

Corson Conservation District (No. 52)

History from 1969 publication:

Corson County is located in northwestern South Dakota and borders North Dakota and the Missouri River. The West Corson District occupies that portion of the County lying west of Highway 65, and comprises about 468,000 acres. The area is largely occupied by ranchers that combine wheat growing along with livestock products.

The Grand River flows through the Conservation District from east to west and empties into the Missouri River. The Grand River and its tributaries drain the entire Conservation District.

The topography of the area ranges from steep to undulating to rolling, with the steeper areas along the Grand River and its tributaries. The drainage of the area is from well to excessive.

The clay loams and loams predominate with some sandy areas; and are primarily best suited for ranching and cash grain farming, with attention to wind and water erosion control. Wheat is the cash crop. These areas are very susceptible to erosion.

The Conservation District is in a low rainfall area where ranching is the leading enterprise. The land produces good grasses, which is one of the leading assets. Water is supplied by the river, creeks, springs, dams and wells, with the dams and wells being an important source of supply.

Grass is the most important natural resource. To produce grass, there must be good soil and sufficient water. And along the creeks and in the draws may be found "brush" that furnishes protection for the wildlife.

About 1951, a group of ranchers from the west part of Corson County decided that a soil conservation district would be very helpful in overcoming some of their farming and ranching problems. So they held several meetings at which the proposition was discussed. Petitions were signed and a hearing held on June 21, 1951, at which the evidence indicated that the people wanted to vote on the matter. The referendum on October 19th passed with a favorable vote of 183 to 79. On December 10, 1965, one and one-half townships were added to the Conservation District by petition. On July 20, 1968, two more townships were added to this Conservation District; they were Mahto and Township 20.

As soon as the supervisors were chosen, they prepared their program and plan of work and prepared and signed agreements with cooperating agencies. In their plan of work they listed the problems facing the district as: ranges were in need of protection; livestock water supply not well distributed; need more adequate feed supply; some cropland should be seeded in grass and legumes; water could be used more advantageously; need irrigation development; improved crop rotations; cropland needs protection from wind and water erosion; weeds are a problem; need more trees for farmstead and field protection; dams could be stocked with fish.

Practices that the supervisors proposed to use to meet these problems included:

Range management: Controlled grazing, range use be rotated in so far as possible, so the grass can be maintained and increased. District has special rangeland drill available to cooperators.

Livestock and water supply: Additional stock water dams will be needed and it is the recommendation of the board to work on those practices.

Feed production: In order to increase feed production, it is believed the land suitable for alfalfa production should be used for that crop. Water spreading systems should be built to

spread water over native grass and alfalfa fields where the land is situated so the practice can be used. Building of trench silos is to be encouraged, to store and preserve feed supplies.

Grass and legume seeding: An alfalfa-grass mixture could be seeded for feed production.

Water management: Stock water dam, water spreading, on range and hay lands, contour furrows and range pitting on the contour will also help hold the water where it will fall on range.

Irrigation: Many draws have possibilities for storage of water that can be used for irrigation purposes. Sprinkler system of irrigation is a possibility where soils and available water are close together. Part of the district will be located in the proposed Shadehill Irrigation area. The district is now dealer for Crisafulli Irrigation Pump to promote irrigation.

Crop production: More legumes and long time grass rotations can be used. This would help the feed situation, as well as to help control erosion. To use sweet clover as a green manure crop is also recommended.

Wind and water erosion: These hazards can be overcome by the use of sub-surface tillage implements, strip cropping, the use of grass and legumes, and green manure crops. If the slopes would be farmed on the contour and grassed waterways used, water erosion could be controlled. The use of stubble mulch tillage would help to hold the moisture when it falls and prevent erosion.

Weeds: The use of good rotations and sub-surface tillage after harvest in the fall, along with the use of chemicals.

Tree planting: Farmstead windbreaks should be planted where favorable soil sites can be found. Desirable wintering places should also be provided by making plantings along creeks and water courses.

Stocking dams with fish: Where dams are of sufficient size and proper location, they could be stocked with suitable species of fish for recreational and food purposes.

The following table shows the amount of work completed at the close of 1968:

Conservation cropping systems	65,000	acres
Contour strip cropping	5,000	acres
Terraces	888,230	feet
Grassed waterways	943	acres
Stubble mulch fallow	30,000	acres
Wind strip cropping	160,000	acres
Noxious weed control	800	acres
Grade stabilization structures	6	
Land levelling	130	acres
Irrigation systems	3	
Proper range use	343,000	acres
Range seedings	3,617	acres
Stock water developments	751	
Water spreading	738	acres
Cross fencing	130	miles
Pasture plantings	11,000	acres
Proper land use	11,000	acres
Wildlife developments	509	acres
Fish pond development stocking	75	
Private outdoor recreation development	21	
Public outdoor recreation development	3	
Floodland protection plantings	813	acres

The first district supervisors were: Norman Kvale, Thunder Hawk; Joe Riehl, Watauga; Oren Sands, Keldron; Alex Campbell, McIntosh; and Lester Hetzel, Keldron.

Others who have served as supervisors are: Vernon Dickenson; Vinal Farrott; Matt Gill; Todd Hoffman; Don Bruce; Harold Meyer; Ronald Waddell; Jack Vlanstadt; Harold Arnold; Francis Bohenkamp; Robert Bubbers; and Frank Enick.

The 1969 supervisors were: Oren Sands, Keldron, chairman; Lester Hetzel, Keldron, vice chairman; Robert Bubbers, Morrystown, secretary; Don Bruce, McIntosh, treasurer; Harold Meyer, Isabel, supervisor; Don Howe, Jr., Mahto, assistant supervisor; Jack Warnstadt, Keldron, assistant supervisor; and Delmer Helgerson, Lesterville, assistant supervisor.

The Corson Soil Conservation District was originally comprised of the West Corson Soil Conservation District, which included that portion of the county lying west of highway 65, and the East Corson Soil Conservation District, which included the remaining portion of the county. These two Conservation Districts were organized in 1951. In 1969, the East Corson Soil Conservation District was disbanded. In 1979, the Corson County Conservation District was formed to include the entire county. The county comprises 1,582,757 acres and the average farm/ranch is 4038 acres in size.

Updated information provided in 2012:

The Corson Conservation District is self-governed and has the authority to enter into working agreements with government agencies and private entities to carry out conservation activities. Currently the Conservation District works closely with the Tatanka RC&D, NRCS, FSA, Standing Rock Sioux Tribe, SD Department of Resource, Conservation, & Forestry, South Dakota Conservation Commission, and Corson County residents, to implement conservation activities through out the county.

The Corson County Conservation District Board of Supervisors determined the need to start a no-till rental program in 1994. This would help to prevent soil erosion due to conventional tillage practices, give producers an alternative method for seeding grass and alfalfa, and give farmers and ranchers an opportunity to use no-till equipment with out purchasing the expensive equipment.

The Corson Conservation District applied for a loan through South Dakota Department of Agriculture. A John Deere 750 no-till drill was purchased from Dittus Equipment for 1995 spring planting season. The first year 950 acres were planted. The second year 1539 acres were planted. By 1997, almost 3000 acres were planted and producers were looking to rent a no-till corn planter. Corson Conservation County Board of Supervisors purchased 1720 John Deere no-till corn planter in 1998. The Corson Conservation District currently has two no-till corn planters and one no-till drill for rent. The Conservation District purchased a New Holland manure spreader May 2010, to add to the Equipment Rental Program.

The Corson Conservation District promotes conservation through education. The Conservation District sponsors the Arbor Day Essay and Conservation Speech contest. The Conservation District sponsors high school students to Range Camp in Sturgis. The Conservation District will also sponsor students attending Rangeland and Soils Days held across the state. The Conservation District promotes Arbor Day & Soil Stewardship Week by planting trees with the second grade class and providing bulletin covers to Corson County Churches. The Conservation District works with the Corson County 4-H program and the Corson County Fair.

The Corson Conservation District works with the NW Area Forester, Natural Resource Conservation Service, and the Farm Service Agency to promote tree planting with cost share programs. Programs currently used by producers are Continuous CRP, EQIP, Whip, CSP, and

cost-share programs from SD Conservation Commission. The Conservation District currently plants 35-75 acres of trees yearly. The Conservation District owns a tree planter, fabric machine, tractor, and trailer. The Conservation District employs a four man crew each spring to plant trees and apply fabric for Corson County residents.

The Corson Conservation District has been awarded a Resource Conservation Technician Grant through the SD Conservation Commission since January 2006. The technician helps with the implementation of programs through the Natural Resource Conservation Service that benefit the Conservation District and Corson county residents.

Corson County Conservation District is a member of SDACD, NACD, Arbor Day Foundation, Grass Land Coalition, Corson County 4-H and Fair, Ag in the Classroom, Farmers Union Foundation, and Big Sioux Nursery. The Conservation District manager is currently secretary of the Big Sioux Nursery Board.

The current positions on the Board of Supervisors are filled by: John Hetzel-Chairman, Rock Seiler-Vice-Chairman, Brenda Schneider-Treasurer, Barbara Campbell, and Mike Beer. Harold Arnold and Lisa Schmidt are Conservation District Advisors. The Corson Conservation District employees Kathy Sieck-Chase as Business Manager and Melva Brenner as Resource Conservation Technician. Past Supervisors for the Corson Conservation were; Jack Wanstedt, Harold Meyer, William Kramer, Maurice Campbell, Robert Bubbers, Lester Hetzel, Donald Bruce, Norman Kvale, Joe Riehl, Alex Campbell, Vernon Dickenson, Vinal Parrott, Matt Gill, Orel C. Sands, Todd Hoffman, Ronald Waddell, Leo Merkel, Don Howe, Frank Emch, and Francis Bogenkamp.