Heis	1966 –
Leslie Patterson	1942 – 1948	Mahlon Spurr	1968 – present
Lester Stearns	1942 – 1952	Martin Weistmantel	1970 – 1972
Paul Karlen	1942 – 1948	Earl McCulloch, Jr.	1973 – 2002
Elza Luttrell	1945 –	Ted Yde	1973 – 1977
John Peterson	1946 – 1953	LaVerne Swanson	1976 - 1994
Harold Strand	1948 – 1981	Art Ringgenberg	1978 – 1984
Henry Forsting	1948 – 1958	Arlene Hixon	1981 – 2011
Delbert Wylie	1948 – 1958	Lloyd Dennert	1985 – 1988
Earl McCulloch, Sr	1948 –	Gordon Weideman	1989 – 1989
Connie Hanson	1948 –	Terry Gilchrist	1989 – 2010
Dick Daly	1949 – 1956	Robert Cutler	1995 – 2011
Leo Marttila	1949 – 1956	Dana Dennert	2002 – present
Harold Schaunaman	1952 – 1957	Lynn Ruenz	2011 – present
Art Ringgenberg	1953 – 1969	Rory Mikkonen	2011 – present
Laurie Kotila	1955 – 1962		