

East Pennington Conservation District (No. 39)

History from 1969 publication:

East Pennington Conservation District is all of Pennington County that lies east of the Cheyenne River. The Cheyenne River drains most of the area, except the southeast corner which drains into the Bad River and White River. These three rivers all run to the Missouri River. These rivers and few springs are the only natural water sources.

The topography of the area is undulating and steep, except a narrow strip of flat land along the Cheyenne River and a flat area in the Badlands Basin. Most of the soils are formed from Pierre Shale, except in the Badlands basin where they are a very fine and tight clay.

Most of the land north of the Badlands produces excellent grass best suited for livestock and grain production. The drainage is well to excessive, so water conservation is important.

Badlands National Park includes a large part of the badlands area. There is also an area north of the badlands that is in a Federal Land Utilization Project. These acres were later added to the Conservation District bringing the total acres of the Conservation District to 782,385.

The land along the Cheyenne River is steep and rough therefore, it is used primarily for livestock production. The remaining area of the Conservation District is gently rolling to nearly level and is utilized for grain and livestock production.

The Conservation District was approved by the Secretary of State on January 24, 1947. The first Conservation District supervisors were Chair Tony Krebs, Quinn; Vice Chair Osborn L. Kitterman, Wall; Secretary William Bielmaier, Sr., Wall; Treasurer Edmond Eisenbraun, Creighton; Supervisor Emil W. Sieler, Quinn; and County Agent Kirk T. Mears, Rapid City.

As they developed their program, they named the following concerns:

- Wind and water erosion on cropland and rangeland;
- Gullies on farm and range lands;
- Shortage of livestock water;
- Flooding on low lands and along streams;
- Overgrazed range and pasture lands.

They proposed to meet the problem by establishing control methods such as:

- Stubble mulch tillage;
- Contour cropping;
- Terraces where needed;
- Diversion ditches;
- Water spreading;
- Irrigation systems;
- Proper range use;
- Grass seedings on pasture and range;
- Rotation seedings;
- Tree plantings;
- Dams for livestock water and sealing dams where necessary;
- Stock water wells;
- Installation of pipelines where needed;
- Stocking fish ponds;
- Wildlife development and preservation areas

Updated information provided in 2012:

East Pennington Conservation District purchased its first grass drill in 1981 to assist local landowners with grass seeding. In 1987, the Conservation District purchased their first No-Till drills. Currently the Conservation District owns a John Deere 1590 no-till drill and a John Deere 455 minimum till drill. These drills are available to rent by local landowners for grain and grass seedings.

In 2008, the Conservation District created a Bio-Control Grant from Conservation District funds for the control of Canada thistle. The grant cost shares the purchase of Gall Flies and Stem Mining Weevils with landowners who have Canada Thistles in areas that are challenging to access. In 2011, the Conservation District re-issued the grant for another 3 years.

In 2009, East Pennington Conservation District received a grant from the State Conservation Commission for the planting of trees on rangeland. This grant allowed the planting of trees on rangeland to be cost shared when cost share was not otherwise available.

Some of the services the Conservation District offers today are trees and tree fabric for sale along with assistance in shelterbelt planning, planting trees, laying fabric, tree spade service, and maintaining a tree bank for locals to purchase trees from.

Original Board Members

Tony, Krebs, Osborn Kitterman, William Bielmaier Sr, Edmond Eisenbraun, Emil Sieler

Former Board Members

Reuben Deutscher, James Kjerstad, Larry Larsen, Lavon Shearer, Robert Jurisch, William Clark, Rodney Renner, Leonard Kjerstad, Raynold Paulsen, Dennis Sieler, Harlan Eisenbraun, Jeff Clark, Paul Zelfer, Kent Kjerstad, Bill Blair, Mark Zelfer, Sharla Julson, Floyd Kjerstad

Current Board Members

Kent Jordan, Larry Eisenbraun, Dan Dartt, Elden Helms, Lynn Denke