

Perkins County Conservation District (No. 65)

History from 1969 publication:

Perkins County is located in the Northwest corner of South Dakota, the second county east from the Montana line and is the second largest county in the state. It has always been primarily a livestock county, with many small farms scattered over the county. The county was created in 1908 and organized in 1909.

The north part of the County drains into the Grand River, both in the main stem and the south fork. The south half drains into the Moreau River through Rabbit Creek and Antelope Creek and some other smaller creeks.

Topography ranges from steep to undulating to rolling and the soils range from clay loams to loams and sandy loams, and are best suited for ranching in most areas; and with the more level used for limited cropping, when properly protected from wind and water erosion.

The north one-third of the county is strong rolling to undulating and is suited primarily for livestock production. Through the middle of the county, extending from east to west, is a steep to undulating area suitable for ranching and cash grain. The south about two-fifths of the county is undulating to rolling and suitable primarily for ranching.

About one-quarter million acres in the southeast corner of Perkins County is included in the Tri-County Conservation District.

The early settlers of the county found a vast area of good grazing land, with low rainfall and poor distribution of livestock water, except along the rivers and streams. They also found lignite coal which provided much of the fuel for homes and ranches.

Over the years, this area had suffered, not only from low rainfall, but from overgrazing of the ranges, resulting in low carrying capacity; and the cropland suffered from wind erosion and some water erosion. The ranchers and farmers were looking for some remedy for these problems. They had observed the work done in some of the surrounding areas, and so in the spring of 1954, the county extension agent called a meeting of a few farmers and ranchers, including the ASC Chairman, a representation of the chamber of Commerce and the Soil Conservation Service. They discussed the possibility of a soil conservation district. They set up a temporary committee to get things rolling. On the committee were Louis C. Miller, Lemmon; O.M. Jerde, Sorum; Ed J. Veal, Chance; Truman Quall, Strool; Harold Boe, Hettinger; Roy McFarland, Hettinger; Elmer Jorgensen, White Butte; Clifford Seidel, Meadow; Virgil Worm, Chance; Art Rolien, Lemmon; and O. Theodore Beckman, Strool.

This group planned a series of meetings to be held the latter part of July at Inland School, Lodge Pole, Strool, White Butte, Coal Springs, Lemmon and Bison, at which the organization and operation of a soil conservation district was explained. At these meetings petitions were signed requesting a hearing on the matter. These meetings were conducted by County Agent Bently and Merle Switzer of the State Extension Service. The hearing was held November 9, 1954, at which the people asked for a chance to vote on the matter.

The referendum was held January 28, 1955, at which time the Conservation District was approved by an 85 percent majority, covering one and a half million acres. As soon thereafter as possible, the five supervisors were chosen. On April 11, 1955, these supervisors met and

completed the organization by selecting officers, preparing the agreements with cooperating agencies and developing their program and plan of work.

The supervisors as chosen were: Truman Quall, Strool, Chairman; O. Theodore Beckman, Strool, Vice-Chairman; Ed J. Veal, Chance, Treasurer; Harold Boe, Ralph; Louis C. Miller, Lemmon; and Elbert Bently, County Agent, Secretary.

The problems confronting the supervisors included:

- Instability of the livestock industry in the county as a result of periodic droughts and an imbalance of livestock numbers and winter forage production;
- The historic one practice conservation program (stock water dam) with complete disregard for other needed conservation practices;
- Lack of awareness of amount and extent of soil and water losses on farms;
- Non existence of an effective conservation education program.

Practices proposed to correct these problems were:

- Promote and establish practices such as water spreading, irrigation, seeding tame hay and pastures, and establishing temporary tame pastures to assure an ample supply of forage for livestock to stabilize the industry;
- Promote the treatment of all lands according to their needs;
- Continuously stress the importance of soil and water losses and resultant benefits of their conservation;
- Establish a program of tours, demonstrations, contests, news stories, annual reports, etc., to affect a good conservation education program at all levels.

This table shows the kinds of practices used and the amounts established by the close of 1967:

Conservation cropping system	181,500	ac.
Crop residue use	145,600	ac.
Stubble mulch fallow	75,000	ac.
Wind strip cropping	72,000	ac.
Grassed waterways	135	ac.
Pasture and hayland plantings	63,000	ac.
Native grass seedings	5,900	ac.
Farmstead windbreaks	5,294	ac.
Water spreading	2,615	ac.
Dams and dugouts	1,827	structures
Range wells	250	wells
Structures for water control	281	units
Cropland converted to grass	16,500	ac.
Diversion ditches and dikes	117,572	L.F.
Irrigation land leveling	332	ac.
Wildlife shelterbelts	61	ac.
Wildlife food plots	45	ac.
Wildlife and recreation land	2,452	ac.
Proper grazing use	825,000	ac.
Land adequately treated	750,000	ac.

Others who were active in promoting the Conservation District organization were: George Smith, Lemmon; O.M. Jerde, Sorum; Roy McFarland, Hettinger; Elmer Jorgensen, White Butte; Clifford Seidle, Meadow; Virgil Worm, Chance; and Art Rolien, Lemmon.

Updated information provided in 2012:

Past and present supervisors

Truman Quaal 1955-1963	Robert Preszler 1971-1980
O. Theodore Beckman 1955-1969	Doug Jerde 1979-1980
Ed Veal 1955–1966	Gayle Evridge 1981-1984
Harold Boe 1955-1956	Roger Brown 1985-1993
Louis Miller 1955-1959	Tim Smith 1987-2002
Robert Mundahl 1956-1966	Dennis Brown 1994-1997
Lyol Mitchell 1959-1979	James W. Anderson 1966-Present
Lester Aaberg 1963-1982	Willard Ottman 1981-Present
LeRoy Jacobs 1966-1968	Ron Harris 1983-Present
Roland L. Miller 1966-1986	Veronica Kari 1997-Present
A.O. Rolien 1969-1976	Greg Fried 2003-Present
Robert Ham 1971-1974	

Past and Present Secretaries

Alberta Lewton 1965-1974	Debbie Kahl 1978-1979
Janet Coe 1975-1976	Nancy Dannenbring 1979-1983
Gladys Jackson 1976-1977	Chris Lutz 1983-1985
Barb Bartell 1977-1978	Susan Anderson 1985–Present

Practices used and amounts established from 1968-present

Tree Planting	4309	ac.
Weed Barrier	1,380,164	L.F.
Grass Seeding (Native, CRP & Pasture & Hayland)	111,606	Ac.
Dams & Dugouts	847	
Wells	417	
Tanks	1,758	
Pipelines	2,743,936	L.F.
Fence	1,462,856	L.F.
Pumping Plant	132	
No-Till	16,375	ac.
Spring Development	28	
Grassed Waterway	163.6	ac.
Grazing Land Mechanical Treatment	1,539	ac.

Other practices were applied but too numerous to list.

In 1955 the Conservation District was organized to help find a remedy for the problems of overgrazing the rangeland, resulting in low carrying capacity and cropland that was suffering from wind and water erosion.

In 2005 the Perkins County Conservation District celebrated 50 years of service by having a booth at the Perkins County Fair.

The Perkins County Soil Survey was completed in 1975 and published in 1980. 1,834,240 acres were surveyed over a 10 year period.

Standards for the Control of Soil Erosion and sedimentation in Perkins County were adopted on June 7, 1979.

The Conservation District hosted Rangeland Days in 2010 and 2011 in Lemmon. We also sponsor Range Camp; Soil Stewardship Week; Arbor Day; Speech Contest; Soil & Moisture Award; Tree Care Award and County Photo Contest.

We have hosted and participated in the Legislative Luncheon to keep our legislators updated with the Conservation Districts activities in our area.

We provide the services of tree planting and laying of weed barrier to the county. In 2009, a new tree shed was constructed with more space and improvements for storing trees. For several years the Conservation District had a no-till drill available for rent to help promote no-till farming. We have now purchased a no-till grass drill to have available for lease.

The Conservation District works with the Fish & Wildlife Service to help with funding on new dams or the repair of existing dams that may not qualify for other cost share programs. We have received numerous grants through the Division of Resource, Conservation & Forestry; State Conservation Commission: DENR; 319 and U.S. Forest Service to help cost-share practices to be implemented on the land for area farmers and ranchers.

The Conservation District has worked with the county and state to put in Living Snow Fences in areas where there were problems with snow blocking the roads.

We have been the lead conservation district since 2004 for managing grants which includes Corson, Dewey, Harding, Perkins, Tri-County and Ziebach in the Northwest Area. We currently have Conservation Commission grants for the NW Area Natural Resource Specialist grant and the NW Tree Planting Grant. We also had a Cottonwood Restoration Grant.