



# Dakota County Soil & Water Conservation District

## News & Notes

This newsletter also available at [www.dakotacountyswcd.org](http://www.dakotacountyswcd.org) Volume 23, Number 2 Fall, 2004

### Soil and Water Supervisor Candidates Statement

The Board of Supervisors for the Dakota County Soil and Water Conservation District has five members, each elected to a four-year term. District II, IV, and V seats are on the election ballot in November. SWCD Board seats are elected county-wide, so you have the opportunity to vote for supervisors in the Districts listed above.

As a service to our readers, we are providing statements submitted by the candidates for the office. The SWCD does not endorse any of the candidates and is printing the statements as submitted.

#### District II

*This seat is currently held by Suzanne Savanick Hansen. This seat is open as the incumbent has moved from the district. Three candidates have filed for this position.*

**Name:** Ron Finger

**Background:** I retired from teaching in June of this year. I taught for five years in Minneapolis and then the past 28 years in ISD 196 (Rosemount-Apple Valley-Eagan). I was a member of our teachers union and was elected to a district wide leadership position for the last 14 years. I served in the US Naval Reserve for 21 years retiring in 2001.

**Endorsements:** None

**Essay:** As a history teacher I always emphasized to my students that they needed to get involved if they want to make a difference. Now that I am retired I have the time to follow my own advice. The land we live on and the water we have for drinking and recreational use are two of our greatest resources. Proper management and conservation of those resources impacts us now and in the future. As a member of the SWCD board I will do my best to carry out those responsibilities.

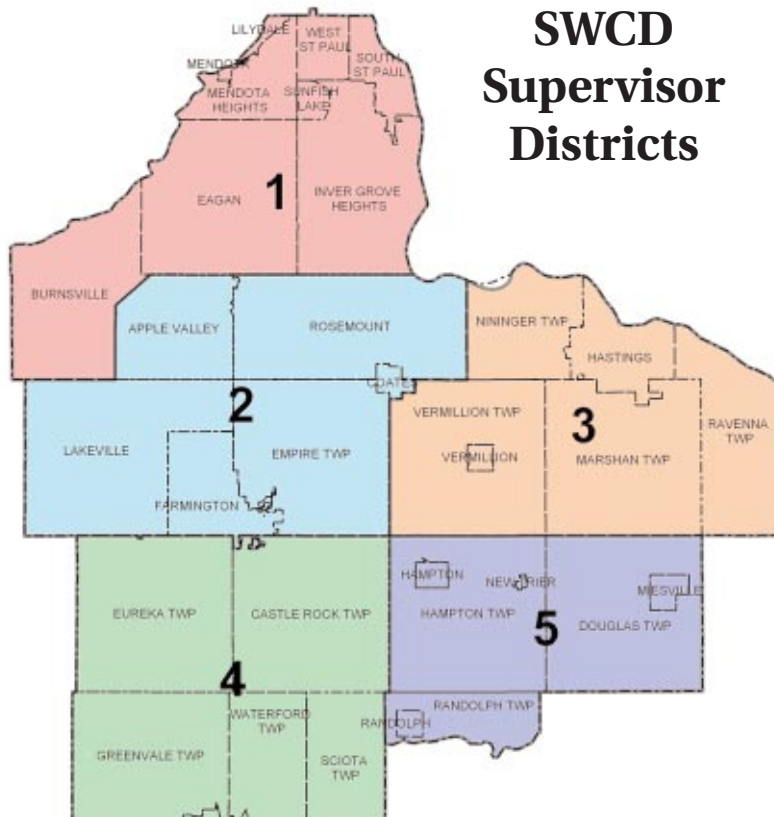
**Name:** Marian Brown

**Background:** I moved to Lebanon Township with parents in 1958. I have lived in Apple Valley/Rosemount all but ten years since. I have a BS from the University of Minnesota, Mankato State, and Masters from Hamline University. Currently I am self-employed in sales. I retired from the University of Minnesota, Hennepin County Extension, then Epidemiology as a research interviewer and other various projects.

**Endorsements:** I declined endorsement from my political party as this is a non-partisan office.

**Essay:** I have filed because I want any future redistricting to retain some rural representation because agriculture is still a large part of land use in our county.

I see myself as a mediator between the urban where I live and the rural where I have many contacts. Teaching, interviewing, and sales have given me good listening and negotiating skills.



*Continued on page 3*

# News & Notes

*published semianually by*

## **The Dakota County Soil & Water Conservation District**

Dakota County Extension  
and Conservation Center

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Farmington, MN 55024-8087

**Phone:** 651-480-7777

**FAX:** 651-480-7775

<http://www.dakotacountyswcd.org>

## **District Board**

Suzanne Savanick-Hansen, *Chair*

Joe Meyers, *Vice-Chair*

Dwain Otte, *Secretary/Treasurer*

Rick Hansen, *Public Relations and  
Information Officer*

## **District Employees**

Brian Watson,

*District Manager*

Jay Riggs,

*Urban Conservationist*

Laura Jester,

*Watershed Conservationist*

Todd Matzke,

*Resource Conservationist*

Brad Becker,

*Resource Conservationist*

David Holmen,

*Resource Conservationist*

Lana Rotty,

*Administrative Assistant*

Dee Parker,

*Office Assistant*

Mike Isensee,

*Conservation Technician*

Craig Luns,

*Conservation Technician*

assisted by the **USDA Natural  
Resources Conservation Service**

Michelle Wohlers,

*District Conservationist*

Matthew Schaar,

*Soil Conservation Technician*

The Dakota SWCD Board of Supervisors meets on the first Thursday of every month. All meeting times subject to change. With changes of address or subscription inquiries, call 651-480-7777.

*All programs and services of the U.S. Department of Agriculture, Natural Resources Conservation Service, and the Dakota County Soil and Water Conservation District are offered on a nondiscriminatory basis without regard to race, color, national origin, religion, sex, age, marital status, or handicap.*

## Welcome Mike Isensee

Mike Isensee joined the Dakota SWCD in March as the new Conservation Technician. He came to us from the Minnesota Erosion Control Association, where he worked as a program coordinator. He has also served as an environmental programs advisor for the Slovak National Environmental Agency as a Peace Corps Volunteer in Slovakia and worked for the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources, Scientific and Natural Areas Program.



Mike's responsibilities include conducting construction site erosion and sediment control compliance inspections and data collection for the Vermillion River Ground Water Study. He also assists with data collection for the Vermillion River and Chub Creek water quality and quantity monitoring programs and public education and outreach efforts.

Mike is originally from Sparta, Wisconsin and now lives in Saint Paul with his wife Beth. He graduated from Winona State University majoring in Biology with an Ecology emphasis. In his spare time Mike enjoys trekking, football, and native landscaping for water quality and wildlife.

## Welcome Michelle Wohlers

The Dakota SWCD is happy to welcome Michelle Wohlers to Dakota County. She is the new District Conservationist for the Natural Resources Conservation Service. Michelle is here to provide Federal Farm Program assistance to the constituents of the Dakota SWCD. Michelle came here from Chisago County, where she served as District Conservationist for thirteen years. She has worked for NRCS for seventeen years; in that time, she has worked in Chisago, Wabasha, Olmsted, Douglas, Marshall, Beltrami, and Isanti counties. Michelle is a graduate of University of Wisconsin with a degree in Resource Management and a minor in Soil Science. Her experience with agriculture and urban landscapes makes this a perfect opportunity for her. She enjoys working with landowners to assist them with their natural resource concerns.



Michelle has moved with her family to the city of Farmington. She has two boys, ten-year-old Lincoln and seven-year-old Nash, and one girl, Halle, who is almost three. Michelle and her husband are originally from the Plainview area. Michelle enjoys spending time with her family. She is now closer to home so she can visit with her Grandmother of ninety-two who still lives on the farm. Michelle can be reached at 651-463-8665 ext 102 or by e-mail at [michelle.wohlers@mn.usda.gov](mailto:michelle.wohlers@mn.usda.gov).

*Supervisor Candidates continued from page 1*

Grant money needs to be used so that it will do the most good for our county — agricultural and rural, suburban and urban. Education and demonstrating good conservation practices in all areas are as important as determining which projects should be funded.

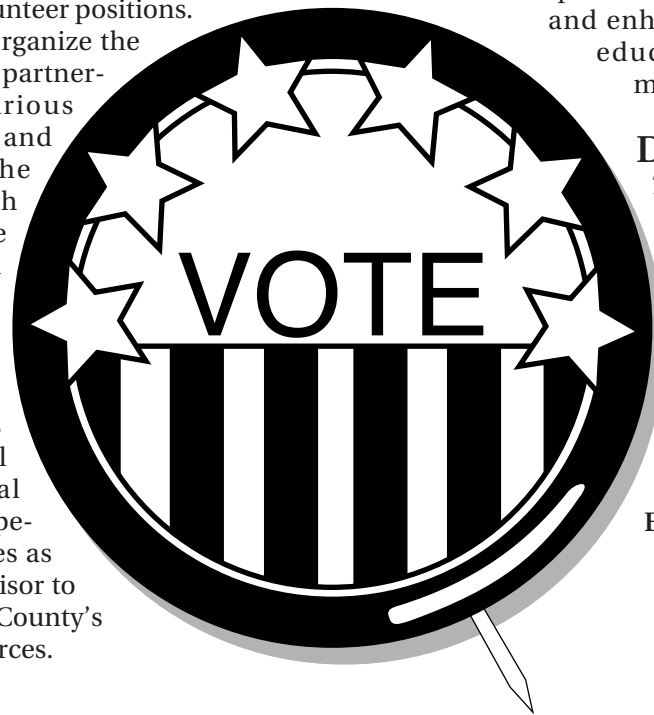
**Name:** Kevin Bigalke

**Background:** I have a Bachelor of Arts in Biology from Gustavus Adolphus College and a Master of Arts in Public Administration from Minnesota State University-Mankato. I serve on the Vermillion River Watershed Planning Commission. I have worked for local, regional, and state government, as well as non-profit organizations.

**Endorsements:** Southern Dakota County Labor Union

**Essay:** I have worked on Dakota County natural resource issues in professional and volunteer positions.

In these positions, I helped organize the Dakota Habitat Alliance — a partnership among the various conservation organizations and helped coordinate the Vermillion River Watch Program. I want to bring the experience I have gained working with these groups and the Vermillion River Watershed Planning Commission to the whole county. I have over 9 years experience working on natural resource and agricultural issues. I hope to utilize my experience and leadership abilities as Dakota County SWCD Supervisor to conserve and protect Dakota County's natural and agricultural resources.



### District IV

*This seat is currently held by Dwain Otte. Dwain is retiring from the SWCD Board of Supervisors having served 27 years. Mr. Nielsen is running unopposed.*

**Name:** Chris Nielsen

**Background:** I have lived in Dakota County all my life. I am the oldest of eight. I have been a life-long farmer. My wife, Amy, and I reside in Eureka Township and have two young daughters. We farm and maintain township roads in Dakota County.

**Endorsements:** None

**Essay:** I have always enjoyed working with the SWCD. They have helped our farming operation. They also work with our townships and really help there. I filed for candidacy to help the district that has helped us all. The purpose of the SWCD is to protect our soils from erosion, noxious weeds, help to implement practices that improve our ground and surface waters and enhance our quality of life, and educate the public about best management practices.

### District V

*This seat is currently held by Joe Meyers. He is running unopposed.*

**Name:** Joe Meyers

**Background:** I am a lifelong resident of Douglas Township. I am a crop farmer, livestock operator, and seed dealer.

**Endorsements:** None

**Essay:** I have been a supervisor for the Dakota County Soil and Water Conservation District since 1992.

## Funding Available for Sediment Control in Etter Creek

Landowners in the Etter Creek Watershed in Ravenna and Welch Townships can receive up to 85% in cost share funds to install water control basins and other best management practices that will help reduce soil loss from their land.

The Metropolitan Council has awarded a \$100,000 MetroEnvironment Partnership (MEP) Grant to the Dakota County SWCD for implementing an Etter Creek Watershed Sediment Control Project. In cooperation with the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) in Dakota and Goodhue Counties, and the Goodhue County SWCD, the money will be used to help pay for the installation of water control basins within the upper reaches of Etter Creek in Ravenna and Welch Townships.

The goal of the project is to reduce the amount of sediment running into the Vermillion and Mississippi Rivers. In most cases, grant funds will be used to supplement federal funds available through the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) administered by the NRCS. Other projects eligible for grant funds include grassed waterways and the repair or maintenance of a failing water control basins. The funds are available on a first come, first serve basis through 2006.

For more information on this project, landowners in Goodhue County should contact Thomas Steger with the NRCS at 651-923-5285 Ext. 3. Interested landowners in Dakota County should contact the SWCD office at 651-480-7777.

## Dakota Ringnecks Named Outstanding Conservationist of the Year

The Dakota County Soil and Water Conservation District is proud to announce the selection of the Dakota Ringnecks Chapter of Pheasants Forever as the District's Outstanding Conservationist of the Year.

The Dakota Ringnecks Chapter has been a leader in wildlife habitat education and establishment in Dakota County. They have donated funds toward the purchase of a native grass drill, a native grass hand seeder, and a tree planter. This equipment is rented to Dakota County landowners interested in creating wildlife habitat on their property. The Chapter has established a local "Wildlife Habitat Incentive Program," in which they provide cost-share incentives to landowners willing to establish wildlife habitat. The chapter has also established a "Food Plot Program," in which they donate seed corn to local farmers willing to plant it and leave it unharvested over the winter. Over sixty farmers participate in the program every year.



*Mark Henry, Vice-President of the Dakota Ringnecks, is shown standing next to a new Truax native grass drill.*

*The Dakota Ringnecks chapter donated \$10,000 to purchase the drill for the SWCD. The drill has been used to plant over 450 acres of water quality buffers and wildlife habitat in Dakota County over the last two years.*

The Dakota Ringnecks Chapter has supported youth education and land stewardship in Dakota County. They annually donate to the SWCD's educational programs; including the Poster and Essay Contest, the Envirothon, and the Dakota SWCD Outdoor Education Field Days. Chapter members have donated their time to the Minnesota Continuous CRP Initiative by contacting local landowners and conducting face-to-face meetings to promote the establishment of buffer strips. The Chapter is a member of the Dakota Habitat Alliance, a conservation group that brings local habitat organizations together to discuss conservation programs and issues with SWCD, NRCS, and DNR staff to work toward common goals. Chapter members frequently provide

input to technical advisory groups established for watershed planning efforts and other local water quality issues.



*The Dakota Ringnecks Chapter donated funds toward the purchase of a tree planter, which is rented to Dakota County landowners who are planting wildlife habitat on their property. Mark Henry, Vice-President of the chapter, is shown standing next to the tree planter.*

The Dakota Ringnecks Chapter of Pheasants Forever and their twelve hundred members have been strong advocates for wildlife habitat and education in Dakota County for the last decade. They have been generous partners in conservation activities throughout the Dakota Soil and Water Conservation District. Their local habitat improvement programs and their donations toward conservation education and equipment have had a tremendous impact on wildlife habitat and water quality.



*The Dakota Ringnecks annually donate to many of the SWCD's education programs, including the Dakota SWCD Outdoor Education Field Days.*

## New Resources Available!

DNR's Central Region Community Assistance Unit and Dakota County Soil and Water Conservation District are pleased to introduce two new products to help local communities incorporate natural resources into their activities:

The Brochure, "A Quick Guide to Using Natural Resource Information" and companion CD-ROM "Guide to Using Natural Resource Information in Local Decision Making" are now available in hard copy from the DNR or in electronic form at the DNR's Web site, <http://www.dnr.state.mn.us/nrig/index.html>

The Guide illustrates how using natural resource information in the local land use planning process can ensure that land use decisions are made in an environmentally sensitive and fiscally responsible way. It outlines a step-by-step Natural Resource-based Planning Process designed to provide planning guidance for people with a wide range of backgrounds and interests, including: local officials, local staff, concerned

community character is often lost.

The Quick Guide brochure serves as an introduction to the much more in-depth CD-ROM, which provides details about how to do a natural resource inventory, including where to find critical pieces of natural resource data that may already exist for your community.

The CD-ROM includes numerous case studies of how communities have used natural resource information in a wide variety of ways.

In addition to the materials, training will be offered in Natural Resource Based Planning for interested local governments.

To get hard copies of the brochure, CD-ROM, or both, or to inquire about training, please contact Julie Westerlund at [julie.westerlund@dnr.state.mn.us](mailto:julie.westerlund@dnr.state.mn.us), 651-772-7938 or Michele Hanson at [michele.hanson@dnr.state.mn.us](mailto:michele.hanson@dnr.state.mn.us), 651-772-6152.



citizens, developers and other land use professionals.

Traditional, development-oriented planning starts with areas "suitable for development" based on logistics like proximity to roads, utilities, and other infrastructure. Natural Resource-based planning starts a natural resources inventory, which identifies what the natural resources are within the community and then works from a natural resources standpoint to finally determine where development is suitable. The inventory is used to clarify the values and goals the community has for protecting their natural resources. Communities are able to avoid the unintended consequences of the typical planning process, where open space becomes the "left-over" pieces, water resources become degraded, and



## Cooperators Make the Difference

Patience has its rewards. A year after he approached the Dakota County Soil and Water Conservation District for help with the project, Dan Peine recently complete a 2900 foot waterway in the Trout Brook Watershed in Douglas Township.

Dan approached the Dakota SWCD last fall asking for technical assistance to reconstruct the old waterway.



*Peine Waterway,  
Douglas Township*

Funding for the project came from the USDA-Environmental Quality Incentives Program and Minnesota State Cost-Share Program.

The effort paid off; the waterway was finished in early September. Our thanks and congratulations go out to Dan. It is the collective efforts of landowners like him that make Dakota County a great place to live.



*View of Waterway from Highway 50,  
1.5 miles east of New Trier*

## Grass Buffer Strips Have Many Benefits

When combined with other conservation practices, buffers help protect surface and ground water quality, improve air quality, provide wildlife habitat, and can be used to enhance the visual appearance of livestock production facilities. Buffer strips are areas of grass, trees, and/or shrubs used to slow water flow along watercourses and allow contaminants like sediment, chemicals and nutrients to collect in vegetation. Collected nutrients are used by vegetation, rather than entering water supplies.

You may have land that is well suited to serve as a buffer. If so, that land may be eligible for the Continuous Conservation Reserve Program (CRP), and you can be reimbursed to establish grass or trees for ten years or more. To be eligible for CRP, the land must have a recent agricultural crop production history. Landowners that have property not currently in crop production may be eligible for the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP), Community cost share or other types of assistance.

Even if a buffer does not meet the criteria to qualify for cost share assistance, the SWCD can provide technical assistance to design a buffer to fit every producer's specific needs and opportunities. For more information, interested participants should contact the Dakota County Soil and Water Conservation District at 651-480-7777.



## Water Monitoring Continues in the Vermillion and Chub

You may have noticed SWCD vehicles parked along the road near bridges. This is usually because SWCD staff is busy collecting water samples and flow data at several monitoring sites throughout the county on behalf of the Vermillion River Watershed Joint Powers Organization and the North Cannon River Watershed Management Organization. Aside from some busy beavers and minor equipment problems, monitoring is going pretty well this year at our fourteen sites. Data such as flow, temperature, dissolved oxygen, and concentrations of nutrients, bacteria, and sediment are collected from six sites in the Vermillion River Watershed and five sites in the Chub Creek Watershed. We also operate three additional monitoring stations for the Metropolitan Council located on the Vermillion River in Hastings, the Cannon River in Welch, and Willow Creek (as it travels through a storm sewer) in Burnsville.

Heavy rains early in the year allowed staff to get many "runoff event" samples to help understand the amount and quality of the water running off the land. Additionally, a relatively dry summer has enabled staff to acquire low flow samples and data when there is no influence from precipitation. Although water quality data for this season is not yet available, previous monitoring indicates high nitrates in the Vermillion River and high bacteria in both the Vermillion and Chub Creek watersheds. Continued monitoring may show trends over time. The SWCD has been monitoring various rivers and streams in Dakota County since 1999.

For more information on the water quality and quantity monitoring in Dakota County, please contact Laura Jester at 651-480-7784.

## Pesticide Collection a Success

On August 31, 2004 the Dakota County Agricultural Inspector program, University of Minnesota Extension Service, and Dakota County Environmental Services sponsored the annual agricultural pesticide container collection. Nearly two thousand empty pesticide containers were collected at the CENEX in Hampton, Minnesota. All containers are chipped and recycled into non-food holding plastic material. Most of materials are used for products like plastic park benches. Funding for annual empty pesticide container collections and waste pesticide collection comes from the Minnesota Department of Agriculture through the commercial pesticide registration fees.

We are sorry if you missed this year's collection. Landowners that missed the collection should not try to dispose of empty agricultural pesticide containers in the regular weekly recycling or toss them into the garbage. The 2005 collection has tentatively been planned for Castle Rock Farmers Mill in August 2005 with the dates to be determined.

## Vermillion River Trout

You may have noticed some attention given to the Vermillion River trout fishing as of late. In June, Brian Watson, District Manager of the Dakota County SWCD, and Steve Michad, Parks Director for the City of Lakeville, accompanied meteorologist and feature reporter Belinda Jensen on a Vermillion River fishing trip for a Minnesota Bound story produced by KARE 11. The expedition landed one small brown trout and a monstrous 24-inch brown trout.

As you may recall, last year an additional twenty miles of stream were officially added to the designated trout stream status after the DNR determined that stream conditions and trout populations warranted the designation. This is good news for this prairie river whose watershed includes rapidly developing suburbs and thousands of acres of agriculture. It's also an indication that the river is worthy of protection and care.

Although the Vermillion River is a trophy fishery and considered in the top 10% of all trout streams in the state, access for anglers is minimal. Plans for additional access are currently being evaluated by Dakota County and the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources.

In talking with residents of the area, anglers report fish of over twenty inches quite common. In fact, a fish measuring 26" with a weight of seven pounds was caught recently. With this in mind, anglers must take great care of this trophy fishery. CPR (catch-photo-release) should be regularly practiced to ensure trophy fishing.



## Well Sealing Cost-Share Funds Available

Recent changes to Minnesota Board of Soil and Resource Water policy now make it possible for local soil & water conservation districts to cost-share the sealing of unused wells. Participants can receive up to 50% of the cost to seal an unused well.

In addition to well sealing, the Dakota County SWCD is accepting applications for traditional erosion control practices. Funds are available for grass waterways, sediment control basins, feedlot runoff control, and other water quality improvement practices.

For more information, interested participants should contact the Todd Matzke with the Dakota SWCD at 651-480-7780.

## Dakota SWCD on the Web

If you have not visited us online recently, now is the time! We have a wealth of information available online — from recent district news to monthly meeting minutes and agendas, featured conservation projects, and many conservation resources. The Spring 2005 Tree Order Form will be available for download from the website ([www.dakotacountyswcd.org/treeordr.htm](http://www.dakotacountyswcd.org/treeordr.htm)) next month. You will

be able to print an order form from home, fill it out, and mail it back to us along with a check for your purchase. If you would like to read a digital version of this newsletter you can sign up at [www.dakotacountyswcd.org/news\\_form.htm](http://www.dakotacountyswcd.org/news_form.htm). We will e-mail you a message including a link to a digital version of this newsletter (including color photos) when it's available at the web site.



# Dakota County SWCD Spring 2005 Tree Order Forms

## will be available mid-October, 2004

*Forms will be sent to all those who purchased trees at the 2004 sale. To request an order form, call 651-480-7776 or check our web site at [www.dakotacountyswcd.org](http://www.dakotacountyswcd.org).*

- ◆ An Inside Glance...
- ◆ Supervisor Candidates
- ◆ Conservationist of the Year Selected
- ◆ New Staff Members
- ◆ SWCD Participates in Minnesota Bound TV Show

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