

Hyde County Conservation District (No. 58)

History from 1969 publication:

Hyde County is located in the central part of South Dakota, with the southwest corner bordering on the Missouri River in the Big Bend area. The county was organized in 1883, but its settlement began in 1880 when the Northwestern Railroad was built into the south end of the county.

The northeast part of the county drains east through Wolf Creek into Turtle Creek and into the James River, while the remainder of the county drains into the Missouri. The topography ranges from steep in both the north and south parts, to undulating and gently rolling in the other areas. The soils range from a Pierre clay in the southwest to clay loams and silt loams in the other areas. The surface drainage is excessive on the steep lands, while in other areas it is good, and poor in some areas, and does erode on sloping outlived fields. Most of the land is well suited to livestock production and the less sloping areas may be used for cash grain production when erosion control practices are employed.

Early settlers found a land covered with a mixture of tall, medium and short native grasses that provided excellent forage, both for grazing and hay. The water supply was a problem except along the creeks.

During the drought years of the 1930's, the cultivated lands suffered the same erosion hazards as in the other counties. During the early '30's, many acres of cropland were planted to grasses with very poor results. The range and pasture lands suffered from overgrazing and low production. The AAA and ACP programs assisted the operators with some control practices and helped the operators to realize that they needed help. At the same time, they saw the work being done in Soil Conservation Districts. So they decided that they should have a conservation district, and they started proceeding to form an organization. As a result, key people in each township were selected and trained in the organization and functions of a Soil Conservation District. Interest developed from the work of these key people, with assistance of the Extension and Soil Conservation Services.

The meetings were held early in 1953, attended by 60 farmers and ranchers. The organization and operation of a conservation district were explained and the proposition discussed. The group decided to proceed, and circulated petitions requesting a hearing. The hearing was held in March, with all testimony being favorable. A referendum was called for in September 1953, at which a big majority voted favorably.

As soon as possible after the referendum, the supervisors were chosen and they completed the organization by electing their officers, prepared and signed the necessary agreements with cooperating agencies, and developed their program and plan of work.

In their program of work, they named their problems as: wind and water erosion on cropland, pastures and grazing lands; poor range and pasture management; and lack of sufficient livestock water.

They proposed to solve these problems by the use of: re-seeding ranges and pastures; seeding grass on some cropland; building stock water dams and dugouts; and dig wells, both shallow and artesian.

By 1968, the following practices had been established in the amounts shown:

Contour farming	1,790	acres
Farm Ponds	1,761	
Farmstead and feedlot plantings	2,788	linear ft.
Field windbreaks	245,151	linear ft.
Pasture and hay land plantings	20,500	acres
Range proper use	148,785	acres
Range seeding	335	acres
Spring developments	10	
Terraces	136,500	feet
Water spreading	789	acres
Wells	96	wells
Stubble mulch	7,253	acres
Contour strip cropping	960	acres
Wind strip cropping	3,757	acres

Of the 96 wells, over 20 are flowing artesian wells which were established through the use of Great Plains contracts. These wells supply water and contribute toward improved range management on some 50,000 acres in the county.

The first supervisors were: Orville K. Peterson, Holabird, Chairman; Ross Wright, Highmore, Vice-Chairman; Marion Staly, Highmore; Elmer Faulstich, Highmore; Leo Tompkins, Highmore; and W.G. Paynter, County Agent, Secretary.

Other supervisors have been: Wilbur Goehring, Holabird; Eldon Tompkins, Highmore; Gordon Ray, Highmore; Milton Ohlerking, Highmore; John Jenson, Highmore; R.V. Ray, Highmore; and William Schuette, Highmore.

The 1969 supervisors were: Orville Peterson, Holabird, Chairman; Milton Oehlerking, Highmore, Vice-Chairman; Robert Ray, Highmore, Treasurer; William Schuette, Highmore, Supervisor; John Jenson, Highmore, Supervisor; Eldon Tompkins, Highmore, Assistant Supervisor; and Wilford Paynter, Highmore, County Agent, Secretary.

Updated information provided in 2012:

Throughout the years of ever growing and changing agricultural needs, the Hyde County Conservation District, with assistance from different agencies, has been helping area producers better their operations while conserving our natural resources for future generations.

Over the years the Conservation District participated in multiple grants offering cost share funding for producers. These grants and mini-grants helped introduce no-till farming in the late 70's, getting the equipment necessary to implement the new farming practice and providing tours to see the practice in use in the 80's. As shelterbelts grew in age and size, the need to maintain and care for them also grew - the late 80's and early 90's brought grants to help.

Running through 3 phases that began in July 2001 and ended in July 2010, the North American Wetland Conservation Act (NAWCA) ~ Threatened Habitats Grant was sponsored to help supply producers from 21 counties with funding to make improvements. The Hyde County Conservation District, in conjunction with Ducks Unlimited, Pheasants Forever, SD Game Fish and Parks, US Fish and Wildlife, North Central Resource Conservation and Development, and South Dakota Conservation Commission helped 418 landowners and producers implement over \$8.8 million in improvements. Enhancements were installed on 62,652 acres of grasslands and

wetlands including 23 rural water hook-ups, 188,381 linear feet of pipeline, and over 100 water tanks holding 105,447 gallons of water. Due to the great success of the first three phases, a fourth phase named the Missouri Coteau Grassland Project was started in July 2010 and is projected to put another \$250,000 in conservation practices on the land.

The Conservation District, realizing the need to bring new life to aging shelterbelts, partnered with Hand County in 2006, offering the Hand/Hyde Enhancement Project Grant. This grant offered a 50 percent cost share to producers in the two counties to help 'beef up' aging belts or install new belts that weren't eligible for cost share from any other programs. Helping 40 producers with 24.9 acres of renovations, 74.1 acres of new plantings and 120,510 linear feet of fabric applied, the grant was considered a success and a second phase was started in 2010.

In 2009, the Conservation District, in partnership with U.S. Geological Survey and SDACD, applied for the Google Earth Watershed Interface grant. This grant provided funding to interface the South Dakota Watershed Boundary Dataset with Google Earth, making it possible for anybody to learn more about their watershed and the surrounding environment via the internet.

While the needs of the Conservation District's producers grew, so did the need to have personnel in the office as well as services provided through the Conservation District. In 1981, Doris Rubendall was hired through the Green Thumb, Inc program. Doris was a 'green thumb' employee through 1988 until January 1989 when funding was supplemented by the county to help pay for Doris' wages. Doris worked for the Hyde County Conservation District until she retired in December 2006, after providing 25 years of service. In 2000 a District Technician was hired to help producers and landowners plan their tree plantings, complete field work and provide any necessary follow up.

To help the area's producers and landowners implement conservation practices, the Conservation District has purchased a 12' Truax Grass Drill, 20' John Deere No-Till Drill, and 45' Summers Land Roller. Since the Truax Grass Drill was purchased in 1999, 7,237.2 acres have been seeded to grass. The JD Drill was purchased in the fall of 2010 and has been utilized mostly for cover crops. Since that time, over 1200 acres have been covered. Anybody who is familiar with Hyde County knows we have some rough terrain and a lot of rocks. The Land Roller has been an 'equipment saver' rolling rocks down in alfalfa fields and helping to roll in the area's 'new hot crop,' soybeans. The first year of use saw over 1000 acres rolled and already a waiting list for next year.

Since the Conservation District was established in 1953, 6,145.5 acres of trees have been planted, which translates into 2,773,579 trees! With the introduction of fabric in 1997, producers saw the competition for moisture from weeds and grass decrease dramatically and the Conservation District found themselves busier. Since 1997, 2.9 million feet of fabric, or 565 miles of fabric have been installed.

With all the changes taking place, the Conservation District knew education of both producers and youth were vital to the future of conservation. Every year, the Conservation District has honored producers who implement sound conservation practices on their land with a Soil and Moisture Award or the Tree Care Award. The winners of the Soil and Moisture Award are invited to attend the Soil and Moisture Clinic put on every other year in Brookings at South Dakota State University. The Conservation District also offers scholarships to help defray costs to those that are interested in attending educational opportunities such as the Grazing School, Soil and Moisture Days, Rangeland Days, Youth Conservation Camps or other venues that teach about conservation.

In 1994 the Hyde and Hand County Conservation Districts, NRCS, SDSU Extension and Weed and Pest Offices worked together to start offering producers a chance to expand their knowledge and ideas about farming and ranching practices available. The Ranchers Workshop is offered every year in January or February, rotating locations between Highmore and Miller. Originally started in April of 1994, the Legislative Update was held in Miller; in 1998 it was moved to Ree Heights and renamed the Info Show. Both are still offered each year sharing the latest ideas and innovations with close to 100 producers from the area in attendance. Realizing the importance of getting our youth involved and thinking about conservation, the Conservation District sponsors an Arbor Day Essay and Poster Contest every year with the local school. In observance of Arbor Day, a presentation is given at the school, teaching about the importance and benefits of trees to our lives. In 2005, the Conservation District established a scholarship to be offered to any Hyde County graduating senior planning to pursue a career in agriculture. With these activities and opportunities provided, we hope conservation will continue well into the future for generations to come.

The Hyde County Conservation District's past supervisors who were instrumental in getting the Conservation District started are as follows: Orville Peterson, 09/53~03/85; Ross Wright, 09/53~12/56; Marion Stoley, 09/53~03/60; Elmer Faulstich, 09/53~02/59; Leo Tompkins, 09/53~05/58; William "Bill" Schuette, 02/54~10/72 & 11/79~12/88; Bill Paynter, *County Agent, Secretary*, 09/53~12/79. Supervisors since have been: Gordon Ray, 01/57~02/61; Eldon Tompkins, 08/58~05/84; Wilbur Goehring, 06/59~09/64; Milton Ohlerking, 03/61~10/79; John Jensen, 03/65~05/78; R.V. "Bob" Ray, *Treasurer*, 02/69~11/70; John Lusk, 01/71~08/79; Howard Hemminger, 01/73~10/96; Charles Clement, 02/80~12/86; Donald Alumbaugh, 6/84~12/97; Ronald Pekarek, 03/85~12/86; Jerry DuBois, 01/87~12/04 and Raymond Wieseler, 01/89~05/09. Current Supervisors are: Dorn Barnes, Chairman, 01/97; Randy Hague, Vice-Chairman, 01/87; Randy Rinehart, 01/98; Kathy Stirling, 01/05; and Michael Ashdown, 08/09.



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