

## Turner County Conservation District (No. 28)

History from 1969 publication:

Turner County Conservation District covers all of Turner County, which is located in the southeastern part of the state and in an area endowed with a fertile black soil that is excellent for growing corn, beans, grains and grasses. The county has a total of 391,680 acres, which include 460 acres of water. Parker is the county seat. About 83 percent of the acreage in the county is cropland and about 11 percent supports native grass. Farming is diversified; livestock and grain crops are the main sources of income.

The county was created and organized in 1871. Turner County drains through the east and west forks of the Vermillion River into the Missouri River. The topography of the county is largely level with some undulating and a bit steep along the rivers. The northwest part is nearly level to undulating with some areas of a rather heavy subsoil that drains poorly. The soil is a loam and produces good corn, grain, grass and legumes. About the south and west 1/3 of the county is gently undulating and with a well-drained fertile soil suitable for corn, beans, grains, grasses and legumes. Most of the eastern part of the county is level and poorly drained where wet lands are a problem. The soil is a bit heavy of silty clay loams and clay loams, and produces good corn, oats and soybeans.

The Turner County Conservation District was organized by referendum held on June 5, 1942 at Centerville with an 85.3% favorable vote. The area first included a total acreage of 70,298. The remainder of the acres was added between 1942 and 1946. The primary problems were flooding along the Vermillion River and Turkey Ridge Creek, and drainage. Objectives were conservation of the soil and water resources, control flooding, preserve wildlife, protect the tax base, and promote the health, safety, and general welfare of the people in the Conservation District. The Conservation District contains the following watersheds: Turkey Clay Creek, Vermillion River, Turkey Ridge Creek, and Hurley Creek.

The first supervisors were Walter Jensen, Viborg; Nels C. Jespersen, Viborg; Eugene Rist, Centerville; W. C. Nelson, Centerville and Harry Wuertz, Davis. The first office was in Centerville and later moved to Hurley. A new concrete block building was constructed in 1949 at the cost of approximately \$7,000.00. The office was moved to the county seat in Parker in 1959. The Conservation District borrowed machinery from the SCS in 1942 and later purchased their own equipment to get the necessary work done.

Updated information provided in 2012:

1981 saw the final acre of Turner County mapped for the soil survey. It was held on the Phil Weeldreyer farm. Copies of the soil survey are still available at the conservation office.

Former USDA-NRCS District Conservationists include Robert Swenson, Jim Rezek, Steve Fischer, Chuck Lebeda, Nyle Herbener and the present DC is Merris Miller. Former supervisors were H. A. Mateer, Noble Jensen, L. E. Weeldreyer, Fred Krull, Noble Jensen, Leon Jorgensen, John Ludens Merlyn Sommervold, Gary Ward, Paul Shubeck, and John Davis. Present supervisors are Dennis Johnson, Phil Weeldreyer, LaRohn Hagena, Kent Westerman and Ordell Oswald. Administrative secretaries include Bernida Koller, Donna Hanson, Virginia Jorgensen, Wanda Kunze and in 1978 Fran Ingalls was hired. In 2007, a grant was applied for and received to help defray expenses between Lincoln Conservation District and Turner County Conservation District for a technician. Charles Groen was hired at that time working half-time in

each county. In 2010, he was hired as full time district technician for Turner County Conservation District.

Main objectives of the Conservation District are to provide a full service district to tend to the needs of the cooperators. Tree plans are written, trees are planted, fabric is laid and CRP acres are drilled. Since 1979 when we first started to report, Turner County Conservation District has planted approximately 3,748.7 acres of trees. There are between 550 to 600 trees per acre so there have been about 2,093,345 trees planted.

Every year since before 1978, the Turner Conservation District has supported and sponsored the District II land judging contest. This annual event draws approximately 10-12 area schools with over 200 students participating. Five pits are dug – each being about four feet deep and two feet wide. Four pits are used in the actual judging and one is used as a practice pit. The Conservation District gives out three plaques for the top 3 schools and 10 individual medals, three gold, three silver and four bronze, for the top 10 students. Turner County has sent many teams and individuals to the national contests and other teams that have gone give credit to the experience gained in the Turner County land judging contest.

Soil Stewardship week is promoted each year and materials are given, free of charge, to all Turner County churches that request them. The Arbor Day Essay & Poster Contests and Resource Conservation Speech Contest are promoted in the 7 schools that cover Turner County. Each year at the Turner County Fair, awards are given to the 4-H members that enter soil and water conservation posters.

Turner County Conservation District works closely with all organizations in the county and the state, including the USDA-FSA and NRCS offices, SD Dept. of Game, Fish & Parks, neighboring conservation districts, all watersheds in the area, the county commissioners, the SDACD and SDACDE, the NACD, the Conservation Commission, the Extension Service and 4-H groups and all local schools and churches.