

Minnehaha Conservation District (No. 21)

History from 1969 publication:

Minnehaha County is located in the southeast part of the state bordering Iowa and about 80 miles north of Sioux City. The county was first organized in 1862, but the Indians came in and destroyed everything. Settlers soon came back and stayed. The county was reorganized in 1868 and it became one of the leading agricultural areas of the state.

When the early settlers came to the area, they found a fertile soil covered with good grass and ample water supplies from the Big Sioux River and several creeks and springs.

In general, the topography of Minnehaha is undulating to gently rolling with some areas fairly level, especially along the Sioux River bottoms. The soils may be divided into two general areas. The eastern half, and possibly a little more, is moderately sloping and is covered with a loess blanket of silt loam and silty clay loam. The western part of the county is covered with a silty clay and clay loam. Both soils are very productive and produce good crops of corn, soybeans, oats, and alfalfa and grasses. Since the land is not level, it is susceptible to erosion from both water and wind, and should be so managed.

The early settlers were from farming states; the natural thing to do was to plow up the sod and plant grain crops. By 1910, they were growing some corn and in twenty years that acreage had increased to equal or exceed that of the other grains. Little thought had been given to maintaining productivity of the soil after it had been broken out, until the drought years resulted in the first consideration of the importance of soil conservation.

The first conservation practices applied on any farms were applied on the Extension demonstration farms. About this time, the county land use planning committee became interested in conservation and they studied the problems and possible solutions and recommended that a conservation district be set up in a portion of the county. The Extension Service conducted several meetings over the county where they explained the organization and operation of a soil conservation district and what the people might expect from it.

As a result of these meetings, petitions requesting a hearing on the matter were circulated and signed. In June 1941, the hearing was held and attended by 100 people from the proposed area. They recommended that a referendum should be conducted where the people could express their views. This referendum was conducted on November 9, 1941, and resulted in an 84% favorable vote.

In 1943, an addition of about seven townships was made and in 1944 the remainder of the county was added by a vote of 670 for and 53 against. And so, with these additions, the entire county is included in the Minnehaha Conservation District.

The final organizational meeting was held on November 20, 1941. L. B. McLoughlin, Sioux Falls, and Thomas Grocutt were appointed to act as the first supervisors to get the Conservation District officially started. Then an election was held to elect three more members.

Members of the first board of supervisors were: L. B. McLoughlin, Sioux Falls, chairman; Forrest L. Berry, Renner, vice chairman; R. J. Hokenstad, Garretson, treasurer; the Minnehaha county Agent, secretary; Alfred Dybedahl, Dell Rapids, supervisor; and Thomas Grocutt, supervisor. Other Minnehaha supervisors have been: P.H. Ginsbach, Dell Rapids; John

Muchow, Sioux Falls; William Holiway, Humboldt; Burton Ode, Brandon; Water Swanson, Sioux Falls, and Lawrence Elsinger, Dell Rapids.

The supervisors prepared their agreements with other agencies and prepared their program of work, in which they specified their problems, how they proposed to meet these problems, and what assistance they would need.

They named their problems as:

1. Soil Erosion ~ Maintaining physical condition so it can absorb more rainfall; Use tillage practices that will slow run-off and hold water where it falls.
2. Wind Erosion ~ Continuous cropping and loss of humus has brought about a physical condition of soils leaving them subject to wind erosion; the use of practical rotation systems and cultural practices are needed to control wind erosion.
3. Pasture Improvement ~ Drought, overgrazing, and weeds have depleted pastures. The use of contours, pasture furrows, proper grass mixture, and stockwater dams are all needed.

The supervisors proposed to meet these problems by the use of: contour and strip cropping; rotations with grass and legumes; terracing; pasture management with pasture furrows, as well as reseeding and proper grazing; build stock water ponds; drain wet areas; control insects; and plant trees for shelterbelts and farmstead protection.

A survey of the conservation needs of the county was made early in its existence. This survey showed what had happened and the types and amounts of conservation practices needed to correct the problems. By 1965 the record showed the following work done: Terraces (10 %), Contouring (50%), Contour strip cropping (45%), Pasture furrows (65%), Waterways (40%), Dams and dugouts (55%), Tree planting (40%), Cropping systems (80%), Crop residue use (80%), and Wildlife development (70%). These figures do not mean that the Conservation District has completed a large portion of its work. New problems develop from year to year. The purpose of a Conservation District is not only to remedy a situation that is already a problem, but an important function is to anticipate problems and do something to head them off.

In 1964 the Minnehaha County Soil Survey Report was published through the Soil Conservation Service. It includes a brief description of all the soils found in the county and how they are classified according to their use and capability. Aerial photos are used in the report to delineate the soil boundaries. This report has been distributed to landowners throughout the county by the Soil Conservation District office and the Extension Service.

A long range conservation district program of work was prepared by the Conservation District supervisors in 1965. It outlines the physical, economic, and social, as well as other conditions that affect the soil and water conservation problems in the Conservation District.

Each year the Conservation District supervisors develop a work plan that lists the goals and activities to be carried out. They have sponsored or co-sponsored national activities, including the National Plowing Matches and Conservation Field Days and the National Corn Picking Contest. They have also held the State Plowing Contest and State Corn Picking Contest.

The supervisors have been host to the Area Land Judging Contest for FFA and 4-H members for eleven consecutive years and each year they have been host to the Area Soil and Water Conservation Speech Contest.

One of the first Watershed Districts in South Dakota was organized in Minnehaha County. It was sponsored by the Minnehaha Soil and Water Conservation District. The Silver Creek Watershed District was formed in 1959 and a work plan completed in 1960. Conservation land treatment has been accelerated within the watersheds and four flood control detention dams have been constructed. An application for a watershed plan for Skunk Creek was submitted in 1966 and has been accepted by the State Committee.

The 1969 supervisors were; John Muchow, Sioux Falls, chairman; George Swanson, Sioux Falls, vice chairman; Burton Ode, Brandon, treasurer; Peter Ginsbach, Dell Rapids; James Woestman, Sioux Falls, and Glen Schrader, Sioux Falls, secretary (county agent).

Updated information provided in 2012:

In 1976, the Conservation District went from a flat per acre fee (\$100/acre) for tree plantings to a "between row spacing" charge per acre (10'=\$120/ac, 12'=\$110/ac, 14'=\$100/ac, 16'=\$95/ac, and 18'=\$90/ac). They also voted to publish the first newsletter. Another big change that happened is the office moved from downtown Sioux Falls to a building at 3812 North Cliff Avenue. A secretary was hired in 1977 to assist the manager with clerical work. Sediment and Erosion Control Guidelines were started with the towns in Minnehaha County. 1978) the first newsletter published. 1979) discussions on the restoration project for Wall Lake. SCS started their compressed work schedule the fall of 1979 (8-9hr, 1-8 hr, 1-off per pay period)

In the mid-80's, the Conservation District went from a fiscal year to a calendar year. It was decided to appoint the Conservation District Manager as the Treasurer. A shelterbelt planting policy was proposed as well as Errors & Omission Insurance purchased. 1985) saw the development of the first Personnel Policy and job descriptions. Tree cultivation program was started. The Supreme Court ruled that local units of government have to abide by the Federal Labor Standards Act on overtime pay (manager & tree planters no overtime, secretary to get time and a half, later, tree planters and cultivation operators should get time and a half). Discussion was also started on drainage law in Minnehaha County. There was also a proposal being developed for the sale of the Big Sioux Nursery. 1987) the Minnehaha County Commissioners approved the proposed drainage ordinance. Conservation District pay periods changed from semi-monthly to bi-weekly. 1988) the board approved that the manager is authorized to sign for tentative approval of conservation plans. 1989) HU planning zones were discussed. Welcome to Minnehaha Conservation District signs were purchased. HU priorities were 1) Wall Lake 2) Big Sioux River 3) Split Rock Creek. Dredging started at Wall Lake. It was also decided to hire a Wall Lake Coordinator.

1990) The board voted to give Whirlwind Terracer to the Ag Museum in Brookings. 1991) Ag Museum returned Whirlwind Terracer to the Conservation District and it was given to Burton Ode. Charging for tree planting was changed from per acre to rod row. 1992) 30' by 50' shed built. Soil Scientist report to do remapping of Minnehaha County. 1993) Festival planning started for a Southeast Water Festival. Board voted to be the primary sponsor for the Water Festival. Equipment purchased to provide chemical weed control in shelterbelts. Dredging at Wall Lake was completed. 1994) Policies of Conservation District Operations were established. Sioux Empire Water Festival was held. SCS becomes NRCS. 1996) Minnehaha County Conservation District was changed to Minnehaha Conservation District at the Secretary of State office. The State Nursery, Big Sioux Nursery, was sold to the Conservation Districts and became Big Sioux Nursery, Inc. 1997) purchased the first No-Till drill. 1998) Moved to a new building at 2408 East Benson Road. Truax drill was purchased to seed native grasses in CRP and other seedings. The drills were purchased with funding assistance from Duck Unlimited, US Fish & Wildlife, and

SD Game Fish & Parks. Fabric machine was built to do fabric installation. 1999) Employee Policy and Procedure manual developed.

2001) New and improved fabric machine was built. Field technician hired. 2002) 40' by 60' shed is built. Truax drill traded for Great Plains drill. 6' Great Plains drill purchased to do grass seeding between fabric rows. 2005) fabric maintenance service was started. 2010) land roller is purchased. 2011) land roller sold.

CONSERVATION CONCERNS OVER THE LAST FEW DECADES

1980- 1) Water Quality 2) Municipal Waste Treatment 3) "Non-Point" Source 4) Land Disturbing Construction 5) Soil Erosion on Road Construction

1990- 1) Water Quality 2) Flood Control 3) Runoff Control 4) Drainage Plans 5) Federal & State Government Control

2000- 1) Animal Waste 2) Water Quality 3) Nutrient Management 4) (tied) Land Disposal and Soil Erosion 5) Water Availability

2010-Cropland- 1) Sheet and Rill Erosion 2) Excessive Nutrients and Organics 3) Excessive Suspended Sediment and Turbidity in Surface Water 4) Ephemeral Gully 5) Excessive Runoff, Flooding or Ponding

Grazing Land- 1) Noxious and Invasive Plants 2) Inadequate Stock Water 3) Excessive Nutrients and Organics 4) Forage Quality and Palatability 5) Inadequate Quantities and Quality of Feed and Forage

Headquarters- 1) Inadequate Shelter 2) (tie) Contaminants – Animal Waste and Other Organics and Excessive Runoff, Flooding or Ponding 3) (tie) Excessive Nutrients and Organics and Noxious and Invasive Plants

Part and full time employees for the Conservation District have included Dave Watkins, Jack Majeres, Margaret Schmidt, Carol Deters, Phil Kappen, Lucille Miller, Pat Kirschman, Lynn Eddy, Joan Foote, Kristi Lewis, Jan Holland, Lisa Vis, Kirk Lindgren, Travis Oehlers, Gary Olson, and Harvey Shafer. Harley Shafer, Amy VanDam and John Parker are the current Conservation District employees.

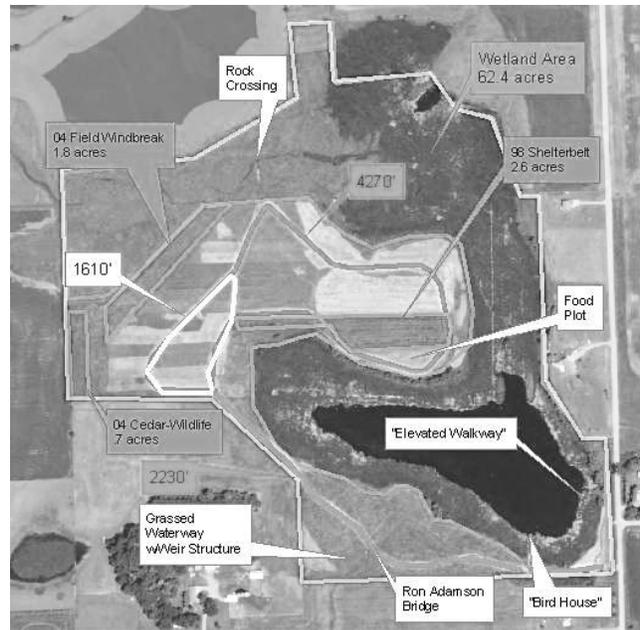
District Conservationists who have served the Conservation District include J. Dwight Morrow, Doug Culhane, Brian Top, and Deron Reusch, who is the current District Conservationist.

Conservation District Board Members who have served:

L. B. McLaughlin	1941-1947	Odilo Hansen	1973-1985
Thomas Grocutt	1941-1954	Dave Watkins	1974-1985
Forrest L. Berry	1941-1951	Arvid Jordan	1977-1978
Alfred Dybedahl	1941-1955	Curtis Eggers	1979-2010
R. J. Hokenstad	1941-1948	Roger Knochenmus	1981-1996
George Kalb, Jr.	1941-1948	Dean Swanson	1983-1998
Carl Berdahl	1948-1956	Carol Sieg	1985-2004
Hilding Anderson	1951-1963	Tom Lyon	1985-1985
Bill Holiway	1954-1969	Tom Steever	1985-1996
Larry Gannon	1955-1961	Ronald Johnson	1997-Present
John Muchow	1955-1977	Tom Wolles	1997-Present
Burton Ode	1956-1980	Jeff Oyen	1999-Present
Peter Ginsbach	1961-1972	Jim Pfeifer	2005-Current
Walter Swanson	1963-1982	Reid Christopherson	2011-Present
James Woestman	1969-1973		

Dewey C. Gevik Outdoor Learning Area

Minnehaha Conservation District owns 100 acres of land just west of Wall Lake. This area is an ongoing project to provide a place for individuals or groups to view conservation practices at work and also to view wildlife. The project started in the mid-90's. The State of South Dakota rebuilt highway 42. In the process they filled in some wetland area. In order to replace (mitigate) the wetlands, they purchased some property. The state did not want to manage the property and approached the conservation district board to take ownership of the property. The board agreed to own and manage this property. There was a stipulation that the property could not be sold for development. A few years later, more wetlands needed to be mitigated; more land was purchased and given to the Conservation District. After the State had purchased all of the property available for mitigation there was 20 acres of cropland left. The Conservation District purchased this cropland to complete the parcel. The cropland was seeded into various warm and cool season grasses. Over the years several conservation practices have been installed; Grassed waterway, wildlife tree planting (cedar), field windbreak, farmstead windbreak, rock crossing, food plot. A walk bridge was donated by Ed Nolz Dragline (in memory of Ron Adamson) that crosses over the grassed waterway. The Sioux Falls Bird Club donated an enclosed viewing platform to watch the birds and wildlife as they migrate to their winter and summer homes. This year (2011) with funding from East Dakota Water Development District and the Izaak Walton League a covered elevated walkway was installed. There have been several individuals and organizations provide funding, equipment and/or manpower to the Outdoor Learning Area. Thank you for your support.



Sign at the Learning Area states:

DEWEY C. GEVIK

Outdoor Conservation Learning Area

The Wall Lake Restoration Project successfully 15 million cubic yards of sediment from the body of water just east of here. This area is designed to preserve the Lake by providing a buffer from future siltation.

Dewey Gevik lived a life dedicated to the preservation of soil & water. His legacy continues in the dams, terraces, and countless trees that are a result of a lifelong career in conservation work. It is to Dewey's memory; the Minnehaha Conservation District dedicates the Dewey C. Gevik Outdoor Conservation Learning Area.

Dewey Gevik 1923-1994
Minnehaha Conservation District

