



2009 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 also provided by the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS).

2009 Supervisors:

Chairman – Don Lefebvre – District 4
Vice-Chairman – Jerome Flottemesch – District 1
Secretary – Duane Grossman – District 3
Treasurer – Tony Beck – District 5
Member – Joe Stenger – District 2

District Staff

Brad Grant, Dist. Administrator
Ginger Flynn, Dist. Secretary
Dean Hendrickson, Dist. Technician
Ed Clem, Dist. Technician
Marsha Watland, Part-time Sec. & Asst. Ag Inspector

NRCS Staff

Ed Musielewicz, Dist. Conservationist
Jeff Norby, Soil Conservation Technician
Dan Pazdernik, Soil Conservationist

Other Staff

John Voz, Wetland Restoration Specialist
Contract Ducks Unlimited
Phil Doll, Wetland Restoration Specialist
Minn. Waterfowl Association

2009 Program Summaries

Supervisor Activities:

- Welcomed newly elected supervisors Tony Beck and Joe Stenger to the Board.
- Approved payment of Minn. Assn. of Soil and Water Conservation District 2009 dues and the National Assn. of Conservation Districts dues for 2009.
- Supervisors attended four Minn. Assn. of Soil & Water Conservation District (MASWCD) Area I meetings in 2009.
- Met on two occasions with representatives from the Wild Rice River Watershed District to discuss possible priority areas and program incentives that the WRRWD would like to develop to partner with the SWCD in the watershed.
- Supervisor Tony Beck attended the new supervisors' orientation training held in St. Cloud, July 14th & 15th.
- Co-sponsored the publication of a Becker County Shoreline Guide to Lake Stewardship.
- Supervisor Don Lefebvre represented the Becker SWCD on the WesMin RC&D Council in 2009.
- Approved publication of a new Becker County plat book at the August meeting.
- Attended the Buffalo-Red River Watershed District Tour in September.
- The Becker SWCD approved a RC&D proposal to install additional dry fire hydrants in the Frazee and Carsonville fire districts in cooperation with WesMin RC&D. The hydrants will be installed in 2010 if funding is approved.
- Supervisor Flottemewch served on the CTAC committee, whose charge was to re-structure the Non-point Engineering Assistance Program.
- The Becker SWCD was approved by Red River Valley Conservation Service Area Joint Powers Board to serve as the as host District and fiscal agent for the new Non Point Engineering Assistance Program Area. Supervisor Flottemesch was elected chairman of the Joint Powers Board.
- Supervisor Flottemesch served on the MASWCD Resolution Committee and attended the April and August committee meetings in St. Paul.
- Selected the Buffalo-Red Watershed District as the Conservationist of the Year for 2009.
- Applied for the following grants; \$82,788 in Clean Water Funds, \$41,220 in Native Buffer Cost-share funds, and \$15,000 in Cooperative Weed Management funds.
- Four supervisors and two staff attended the MASWCD State Conference in Duluth in December.

Educational Programs, Awards and Staff Development:

Educational programs have long been recognized as an important part of the Becker SWCD programs. In 2009, the District board of supervisors authorized and/or sponsored the following activities:

- Sponsored the 42st Annual 5th Grade Conservation Tour at the Ike Fischer Farm near Frazee. Over 400 5th grade students took part over two days to learn about conservation, forestry, wildlife habitat, and water quality.
- Contacted area churches on the observance of Soil Stewardship Week in April.



Senior High students listen to presentation at the Forestry station during the 2009 Senior Envirothon held May 8th at the Prairie Wetlands Center in Fergus Falls, Minn.

- Presented at and co-sponsored the Ag-in-the Classroom Program. Over 300 area 4th graders took part in this program in March. Many volunteers and agencies assist annually to bring an agricultural learning experience into the classroom. The SWCD/NRCS presentation was on soils. Students were shown the different particles that make up soil and also shown a 3-D map of Minn. and the Red River Basin and explained how the basin was formed.

- Provided funds and staff assisted with the Area II Senior Envirothon held May 8th and the Junior Envirothon held October 7th at the Prairie Wetlands Center in Fergus Falls.
- Demonstrated water infiltration rates on different soils types to area 4th graders during the Cormorant Lakes Sportsman Club Outdoor Environmental Days, October 8th & 9th.
- Awarded the 2009 Conservationist of the Year Award to the Buffalo-Red River Watershed District Board of Manager for their support and funding for conservation projects in areas of the watershed that are in Becker County and the partnership that resulted in the Hay Creek Sediment sub-watershed project.



Buffalo-Red River Watershed District Board of Managers (L-R) E. Robert Olson, Jerry VanAmburg, Curtis Nelson, Roger Ellefson, and John Hanson.

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 2009 the following training opportunities were attended by various staff members:

- Ginger attended the Spring Administration training April 7-8.
- Dist. Tech. Ed Clem attended the following wetland training sessions in 2009:
 - Wetland delineators training June 9th in Winger
 - Army Corp Wetland Manual training June 30th, Bemidji
 - Wetland Conservation Act (WCA) new rule July 15th, Thief River Falls
 - Wetland plant ID workshop, August 4th, Fergus Falls
 - WCA 101 BWSR Academy, October 22nd.
- Marsha attended the County Ag Inspectors Annual Conference, July 27-29th
- Four staff members attended the BWSR Program Training Academy held Nov. 2nd-4th.

Conservation Practices Applied:



One of 57 water and sediment erosion control basins that was installed in 2009 in Becker County.

State Cost-share Program:

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 to landowners to install a variety of conservation practices, such as farmstead windbreaks, erosion control practices, abandoned well sealing, ag waste management, critical area seeding and others. Cost-share rates are approved by the Becker SWCD Board of Supervisors. In 2009 the following conservation practices were installed with state cost-share assistance:

Practices	Number of Contracts	Cost-share Provided
Abandoned well sealing	6	\$ 1,065.00
Farmstead Shelterbelts	20	22,655.00
Water and Sediment Control Basins	4 (21 basins)	4,152.00
Native Buffer Cost-share Program	1	224.00
Hay Creek Buffer Program	2	1,536.00
Critical Area Seeding	<u>1</u>	624.00
Total	34 contracts	\$ 30,256.00

Federal Programs:

The Becker SWCD works closely with our NRCS partners to carry out a variety of



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

In 2009 payments to landowner for installing conservation practices totaled \$443,289.00. Practices installed were the following:

Tillage Practices	2,688 ac.	Tree/Grass Plantings	73 ac.
Nutrient Mgt.	2,966 ac.	Cover Crop	1,915 ac.
Pest Mgt.	1,869 ac.	Fence	44,880 ft.
Pasture Planting	178 ac.	Subsurface Drain	39,203 ft.
Sediment Basins	54 Basins	Prescribed Grazing	295 ac.
Pipeline Pasture Watering	12,986 ft.		



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 2009, \$1,242 in cost-share payments were made to seal 8 abandoned wells with cost-share funds being provided with Local Water Plan funds. \$500 of Water Plan funds were also provided toward the publication of the Shoreland Guide for Becker County in cooperation with several other organizations and agencies.

Wetland Conservation Act:

The Wetland Conservation Act (WCA) 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 2009 the following activities relating to the WCA were addressed by the District:

Requests from Landowners –390

Acres impacted via approved replacement plans 0.50

No-loss Determinations – 5

Cease and Desist Orders and Restoration Order issued – 1

Replacement Plans approved – 2

Exemption issued –14

Potential violations investigated – 6

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 2009, two hundred thirty five landowners purchased 31,700 trees from the District. Of that figure, twenty landowners installed windbreaks that were eligible for state cost-share funding totaling \$22,655.00.

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 2009, seventeen landowners rented the District's 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.

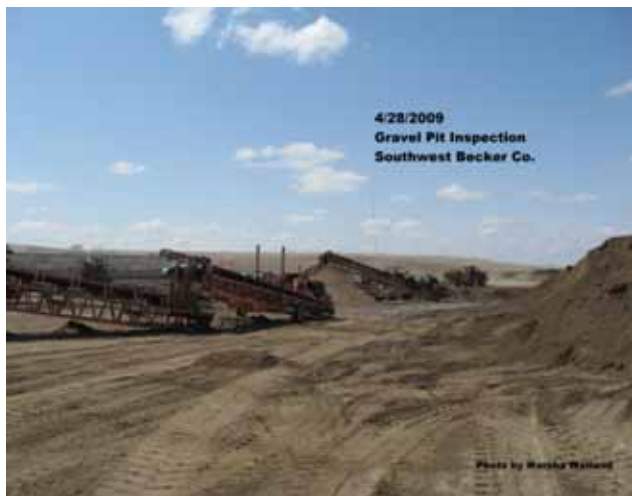
County Ag Inspector Program:

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 2009, the District was awarded a \$24,000 grant from the Board of Water and Soil Resources to continue our Comprehensive Weed Management Area Plan and program for the County. The primary focus for the grant program has been to combat the spread of invasive species in the County. These funds will be used to continue the invasive weed control. Also in 2009, a gravel pit certification program was started to assist in preventing the spread of noxious and invasive plants.

2009 Ag Inspector Program Summary:

- Began implementing a Gravel Pit Certification Program in April. Twenty gravel pits signed a 7-year contract and were inspected twice with 140 acres being treated with herbicide.
- The Annual Township Noxious Weed Training meeting was held on March 25th in Callaway.
- Presented 7 power point presentations on the Invasive/Noxious Weed program in Becker County.
- Shared program information with 4 counties wishing to establish an invasive plant treatment program.
- Provide program information to the public via 3 newspaper ads and 1 radio broadcast on noxious and invasive weeds.
- Attended the Annual County Ag Inspectors short course training.
- Marsha Watland was elected to the Minn. Assn. of County Ag Inspectors Board representing Northwest Minnesota.
- Conducted 5 seed inspections, which included 17 seed samples, which had 3 violations.
- Made 75 landowner contacts concerning weed control issues. Worked with township weed inspectors to follow through with complaints received.
- Established 4 herbicide treatment sites involving Dow AgroScience and Dupont located in 4 townships.
- Conducted 4 township weed tours.
- Worked with 16 landowners to treat 36 sites on 748 acres with leafy spurge flea beetles.
- Harvested 132,000 leafy spurge beetles from sites in Becker County. Provided 60,000 of these to Minn. Dept. of Ag to disperse in Minnesota.
- Treated 1,624 acres with 9,300 spotted knapweed weevils on 30 sites in cooperation with 16 landowners.
- Treated 1,278 acres for invasive plants through or herbicide treatment program.
- Worked with 72 landowners for invasive plant treatment, 22 townships for road treatment and MNDOT for 217 acres mapped for road treatment of invasive plants.

- Held 2 meetings of the Pulling Together In Becker County Committee.
- Updated our web site with herbicide application rates specific to invasive program results.
- Received 26 of 38 Annual Township Weed Treatment Reports. In 2009, townships spent \$15,943 on herbicide for 180 miles of road treated and \$32,791 for mowing 782 miles.



In 2009 a gravel pit certification program was developed to help reduce the spread of noxious and invasive species.



Spotted knapweed, such as this site, are being treated with knapweed weevils for bio control.

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 contacted landowners within the watershed to get interest for installing such practices as buffer strips, wetland restorations, and sediment and erosion control basins. In 2009, 11 miles of filter strips in 32 fields, 20.9 acres of wetland restoration, and 25 water and sediment control basins were installed. The project will continue in 2010 to complete an additional 24 water and sediment control basins and 8 miles of filter strips.

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 2009, the following loans were approved through the AgBMP program:

Tillage Equipment 2 loans totaling - \$ 80,000.00
 Septic System upgrades 7 loans totaling- \$ 46,840.00