

## Clearfield-Keyapaha Conservation District (No. 04)

History from 1969 publication:

The Clearfield-Keyapaha Soil and Water Conservation District is located in the south part of Tripp County, formerly a part of the Rosebud Reservation. The county was organized in 1893, but with only a few people. However, when it was opened for homesteading in 1908, the population climbed rapidly to over 8,000.

The land in the Conservation District is mostly level to undulating and the soil varies from a sand to fine sandy loam and is very susceptible to wind erosion. The drainage of the area is through the Keyapaha River and its tributaries, which along with some small lakes have been an important source of water. These have been supplemented by wells.

The early settlers found a land with a good cover of grasses, tall, medium and short grasses; early, medium and late grasses, all good grazing and hay grasses.

They also found a land that was easy to plow and grew good crops, but since the rainfall was limited, the crop yields were sometimes low. Generally the yields were satisfactory until the dry years came along, followed with extensive soil erosion problems. These erosion problems gradually became worse. And since the people came from areas of high rainfall, they were not prepared to cope with such problems. Even the grasses were different and could not endure the continued heavy uses along with drought. And so, as the dry weather and wind erosion continued, conditions became more serious and the people called for help.

The local people held meetings with officials of various local, state and federal agencies where they presented their problems and asked for help. Method demonstrations were tried, but they did not have the necessary machinery to do the job. The problems were discussed at other meetings with P.M.A., as was often referred to as A.A.A., and with the Soil Erosion Service and Experiment Station. These groups were sympathetic, but did not have much help to give. The Winner-Dixon Demonstration area was set up around Dixon where they were able to obtain the use of heavy dirt moving equipment and help from W.P.A. and later the C.C.C. Camp. Some of this equipment and personnel later became available in limited amounts.

When the South Dakota District Law was passed in 1937, the people proceeded as rapidly as possible with information meetings, petitions for a hearing and referendum.

The Conservation District was organized in January, 1938, and covered nine townships. Later, the remainder of the south part of the County was added to the Conservation District. The present Conservation District covers the south part of the County and comprises 470,046 acres in Tripp County, south of a line coinciding with the north boundary of Township 98N, Range 79W and extending east to the east boundary of 98-76, then south to the north boundary of 97-75, then east to the Tripp County line.

The first supervisors were: D.B. Lyons, Millboro, Chairman; Clyde Sargent, Clearfield; Walter Hellman, Millboro; Grover Meyer, Carter; Carl Kesler, Clearfield, Vice-Chairman.

The problems as stated in the Conservation District program were: severe wind erosion, very severe; water erosion; flooding along the rivers resulting in damage to roads and bridges and silting of bottom lands; pastures and grasslands badly depleted; bad grasshopper infestation; high percent of trees died out.

The solutions as suggested by the people were:

- Wind strip cropping – both straight and contour;
- Contour pasture furrows;
- Water spreading systems;
- Use of stubble mulch tillage;
- Terrace the slopes;
- Use of deep furrow drills;
- Planting of trees, both farmstead and shelterbelt;
- Rotate grazing;
- Planting grasses on cropland;
- Reseeding depleted grasslands.

The most crippling effects of drought periods were the lack of income, the fact that most of the people were on relief, loss of population and loss of business.

Others who have served as supervisors are: Roy Nelson, Frank McKenzie, William Matousek, Con Connot, Morris O'Connor and Jack Kelly.

The 1969 supervisors were: John Walsh, Jr., Clearfield, Chairman; Marlan K. Larson, Colome, Vice-Chairman; W.H. Patmore, Colome, Treasurer; Michael Sharkey, Keyapaha, Supervisor; Marlow Newman, Dallas, Supervisor; and Ray Eihlers, Winner, Secretary (County Agent).

Updated information provided in 2012:

**Former Board Members**

Marlan Larson, Marlow Newman, William Patmore, Robert Mulso, Chandlor Shippy, John Welsh Jr., Robert Lunne, Richard Patmore, Steve Novotny, Jim Cahoy, D.B. Lyons, Clyde Sargent, Walter Hellman, Grover Meyer, Carl Kesler, Roy Nelson, Frank McKenzie, William Matousek, Con Connot, Morris O'Connor, Jack Kelly, Michael Sharkey, Justin Heath, Ferman Harter Jr., Dean Storms, Randy Richey, Jim Cahoy, Carl Diez, Lawrence DeMers

**Current Board Members**

Greg English, Robert Hanson, Clay Kaiser, David Pravacek, Larry Nagel