

Miner Conservation District History (No. 54)

History from 1969 publication:

Miner County is located in eastern South Dakota, the third county west from the Minnesota line, and the third county north from the south state line. The first settlers came in 1878 and a stream of covered wagons came in 1879. The county was organized in 1880.

The western part of the county drains into the James River, through the Redstone Creek and its tributaries, and the eastern part drains into the east and west forks of the Vermillion River. The topography is undulating to nearly level, with the western part well to moderately well-drained. In parts of the area, hard pan spots are found where drainage is poor. Most of the soils are of a loamy type suitable for the production of livestock, grains, and cultivated crops, with attention given to both soil and moisture conservation.

The early settlers found a land with a heavy cover of grass, a fertile soil of high humus content, with good moisture holding capacity. Because of these favorable conditions of water and vegetation, there was an abundance of wildlife.

The above resources were exploited by plowing up land that was subject to wind and water erosion. This contributed to siltation of the rivers, streams, and lakes. In the early years, through the unwise use of the land, we had used up 50% of humus from the soil, which had grave consequences.

There was considerable activity in the field of soil conservation by the ASC and the County Crop Improvement Association which led to an interest in doing something to protect the soil. Then in 1952, a series of meetings were held in the county at which the organization and operation of a soil conservation district was explained, and resulted in a favorable referendum in May of 1952, with the organization completed in August of 1952.

The supervisors determined the major problems and concerns for Miner County as: Wind and Water Erosion, Pothole Drainage, and a need for more ample Livestock Water Supply.

They planned to meet these concerns through the use of: stubble mulch farming, planting grasses and legumes in rotation, leaving stubble on the soil over winter to collect snow by plowing in the spring instead of fall, drain nuisance potholes, and provide wildlife areas by plantings in problem areas.

In 1952, the original Board of Supervisors were: M.H. Walter of Roswell, E.W. Shove of Howard, H.L. Riden of Howard, Sigurd Andenas of Howard, and Russell Duxbury of Canova. Others that helped promote the original Conservation District organization were: Herron Runestad of Winfred, Gilbert Behm of Canova, and Wesley Lewis of Howard. The county agent, Stanley Gilman, served as secretary. In 1953 Ray Mueller took over for Stanley. Then in 1956 County Agent, David Blanchard, replaced Ray as secretary. The original supervisors served until 1958 when H.L. Riden was replaced by Herron Runestad.

Updated information provided in 2012:

1950's: Memorandums of Understanding were signed with the partners which included S.D. Extension Service, USDA-Soil Conservation Service, and S.D. Game Fish, & Parks. The supervisors developed a Program of Work, Work Plan, and a Long Range Plan. One of the main issues facing the Conservation District was drainage – there had been several lawsuits

over drainage in the past. Farmer-District Cooperative Agreements were started. A tree planter was purchased from the Crop Improvement Association for \$150.00. The first trees were planted by the Conservation District in 1953 at a rate of \$32.50 for the first acre, and \$27.50 for each additional acre. The highlight year was 1954 with 90 acres of trees planted. Other years had as many as 60 acres planted. The Conservation District participated in the Tri-County Farm Show in Carthage. Two Brillion Seeders were purchased with the help of the State Conservation Revolving Loan fund. Seeders were rented for 50¢/acre with a minimum charge of \$5.00. One of the seeders was later sold to McCook County. The Conservation District used the county's dragline to construct dugouts. A furrow plow was purchased, and was leased for \$1.00/acre. A 47 M-IHC tractor was purchased. Many meetings were spent discussing ways to promote conservation in schools and 4-H, materials were sent to schools – contests were held through 4-H. The Conservation District supplied materials to local churches to celebrate Soil & Water Stewardship Week. 'Entering Miner County Soil Conservation District' signs were purchased and installed at county lines. The Conservation District planted 100 potted cedar on an 'experimental' plot. Teacher scholarships were sponsored for the conservation short course at Black Hills Teacher College. 'Deep Water' signs were purchased and installed. Supervisors attended national meetings in Omaha, New Orleans, and San Diego. Annual Conservation Awards Banquets were held each year.

1960's: In 1965, Gilbert Behm joined the Board of Supervisors taking the place of Russel Duxbury. Part-time secretarial help was hired for 5 to 10 hours per week during the busy time. Tree planting rates went from \$40 for the first acre to \$62. Acres planted each year ranged from 45 to 80 acres. In 1964 we sold one of our tree planters to Douglas County – they were starting to establish their Conservation District. We purchased spraying equipment to mount on the tractor for application of Simazine 80W. Spraying was done at a rate of \$7/acre, pasture furrowing was \$1.50/acre. We started interseeding into pastures – 68 was a big year with 500 acres interseeded. We started installing terraces and water ways. The Conservation District started celebrating Arbor Day in the rural schools. The Arbor Day Essay Contest started. Miner County started participating in the State Conservation Speech contest. Teachers were sponsored for conservation classes at the Black Hills Teacher College and Huron College. There was active participation in the Soil & Water Stewardship Week. 'Conservation Day Programs' were held each year. We started participating in the State Plowing Contest. In 1963 we (Lila Lee was the participant) won the 'Queen of the Furrow' at the State Plowing Contest. The Conservation District had booths at the Crop Show. The Vermillion Watershed was proposed in 1960, the East Vermillion Watershed was organized in 1966. The Conservation District loaned \$500 to the Eastern South Dakota Research Farm.

1970's: In 1974, the Conservation District hired a District Clerk, Juanita Henderson at a rate of \$1.60 per hour, with a maximum of \$1,000 per year. Brenda Oswald replaced Juanita Henderson in 1975. In 1975, the S.D. Department of Ag appropriated \$50,000 to conservation districts to help pay secretarial wages. The title for District Clerk was changed to Administrative Secretary. In 1976, Ruby Kampshoff replaced Brenda Oswald, who was then replaced by Nadene Buttermier, who was replaced by Marilyn Simpson, then finally replaced by Kathleen Carlson at a rate of \$2.20/hour for 20 hours per week. Tree planting rates went from \$65/acre to \$125/acre. The Conservation District purchased a 69 Ford Van for hauling trees. Many acres of trees continued to be planted ranging from 53 acres to 87 acres per year. The Conservation District continued to do inter-seeding, but also started renting out the machine for \$1 to \$2/acre. Tree spraying rates went from \$5/acre to \$7/acre. The poster contest started in 1973, and the Conservation Scrapbook Contest started in 1975. Arbor Day was celebrated in the schools. Soil & Water Stewardship Week was sponsored by the Conservation District. In 1977 the Conservation District donated to the Tree Seed Collecting Fund and to the S.D.

Conservation History Project. In 1979 the Erosion & Sediment Control Ordinance was created by the Conservation District for Miner County.

1980's: In 1981 Herron Runestad was replaced by Chester Wombacker and John Raesly replaced Henry Loe. Deb Dawson was hired as the new Administrative Secretary in 1982. Chris Laible replaced Deb Dawson as secretary in 1982. In 1986, Henry Loe left the Conservation District Board, being replaced by Martin Reisch; Verna Hauge was the new Administrative Secretary, later replaced by Brenda Mentele. In 1989, the title of Administrative Secretary was changed to District Manager, and Jan Holland was hired to replace Brenda Mentele. Tree planting rates went from \$1.35/RR to \$3.00/RR. Tree plantings continued to be high ranging from 47 to 85 acres per year. The Conservation District started their 'Tree Care Awards'. The interseeder was rented for \$3 to \$4/acre, until it was sold in 89. Fall Tree Spraying was at 40¢/RR. A Tree-Ro-Weeder was purchased in '88, tree sites were cleaned for \$30/acre. The Conservation District had grants for: Conservation Tillage, Living Snow Fence, Fall Tree Spraying, and Windbreak Renovation. The County was divided in two Hydrologic Units (West James and East Vermillion). All highly erodible fields had been identified. In 1984 the Miner County Soil Survey book had been completed, published, and distributed. New 'Entering Miner Conservation District' signs were installed. The Conservation District started donating to the Endowment Fund. School Activities included Conservation Week for 3rd through 6th grade, 5th & 6th Grade Scrapbook Contest, 5th & 6th Grade Arbor Day Essay, & Arbor Day Presentations. Miner Conservation District hosted the National Soils Judging Contest in 1988. The Conservation District participated in the Soil & Moisture Clinic, Quad States Awards, Legislative Dinners, Soil Stewardship Breakfast, Siouxland Banquet, Miner County Farm Show. Articles on conservation were being published in the local paper along with radio announcements. A supervisor attended National Convention in 1989 to Salt Lake City, Utah, and also participated in the 'Capital for A Day'.

1990's: Martin Reisch left the board in 1991 and was replaced by Patrick Keleher. 1993 brought two more changes to the board, Chester Wombacker and Sigurd Andenas left the board and were replaced by Marvel Wombacker and Kevin Erickson. In 1996 Merwyn Walter left the board and was replaced by Dale Shumaker. Kevin Erickson left the board in 1999 and Donald Threadgold joined the board. Lisa Garry was hired as Conservation District manager in 1992. Tami Moore replaced Lisa in 1993. Tree planting rates went to \$2.75/RR for tree and \$3.25/RR for shrub plantings. Tree planting acres were as low as 37 acres in 1992, and ended with 139 acres in 1999. Tree Care Awards were honored at the Annual Banquet. A pickup and trailer were purchased for hauling the tractor and tree planter. In 1994 a tree planter was purchased from Charles Mix Conservation District. The Conservation District continued to provide cultivation until '98 when the tree-ro-weeder and disk were sold. Tree spraying services continued until the Conservation District purchased a 4-Wheeler and sprayer to rent to producers for spraying trees in '98. A John Deere No-Till drill was purchased in '94 with the assistance of the SD Conservation Commission Revolving Loan Program. This drill use ranged from 1,326 acres to as many as 2,183 acres per year. Two 10' Haybuster Grass Drills were purchased in '96, with the assistance of Ducks Unlimited (24%), Fish & Wildlife (25%), and GF&P (25%). Each year the John Deere drill was traded for a new one. In 1999 a 15' No-Till Tye Grass Drill was purchased. Use of the Haybuster drills ranged from 515 acres in '97 to 1811 acres in '99. The Conservation District provided Plateau Herbicide for producers to purchase in '99. 'Scope & Effect' was started and completed in the 1990's. HU Plans were completed. School activities included Conservation Scrapbook Contest, Arbor Day Presentations, Arbor Day Essays, Photo Contest, Conservation Speech Contest, 5th Grade Field Days, Conservation Week at the Schools, Scholarships to Conservation Camp, and Leaf Booklets. Community Activities included: Farm & Home Show Booths, Soil & Water

Stewardship, 4-H Conservation Awards, Homecoming Parade Float Entries, Extravaganza Parade Entries, Reduced Till Workshops, Annual No-Till Workshops, Grazing Workshops, and the Quad States Awards Banquet. In 1993 Standardized Bookkeeping for all Conservation Districts was established with the In-House Accounting Program, later in '97 Quick Books Pro was the new standardized bookkeeping program. Two board members were honored with the 'Endowment Fund'. Chester Wombacker was honored in 1992, and Merwyn Walter was honored in 1995. In 1993 Supervisor Merwyn Walter was honored with 'Eminent Farmer of the Year'. US Fish & Wildlife became big partners with the Conservation District in conservation projects and cost-share in the early 90's. 1995 brought the reorganization of USDA, changing the Soil Conservation Service to the Natural Resource Conservation Service. Up to 1996, Supervisors had only received compensation for special meetings attended. '96 was the start of supervisor per diem. Conservation Districts legally changed their name from Soil Conservation Districts to Conservation Districts. A huge project started in '96 was the Abandoned Well Sealing Project. Grant funds were received from the S.D. Conservation Commission, DENR, and East Dakota Water Development District. Other grants were: Technical Assistance, Tree Planting, Renovation of Sod Bound Belts & Ponds Projects. Miner Conservation District hosted the Vermillion River Watershed Authority Meeting and helped establish the 'Unified National Strategy Animal Feeding Operations' manual. Conservation Districts in South Dakota purchased the Big Sioux Nursery from the State of SD at a rate of \$250/Conservation District. The net worth of the Conservation District increased from \$45,000 to \$149,500 in the '90's.

2000's: In 2003 Gilbert Behm left the board, and Marvin Kizer joined. In 2007, Patrick Keleher left the board and Tim Clarke replaced him. Marvel Wombacker left the board in 2007. Julie Calmus joined the Board of Supervisors in 2009, taking Marvel's position. Tami Moore was the Conservation District Manager. Tree planting rates ended at \$4.00/RR and \$4.40/RR. 2003 topped the acres of tree planted at 197 acres, with the low in '08 with 57 acres. A new pickup and new 4-wheeler were purchased for tree planting. The Conservation District continued to honor Tree Care Award winners at their Annual Banquet. We had an enclosed sprayer made for the front of our 4-Wheeler for spraying trees. Our Water Quality Protection Project (Abandoned Well Sealing) continued this decade, and ended in '09 and ended with the 254 abandoned wells sealed through 5 different grants. The Long Range Plan was up-dated in '02. The Conservation District had their own e-mail address in 2000. The John Deere drill rentals continued to be successful with annual acreages ranging from 1,995 acres to 2,959 acres. We are trading the JD every other year. Rates for the drills remained the same at \$7/acre. The Tye Grass drill was sold and replaced with a new Great Plains Grass Drill with a no-till attachment. 2002 brought the purchase of 45' Land Roller, the decade started at use of 648 acres and ended with use of 4,111 acres. After months of research and discussions the Erosion & Sediment Control Standard was updated and approved through public meetings. Donations were made to the World War II Memorial in memory of Chester Wombacker (former supervisor), Houdek (state soil) Soil Exhibit for the Smithsonian Institute in Washington, DC, Precipitation Data Collection for Miner County, and the Veteran War Memorial in memory of Miner County's fallen soldiers: Marlin Callies, Roger Kvernes, Tommy Callies, and Roy Johnson. Two supervisors were honored with the President's Endowment Fund Award: Gilbert Behm and Patrick Keleher. The Conservation District continued with Legislative Coffee and sponsored Grass Seeding Workshops, Grazing Workshops, Vegetative Treatment Field Day, and Grazing Tours. We created a Mass Fatality Response & Management Plan. Grants the Conservation District is involved in: Animal Waste Management, Tall Grass Prairie Conservation, Living Snow Fence, Concentrated Animal Feeding Operations, Shelterbelt Plantings, Vegetative Treatment Systems for Research Projects, Water Quality for Livestock, Tree Planting Renovations, Resource Technician, Conservation Education & Information, Governor's Community Tree Planting, and Riparian Buffer & Feedlot Tree Planting. The Conservation

District has stayed involved in all the same education projects but added 2nd grade Coloring Projects for the Farm & Home Show, Earth Day Parties, and participation in the Big Sioux Water Festival; Conservation Week at the school was eliminated. Community Activities added were: SD Gypsy Moth Trapping Project, Parade of Trees at Courthouse and the Holiday Parade. The highlights for this decade included our 50th Anniversary (which included a cookies & pop open house for the entire year of '02) and a visit from Governor Rounds to promote our Community Tree Planting Project. The net worth of the Conservation District increased to \$245,594.

2010's: This decade has brought with it tougher financial times. Between 2010 and 2012 tree plantings have ranged from 20 acres in '10 to 100 acres in 2012. John Deere Drill usage is at about 1,500 acres per year. A new Mandako Land Roller was purchased – the old Degelman Land Roller was sold for more than we originally purchased it for. Land roller use has decreased to less than 3,000 acres per year, as many producers now have land rollers. A new service was added: Tractor, Driver, and Grass Seeding – this has been great and has brought in much needed revenue to the Conservation District. New 'Entering Miner Conservation District' signs are being installed at county lines. Grant Projects include: Shelterbelt Renovation, Shelterbelt Plantings, Resource Technician, Water Quality for Livestock, Conservation Education & Public Awareness, Replacement Cedar, Cover Crops, Livestock Protection & Watering, and Information & Education Workshops. Net worth is steady and increasing slightly each year.

The Miner Conservation District has always been very fortunate to have a dedicated Board of Supervisors – always full of new ideas for improving and maintaining the Conservation District. The following is the number of years served as a Board of Supervisor: M.H. (Merwyn) Walter – 44 years, Sigurd Andenas - 41 years, Gilbert Behm – 38 years, E.W. Shove – 25 years, Herron Runestad – 23 years, Patrick Keleher – 16 years, Dale Shumaker – 16 years (still serving), Russel Duxbury – 13 years, Donald Threadgold – 13 years (still serving), Chester Wombacker – 12 years, Marvin Kizer – 9 years (still serving), H.L. (Harley) Riden – 6 years, Kevin Erickson – 6 years, Henry Loe – 5 years, Martin Reisch – 5 years, Tim Clarke – 5 years (still serving), John Raesly – 4 years, and Julie Calmus – 3 years (still serving). The longest terms served as District Manager (District Secretary) have been Tami Moore – 19 years (still serving), Kathleen Carlson – 6 years, Juanita Henderson – 5 years, Chris Laible – 4 years, and Jan Holland – 3 years.