

## Kingsbury County Conservation District (No. 41)

History from 1969 publication:

Kingsbury County is located in east central South Dakota about midway between North Dakota and Nebraska and in the second tier of counties west of the Minnesota line. The county was created in 1873 and organized in 1880. The Kingsbury County Conservation District occupies the entire county.

The topography is undulating to nearly level. The west part drains through the Redstone Creek into the James River. The east part drains largely into several lakes--Henry, Thompson, and Whitewood--and with some drainage into the Sioux River and the Vermillion River.

Through the county agent's leadership with help of the Kingsbury Farmers Union and leading farmers, an information program was carried on to acquaint the people with the soil conservation help available. After a series of meetings, the people decided to proceed toward the organization of a soil conservation district.

A hearing was held in January 1947 and the referendum was conducted in June 1947, with a 90 percent favorable vote. The organization of the Conservation District was completed in October, 1947. The original supervisors were: Harold Fritzel, DeSmet, chairman; Roland Leonhardt, Oldham, vice chairman; Harold Galseth, Erwin; Art Brose, Arlington; Kenneth Widman, Esmond; Carroll Wellman, County agent, secretary.

Updated information provided in 2012:

Today we are called the Kingsbury County Conservation District.

We are one of three Conservation Districts in the state that own our own building and are not co-located with USDA-NRCS and FSA. The Conservation District purchased land in the 1960's and put up an office. The west side of the Office was added on in the 1980's. NRSC rented from the Conservation District until the 1990's when they moved in across the street with FSA. In 2004, we added the Steel storage building attached to the office with a 20' by 25' tree cooler. This gives us a large cooler to store the trees in the spring and allows us to store all of our equipment inside during the winter.



In 1968, there were 1,178 farms in the county that number was about one-third less than in 1930's. Today in 2011 we have 551 farms. The average cost of land back in the 60's was around \$100.00 to \$150.00 per acre and today it can go from \$2,000.00 to \$4,000.00 per acre.

The soils of the area are developed from glacial material and vary in structure from silty clay loams, silty clays, and silt loams. In the west part of the county, some soils are rather fine textured and some clay-pan. These soils are better suited to grain and livestock farming. From

the middle of the county east, the land is somewhat undulating with a little more loamy soil and suitable for general farming. A considerable acreage of this area is devoted to cultivated crops. Soil and water conservation practices, as well as maintenance of fertility, are needed. Seventy-four percent of the land is cropland with eighteen percent pasture and six percent other use.

The precipitation average in 1968 was 21.51 inches. The climate has changed and in 1971 thru 2000 the average rainfall has increased to 23.35 inches per year, with approximately three-fourths of that coming during the growing season. The average growing season in Kingsbury County is 140 days.

Flooding of Lake Thompson - Snow and rain brought sufficient moisture in 1986 to restore Lake Thompson to the limits described by its discoverers in 1857. Lake Thompson is the largest natural lake in South Dakota. The lake had become a 9,000 acre marsh and meandered lake bed about half the size of the original lake, during the interval between 1857 and 1986. The rains of 1986 and 2011 have reclaimed the lake to just over 18,000 acres of lake. A new State Park was added to the north end of the lake and many homes and weekend cabins were built. Due to the heavy snow and rain in 2011 many of the homes and cabins have been flooded. Many of the smaller lakes in the county also saw large increase of water with most of the extra water ending up in Lake Thompson. Many roads in the county were washed out again because of the heavy runoff.

In July of 2008, we completed a six year EPA-319 project. Kingsbury Lakes Water Quality Implementation Project goal was to protect and restore the beneficial uses of Lakes Thompson, Henry, Preston and Whitewood by implementing Best Management Practices that reduce nutrient and sediment loading and prevent bacterial contamination in the 263,000 acre watershed. Several Ag-waste systems were built within the Lake Thompson watershed. This would help eliminate livestock runoff from entering the lakes in the watershed. Rotational grazing systems were also installed.

In the early 80's, farming practices also changed. Because of economics farmers started planting more corn and beans and less small grain, oats and flax. They also went to no-till farming and more attention was given to conserving the land. Rotational grazing also showed an increase. Many farmers took the opportunity through the EQIP program to install cross fencing and center water tanks. This also increased the grazing season and improved the weed control due to better pasture management and less over grazing.

Cattle are still the largest group of livestock in the county, with fewer pigs and sheep being raised. Cow-calf operation are more on the west side of the county.

In 1994, the Conservation District purchased two Truax grass drills that we rent out. From 1994 until 2010 we have seeded 19,584 acres of grass. With 11,253.9 acres of tame grass and alfalfa and 8,330.1 acres of warm season grasses. Several grazing tours and workshops were held to promote the rotational grazing systems.

In 1947, they identified the problems that were facing the people and specified the practices that they proposed to use to attack these problems. The problems named were: Wind and water erosion after almost 100 years of farming; Only 20 percent of top soil left in some places; Water damage to roads and bridges; Noxious weeds have increased; Crop and buildings need protection from the wind; Pastures overgrazed and poorly managed; Poor crop rotations. Today we are still faced with some of the same old problems.

### Total Acres of Tree Planting Through the Decades

Decades	Field Windbreaks	Farmstead & Feedlot Windbreaks	Renovation	Wildlife	Other Sites	Total	Farm Sites
1944-1949	17.9	66.9	0.0	0.0	7.7	92.5	46
1950-1959	234.8	528.4	0.0	0.0	73.3	836.5	411
1960-1969	423.8	799.3	0.0	0.0	40.8	1,263.9	691
1970-1979	331.7	663.7	38.7	0.0	32.2	1,058.3	667
1980-1989	126.7	387.6	38.7	3.3	43.0	599.3	397
1990-1999	93.1	266.0	22.7	15.7	110.8	508.3	266
2000-2009	196.8	367.7	2.0	63.0	39.6	667.8	215
Total	1,424.8	3,079.6	94.1	82.0	347.4	5,026.9	2,693

In 2011, our priorities are:

Cropland 1) Soil Erosion – Concentrated flow erosion 2) Soil Quality Degradation - Compaction, 3) Soil Erosion -Sheet, rill and wind erosion 4) Soil Quality Degradation – Concentration of salts or other chemicals 5) Excess/Insufficient Water – Ponding, flooding, seasonal high water table seeps and drifted snow.

Grazing land 1) Livestock production limitation – inadequate livestock water 2) Degraded plant condition – Excessive plant pest pressure 3) Livestock production limitation – Inadequate livestock shelter

Headquarters 1) Livestock production limitation – Inadequate livestock shelter 2) Inadequate habitat for fish and wildlife – Habitat degradation 3) Inefficient energy use – Farming/ranching practices and field operation 4) Air Qualities – Objectionable odors.

Education of our youth is also a big part of the Conservation District. We hold a Land Judging school every fall for FFA students from 6 schools. Sponsor a \$1,000.00 per year Scholarship to be given to students attending a school in the agriculture field from Kingsbury County. Sponsor the local Arbor Day Essay and support the churches with Soil Stewardship materials.

Today we provide tree planting, tree fabric, handplants, grass drills and other tree products to the producers of Kingsbury County.

Past and present Kingsbury County Conservation District supervisors:

Harold Fritzel	1947-1964	Dale Jones	1973-1978
Roland Leonhardt	1947-1983	Mike Carroll	1974-2004
Arthur Brose	1947-1968	Darrel Muser	1978-1986
Kenneth Widman	1947-1954	Otto Sckerl	1980-2000
Otto Sckerl (Extension)	1949-1979	James Nielson	1983-1984
Fred Hassebroek	1952-1955	Phil Bjordahl	1985-1998
Ollie Walraven	1954-1957	Lyle Anderson	1985-1988
Bernard Larson	1955-1989	Alan Vedvei	1987-Present
Leslie Larson	1957-1960	Wayne Soren	1991-1994
Everett A Johnson	1960-1966	Bill Wilkinson	1995-Present
Henry Kropuenske	1969-1973	Erland Weerts	1999-Present
William Logan	1964-1974	Delver Williams	2001-Present
Howard Schultz	1969-1979	Rich Abrahamson	2005-Present