

Dewey County Conservation District (No. 57)

History from 1969 publication:

Dewey County is located in the northwest part of South Dakota on the west side of the Missouri River and the second county south from the North Dakota line, south to the Cheyenne River, and lies mostly within the Cheyenne River Indian Reservation. In the “early days”, large parcels of land were leased to big cattle outfits. With the coming of the homesteaders, the cattle companies gradually disappeared, and in 1910, when a portion of the Standing Rock Indian Reservation was opened, the livestock industry on a large scale basis entirely disappeared. The South part of the county was formerly known as Armstrong County, which was never organized. The South Dakota Legislature discontinued the county and added the area to Dewey County.

The drainage of the north part of the county is into the Moreau River and the south part into the Cheyenne – both of these rivers flow into the Missouri. The topography of the area is from rolling to undulating to steep. All of the area bordering the Missouri River is steep to undulating and the west part of the county is undulating to rolling. There is quite a bit of grain farming in the north and west parts of the county, mostly wheat. The remainder of the county is largely devoted to livestock production.

The early settlers were chiefly livestock men and were primarily interested in grass and water for their livestock and occupied the areas where these resources were most available. Those who were interested primarily in farming established their operations more to the west part of the county. Most of these people were livestock men as well as farmers.

During the dry years, the winds took a heavy toll in the farming areas and the heavy grazing damaged the ranges and pastures, as well as reduced the available water supplies; and the operators realized that they needed to do something. In late 1951, some of the people decided to learn something about a soil conservation district. In the spring of 1952, meetings were held at Isabel, Eagle Butte, Trail City, Glencross, Firesteel, and Timber Lake, at which the organization and operation of a soil conservation district was explained. The people decided to proceed with the organization work. Petitions for a hearing were circulated and the hearing was held in May where the people decided to hold a referendum. This referendum was held in October 1952, with a favorable vote of 318 to 45. Then in 1954, the part that was Armstrong County was added to the Dewey County Conservation District by petition.

The following supervisors were chosen: Herman Holm, Isabel; Vernon Anderson, Eagle Butte; Louis A. Caswell, Timber Lake; L.G. Schweitzer, Glencross; and F.C. Miller, Ridgeview.

Problems facing the Conservation District were:

- Wind erosion on cropland;
- Water erosion on cropland and grazing land;
- Not sufficient water on ranges;
- Ranges over used.

Practices to be used to meet these problems included:

- Crop residue management;
- Strip cropping;
- Grass-legume rotations on cropland;
- Establish grass on some cropland;

- Better range management;
- Re-grass depleted ranges;
- Establish more stock water facilities.

Among others who have served as supervisors are: Bert Libolt, Dupree; Leo Aberle, Glencross; and Lestie Peterson, Ridgeview.

The 1969 supervisors were: Alvin Herman, Timber Lake, Chairman; Leo Aberle, Glencross, Vice-Chairman; Herman Holm, Isabel, Treasurer; Bert Libolt, Lantry, Supervisor; Lestie Peterson, Ridgeview, Supervisor; Victor Hulm, Timber Lake, Assistant Supervisor; and Herb Lippert, Timber Lake, County Agent, Secretary.

Updated information provided in 2012:

Former Board Members

Herman Holm, Vernon Anderson, Louis Caswell, Ted Schweitzer, F.C. Miller, Bert Libolt, Leo Aberle, Matt Schweitzer, Barry Stanley, Leslie Petersen, Robert Ernst, Alvin Herman, Paul Stradinger, Art Reichert, Jerry Keller, Dwayne Miller, Leon Voegle, Les Peterson, Jim Peterson, Dawn Leibel, Cathy Alley, Ken Quinn, Cathy Alley, Robert Martian

Current Board Members

Brandon Heck, Louis Keller, Paula Hinckley, James Petersen, Willard Nash