

## **Charles Mix County Conservation District (No. 32)**

History from 1969 publication:

The Charles Mix Soil and Water Conservation District occupies all of Charles Mix County, except two townships along the Chateau Creek. It is bordered by the Missouri River on the west and Brule County on the north. The Conservation District has nearly 100 miles of river frontage.

The topography along the Missouri is steep to undulating and the area to the east is largely gently sloping to level. The drainage is all toward the Missouri River through a number of creeks, including the Platte and Chateau Creeks.

The soils have quite a range, but along the Missouri River, they are chiefly undulating to steep clays and suitable primarily for range and livestock production. To the east, the land is gently undulating to fairly level silty clay loams which are good small grain and corn producing areas. Safe farming of all of these soils requires attention to moisture conservation and maintenance of organic matter and fertility.

The first house built in what is now South Dakota was built in Charles Mix County in 1794 on a rocky ledge along the Missouri by a French fur trader and its early history is bound up with Sioux Indians and the reservation activities. Lewis and Clark also spent some time here on their trip up the Missouri River. The County was created in 1862 but not organized until 1879 with Wheeler as the county seat.

A great wave of settlers came in the early 1890's, especially in 1893 when the Indian land was opened for sale. These settlers were a thrifty group of people, including Hollanders and Czechs, and the area was known as a modern and prosperous community.

These early settlers found an abundance of good grasses and ample supplies of water from the river, creeks and springs; and abundant wildlife and wide areas of good soil. The rough land along the river provided good grazing for cattle. The more level land produced good grain crops. Charles Mix County is one of the top ones in both livestock and crop production – including both corn and sorghums.

By the early 1940's, the farmers here experienced the same dry windy conditions as other areas of the state, resulting in the cropland blowing and washing, the grassland overgrazed and the grasses killed out, resulting in reduced crop yields and depletion of livestock numbers. The people realized that they must do something. They knew that a C.C.C. Camp at Chamberlain was helping with soil and water work in Brule, Buffalo and Lyman Counties and that soil conservation districts were organized in these counties as well as that part of Charles Mix County included with the Conservation District in Bon Homme County.

Late in 1942 and early 1943, some meetings were held in three townships in the northwest part of the county at which their problems were explained. The people from the four north townships then decided to proceed with the organization work. A hearing was held in August 1943, and the referendum conducted in November 1943, with an 84 percent favorable vote.

The Conservation District was known as the Academy District and as soon as the vote was approved, the farmers chose their supervisors, prepared their program and plan of work, and entered into the necessary agreements with the cooperating agencies and were ready to start operations.

The supervisors named their problems as: weeds; wind and water erosion; gullies; grassland overgrazed and grasses killed out.

The people lacked the “know-how” to meet the problems. They proposed to solve these problems by adopting the following methods and practices;

- Set up a weed program with an active weed board;
- Gullies bladed and shaped and seeded to grass—
  - Established grassed waterways;
- Use contours and terraces where needed;
- Use wind erosion control practices –
  - Crop residue management
  - Seeding of grasses
  - Use crop rotation
- Control grazing and reseeding of depleted pastures and ranges.

Farmers who took the lead in the organization of the original Academy Conservation District, in addition to the first board of supervisors, were: E.D. Pasck, Academy; Thomas Kucera, Wagner; Emil J. Hachtigal, Academy; and George Lucas, Lake Andes.

In 1944, a movement was started to add the remainder of the county to the Conservation District. This was accomplished in 1945 by an 81 percent favorable vote.

Those farmers who took the lead in promoting the move to include the remainder of the county to the Conservation District were: Carl Anderson, Wagner; L.V. Geddes, Wagner; Charles Ahrens, Wagner; R.D. Swanson, Wagner; Frank Fijala, Geddes; Forrest Scott, Geddes; and Mike Minnehan, Lake Andes.

Since the remainder of the county had been added to the Conservation District, a movement was started in 1954 to change the name of the Conservation District from the Academy Conservation District to the Charles Mix Conservation District. This was accomplished in November of that year.

Others who have served as supervisors include: Harold Pavlis, Geddes; Harvey Johannsen, Wagner; Forrest Scott, Geddes, assistant; Kenneth Dvorak, Lake Andes, assistant; Bruce Bakken, Platte; Harold Meyerink, Platte, Mark Goldammer, Wagner, assistant; Charles Ahrens, Wagner, assistant; Mike Minnehan, Lake Andes. The 1969 supervisors were: Harvey Johannsen, Wagner, Chairman; Bruce Bakken, Platte, Vice-Chairman; Mark Goldammer, Wagner, Secretary; Garfield Johnson, Platte, Treasurer; Kenneth Dvorak, Lake Andes, Supervisor; and assistant supervisors Harold Pavlis, Geddes, and Albert Baukup, Dante.

Updated Information provided in 2012:

#### **Original Board Members**

Garfield Johnson, Fred Lucas, Hiram Dimick, L.A. Fite, George Fish

#### **Former Board Members**

Joseph Kokes, Mark Goldammer, DeLyle Johnson, Thomas L. Travis, Bruce Bakken, Delbert Beeson, Richard Dvorak, Harvey Wiesser, Harvey Johannsen, Richard Dvorak, Allen Rasmussen, Eugene Fite, Harold Pavlis, Kenneth Dvorak, Jerry Bambas, Steve Fusch, Dorlan Rolston, Dan Park, James Luden

#### **Current Board Members**

Travis Beeson, Roger Huizenga, Jay Kokes, Kurt Antonsen, Frank Bures