

Jackson County Conservation District (No. 23)

History from 1969 publication:

The area now covered by the Jackson –Washabaugh Soil and Water Conservation District was in the early days known as Washabaugh County and later divided into two counties, covering quite an area of the Badlands and Washabaugh County, which is mostly Indian land.

The area of Jackson County was homesteaded about 1906 and the county organized in 1915.

The entire area of this part of South Dakota was occupied originally by big cattle and sheep ranches. Some of these early ranches are being operated today by descendants of these old timers. In 1892, one of the largest roundups of this part of the world was held in this area.

The topography of the area ranges from rough to gently rolling, with some more level places along the river and creek bottoms. The real rough land is in the Badlands, along the river breaks and some of the creeks and tributaries.

There is a wide variation of soils from the Badland clay, shale, a heavy clay, silt loam, and some sandy loam. The large part of the area is of heavy clay and slopes are steep. That means drainage is excessive and so the land is best suited to grass. There are spots of cultivated lands, particularly in the North and South parts of the Conservation District.

The drainage is largely into the Bad River and White River and their tributaries. These rivers, creeks and springs were the original sources of water. The early cattlemen built some stock water dams and so did the homesteaders. The early settlers also used some wells.

The total acreage farmed in the Conservation District was only about 100,000 acres. Of course, there was bad wind and water erosion on that, but the grazing and water problems were more serious. The creeks and streams were dry and caused such problems as lack of livestock water and poor distribution of grazing, and affected agricultural production. Economic instability resulted from drought and wind and water erosion.

The lack of livestock water has largely been taken care of with the construction of dams, dugouts, wells and springs. Some work along this line remains to be done to refine the distribution of grazing and to replace facilities that are no longer adequate. The effects of drought have been lessened by the use of such practices as water spreading, irrigation, terraces, stubble mulch tillage, fallowing of cropland, and proper grazing of range land. These practices have also lessened the loss of soil to wind and water erosion.

Except for the early efforts in development of stock water and irrigation, there was little thought of conservation until the “dirty thirties”. Wind and water erosion both became evident during that decade, and people became very concerned.

Attending the original hearing on the Conservation District were: William Porch (temporary Chairman), Frank Uhlir, Jay Hamm, Lewis Reynolds, Norman Mason, Ray Mosher, Harry Dawson, Bill Sears, P.J. Rock, John Bateman, Mrs. Sloan, C.A. Hunt, Frank Bauman, Fred Ferwerda, H.P. Gilchrist, Stanley Uhlir, Henry DeVries, Stanley Sloan, Ohmer Cook and Ingebert Fauske.

The first supervisors were: Henry DeVries, Belvidere; Ohmer Cook, Cottonwood; W.L.Rulon, Interior; Francis Sloan, Kadoka; and John Spinsby, Stanford.

The supervisors spelled out their problems as:

- Lack of livestock water and poor distribution of grazing, resulting in overgrazing and killing out many desirable grasses;
- Wind and water erosion on cropland ruined some of these lands;
- A lack of understanding of how to manage the grass and croplands in a dry area was an important factor contributing to the terrible losses.

They proposed to overcome these problems by using the following methods and practices:

- Construction of dams and dugout for livestock water;
- Dig wells and develop springs for both livestock and home use water supplies.

The first additions to the Conservation District were made in 1943, and by the end of 1945 practically all of the privately owned land had been added to the Conservation District. Three additions were made in 1943 and 16 additions in 1945. All of these additions were made by petition rather than referendum.

When all of the privately owned land had come into the Conservation District, the name was changed to the Jackson-Washabaugh Conservation District.

Others who have served as supervisors are: George Renning, Kadoka; C.A. Seidler, Kadoka; Byron Bradfield, Kadoka; Keith Crew, Interior; Tony Wiedmann, Wanblee; and Albert Amiotte, Interior.

The 1969 supervisors were: Forrest Ireland, Kadoka, Chairman; Leslie Handcock, Longvalley, Vice-Chairman; Byron Bradfield, Kadoka, Secretary; A.J. Gorman, Kadoka, Treasurer; and C.A. Seidler, Kadoka.

Updated information provided in 2012:

The Conservation District and the people of Jackson County have seen and been involved in many changes over the last several decades.

The name change to Jackson County Conservation District was approved in the fall of 1987.

Some of the concerns still being named in the 80's were: Erosion and sediment control, conservation tillage, priority areas & priority practices, State tree program and overgrazing.

The late 80's brought about "Basic and Alternative Plans" under Conservation Compliance. The Jackson County Board of Supervisors at that time felt that a stipulation was needed pertaining to natural or man-made circumstances beyond the operator's control and that the Conservation District Board should have the authority to determine if the producer attempted in good faith to comply with the provisions.

The late 80's/early 90's brought about a lot of producer participation in the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) under the 1985 Farm Bill provisions. The Conservation District's two Haybuster drills were kept busy being leased to landowners planting their fields to grass along with an increase in acres of trees being planted within the county. The Conservation District

has since bought 1 used and 2 no-till drills, which has allowed us to continue our program of renting drills to landowners.

The Conservation District had a maintenance agreement for the Plant Materials Evaluation Site located in Cottonwood. This site was considered one of the poorest of soils in Jackson County and a number of species of trees/shrubs were planted there with tests and annual survival reports being completed. It was also a test site for 2 types of weed barrier fabric along with 3 types of tree tube protectors. This site is no longer being used as a test site.

In the early 90's our Conservation District was the lead sponsor in a partnership with neighboring conservation districts in the implementation of the Upper Bad River Watershed Project. A review board was formed consisting of members from each of the conservation districts along with a coordinator. Water quality issues and excess sediment at the mouth of the Bad River were major issues. One of the goals met under this project was to reduce the sediment.

The Conservation District's fiftieth anniversary was observed in April 1992, by the planting of 50 evergreens (cedar and ponderosa pine) in the Kadoka City Park with the assistance of local 5th and 6th grade students along with city personnel. Fifty trees were also donated to the Interior Cemetery.

The Board of Supervisors adopted a resolution in July of 1992, opposing demolition by explosives of the Minuteman II Missile Systems and supported the inclusion of landowners in the decision process in the deactivation of the sites.

The State owned nursery was not doing well financially and there were talks of it being sold or abandoned. A task force was formed to try to save the nursery as it was the main source of supply for the conservation districts in their tree planting programs. There was a proposal of a cooperative being formed with shares being sold. Conservation districts were offered a one-time membership fee of \$250.00 with the stipulation that 75% of their stock would be order annually from the nursery. Gene Williams, Jackson County Conservation Board member, became the first President of the Big Sioux Nursery and this nursery is still our main supplier of trees today.

The Conservation District's tree program has always been their main source of revenue. Weed barrier fabric was introduced and became a new service under our tree program, greatly improving the survival rate of our plantings in addition to helping with the weed control. We then added the service of hand planting replacement trees in sites with or without weed barrier. With conservation districts planting fewer trees today, the nursery had to be innovative in their sales and today offers a variety of native/perennial plants and grasses along with potted stock and larger tree stock. This has also improved our sales revenue as we are able to offer this new stock to members of our community.

We have partnered many years with the U.S Fish and Wildlife Service in being able to offer cost-share in the repair of and/or building of new dams in Jackson County. Other partners who have joined in on this to allow for a cost of about 30% to landowners are SD Game, Fish and Parks, Ducks Unlimited and the SD Department of Agriculture/Division of Conservation & Forestry. We have also partnered with neighboring conservation districts in this venture.

We continue to work with the Natural Resources Conservation Service in providing technical and educational information and support to landowners within Jackson County. Information

gathered on local resource concerns is also used as a basis to better the service and programs offered to landowners in Jackson County. We also work with the State Conservation Commission/Division of Conservation & Forestry in the securing of grants offered to local landowners on needed practices that were not approved under the federal program offered.

Education of our youth remains one of the top priorities of the Jackson County Conservation District board and staff. We sponsor the Arbor Day Poster and Poem/Essay contest along with the Resource Conservation Speech Contest. We sponsor 3-4 students to the Youth Range Camp held in June each year in Sturgis. We began a Youth Range Day in the Badlands in the fall of 2002. This annual event originally was designed for 7th graders in Jackson County, but for the first couple years, now includes the 7th graders from the neighboring communities of Midland, Philip and Wall and continues to be hosted at the Gene Williams Ranch. Back in 1990 and 1991 we co-hosted SD Rangeland Days along with Haakon County Conservation District. In 2012 and 2013 we will again be co-hosting this event now known as SD Rangeland/Soil Days. 2013 will be the 30th anniversary of the Rangeland portion of the event.

Members of the Board of Supervisors who have given many years and long hours of dedication to conservation in Jackson County since it's organization are: Ohmer Cook, Henry DeVries, W.R. Woods, Francis Solon, Wm. L. Rulon, John Spinsby, Guy Solberg, Carl Hood, Louis Hercher, Raymond Thomas, Wallace Ruggles, Tony Wiedmann, Allen Smith, George Renning, Connie Seidler, Keith Crew, Byron Bradfield, Albert Amiotte, Forrest Ireland, Leslie Handcock, A.J. Gorman, Marvis Hogen, Francis Guptill, L.P. Swisher, Lyle Jarvis, Virgil Kjerstad, Terry Thomas, Joy Klima, Lloyd Reiman, Oliver Willert, Gib Rodgers, Greg Kampfe, Chuck VanderMay, Justin Wheeler, Gene S. Williams, Grady Crew, Linda Stilwell, Ken Graupmann, Mike Perault, Clifford Poss, Bob Cerney, Stephanie Sharp, Mike Amiotte, Terry Pinney, Brandon Rock, Dennis Sinkey, Luke VanderMay, Donita Denke, and Nicholas Patterson.