

## Sanborn County Conservation District (No. 06)

History from 1969 publication:

Sanborn County is located in the east central part of the state on both sides of the James River. It was organized in 1883 and opened for settlement before that, but few settlers came before that year when the railroad was built into the county. Settlement followed rapidly.

The James River flows from north to south through the county and Sand Creek flows into it from the northwest. This and a few short creeks with springs drain the area. There are also a few lakes. The river, creeks, lakes and springs, together with wells, were the original source of water. Later artesian wells were dug. Woonsocket had the most powerful well in the world.

The topography is generally quite level, except the brakes along the river are quite steep. Most of the remainder of the area is a bit undulating. Most of the land, except the river breaks, is or has been farmed. Originally the area was covered with a lush growth of native grasses. The grasses included: sand drop seed, bluestem, blue grama, western wheatgrass, salt grass and buffalo grass.

There are two general soil areas – a sandy area extends part way through the middle part of the county from North to South. Most of the other soils are silt or silt loam. The soils were easily tilled and so, were farmed for many years. However, the sandy soils became a problem when the dry years came along. It was very good corn land with ample moisture and had produced a lot of corn. But many years of corn broke down the soil structure, reduced the humus and left nothing to bind the soil particles together and keep them from blowing. Consequently, erosion took a terrible toll. The operators tried desperately to stop the erosion, but nothing seemed to work. They held meetings with representatives of other agencies and received support for further action. Then after the Soil Erosion Service was authorized, they called on this agency for help. About this time the C.C.C. Camp was set up to work on projects and a voluntary Soil Conservation Association was organized. Five agreements were written under the 1936 Drouth program. Applications covering an additional 9,000 acres were received. Tours and meetings were held and one demonstration farm was planned.

This area became an erosion control project, and equipment became available. Through C.C.C. and W.P.A. there was help to clean fences, level fields, plant grasses and trees, and build some stock water dams on a demonstration basis. The results convinced the people that something could be done, especially on an organized basis.

Strong local interest in the formation of a soil conservation district resulted in the circulation of petitions for a hearing which was held June 17, 1939. Upon recommendation of the State Soil Conservation Committee, a referendum was held on September 1, 1939, at which time 84 percent of the votes cast were favorable. T.B. Dunn and W.R. Jamison were appointed by the State committee on September 6<sup>th</sup> to act as supervisors. The following month E.E. Baruth, August J. Kundert and John Berg were elected by local farmers to complete the board of five conservation district supervisors.

The Memorandum of Understanding between the Conservation District and the United States Department of Agriculture and the Supplemental Memorandum of Understanding between the Conservation District and the Soil Conservation Service were signed on January 10, 1940.

The newly formed Conservation District included all of Silver Creek, Logan, Letcher, and portions of Woonsocket, Twin Lake, Warren, and Elliott townships, a total of 104,319 acres. Through two subsequent referendums, additional areas were included within the boundaries of the Conservation District. The final addition included all of Sanborn County and was approved on July 17, 1942. The original Conservation District was known as the Silver Creek Conservation District. The soon after the remainder of the county came into the Conservation District, the name was changed to the Sanborn County Conservation District.

Among the problems facing the Conservation District were:

- Water table dropping;
- Overgrazing and drought nearly eliminated the native grasses;
- Carrying capacity of pastures and ranges reduced;
- Livestock numbers reduced;
- Land ownership low;
- Wind erosion had taken a terrible toll;
- Rainfall was low.

The supervisors proposed to meet these problems by the use of:

- Improved crop rotations;
- Conservation cropping systems;
- Wind strip cropping;
- Crop residue management;
- Terracing and contour farming;
- Field windbreaks;
- Proper range and pasture use;
- Grassland plantings;
- Livestock water developments;
- Grassed waterways;
- Irrigation practices;
- Wildlife developments;
- Re-seeding range and pastures.

The supervisors of the first Conservation District were: W.R. Jamison, Woonsocket; August Kundet, Woonsocket; T.B. Dunn, Woonsocket; John Burg, Mount Vernon; E. Baruth. Others who helped with the Conservation District organization were Otto Ohlerking, Luther Roderick, Ben Putnam, Richard Edwards and Merlin Nelson.

Among others who have served as supervisors are: Charles Graves, Artesian; Larry Estabrook, Woonsocket; Donald Swenson, Woonsocket; Robert Trusty, Letcher; Luther Roderick, Artesian; and Ed Hostler, Artesian.

The 1969 supervisors were: Charles Graves, Artesian, Chairman; Gene Ellington, Forestburg, Vice-Chairman; Charles Swenson, Woonsocket, Treasurer; Robert Ruml, Letcher, Supervisor; Paul Donahue, Woonsocket, Supervisor; LuVern Rusch, County Agent, Secretary, Woonsocket; Ed Hostler, Assistant Supervisor, Artesian; Lawrence Estabrook, Assistant Supervisor, Woonsocket; Ivan Goetze, Assistant Supervisor, Letcher; and Leo Vetter, Assistant Supervisor, Woonsocket.

Updated information provided in 2012:

The Conservation District is managed by a very dedicated board. The list of supervisors is as followed:

Supervisor	Address	Years of Service
E.E. Baruth,	Woonsocket	1939-1941
John Berg,	Mt Vernon	1939-1941
Rodney Clarambeau,	Letcher	2000-Present
Joseph Clark,	Woonsocket	2004-2004
Jim Davis,	Forestburg	1996-2002
Paul Donohue,	Woonsocket	1969-1976
T. B. Dunn,	Woonsocket	1939-1941
Richard Edwards,	Letcher	1942-1948
Gene Ellingson,	Forestburg	1966-1978
Larry Estabrook,	Woonsocket	1961-1968
Judy Fredrichs,	Artesian	1995-Present
Robert Ivan Gaetz,	Letcher	1977-1994
Verlyn Godber,	Letcher	1996-2003
Charles Graves,	Artesian	1954-1974
Charles Graves,	Artesian	1978-1988
Larry Graves,	Artesian	1995-2000
Roger Hinker,	Forestburg	1991-1995
Ed Hostler,	Letcher	1975-1978
Jim Howard,	Woonsocket	2003-2006
W. R. Jamison,	Woonsocket	1939-1959
Donald Klinkner,	Artesian	1989-2008
August Kundert,	Woonsocket	1939-1953
Karen Lambert,	Artesian	2004-Present
Lewis Larson,	Woonsocket	1962-1966
Howard Moore,	Artesian	1985-1994
Robert Nelson,	Artesian	1979-1990
Merlin Nelson,	Artesian	1952-1957
Otto Oehlerking,	Letcher	1950-1960
Orlando Olson,	Artesian	1977-1984
Ben Putman,	Artesian	1942-1951
Luther Rodrick,	Artesian	1942-1959
Robert Ruml,	Letcher	1960-1976
Brett Selland,	Woonsocket	1995-1995
Mark Snedeker,	Woonsocket	2008-Present
Charles Swenson,	Woonsocket	1965-1974
Donald Swenson,	Woonsocket	1960-1964
David Tollefson,	Woonsocket	2007-Present
Robert Trusty,	Letcher	1962-1966
John Vetter,	Woonsocket	1989-1994
Leo Vetter,	Woonsocket	1975-1988