

## Hamill County Conservation District (No. 26)

History from 1969 publication:

The Hamill Soil and Water Conservation District is located in the north half of Tripp County along the White River, and is situated in the south central part of South Dakota and in the eastern part of the old Rosebud Indian Reservation. The county was organized in 1909 when the population stood at about 8,000.

The area comprising the Conservation District is entirely drained by the White River and Missouri River. The topography is undulating to steep. The steep areas are found along the breaks of the White River. However, there is some flat land along the river bottoms. All of the land is well to excessively drained.

The soils are primarily of Pierre clays, with some containing small amounts of lighter material. These soils are suitable for general farming, but primarily livestock. Wheat is the leading crop grown, followed by corn, oats and sorghum. Grass occupies more acres than any other crop.

The early settlers found excellent grass, good soil and ample water along the rivers and streams. Away from the streams, the water had to be supplied by dams, wells and springs.

Most of the settlers were farmers, and so they broke out the sod and set up a grain farming system and planted mostly wheat, which is still the main crop. When the dry years came along, the people reported that too much land was under the plow and was left to the mercy of the winds. Pastures and grass lands were depleted and damaged by winds and grasshoppers. Many of the trees had died out. Crops were very poor and people had to sell most of their livestock. The people were looking for help, and in 1935 they appealed to the Soil Conservation Service for assistance. They were able to get help from the Soil Conservation Service and the C.C.C. Camp to help clean out fence rows, level hummocks, set up tillage to control erosion, plant grass seed and trees, with some favorable results.

Then about 1940, after they had seen the work done through the Clearfield-Keyapaha, American Creek, and Gregory County Conservation Districts, they decided they wanted their own Conservation District, so the assistance could be more wide spread than the C.C.C. Camp, located at Chamberlain, was ready to render. They conducted an information program early in 1941, had a hearing in August and a referendum on November 22, with a favorable vote. Then in June 1944, a hearing was held at the Ideal School to add another 135,973 acres to the Conservation District, making a total of 281,114 acres.

The following men were named as the first board of supervisors: J.E. Broline, Winner; H.E. Covey, Hamill; Joe Dvorack, Hamill; T.J. Harrington, Hamill; and Henry A.L. Thompson, Winner. Chester Covey, Hamill, and Ray Nelson were also very active in getting the Conservation District organized.

As soon as the supervisors were appointed and elected, they prepared their program and agreements and were ready to start operations.

They specified their problems as:

- Very severe wind erosion;
- Pastures and grass lands badly depleted;
- All areas subject to severe grasshopper infestations;
- Many of the tree plantings had died out.

They proposed to solve these problems by using:

- Wind strip cropping;
- Contour strip cropping;
- Basin listing;
- Use of deep furrow drills;
- Grass and pasture management and seeding;
- Planting of trees for farmstead protection;
- Planting of tree strips for field protection;
- And others.

The figures below indicate the amount of work done by the close of 1966:

• Wind strip cropping	15,610	acres
• Contour strip cropping	4,273	acres
• Use of deep furrow drills	68,500	acres
• Grass and pasture management and seeding	45,400	acres
• Farmstead tree plantings	1,490	acres
• Planting of tree strips for field protection	115,700	acres

Others who have served as supervisors were: William Matousek, Carter; Roy J. Kelley, Ideal; Con Connot, Dallas; Roy Nelson, Hamill; and Frank McKenzie, Winner.

The 1969 supervisors were: George Schramm, Winner, Chairman; Lowell Christensen, Ideal, Vice-Chairman; Con Connot, Dallas, Treasurer; Duane Blare, Hamill; Clarence Jenke, Carter; and Ray Eilers, Winner, Secretary (County Agent).

Updated information provided in 2012:

#### **Original Board Members**

J.E. Broline, H.E. Covey, Joe Dvorack, Henry Thompson, T.J. Harrington

#### **Former Board Members**

Con Connot, Lowell Christensen, George Schramm, Duane Blare, Roy Kelly, Clarence Jenke, Kenneth Kulbel, Lawrence Neyens, Ron Fiala, Neil Lantz, Edward Pajl, William Matousek, Tom Farnsworth, Tom Goetzinger, J.M. Heying, Rick Spellman, Gary Christensen, Arlan Klundt, Chris Schmike

#### **Current Board Members**

Don Covey, Leroy Hodge, Larry Anderson, Lance Ekberg, Jon Elsasser