



2008 Annual Report Becker Soil and Water Conservation District

The mission of the Becker SWCD is to develop and promote long range programs that satisfy the conservation needs of the people of the District. With rapidly expanding interests in resource development, it is essential that proper resource management be carried out in the District. The programs will include, but not be limited to proper treatment of each acre of land in Becker County in accordance with its needs. Emphasis will be placed on wind and water erosion and protection practices. Implementation of the Comprehensive Local Water Plan will be administered by the District as well as serving as the Local Government Unit for the 1991 Wetland Conservation Act. Technical assistance is provided by the USDA Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS).

2008 Program Summaries

Staff and supervisors:

2008 saw several changes to our NRCS partner's staff. Soil Conservationist Kevin Geitzen transferred to Marshall County and Grazing Specialist Mark Hayek was relocated to the NRCS Area I Office in Thief River Falls. However, NRCS Soil Conservationist Dan Pazdernik joined our staff in September.

Being an election year, 2008 brought about changes to the District Board of Supervisors. Elected to the board for 2009 – 2012 were Joe Stenger of Height of Land Township and Anthony Beck of Spruce Grove Township.

Staff development and training has long been recognized by the supervisors as an important part of providing the best services to Becker County residents. In 2008, Dist. Technician Ed Clem completed the Minnesota Association of Soil and Water Conservation Districts Leadership Institute. This 8 session, year long commitment was highlighted with a trip to Washington D.C. to meet with lawmakers and discuss conservation issues with them.

In October, staff attended the first BWSR Academy of North. This session provided training opportunities on many of the programs the SWCD administers. Also, Assistant Ag Inspector Marsh Watland gave a presentation on our Comprehensive Weed Management Program at the first annual Invasive Species Conference in Duluth. Three supervisors and three staff attended the Minn. Association of Soil & Water Conservation Districts Annual Conference in St. Paul in December.

Educational & Award Programs:

Educational and awareness programs have long been a part of the Becker SWCD's plans, and 2008 was no exception. The following programs were sponsored or participated in by the District in 2008.

- Sponsored the 41st Annual 5th Grade Conservation Tour at the Ike Fischer Farm near Frazee. Over 400 5th grades students took part over two days to learn about conservation, forestry, wildlife habitat, and water quality.



the Prairie Wetlands Center in Fergus Falls.

- Promoted the observance of Soil Stewardship by providing area churches with liturgy, bulletins, or book marks.
- Organized and conducted an Invasive Weed Species and Conservation Practices Bus Tour for county officials, state legislators and agencies.
- Provided funds and assisted with the Area II Envirothons and the State Envirothon Programs held at

Students shown taking the test as part of 2008 Envirothon

- Presented at and co-sponsored the Ag-in-the-Classroom Program for over 350 area 4th graders. Students were shown the different particles that make up soils and also shown a 3-D map of Minnesota and explained to them the history of the Red River Basin.
- Demonstrated water infiltration rates on different soils types to area 4th graders during the Cormorant Lakes Sportsman Club Outdoor Environmental Days.
- Awarded the 2008 Conservationist of the Year to the John and Mike Schouviller of rural Callaway. The Schouvillers were recognized for their efforts in soil erosion control, feedlot runoff and windbreak plantings.



John & Linda Schouviller were presented with a plaque by the Becker SWCD during the 72nd Minnesota Association of Soil and Water Conservation Districts Annual Conference in St. Paul, Dec. 7th – 9th. Pictured left to right supervisor Duane Grossman, Dist. Adm. Brad Grant, Linda Schouviller, Mike Schouviller, supervisors Jerome Flottesch, and Dale Lubitz, and Dist. Secretary Ginger Flynn.

Cost-share Programs & Conservation Practices Installed:

The Becker SWCD has administered the State Cost-share Program for the Board of Water and Soil Resources since 1977. This program provides cost-share assistance for a variety of conservation practices at a cost-share rate determined by its Board of Supervisors. In 2008 the following conservation practices were installed with state cost-share assistance.

23 windbreaks (field or farmstead) totaling \$22,437.00 in payments.

1 grassed waterway - \$2,423.00 in payment.

2 water retention structures - \$6,620.00 in payments.

12 sediment and erosion control basins for 6 landowners - \$5,763.00 in payments.

4 abandoned well sealing's - \$878.00 in

payments



Drain tile being installed as part of an erosion and sediment control system. Once tile is in place the inlet and dike are installed to allow for a controlled release of water flowing down the hillside and reducing soil erosion.

Federal Programs:

The Becker SWCD works closely with our NRCS partners to carryout a variety of federal programs such as Conservation Reserve Program (CRP), Continuous Conservation Reserve Program (CCRP), Wetland Reserve Program (WRP), and Environmental Quality Incentive Program (EQIP). In 2008, thirty four EQIP contracts were approved totaling \$655,000. The following practices were contracted during 2008 through the EQIP program:

Water & Sediment Control Basins – 16

Cover Crop – 1

Grazing Systems – 4

Irrigation System – 1

Organic Conversion – 1

Ag Waste System - 1

Forestry Practices – 3

Invasive Species Control – 1

Conservation Tillage – 5

Manure System Abandonment – 2

Local Water Management Plan:

The purpose of the Local Water Management Program is to protect water resources through the adoption and implementation of local water management plans that are based on local priorities. The first 5 year water plan for Becker County was approved in 1991 and updated in 1997 and again in 2005. The program is funded through a state grant and local county levy as a match. A portion of the funding provides staff to the SWCD to carryout water plan activities. One of the most popular programs of the local water plan is the cost-sharing with landowners to seal abandoned wells on their properties. In 2008, eight abandoned wells were sealing with water plan funds providing \$1,950.00 in cost-share assistance.

Wetland Conservation Act:

The Wetland Conservation Act became a Minnesota law in 1992; and, was passed to maintain and protect Minnesota’s wetlands and the benefits they provide. Local units of governments such as cities, counties, watershed management organizations, townships, soil and water conservation districts implement the act locally. The Becker SWCD administers the act in Becker County for all lands in the county and for all the cities.

The law requires anyone proposing to drain, fill or excavate a wetland first to try to avoid disturbing the wetland, second to try to minimize any impact on the wetland, and finally to replace any lost wetland acres, functions and values. Certain wetland activities are exempt from the act, allowing projects with minimal impacts, or projects located on land where certain pre-established land uses are present to proceed without regulation.

In 2008 the following activities relating to the Wetland Conservation Act were addressed by the District:

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| Requests from Landowners – 144 | Replacement Plans approved – 5 |
| Acres impacted via approved replacement plans 0.50 | Exemption issued – 15 |
| No-loss Determinations – 9 | Potential violations investigated – 9 |
| Cease and Desist Orders and Restoration Order issued – 3 | |



Nelsons Bros. wetland restoration site November 2007



Nelson Bros. wetland restoration summer 2008.

Tree Program:

The Becker SWCD annually provides landowners an opportunity to purchase conservation grade tree stock to establish farmstead windbreaks, field windbreaks, and wildlife plantings. In 2008, two hundred fifty landowners purchased over 34,500 from the District. Of that figure twenty one installed windbreaks that were eligible for state cost-share funding.

No-till Drill Rental:

The Becker SWCD has a John Deere Model 1560, 15 foot no till drill for rent to landowner desiring to do no-till seeding on their farms. In 2008 seventeen landowners rented the Districts drill and seeded a total of 1,352 acres. Cost-share assistance may be available for no-till seeding through the

federal Environmental Quality Incentive Program. Landowners should stop by our office for further information on this program.

County Ag Inspector Program:

Since 2006, the Becker SWCD has served as the County Ag Inspector for Becker County. In addition to carrying out the duties of noxious weed control in Becker County, the District has actively pursued a variety of grant opportunities to develop programs to combat new invasive species that are being found throughout the County. In 2007, the District was awarded a \$45,000 grant from the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation to develop a Comprehensive Weed Management Area Plan for the County. The primary focus for the grant program has been to combat the spread of invasive species in the County. 2008 marked the second year of the grant program. A second grant totaling \$75,000 was also awarded by the Foundation for FY09-10. These funds will be used to continue the invasive weed control program along with the development of a gravel pit certification program. \$24,000 was also received from the Board of Water and Soil Resources through their Cooperative Weed Management Area Grants Program.



Assistant County Ag Inspector Marsha Watland reviews the Noxious Weed Law with Township Officials during the annual township weed meeting held in Callaway in March of 2008.

Hay Creek Watershed Buffer Initiative:

In 2008, the Buffalo-Red Watershed District was awarded an \$185,000 Clean Water Legacy Grant to address erosion and sedimentation occurring in the Stinking Lake/Hay Creek Watershed area in western Becker County. As a partner to the grant, the Becker SWCD and NRCS staffs have been contacting landowners within the watershed and taking sign-ups to install such practices as buffer strips, wetland restorations, and sediment and erosion control basins. In 2008, landowners in the watershed have committed to install a total of 32 sediment and erosion control basins, 3 wetland

restorations, 11 miles of filter strips totaling 88 acres. Survey and designs and CRP Plans were completed in 2008 with installation scheduled for the spring and summer of 2009.

Agricultural Best Management Loan Program (AgBMP):

Since 1995, the Becker SWCD has participated in the AgBMP Loan Program. This program makes available low interest loans to qualifying landowners who wish to install a variety of conservation and water quality practices. Eligible practices for loans include conservation tillage equipment, erosion control practices, upgrading of septic systems, and ag waste systems and equipment. In 2008 the following loans were approved through the AgBMP program.

Ag Waste Facility – \$39,000.00

Tillage Equipment - \$80,000.00

Septic System upgrades - \$15,201.00