

Hughes County Conservation District (No. 53)

History from 1969 publication:

Hughes County is located in the center of South Dakota and was involved in the early activities of the area, including the explorations of Lewis and Clark; as well as Indian uprisings and early tribal activities. The arrival of the railroad in 1880 brought in a sudden influx of people, some of whom settled in Hughes County.

Hughes County drains into the Missouri River through several creeks. The topography ranges from undulating to sloping and is well drained, which means it is susceptible to water erosion. The soils range from clay loams and loams to silt loams. Some soils on this terrain are suitable for livestock raising and cash grain farming, provided water and wind erosion control practices are used and attention is given to the maintenance of soil fertility and the organic matter supply.

The early settlers found a land of good grazing for their horses and cattle, and a productive soil when the water supply was plentiful for growing crops, but the dry years created some hazards.

In 1949, a group of 46 farmers and ranchers met at Blunt and talked over their problems as to what they might do to meet them. The result was they decided to hold a series of meetings at which the organization and operation of a soil conservation district would be explained and where the people would have the opportunity to ask questions. These meetings were held in December, 1949. An informative program was continued for several months. A referendum was held in September 1951 with 72 percent favorable vote.

Soon thereafter, the following men were selected as supervisors: Guy Barnes, Pierre; Gwen Nystrum, Pierre; Randall Mercer, Blunt; Martin Huston, Crow Creek; and Charles Marso, Harrold.

Others who were active in promoting the Conservation District organization were: Van Parks, Blunt; Adam Saylor, Harrold; and Fred Day, Pierre.

When the supervisors were selected, they met and elected their officers, prepared and signed agreements with other cooperating agencies, and prepared their plan of work.

The major problems facing the Conservation District, as the supervisors saw them, included: crop rotations needed more extensive use; low fertility of present soil; need of more farmstead shelterbelts, trees for wildlife protection and livestock shelters; on grassland, too much water allowed to run off; diversions and water spreading would increase grass; range management, proper stocking, and deferred grazing needed; supplemental pastures needed to prevent overgrazing; stock water developments and maintenance needed; annual weeds and noxious weeds as hindrance in crop and range production; burning of crop residue and livestock manure; grasshopper control needed.

The practices proposed by the supervisors were: crop rotations and fertility, shelterbelts and farmstead planting for livestock and wildlife, encourage land not suitable for cultivation to stay in grass and seeding unsuitable lands back to grass, encourage desirable size unit with crop residue management with grass and legume in rotation, apply wind erosion and water conservation practices, water spreading and diversion, range management, supplemental pastures, irrigation for stabilization of production, gully and sheet erosion control, stockwater development and maintenance, control of annual and noxious weeds, discourage burning of

organic matter and waste of manure, and obtain information from existing agency of entomology for grasshopper control.

The following are the principal practices that have been applied in Hughes County during 1967:

Non-commercial recreational developments	--2	
Diversions	1,360	ft
Farm ponds	10	
Tree Planting (farmstead and feedlot windbreaks)	80	ac
Field windbreaks	21,254	ft
Grassed waterways-	24	ac
Irrigation pipeline	1,320	ft
Irrigation storage reservoir	1	
Irrigation system sprinkler	8	
Irrigation surface and subsurface	8	
Irrigation water management	1,671	ac
Irrigation land leveling	133	ac
Pasture and hay land planting	1,038.3	ac
Stubble mulching	156	ac
Drainage field ditch	1,800	ft
Wells	3	
Wildlife habitat preservation	109	ac
Wildlife habitat development	458	ac
Cropland to grassland	934	ac
Irrigation field ditches	2,600	ft
Stockwater pipelines	9,411	ft
Range seeding	373	ac
Wind strip cropping	253	ac

Others who have served as supervisors are : Guy Barnes, Pierre; Gewn Nystrom, Pierre; Randall Mercer, Blunt; Martin Houston, Blunt; Lawrence Snyder, Pierre; Norman Nystrom, Pierre; Kenneth Gregg, Harrold; Elva Frei, Blunt; Ewald Mattheis, Harrold; and Lawrence Mascher, Harrold.

The 1969 supervisors were : Chair Norman Nystrom, Pierre; Vice Chair Clarence Neuharth, Pierre; Treasurer Lawrence Snyder, Pierre; Supervisor William Maher, Pierre; Supervisor Lee Bourk, Blunt; Assistant Supervisor Harrold Hansen, Pierre; Assistant Supervisor Elva Frei, Blunt; and County Agent James Likness, Pierre.

Updated information provided in 2012:

During the 1970's the following individuals served as supervisors to the Hughes County Conservation District at one time or another; Norman Nystrom, William Maher, Lawrence Snyder, Clarence Neuharth, Lee Bourk, James Likness, Matthew Bauer, Elva Frei, Harrold Hansen, Matthew Bauer, Howard Geers, Maxwell Finke, and Robert Edwards.

Throughout the years, (1970's through 2011) the following were employed as Conservation District Managers by Hughes County Conservation District: Greg Shoup, LeRoy Johnson, Pat Buscher, Mike Larsen, and Doug Boes.

Administrative Secretaries were shared with Stanley County Conservation District. Betty Hunt, Candy Scheibe, Patricia Holso, Sandra Moos, Vivian Jackson, Alberta Olson, Sherri Cass, and Shelly O'Daniel all held the administrative secretary position starting in the 1970s through 2011.

The board was very involved in helping develop the GPCP dockets, cooperating with the North Central RC&D projects by sponsoring several proposals and helping with technical assistance, and assisting with many resource studies.

Education seemed to be a priority to the board as they helped fund different events including scholarships for producers to attend the soil and moisture clinic at SDSU, provided conservation booklets to the public and co-sponsored a range judging contest. Hughes County Conservation District also worked closely with the Corps of Engineers and Oahe FFA chapter to select a site for outside classroom. The Conservation District also helped sponsor students to attend conservation camps such as the South Dakota Wildlife Federation Conservation Camp in the Black Hills, and participated with the Corps of Engineers ECO Field Day for grade school children. Training was also provided to FFA and Veteran Agricultural classes in range management plant identification through the Conservation District.

Hughes CD also provided technical assistance to the South Dakota Department of Administration when seeding critical areas near the state library and developed erosion and sedimentation standards for land disturbing activities in Hughes County. Soil stewardship material such as brochures and teaching information was provided to local churches at no cost to them for Soil Stewardship week as well.

Hughes and Stanley Conservation Districts joined to put out a newsletter each month starting in the 70s. This eventually turned into a quarterly publication that received many awards and recognitions. It is still in circulation today!

During the 1980's the following supervisors held positions on the board: Norman Nystrom, James Schumacher, Lawrence Snyder, Lee Bourk, Lyle Wendell, Maxwell Finke, Milton Oerlerking, Howard Geers, and Matthew Bauer.

New items the Conservation District worked on in the 80s include conducting a Grass Identification contest, providing a plant specimen set to the Riggs High School, and assisting in sponsoring the publication of "Capitol Grounds Arboretum Trail," and donating trees to Pierre for Arbor Day plantings! Additionally, no-till drills were purchased and leased to producers; in turn, the Conservation District became a member of the South Dakota No-Till Drill Association.

Other educational assistance includes supporting the Environmental Workshop for teachers, sponsoring Rangeland Days, and helping fund the Fragile Rangeland study through North Central RC&D.

The Hughes County Board of Supervisors throughout the 1990s included these supervisors: Norman Nystrom, James Schumacher, Lyle Wendell, Lee Bourk, Larry Snyder, Milton Oehlerking, Maxwell Finke, Jeff Blankenfeld, Sarita Hartmann, Lyle Stewart, Terry Ness, Keith Harner, Keith Gebhart, Jim Feller, Keith Krull, and Lawrence Mascher. Hughes County helped solicit for new ponds to be built with the help of the Fish and Wildlife Service. Great Plains contracts were written and started in 1992. Six contracts started it all, and they covered over 42,000 acres.

The Conservation District nominated producers for the District Wildlife Cooperator, Wildlife Habitat Award, and Izaak Walton League Habitat Award.

The Weed and Pest program was started in 1996. This included spraying right of ways for the county weed and pest board. The board contracted with the SD DOT for state highway noxious weed control within Hughes County. This program lasted until about 2003.

Hughes CD has helped sponsor the Water Festival. The festival consists of 4th graders from central South Dakota schools. The program teaches kids the importance of soils and water.

During the 2000s Keith Harner, Keith Krull, Lawrence Mascher, Don Irion, Lyle Stewart, Brent Pries, Jim Finley, Darrell Metzinger and Terry Ness served on the board of supervisors.

2004 marked the beginning of the scholarship program with Hughes County. Hughes County offers at least three \$1,000 scholarships to students that attend any accredited university, college, technical school or other recognized program preparing young people for careers. Eligibility is limited to Hughes county residents. Priority is given to applicants involved in agriculture/conservation in Pierre area.

The tree planting program thrived in this decade; Hughes County Conservation District planted 320 acres at their peak year. The Conservation District promoted no-till drilling and continued to rent out their drill with the option of the Conservation District manager seeding for producers. It was well received in our area, and the program continues to prosper. The mowing program also started around 2007. Hiring someone to mow between tree rows seems very advantageous to area cooperators.

Supervisors that held terms in 2010 and 2011 include Lyle Stewart, Terry Ness, Brent Pries, Jim Finley, and Darrell Metzinger.