

Hamlin County Conservation District (No.37)

Hamlin County lies in east central South Dakota, with a fertile soil well suited for general farming and has several natural lakes. The Soil Conservation District covers all of the county.

Soil types consist mainly of Kranzburg, Barnes and Sinai. The topography is undulating to rolling and nearly level. The County's east part is drained by the Sioux River and includes the Sioux Valley, which is level and productive during normal moisture years. The Conservation District includes several lake areas, including Poinsett, which is the largest natural lake in South Dakota, Lake Albert, Lake John, Lake Mary, Lake Norden, Lake Marsh, Clear Lake, Twin Lakes, and Lake Florence. The central and northwestern parts of the county are characterized as having a more heavy type of soil, being very productive. It is also characterized as having a poorly defined drainage and numerous potholes or depressional areas which intercept some of the surface run-off during wet seasons and remain unillable throughout the year.

Hamlin County's fertile and productive soil had been cropped about 65 years with little or no regard to the fact of eroding top soil and fertility exhaustion. The continued exploitation of this already 40 percent depleted top soil by the use of high producing crops could have but one end—that being a barren and unproductive agriculture and the results that follow. It was high time that thought be given to the fact that a permanent agriculture and prosperity is based on conserving the soil or serious economic and social consequences would surely result.

Faced with the above facts, a group of farm leaders began talking about their problems and what they might do to meet them. The County Crop Improvement Association members began a movement to develop interest in a soil conservation district. The matter was discussed at meetings conducted by County Agent Kelsey and in March 1945, a hearing was held on the matter of organizing a conservation district in Hamlin County. The result was a referendum in May 1945 when the entire county was voted into a district, consisting of 230,917 acres.

The first supervisors were: Albert Mischke, Vienna, chairman; Carl Guse, Bryant, vice chairman; Everett Baxter, Hazel, treasurer; Aldon Berg, Bemis; and A. V. Davis, Estelline. Other farmers who were active in the promotion of the district were: Albert Jager, Lake Norden; L. B. Kornmann, Hayti; Howard Opdahl, Hayti; Peter Thue, Bryant (deceased); C. Vio Garner, Watertown; Neil Bleeker, Castlewood; Anton Tekrony, Bemis; Otto Namken, Castlewood; John Aronson, Hayti; R. B. Stevenson, Hazel; John Misohke, Hazel; Einar Salmonson, Estelline; Alfred Lundberg, Estelline; Mrs. F. D. McCarriar, Castlewood; Clive Schooley, Castlewood; Dwight Dickason, Castlewood; Ray Antonen, Lake Norden; Al Flakus, Lake Norden; Freal Hayes, Lake Norden; Emil Olson, Lake Norden; Ernest Olson, Lake Norden; Tom Shelsta, Hayti; Ed Harrenga, Castlewood; Menno Janssen, Dempster; Leslie Yahn, Vienna; and Eugene Simonson, Watertown.

When the organization of the district was completed, the supervisors referred to the minutes of the hearing to learn what the people thought were problems facing the farmers of the area. Drainage, tree plantine, contouring, terracing, and weed control appeared most often at the hearing. The supervisors noted that large amounts of fertile soil had been lost as indicated by bald spots on cultivated slopes. Occasionally gullies were noticeable where considerable run-off water had accumulated.

The supervisors proposed to remedy their problems through the use of the following practices. The units accomplished are as of the close of 1968.

Conservation cropping systems	112,865	acres
Contour strip cropping	3,420	acres
Terraces	37.2	miles
Grassed waterways	1,26	acres
Stubble mulching	15,000	acres
Wind strip cropping	6,111	acres
Land levelling	66	acres
Irrigation wells	4	units
Irrigation systems	4	units
Proper range use	2,355	acres
Stock water developments	490	units
Pasture plantings	8,473	acres
Proper pasture use	11.182	acres
Wildlife developments	2,235	acres
Fish pond developments	16	units
Farmstead and feedlot plantings	1,692	acres
Field plantings	245	acres
Contour farming	6,386	acres

Additional men who have served as supervisors are: Henry Wellhause, Castlewood; Kenneth Pulscher, Bryant; Dale Everson, Vienna; and Kenneth Connor, Castlewood.

The 1969 supervisors were: Dale Everson, Vienna, chairman; Kenneth Connor, Castlewood, vice chairman (deceased); Jay Bretsch, Hayti, secretary; Leland Roe, Hazel; and Clifton Larson, Bryant.

Updated information provided in 2012:

The Hamlin County Conservation District was organized in 1945 to provide a means by which the conservation of moisture, soil, and soil resources may be carried out. It was organized to preserve the natural resources, control floods, properly manage wildlife, protect the tax base which is the land and promote the health, safety, and general welfare of the people within the Conservation District. The Conservation District has continued through the years to work towards accomplishing these goals that were set at its conception. A history of the Hamlin County Conservation District was written and published in 1965. Since that date many historical conservation events have taken place within our nation, state and Conservation District. Many news articles were written by the District Conservationist and Conservation District secretaries and published in the local newspapers. Annual work plans were written each year and a long range work plan updated periodically to guide the supervisors elected by county voters in directing the work of the conservation district employees. With the help of the Natural Resource Conservation Service (Soil Conservation Service) and the Farm Service Agency (Agricultural Stabilization Conservation Service) the supervisors have strived to accomplish the goals they set for the Conservation District.

The Conservation District's work through the last 45 years has been directed by a long range work plan and a yearly work plan. During this time the Conservation District was served by supervisors and employees who have taken active roles in achieving the goals set for educating and informing cooperators and residents of Hamlin County through articles in the local newspapers and Conservation District newsletters.

The Conservation District had continued with planting shelterbelts for fields, farmsteads and homes throughout Hamlin County with the help of the cost share programs provided by the

federal and state sponsored government programs. In 1945 the Conservation District started out with a tree planter and a tractor borrowed from the county highway department and through the years has added more and newer equipment. As of 2011 the Conservation District has added many programs offered to the county cooperators. In the last 20 years the Conservation District has purchased a new tree planter, Weed Badgers, disc, cultivator, mower, tractors, trailers, pickups, and trucks to continue planting and cleaning tree sites. A tree fabric service has been used for the last 10 years offering an alternative to weed badgering trees. The Conservation District also has a seeder for planting grass between the rows and a gas operated tree auger for hand planting trees.

The Conservation District provides many other services to the county with equipment to rent to producers- two John Deere no-till drills, a grass drill and two land rollers.

During the 1940's through the 1950's most of the Conservation District's efforts were planting trees across the prairies of Hamlin County. In the 1960's the Conservation District began entering into programs to aid the Conservation District cooperators in their farming endeavors and to help protect the natural resources of the county and surrounding counties for the protection and enjoyment of all citizens.

1968-Began the process of forming the North Marsh Lake Watershed District along with Clark and Codington Counties for the purpose of construction of necessary floodwater control structures to minimize floodwater damage and reduce soil erosion and enhance wildlife. This Watershed District has over the years cleaned and helped to maintain the Tetzlaff Ditch constructed in 1910 and the Barrett Ditch, dug at a later date. It remains a viable Watershed District at this time administered by the Conservation District with a board consisting of watershed cooperators.

1981-Oakwood Lakes-Poinsett Rural Clean Water Program (RCWP). This project involved the Hamlin, Kingsbury, and Brookings Conservation Districts; the Agricultural Stabilization Conservation Service (ASCS), Soil Conservation Service (SCS) all under the Farm Service Agency today; County Commissioners, Extension Service, Economic Research Service, Environmental Protection Service (EPA), South Dakota Department of Environmental Natural Resource (SDDENR), South Dakota State University and the National Water Quality Evaluation Project. The object of this 10 year assessment project was to identify crop and grass lands creating problems within the project area, implement Best Management Practices (BMPs) and monitor their effect on the water quality.

1992-Multi County Abandoned Well Sealing Project. Hamlin CD entered into an abandoned well sealing project along with Codington, Deuel, Mellette and Todd County Conservation Districts and the East Dakota Water Development District. There were many wells identified and sealed through a cost-share program.

1992-Hydrologic Unit Plans. Began the process of working with the Soil Conservation Service, US Department of Agriculture, SD Cooperative Extension Service and the SD Association of Conservation Districts by hiring a resource planning coordinator to develop and update hydrologic units for Hamlin County. Public meetings were held for local cooperator input. These plans are meant to be used to help the Conservation District apply for conservation related funds and form annual and long range workplans.

1998-Lake Poinsett Watershed Project. Along with Kingsbury and Brookings Conservation Districts and SD Department of Environment and Natural Recourses, Hamlin CD became the sponsoring Conservation District for a multi-year project designed to reduce the nutrients and

sediment loads entering the lake and implement a pollution prevention program. This project has continued on to become the North Central Big Sioux Watershed Project that is continuing into 2012.

2006-Central Big Sioux River Water Quality Project. Hamlin CD entered into a joint agreement with Brookings, Lake, Moody, Codington, Deuel and Minnehaha Conservation Districts for a 2 year project with the purpose of installing soil and water conservation best management practices to improve the water quality in the Central Big Sioux River Watershed.

2008-Tallgrass Prairie Conservation Initiative Project. Hamlin CD entered into a multi-county project, with Kingsbury, Miner, Brookings, Deuel and Lake Conservation Districts along with support from USFWS, SDGFP, and Ducks Unlimited. All entities are committed to working together to jointly implement conservation projects to include multiple purpose wetland creations and livestock water developments to enhance rangeland stewardship. Hamlin has been the administrator of all funds.

2011-Prairie Coteau Grassland Management Project. This is an extension of the Tallgrass Project that was completed in 2010 and will continue to work towards improving grazing management practices within the multi-county area. This project is scheduled to go through 2013

2009-Big Sioux River Watershed Riparian Area Management (RAM). This program was established to provide technical assistance and cost share dollars to establish alternate water sources and rock crossings in the riparian areas within the project area that includes Codington, Hamlin, Deuel, Brookings, Lake, Minnehaha and Moody Conservation Districts. Each Conservation District administers the funds for 10-15 year contracts for designated acreages within these Conservation Districts.

2009-Upper Big Sioux-Northern Prairie Coteau Rapid Watershed Assessment Project. In order to provide improved soil and water quality in the designated areas the Brookings, Clark, Codington, Day, Deuel, Grant, Hamlin, Kingsbury, Lake, Marshall, Moody and Roberts Conservation Districts agreed to work together to promote and provide assistance to landowners and operators in planning and installing recommended soil and water conservation best management practices. This agreement is effective until 9/30/2014.

Vermillion River Basin Watershed Project. Entered into an agreement with McCook Conservation District along with Brookings, Clark, Hutchinson, Kingsbury, Lake, Lincoln, Miner, Minnehaha, Turner, Union and Yankton Conservation Districts to cooperate with federal, state, and local producers to help clean up the Vermillion River.

Along with the projects listed above the Conservation District has been involved with the local schools and communities within its boundaries. The Conservation District offers a scholarship for Science Fairs held at the schools and two scholarships each year for students entering into an agricultural field in college or vocational school, sponsors students to attend conservation wildlife camps, take part in the Watertown Winter Farm Show, promote Soil Stewardship Week, present awards to area landowners for stewardship of the land, has sponsored many grazing and no-till workshops.

Through the years the Conservation District office has been housed in different buildings within the county seat of Hayti. It is now in a central building along with the Farm Service Agency & Natural Resource Conservation Service. In 1962 the Conservation District purchased the old Farmers Cooperative building and moved it on land they purchased just east of Hayti. This

building was modified into a storage building and tree cooler. A machine shed was added many years later. In 2010 the Conservation District began building a new tree cooler/machine storage building on the same site and began using it in the spring of 2011.

Through the years there have been several district conservationists, soil technicians, and soil scientists who served Hamlin County. Since 1965 the District Conservationists have been Loren Holzworth, Roger Mueller, John Lentz and Jessica Michalski.

Conservation District Secretaries have been Joy Bretsch, Maryls Thyen, Joyce Stolp, Violet Roe, Karen Roe, Doris Stormo and Nancy Seppala. In 1988 the Conservation District hired a Conservation District Manager, Dorene Lemme, who worked full time. Dorene retired in 2010 and Peggy Loomis was hired to take on the duties of Conservation District Manager.

Supervisors serving the Conservation District since 1945 to present time are listed below:

Albert Mischke	1945-1964	David Anderson	1982-2000
Carl Guse	1945-1965	Eugene Fedt	1987-1996
Everett Baxter	1945-1967	David Ebbers	1989-1994
Aldon Berg	1945-1962	David Schaefer	1991-1998
A.V. Davis	1945-1973	Larry Brusse	1995-Present
Dale Everson	1964-1974	Robert Rommereim	1997-Present
Leland Roe	1967-1978	Burton Tesch	1999-Present
Darwin Latt	1969-1974	Leonard Saathoff	2001-2008
Curtis Juntunen	1974-1976	Chad Schooley	2006-Present
Laurence Norman	1973-1982	Jared Namken	2008-Present
Reid Tuohino	1974-1978	Kenneth Pulscher	1965-1968
Harold Heidemann	1975-1988	Kenneth Connor	1962-1969
Dale Braaten	1977-1987	Clifton Larson	1969-1971
Dallas Bocek	1979-1990	Henry Wellhouse	1949-1950
Clinton E. Rudebusch	1979-2006		