



2010 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).

2010 Supervisors:

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

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 (Jan.-May)

Other Staff

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

2010 Program Summaries

Supervisor Activities:

- Elected Duane Grossman as Chairman for 2010 and 11, and Tony Beck as vice-chairman.
- Approved payment of Minn. Assn. of Soil and Water Conservation District 2010 dues and the National Assn. of Conservation Districts dues for 2010.
- Adopted the Becker County Local Water Management Plan as the Comprehensive Plan for the Becker SWCD.
- The Becker SWCD/NRCS Field Office received an outstanding project award at the WesMin RC&D Annual meeting for the biomass workshop held in conjunction with the White Earth Tribal Natural Resources Department.
- A new Becker County Plat Book and Atlas sponsored by the SWCD arrived in January. The atlas is on sale at several locations.
- Reviewed and approved the 2011 Annual Plan of Operations.
- Supervisors attended three Minn. Assn. of Soil & Water Conservation District (MASWCD) Area I meetings in 2010.
- Approved the establishment of a Health Care Savings Plan for employees through the Minnesota State Retirement System.
- Supervisors Beck, Lefebvre, Flottemesch, Grossman, Dist. Conservationist Ed Musielewicz, and Dist. Adm. Brad Grant attended the BWSR Summer Tour held in the Buffalo-Red River Watershed. One of the tour stops featured the Hay Creek Watershed Project.
- Approved to serve as the fiscal agent for the Big Toad Lake Association Healthy Lakes and Rivers Partnership Grant.
- Supervisor Lefebvre, County Commissioner Schram and Dist. Adm. Brad Grant attended the Water Management Summit in July.
- Supervisors Flottemesch and Grossman attended the Buffalo-Red River Watershed District Tour in September.
- Supervisors Jerome Flottemesch and Don Lefebvre were re-elected to the Becker SWCD Board of Supervisors for four year terms in the November general election.
- Supervisor Flottemesch was re-elected Chairman Red River Valley Conservation Service Area Joint Powers Board for 2011.
- Supervisor Flottemesch served on the MASWCD Resolution Committee.
- Approved working with the Pelican River Watershed District to apply shore land grant.
- Selected Candace and Kevin Lunde as the 2010 Conservationist of the Year for Becker County. The Lunde's were recognized at a noon luncheon honoring all county conservationists from throughout the state during the MASWCD Annual Conference, Dec. 5-7 in St. Paul.
- Adopted a policy that charges for engineering services provided by the RRVCSA engineering staff when no other funds are available for these services.
- Recognized Dist. Adm. Brad Grant for his 40 years of service to the District.
- Supervisor Flottemesch was appointed to the Water Summit Committee.
- Applied for and was awarded \$161,900 of Clean Water Legacy grants for sediment and erosion projects in the Hay Creek Project area, and the Campbell Creek Area to be installed in 2011.
- Authorized completing the Conservation Reserve Program Plans in cooperation with MASWCD and NRCS.
- Five supervisors and two staff attended the MASWCD State Conference in St. Paul, December 5th – 7th.

Conservation Practice Application:

2010 was a busy year for applying conservation measures in Becker County. A total of 32 state cost-share contracts were approved for payment totaling \$35,727.00. An additional \$9,600.00 was provided by the Buffalo-Red River Watershed District to augment share cost-share funds.

State Cost-share Program Summary

Practices	# of Contracts	Total Cost-share
Abandoned well sealing	9	\$ 2,075.00
Farmstead Shelterbelts	11	12,575.00
Water and Sediment Control Basins	8 (Including BRRWD funds)	18,113.00
Native Buffer Cost Share Program	5	10,060.00
Rain Gardens	1	750.00
Wetland Restoration	1	1,474.00
Total	35 contracts	\$ 45,047.00

Federal Programs

The Becker SWCD works closely with our Federal NRCS partners to assist in carrying out a variety of conservation programs in Becker County. In 2010, 91 applications were received for various conservation programs. Of that figure, 49 were approved for funding totaling \$1.48 million dollars, of which \$592,665.00 in payments were made in 2010 for the following conservation practices.

Tillage Practices	1,486 ac.	Tree/Grass Plantings	60 ac.
Nutrient Mgt.	2,024 ac.	Cover Crop	1,005 ac.
Pasture Planting	306 ac.	Fencing	80,008 ft.
Sediment Basins	40 basins	Subsurface Drain	15,176 ft.
Pipeline Pasture Watering	32,978 ft.	Prescribed Grazing	732 ac.
Conservation Stewardship	10,125 ac.		



Gully's like these can be eliminated with the installation of water and sediment control basins.



Water and sediment control basin project tile outlet, enveloped in rock before backfilling.



Typical tile inlet and dike of a water and sediment control basin.



Once tile inlet and basins are completed gullies can be filled in and farmed.



New Project:

In 2010, the Becker SWCD received a request from landowners on Island Lake for assistance in installing a rain garden to reduce runoff and sediments from the surrounding impervious area and upland. Cost-share for the project was provided through the Native Buffer Cost-share Program.

As the rain garden project was a new practice for us, technical assistance was requested from the East Otter Tail SWCD Shoreland Specialist Steve Henry. Steve provided guidance on design and plant selection for the project. As the requests for this type of practice is expected to increase in Becker County, it is hoped that a shoreland specialist position can be created in Becker County in the future to assist property owners in run-off management practices for lake shore areas.



Un-obstructed runoff from impervious surface and surrounding area flowing directly into Island Lake.



Rain garden is shaped and graded to receive runoff and trap sediments from entering the lake.



Final grading and landscaping before plants are placed.



Over 200 plants of various species are planted in the rain garden to provide a variety of color all season long.



Grassed Waterway:

With the installation of water and sediment control basins, a practice that has not been used as much in recent years is the Grassed Waterway practice. This practice basically takes an eroding gully, stabilizes the grade, re-shapes the bottom to a width that will handle the amount of contributing water, gradual side slopes are constructed and seeded down to grasses to control erosion. This past construction season, the Becker SWCD/NRCS office designed and supervised construction of one of the largest grassed waterways to be installed in Becker County in recent years. Total length of the waterway was one half mile with a contributing watershed of 1,300 acres.



Shaping the bottom of waterway and side slopes. Average top width was 80ft. bottom width 20ft. with 8:1 side slopes.



Eroded outlet along highway 59 prior to construction.



Outlet after construction. This portion was in the Hwy. 59 right of way and was completed by MnDOT.



Outlet leading under Hwy. 59 prior to construction.



Completed outlet under Hwy. 59.



Watershed Buffer Initiative: Hay Creek

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. 2010 marked the second year of construction of conservation practices in the project area. Below is a summary of the total project since the project began.

- **Size of Project Area in Becker County = 9-10 sq. mi.**
- **Number of Water and Sediment Erosion Control Basins installed = 45**
- **Acres of Native Buffers installed = 167**
- **Total cost = \$493,640**
- **CRP funds provided = \$232,340**
- **Clean Water Legacy funds provided = \$185,000**
- **Buffalo-Red River Watershed District funds = \$50,000**
- **Landowners cost = \$26,300**



Local Water Management Plan:

In 2010, the Becker SWCD updated the implementation portion of the Becker County 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. This was an update to the 5 year implementation schedule of the existing 10 year plan that runs through 2014. The update was authorized by the Becker County Board of Commissioners and approved by the Minnesota Board of Water and Soil Resources in October of 2010. The complete plan can be found on our web site by going to www.co.becker.mn.us, and click on SWCD site.



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 cities in the county. The law requires anyone proposing to drain, fill or excavate a wetland first try to avoid disturbing the wetland,



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 2010 the following activities relating to the WCA were addressed by the District:

- Requests from Landowners –193**
- Acres impacted via approved replacement plans 0.40**
- No-loss Determinations – 1**
- Cease and Desist Orders and Restoration Order issued – 1**
- Replacement Plans approved – 1**
- Exemption issued –6**
- Potential violations investigated – 3**



Tree Program & No-till Drill Rental:

The Becker SWCD annually provides landowners an opportunity to purchase conservation grade tree stock to establish farmstead windbreaks, field windbreaks, and wildlife plantings. In 2010, two hundred twenty three landowners purchased 28,800 trees from the District. Of that figure, eleven landowners installed windbreaks that were eligible for state cost-share funding totaling \$12,575.00. A promotion Tree Days was held Feb. 23rd & 24th.

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 2010, eight landowners rented the District’s drill and seeded a total of 570 acres. Cost-share assistance may be available for no-till seeding through the Federal Environmental Quality Incentive Program.



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 2010, the following loans were approved through the AgBMP program:

Tillage Equipment - 1 loans totaling	\$ 45,000
Septic System upgrades - 2 loans totaling	\$ 16,159
Ag Waste Facility - 1 loan	\$ 52,200
Tillage Equipment - 1 loan	<u>\$ 60,000</u>
Total loans approved	\$ 173,359

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, the District has actively pursued a variety of grant opportunities to help combat new invasive species that are being found throughout the County.

2010 Ag Inspector Program Summary:

- The Gravel Pit Certification Program is in its' second year. We went from 20 gravel pits participating in 2009, to 41 gravel pits being certified in 2010.
- 20 Gravel pit operations have signed a 7-year contract and were inspected twice with 353 acres being treated with herbicide and/or mechanical treatment. In 2009, there were 255 acres treated.
- There are 35 townships, cities and our county who have signed resolutions to purchase from certified gravel pits only. This is up from 25 in 2009.
- Annual Township Noxious Weed Training meeting was held on March 15th 2010 in Callaway.
- Presented 6 power point presentations on the Invasive/Noxious Weed, Biological Control and Gravel Pit Certification Program in Becker County.
- Shared program information with 4 counties wishing to establish an invasive plant treatment program.
- Provided program information to the public via three newspaper articles and three radio broadcasts on noxious and invasive weeds.
- Set up four Invasive Plant Tours in Becker County on July 13th and 14th. These tours were open to township and county officials along with landowners
- Attended the Annual County Ag Inspectors short course training in Worthington.
- Marsha Watland was elected to the Minn. Assn. of County Ag Inspectors Board.
- Conducted 4 seed inspections, which included 17 seed samples, which had 3 violations.
- Made 30 landowner contacts concerning weed control issues. Worked with township weed inspectors' to follow through with complaints received.
- Monitored 4 herbicide treatment sites involving Dow Agro Science and DuPont located in 4 townships.
- Conducted 6 township weed tours.
- Worked with 15 landowners to treat 37 sites on 681 acres with leafy spurge beetles.
- Harvested 83,000 leafy spurge beetles from sites in Becker County. Provided 16,000 of these to U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service to disperse in Becker County.
- Spotted Knapweed treatment on 1,807 acres with 9,319 spotted knapweed weevils placed on 42 sites in cooperation with 19 landowners.
- Harvested 307 Spotted Knapweed Seedhead Weevils.
- Treated 1,012 acres for invasive plants through our herbicide treatment program.
- Worked with 32 landowners for invasive plant treatment, 22 townships for road treatment and MNDOT for 104 acres mapped for road treatment of invasive plants.
- Held 2 meetings of the Pulling Together in Becker County Committee.



Nicole Wallace, NRCS Trainee assists with Leafy Spurge Beetle collection for biological control placement.

Ag Inspector Program Cont.

- Updated our web site with herbicide application rates specific to invasive program results, Cooperative Weed Management Area Steering Committee, and gravel pit certification.
- Received 32 of 37 Annual Township Weed Treatment Reports. Received 5 of 7 Annual City Weed Treatment Reports.
- In 2010, townships spent \$18,856 on herbicide for 268 miles of road treated and \$39,735 for mowing 881 miles.
- Met with Woods and Wheels ATV club, Wolf Pack and ULTRA Snowmobile clubs to begin establishing an invasive plant program.
- Attended the Minnesota/Wisconsin Invasive Species conference in November and presented on Becker Counties Certified Gravel Pit Program.



Wild Parsnip (yellow colored plants) in road ditch, will be treated in 2011.



Township officials learn about treatment used on a Common Tansy infestation in eastern Becker County during the 2010 summer township officials tour.



County Ag Inspector Marsha Watland gives presentation to township and city Ag Inspectors during the 2010 Noxious Weed Meeting in Callaway.



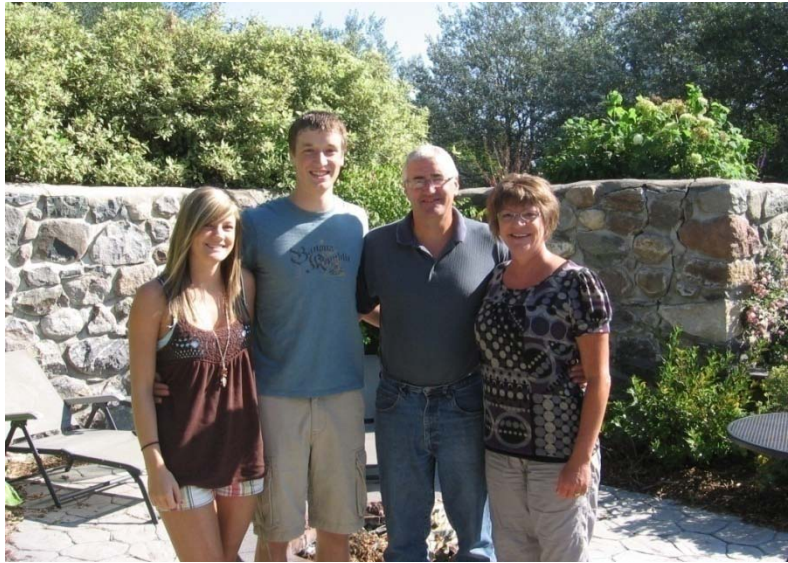
Marsha Watland points out the concern of noxious and invasive species that can invest a disturbed and poorly seeded site during the 2010 township official's tour.

Conservationist of the Year Award

Kevin and Candace Lunde were selected as recipients of the 2010 Conservationist of the Year by the Becker SWCD. The Lunde's operate a 2,000 acre grain farm near Lake Park, Mn., raising corn and soybeans. The farm has been in the family since 1949 and Kevin has been farming since 1991.

Conservation measures installed include multiple water and sediment control basins, wetland restorations,

integrated pest management, nutrient management, native buffers, conservation reserve program and no-till farming. An average of 50% of the farm is planted no-till annually. Kevin serves on the FSA County Committee, Lake Park Cuba Insurance Board, and the Cenex Board. Candace teaches at the Lake Park/Audubon High School, and is active in the St. Frances Church Women's Club and Community Cantata. Congratulations to the Lundes.



Pictured left to right, daughter Chanel, son Bryce, Kevin and Candace



Education Programs:

Educational programs have long been recognized as an important part of the Becker SWCD programs. In 2010, the District board of supervisors authorized and/or sponsored the following activities:

- **5th Grade Tour** - Sponsored the 44th Annual 5th Grade Conservation Tour, held May 10th & 11th at the Ike Fischer Farm near Frazee. Six area schools took part in this year's event, with 357, 5th graders attending. Over the two days students learned about conservation, forestry, wildlife habitat, and water quality.
- **Ag-in-the Classroom** - Over 300 area 4th graders took part in this year's Ag-In-The Classroom educational program held March 15th & 16th in March. Many volunteers and agencies assist annually to bring an agricultural learning experience into the classroom. Ag topics presented to the students included the raising of potatoes, small grains, sugar beets, dairy, sheep, maple syrup, beef, and hogs. 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 and the impacts of glaciers on formation of soils. Other topics included farm safety around equipment and electricity.

- Cormorant Lakes Sportsman Club Outdoor Environmental Days** – The SWCD and NRCS staff took part in the Cormorant Lakes Sportsman Club Outdoor Environmental Days, October 7th & 8th. This annual event provides a variety of outdoor experiences to area 4th graders ranging from orienteering, forestry, paper making, and scavenger hunt. The SWCD/NRCS presentation called “Soils Soakers”, demonstrates the ability of different soils types to absorb rainfall based on particle size, texture and compaction.



Brad Grant explains the different soil textures to area 4th graders during the Cormorant Lakes Sportsman Club Outdoor environmental Days.

- Senior Envirothon** - Twenty-two teams, from 7 schools in 4 counties took part in the annual area Senior High School Envirothon held May 8th at the the Prairie Wetlands Learning Center in Fergus Falls. The Envirothon is an outdoors competition that tests teams on their knowledge of soils, land use, aquatic ecology, forestry, wildlife and a current environmental issue. Becker County was represented by a team from Frazee. This year’s event was won by a team from Underwood and advanced to the state competition held at Deerwood Minnesota.



Lake Park/Audubon Junior Envirothon team completing the test questions at the soils station.

- Junior Envirothon** – Modeled after the Senior Envirothon, the 2nd annual Junior Envirothon for grades 6th – 8th ,was held October 6, 2010 at the Prairie Wetlands Center in Fergus Falls. Twenty- four teams from 5 schools in 4 counties participated in the event. The winner of the 2010 Junior Envirothon was from Kennedy School of Fergus Falls. No state Competition is held for this event. However, it readies the students for future participation in the Senior Envirothon. Local schools attending the Junior Envirothon from Becker County were three teams from Lake Park-Audubon.



Reinvest in Minnesota/Wetland Reserve Program – RIM/WRP

RIM/WRP is a voluntary permanent easement program that pays landowners to set aside land so that it can be restored to wetlands and prairie, and to provide habitat for migratory birds and other wildlife.



Wetland restored under the RIM/WRP easement program.

Eligible land must contain drained wetlands that are restorable.

RIM is administered through the Minnesota Board of Water & Soil Resources (BWSR), while WRP is authorized by the USDA under the 208 Farm Bill and is administered by the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS).

In 2010 the Becker SWCD assisted with several RIM/WRP conservation easement partnership Payments totaling \$647,489. Cost-share for wetland restorations under this program totaled \$91,771.



Staff Activities & Training:

- Brad and Ed were appointed to the Detroit Lakes Transportation Study Steering Committee to review traffic issues west of Detroit Lakes.
- Ginger attended the Spring Administration Session March 30th – 31st
- Planned, organized and held the Annual Township Weed Meeting March 16th in Callaway.
- Ginger served on the Area 1 (south counties) Junior and Senior Envirothon Committees
- Marsha attended the annual Association of County Ag Inspectors Conference in Worthington in July.
- Brad, Ed, Ginger, and Dean attended the Board of Water and Soil Resources Training Academy held Oct. 26th – 28th.
- Marsha attended and presented at the Minnesota/Wisconsin Invasive Species Conference in November.