

## **Yankton County Conservation District (No. 33)**

Organization work was begun in 1943 toward the formation of a Soil Conservation District in Yankton County. The Conservation District was organized in 1944 with a vote of 66% in favor of the Conservation District. The areas included in the Conservation District at this time were the six townships in the eastern part of the County: Volin, Marindahl, Turkey Valley, Walshtown, Mission Hill, and Mayfield. There were 734 operating units with approximately 136,741 acres involved. The first board of Supervisors for the Yankton Conservation District had their first meeting on May 12<sup>th</sup>, 1944.

In June 1946, the remainder of Yankton County (with the exclusion of all federal lands, town sites and cities) voted to include themselves in the Conservation District. The last addition to the Conservation District was made in May 1968 when all federal lands, town sites and cities in Yankton County were included in the Conservation District. This makes a total of about 332,032 acres now in the Conservation District.

In the early days of the Conservation District, certain heavy equipment was loaned to them by the Soil Conservation Service on a part-time basis. This equipment was put to use in blading gullies, making waterways, putting in diversions and drainage ditches. Besides this equipment there were several private contractors who did some conservation work in the County.

As soon as the Conservation District could borrow enough money equipment was bought so that more farmers could be served as far as putting good conservation practices on their land. It was the spring of 1945 that the Yankton County Soil Conservation District started its first tree planting program. With a tree planter on loan from the Soil Conservation Service, 15.5 acres of farmstead and feedlot windbreaks were planted on 15 farms. By 1969, 25 years since the organization of the Conservation District approximately 1,812 acres of farmstead windbreaks were planted.

Yankton County is located in the southeast part of the state with the Missouri River on the south and two counties west from the Iowa state line. The first settlers came in 1858 but the 1859 settlers were the ones who came in large numbers. Territorial legislature met in the town of Yankton in 1861.

The drainage of the county is into the Missouri River through the James River and its tributaries. The topography of the area ranges from undulating to nearly level, and bottom land in the southeast corner is level. The soils vary quite widely from clay loams, silty clay loams, to silt loams; the surface drainage from the undulating areas is rather fast and the soil needs to be protected by conservation practices that reduce or control the drainage. Some of the heavy flat lands need supplemental drainage.

The proper land use varies according to topography and soil types. In general, it may be said the soils are suitable for corn, soybeans, small grains, pasture, alfalfa, and cultivated grasses.

The early settlers found a land of good grass, ample water and a very productive soil. They came to find farm land and establish a home. They plowed out grassland and produced grain crops and some livestock. After a time, corn began to replace some of the small grains and livestock numbers increased, including beef cattle, dairy cattle, hogs, and sheep.

This type of farming was carried on for a matter of 75 or 80 years when things began to happen. The dry years came along and much of the land suffered from both water and wind erosion. Yields were low due to lack of moisture and reduced productivity.

By the early 1940's there were soil conservation districts on three sides of Yankton County and the people saw the conservation work that was being done in these conservation districts so they became interested. Several meetings were held to explain the organization and operation of a conservation district. The following March a conservation district was organized covering nearly the north half of Yankton county. In 1946 the remainder of the county was added to the Conservation District.

#### Yankton County Conservation District history by year

May 12<sup>th</sup>, 1944, the Yankton County Soil Conservation held their first regular meeting to elect supervisors. Harry Christopherson of Menno elected Chair, Edward Lein of Volin elected vice chair, Olaf Gilbertson of Irene elected secretary, and George Lyngstad of Volin elected treasurer. Leonard Gorseth of Volin was the 5<sup>th</sup> member of the board. A Memorandum of Understanding between the Conservation District and the Department of Agriculture was signed.

1945: The cost for tree planting was \$15.00 per acre. This cost included the trees.

1946: Supervisors were paid \$4.00 per meeting plus 5¢ per mile.

1947: 36.8 acres of trees were planted. \$2,029.75 worth of heavy equipment work had been done. The Conservation District purchased a D-6 tractor and dozer.

1948: The cost for tree planting was \$25.00 per acre with the Conservation District supplying the trees and \$10.00 per acre for the use of the tree planter with the farmer furnishing the trees.

1949: The Conservation District's D-6 tractor was put to work in Nebraska to help open blocked roads due to heavy snow fall. \$9.00 per hour was the rate charged for this service.

1950: A new D-6 tractor was purchase for \$4,625.00. A 1939 pickup was purchased for \$251.51. Supervisoers included Chairmen, Praben Engen, Olaf Gilbertson, Harry Christopherson, Warren Libakken, Emil Gall, Martin Slempe, and Clyde Hicks.

1951: An agreement is signed by the landowners in which the farmer agrees to cultivate and maintain their shelterbelt for 20 years.100 acres of trees were planted.

1952: The Conservation District office was moved into the Dakota National Bank. The tree planter wages were raised to \$1.75 per hour.

1953: Conservation District equipment was stored in Volin, SD for \$50.00 per year. The cost for tree planting was \$30.00 per acre with the Conservation District supplying the trees and \$15.00 per acre for the use of the tree planter with the farmer furnishing the trees. The Conservation District purchased a Brillion grass drill.

1954: Ten year anniversary of the Yankton County Soil Conservation District. Tree maintenance agreement was changed from 20 years to 5 years.

1955: The Conservation District assisted the Yankton 4-H in finding suitable grounds for their building.

1956: The Conservation District planted 40 acres of trees. One bundle of trees (25 in a bundle) was \$1.75. Work accomplished included trees on 27 farms, dams on 5 farms, and terracing on 7 farms.

1957: Approximately 150 farms in the Marne Creek each had a total loss of approximately 5 acres of crop due to flooding.

1958: June, 1958 the first ad was displayed in the Yankton P & D advertising what services are available through the Conservation District. The display ad cost \$1.80.

1959: The Conservation District planted trees on 30 farms. The watershed committee had a proposed plan over \$300,000 for a 100 year flood protection for the city of Yankton.

1960: 21 acres of trees were planted. The soil conservation districts across South Dakota considered changing their name to soil & water conservation district. \$5.00 was given from each Conservation District for lobbying.

1961: 5,000 trees were ordered and planted by the Conservation District. Yankton County Soil Conservation District is now called Yankton County Soil & Water Conservation District.

1962: The Conservation District planted 40 acres of trees. An updated Memorandum of Understanding between the Conservation District and the USDA was signed and put into effect.

1963: Sugar beet production is a new crop. Charge to rent the Brillion seeder is raised to 75¢ per acre with a \$5.00 minimum.

1964: The Conservation District purchased their first gopher machine for \$300.00. The charge for rental was \$1.00 per acre. Over 30 acres of trees were planted. A Conservation District secretary was hired at \$1.00 per hour for 4 days per week.

1965: 34 acres of trees were planted by the Conservation District. The Conservation District is looking for several tree storage pits to store trees in.

1966: 21 farms signed up for tree planting for a total of 33 acres. The Conservation District reported having many requests for dams and dugouts. Trees are being stored at Rhian Oil. All types of conservation work in the county are above average.

1967: The Conservation District secretary's salary was raised to \$1.40 per hour. The Conservation District sold their 2 Brillion seeders for \$40.00. Farmers are given the choice to either pay the total amount owed to the Conservation District or to sign a purchasing agreement at the ASCS office where the cost share would go directly to the Conservation District.

1968: 20 acres of trees were planted. The Conservation District purchased a Ford Tractor for \$250.00. Drill rental was increased to \$2.00 per acre with a \$20.00 minimum. The cost for tree planting was raised to 50¢ per rod row.

1969: The State Hospital agreed to let the Conservation District store trees in their potato house which stays around 40 degrees. Inmates from the State Hospital were hired to help plant trees. 55 acres of trees were planted. The Conservation District's secretary's wages were raised from \$1.40 to \$1.60.

1970: 40 acres of trees were planted. 20 dams, 2 terracing jobs, and 2 waterways were completed.

1971 – 1984: Records were not found.

1985: District Conservationist Lloyd V. Gehm discusses the possibility of the Yankton Field office getting a computer.

1986: Conservation Districts are required to have a nursery license to sell trees. Beetles were used in the county for Musk Thistle. Tree planting is slow due to the bad weather conditions. The third sign up for Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) is in progress.

1987: 330 acres of grass were seeded. A Cooperative Working Agreement between the Soil Conservation Service and the Conservation District was signed.

1988: Work is being done along the Missouri River banks to clean up trash and dead trees. Tree planting crew was paid \$5.00 per hour. Dams and livestock ponds were prioritized in the county due to the dry conditions.

1989: A Nu-Way tree planter was purchased. Tree planting rates were 70¢ per tree seedling planted. Handplants were sold for 50¢ a tree.

1990: Burning of CRP acres is discouraged due to the dry weather conditions. Trees are stored at the Well's Blue Bunny cooler. 4 dugouts were completed.

1991: A cooling unit for the trees was purchased. The trees are now being stored in a refer trailer. Handplants were sold for 90¢ a tree. The charge for tree planting was changed to \$2.80 per rod row. Land for sale by the State of South Dakota is being looked at by the Conservation District. The Conservation District plans to build a storage shed on this land.

1992: Land was purchased from the State of South Dakota, next to the National Guard Armory. James Steel built a storage shed for the Conservation District.

1993: One ag waste system was installed. 45 acres of trees were planted. A measuring wheel was purchased to get a more accurate measuring for tree billing. A mobile phone was leased for the Tree Planting Manager for the tree season. Electricity and water was hooked up to the new Conservation District shed. A gopher machine was purchased for producers to rent.

1994: Approximately 40 waterways are either being built or repaired. The Soil Conservation Service is now called Natural Resources Conservation Service.

1995: A tree spade and seed spreader was purchased for producers to use. Cost share for CRP trees remains the same at 75%.

1996: Yankton County Soil Conservation is now called Yankton County Conservation District. Wayne Diede was hired as the Tree Manager for the Conservation District.

1997: Wayne Diede visited producers who recently had the Conservation District plant their trees to promote the Conservation District's cultivation program. Approximately 70 producers have signed up for the CRP program this year. The Environmental Quality Incentive Program (EQIP) went into effect.

1998: Grass seeding rates were raised to \$12.00 per acre. The USDA Service Center, including Yankton County Conservation District has a new location. 2914 Broadway Ave. A new refer trailer was purchased for the storage of the Conservation District's trees.

1999: A 4-wheeler and sprayer was purchased to use for the Conservation District's cultivation program. Tree planting rate is \$3.00 a rod row for trees and \$3.50 per rod row for shrubs.

2000: Approximately 1.5 million acres are eligible for the CRP program. The Emergency Conservation Program (ECP) was introduced. This program cost shared 50% or a maximum of \$1,000 per landowner to clean dugouts.

2001: 60 acres of trees were planted. South Dakota Department of Agriculture introduced the living snow fence program. The purpose of this program is to reduce highway maintenance costs, provide better service to the traveling public, and promote conservation.

2002: Ten CRP contracts were seeded. A gravel driveway to the Conservation District shed was constructed.

2003: The Conservation District now sells weed barrier fabric rolls and staples. 4 out of 14 EQIP applications were approved. A Truax drill was purchased.

2004: All tree plantings done by the Conservation District will have an approval form signed by the Yankton County Zoning officer. Tree planting rate is 200 rod rows or less \$4.25 per rod row and 201 or more \$3.25 per rod row.

2005: The Conservation District purchased a new weed badger for cultivating trees. Grass drilling rates are at \$10.00 per acre.

2006: Cultivation prices are \$240.00 per acre that includes chemicals. A tractor was purchased to use for planting and cultivating trees.

2007: A Yankton County Conservation District sign was purchased and placed next to the National Guard Armory's sign to designate where our building is to make it easier when people are picking up their handplants. Handplants were raised to \$1.25 each.

2008: The Conservation District purchased QuickBooks, an accounting computer program, to help organize their financial records. A Dew Drop Drill was donated to the Conservation District from Pheasants Forever. Members of Pheasants Forever can use this drill at a discounted rate.

2009: 25 acres of trees were planted on 11 sites. 180 acres of grass was drilled on 7 sites. 21 acres of trees were cultivated on 13 sites.

2010: 26 producers purchased approximately 3,400 hand plants. 24 acres of trees were planted. 265 acres of grass was drilled. Cultivation rates are \$275.00 per acre. Grass drilling rates are \$18.00 per acre.

2011: The Conservation District is overwhelmed with over 3,000 acres of CRP grass seedings. Record low tree planting season with only 9 acres of trees planted.

2012: Un-used Conservation District equipment is sold and a new tree storage box is bought and made from the Jamesville Colony. Approximately 25 acres of trees are to be planted.