

Deuel County Conservation District (No. 40)

History from 1969 publication:

Deuel County Conservation District occupies all of Deuel County, which is located on the east border of the state a little north of the middle of the state. The county includes 402,260 acres. The first permanent white people came to the county and settled near what is now Gary; they were soon followed by others, and the county was organized in 1878. These first settlers were Norwegians, but they were quickly followed by Hollanders and Germans.

The topography of this area ranges from undulating to hilly, dominantly through the crop land. A range of hills extends from northwest to southeast of well defined drainage, and flooding during wet seasons. Altitude ranges from 1300 to 1900 feet. The hills divide the watershed- 1/3 drains into the Minnesota River and 2/3 into the Sioux River.

The soils of the county range from clay loams, silty clay loams, silt loams, loams and sandy loams. This combination of topography and soil types would indicate that there are areas of rapid drainage and other areas of poorer drainage, but in most cases it is satisfactory.

The rough land produces excellent grasses and is well adapted to cattle raising. The other areas are very suitable for general farming with cash grains and cultivated crops. However, attention needs to be given to both the control and conservation of water and the maintenance of fertility.

Deuel County, when settled, had grass in abundance. The majority of the soil was black with a covering of mostly a loamy type. Lakes and streams are numerous in the county, with a considerable number of active springs. The lakes and streams were clear and free from silt.

As the county increased in population, much grassland disappeared in favor of tillable land. Grain and cultivated crops increased. Cultivated areas on the steeper slopes started to erode through the action of wind and water. The once fertile soil was approaching the state of infertility. The per farm income dropped, resulting in some of the homestead units being abandoned and attached to adjoining farms. The farm population in Deuel County was on the decline, and where it will stop, we do not know.

Some of the people were becoming concerned about these conditions and were seeking a remedy. As a result, some conservation practices were established on a few farms as a demonstration by the Extension Service. About the same time, the Prairie States Shelterbelt Program began to function and the people became interested in that and planted shelterbelts.

Some of the farmers began to realize that something could be done. They held meetings and discussed their problems, and decided to learn more about a conservation district. And so the organization and operation of a conservation district was explained. Petitions for a hearing were signed, the hearing was held in March 1947, and the referendum the following June with little or no opposition.

As soon as the supervisors were chosen, they prepared and signed the necessary agreements and prepared their program and plan of work. They specified the problems as: wind and water erosion, weeds, range and pasture depletion, need for crop rotations and some wetlands need drainage.

Some of the practices promoted to meet these problems included; stubble mulch tillage, using contour and strip cropping, contour pasture furrows, and terraces on steeper lands. Also promoted was gully control by shaping, grass seeding and use of check dams, shrub planting, crops rotated with grass and legumes, tree planting, weed control by mowing or spraying, constructing dams and dugouts for stock water, and to provide for excess drainage through tiles or open drains.

The first board of supervisors were : Ed Kreger, Albert Cizadlo, Floyd Packer, Fred Kaiser and Oswald Megard.

Others who were instrumental in promoting the Conservation District were: John Gauger, Elmer Sample, Pierson Toft, George Laberee, Dale King, Herman Peterson, Julius Jessen, Edgar Ensberg, T.S. Walseth, Karl Fromm and Hans Megard.

The 1969 supervisors were: Karl Oswald, Clarence Roecker, Albert Cizadlo, Ed Kreger and Jacob Wentzel.

Updated information provided in 2012:

Several people have served on this Conservation District board since 1969. There has always been quite a lot of interest from the public in serving on the board, and a lot of the elections have had competition with three people running for two positions. This has led to an influx of new people and new ideas which has kept the Conservation District board leadership fresh and active. People serving as supervisors since 1969 are: Fred Kaiser, Clarence Walter, Dwayne Redlin, Fred Jurgens, Roger Svec, Richard Akin, Loren Schiefelbein, Maynard Piper, Harley Blumke, Alphonse Jaeger, Charles Appelhof, Chad Limberg, Herb Hamann, Darwin Hunt, Doug Toben and Scott Brandenburger.

The 2012 supervisors are: Phyllis Niemann, Lonnie Budahl, Gary Bandemer, Arnold Krause and LeRoy Stohr.

The Deuel County Conservation District Manager is Elois Redlin, who has been employed by the Conservation District since 1982, making it 30 years in 2012.

District Conservationists who have been stationed in Clear Lake include: Floyd Delmage, Hal Cosby, Harlan Threadgold, Howard Minnick, Odell Greene, Karen Cameron-Howell, Kevin Luoma, and presently Val Dupraz. Technicians who have been in Clear Lake include: Harley Huber, Steve Maras, Cheryl Stohr, Michelle Homan, David Yexley, Tom Jones, Deanna Balster and presently Jeremy Thury. Wetland Specialist was Melanie Dickman and is now Amy Mathis.

One of the main activities of the Conservation District is the tree planting program. Since its beginning in 1947, Deuel CD has planted three million trees and shrubs covering 4,600 acres on 2,500 farms. The Conservation District has updated the equipment to better serve the county with limited downtime due to old equipment break-downs. Tree fabric installation was added in the 1990's as another option to



keep the trees clean and enhance growth and survival. A full-service tree program is offered which includes ground preparation.

A special grass drill service and a no-till drill rental service have been available through the Conservation District. The grass drill has been discontinued, but the no-till drill service is still available.

Deuel CD has had three locations since its start. The first location was downtown Clear Lake, the second location was on South Main Street, and the present location is one block off Main Street, housed in the USDA Service Center.

A new shop with a tree cooler was built in the 1990's, located conveniently two blocks from the office within city limits.

Throughout the years, the Conservation District has been active in the education and information duties of a conservation district. Many students have been sponsored by the Conservation District to attend conservation camps, water festivals and FFA land judging contests. The Sammy Soil Saver puppet and the Conservation District Manager have been to every Arbor Day celebration for Deuel School since Sammy's beginning. Several tours, field days and seminars have been hosted by the Conservation District to encourage landowners to adopt conservation practices.

The original Long Range Plan was updated in 1985, again in 2009, and will be evaluated to meet current needs at least every five years.

Deuel CD has sponsored several special watershed projects, utilizing federal, state and local funds to achieve project goals. Feasibility studies were conducted on the Clear Lake, the Lake Cochrane, the Fish Lake, and the Lake Alice watersheds. These three separate studies led to three large implementation projects on all of the lakes and watersheds.

In the 1980's and 1990's, a complete soil survey was conducted in Deuel County by Ken Miller, Soil Scientist for NRCS. The final book was published in 1997.

A special demonstration project was conducted by Deuel CD to seal abandoned wells in Deuel, Hamlin and Codington Counties. An inventory was completed to determine the need, and cost-share funds were offered to help landowners seal the wells on a voluntary basis. The Conservation District provided personnel, equipment and materials to seal the wells.

The Conservation Commission grant funds have been used for most of the special projects Deuel CD has been involved in.

Hydrologic Unit Planning was conducted in the 1980's, and the information gathered was used for writing the numerous grant proposals which received funding and were implemented in Deuel County by Deuel County Conservation District.