



Dakota County Soil and Water Conservation District

News & Notes

This newsletter also available at www.dakotacountyswcd.org Volume 25, Number 2 Fall, 2006

Soil and Water Supervisor Candidate Statements

The Board of Supervisors for the Dakota County Soil and Water Conservation District has five members, each elected to a four-year term. Supervisor Districts 1 and 3 are on the election ballot in November. SWCD Board seats are elected county-wide, so Dakota County residents have the opportunity to vote for supervisors in both 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 1

This seat is currently held by Michael Pliml. Two candidates have filed for this position.

Name: Michael Pliml

Background: BS University of Minnesota – Environmental Engineering with post graduate studies. 30 years engineering experience and a licensed Professional Engineer. Two term Inver Grove Heights Environmental Commissioner. Gun Club Lake Watershed Management Board member. Chief election judge since 2002. Boy Scout leader — 12 years.

Endorsements: None provided

Essay: I strongly believe in conservation and public service. Dakota County is encountering heavy development pressure at the same time striving to maintain farmlands. The Soil & Water Conservation District (SWCD) must provide sound guidance to developers, homeowners, business, farmers and landowners of all types on environmental practices to protect our valuable soil and water resources. The SWCD needs to partner with government agencies, businesses, conservation groups, and the public, by pooling resources to tackle current critical environmental objectives. I find the work as a board member both rewarding and challenging, and

hope to continue this important work into the future.

Name: Scott A. Holm

Background: Scott A. Holm is a pro-freedom war, U.S. Army National Guard veteran who loves the outdoors. Some of my other years of education include: North American School of Conservation; Pillsbury College/Physical Education major; and Hennepin Technical College/Landscape Architecture. Currently: an athlete, coach, contractor and teacher with six children and seven grandchildren.

Endorsements: None provided.

Essay: My goal or mission is similar to the Dakota County SWCD. It is to provide high quality assistance and protection to the citizens of Dakota County for their land and water resources.

District 3

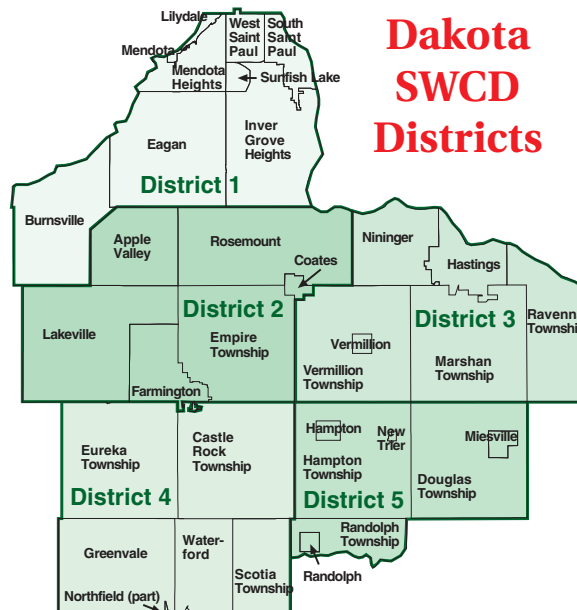
This seat is currently held by Kevin Chamberlain. Mr. Chamberlain is running unopposed.

Name: Kevin Chamberlain

Background: My name is Kevin Chamberlain and I am a candidate for District 3 Supervisor for the Dakota County Soil and Water Conservation District. I am a life-long resident of Nininger Township where I operate my family's crop and dairy farm. I have served as the District 3 Supervisor for 14 years.

Endorsements: None provided.

Essay: I have an interest in seeing a harmony of agriculture production and preservation along with commerce and development, all with the conservation of our natural resources and wildlife habitat. Many of the programs of the Dakota SWCD relate to and support this process. I would like to continue to be a part of setting policy to continue these programs.



**Dakota
SWCD
Districts**

News & Notes

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**The Dakota County Soil and
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<http://www.dakotacountyswcd.org>

District Board

Joe Meyers, *Chair*
Chris Nielsen, *Vice-Chair*
Michael Pliml, *Secretary*
Kevin Chamberlain, *Treasurer*
Marian Brown, *Public Relations and
Information Officer*

District Employees

Brian Watson,
District Manager
Laura Jester,
Watershed Conservationist
Jim Davidson,
Urban Conservationist
Todd Matzke,
Resource Conservationist
Brad Becker,
Resource Conservationist
David Holmen,
Resource Conservationist
Mike Isensee,
Urban Conservationist
Travis Bistodeau,
Water Resource Specialist
Megan Feeser,
Urban Conservation Technician
Lana Rotty,
Administrative Assistant
Dee Parker,
Office Assistant

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. 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.

Dakota SWCD Welcomes New Staff

Travis Bistodeau Hired as Water Resource Specialist

Travis Bistodeau joined the SWCD as our Water Resource Specialist back in April. His responsibilities include surface water monitoring, field equipment deployment and maintenance, data analysis, and water quality modeling.

Travis started his career as an intern for the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency and has since worked for the City of Bloomington and the Prairie Island Indian Community. Travis recently earned a Master of Science degree in Ecology and Natural Resources from St. Cloud State University. In his free time, Travis enjoys running, hiking, mountain biking, fishing, backpacking, and cross-county skiing. Travis and his wife live in Bloomington with their new puppy.



Megan Feeser Hired as Urban Conservation Technician

Megan Feeser joined the SWCD in June as an Urban Conservation Technician. This position was made possible through a cooperative effort with the University of Minnesota. Her responsibilities will be to conduct erosion and sediment control inspections and review plans at development sites. She will also be an instructor for the Erosion and Sediment Control Certification program through the University of Minnesota.

Megan is originally from Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. Her career started as an intern with the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service as a Cartographic Aid. Most recently she would spent over four years with the Berks County, Pennsylvania Conservation District where she worked as an Erosion and Sediment Pollution Control Specialist. She enjoys photography, cross-stitching and taking long walks in the park. Megan and her husband live in Eden Prairie with their two cats, Carmel and Vern.



Welcome Travis and Megan!

Demonstration Held for Controlling Building Site Erosion

On August 9, the SWCD provided a unique educational event in its efforts to reduce adverse water quality impacts from stormwater runoff at construction sites. In partnership with several organizations, businesses, and contractors, the SWCD led Minnesota's first building lot erosion and sediment control field demonstration seminar.



Over 170 city staff, builders, and contractors attended the Rosemount field demonstrations to review and evaluate over thirty different practices and approaches to reduce sediment discharges during construction. During the interactive two-hour walking tour of active building sites, participants discussed cost-effective solutions to erosion and sediment control. Information distributed at the seminar included practice installation guidelines, average cost of practices, and contractor listing to install practices demonstrated practices.



Farmland and Natural Area Program Signup Underway

The fourth application round for the Dakota County Farmland and Natural Areas Program (FNAP) opened on August 4. The FNAP purchases permanent easements from willing landowners to protect prime farmland, improve water quality, and enhance wildlife habitat. The landowner retains the right to farm the land, limit public access, and all other property rights not specifically expressed in the easement language. The easement permanently restricts the landowner's right to develop, extract minerals, or build structures within the easement area. A Stewardship Plan must be implemented to establish needed soil erosion control practices and install vegetated filter strips along surface waters within the easement property.

To be eligible for the FNAP the property must be at least forty acres and predominately "prime" farmland located within one half mile of a priority stream, or adja-

cent to a property already enrolled into the FNAP. Other eligibility restrictions may apply. Over 45,000 acres of farmland meet the eligibility criteria within Dakota County. To date, nine landowners have sold easements protecting over a thousand acres. An additional ten properties totaling about 1,400 acres are in varying stages of completion.

The FNAP payments are based on fair market values determined by an independent real estate appraiser. The easement payment is the difference between the value of the land as it would sell on the open market and the value of the land after the easement is in place.

To participate in the program, you must submit a FNAP Pre-Application Form to Dakota County or the SWCD office by October 2, 2006. The FNAP Pre-Application Form can be found at our web site www.dakotaswcd.org.

Middle Creek and North Creek Have Elevated Bacteria

In 1998, a large portion of the Vermillion River was added to the Federal List of Impaired Waters due to high levels of fecal coliform bacteria. Since then, a Bacteria Study and Regional Total Maximum Daily Load Study have attempted to shed light on the magnitude and possible sources of the bacteria pollution in each subwatershed within the Vermillion River. Unfortunately, the problem is more widespread than originally thought and there may be numerous sources to blame.

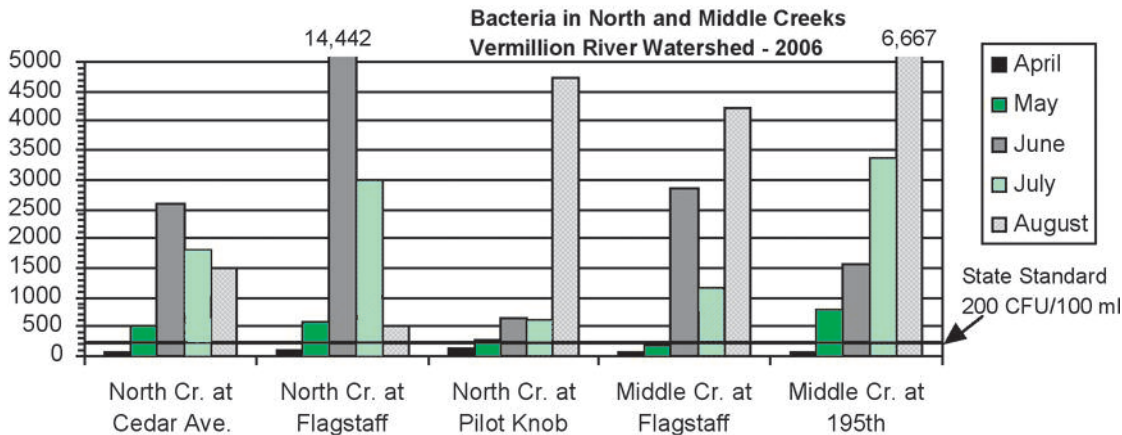
North and Middle Creek, respectively. (The State Standard is 200 CFU/100 ml.) Monthly averages (geometric means) are shown in the graph below for selected sites. Levels are high during periods of low flow and after rainfall events.

The SWCD will continue to work with local officials, agencies, and consultants to discover the sources behind these numbers. Some possibilities include urban wildlife such as geese, general urban runoff, failing or misused

septic systems, livestock in streams, and manure running off fields and feedlots. Additionally, there are many other bacteria life-cycle dynamics that are unknown and constantly changing, making source-tracking difficult. Staff recently walked much of North Creek, looking for obvious culprits (none found thus far).

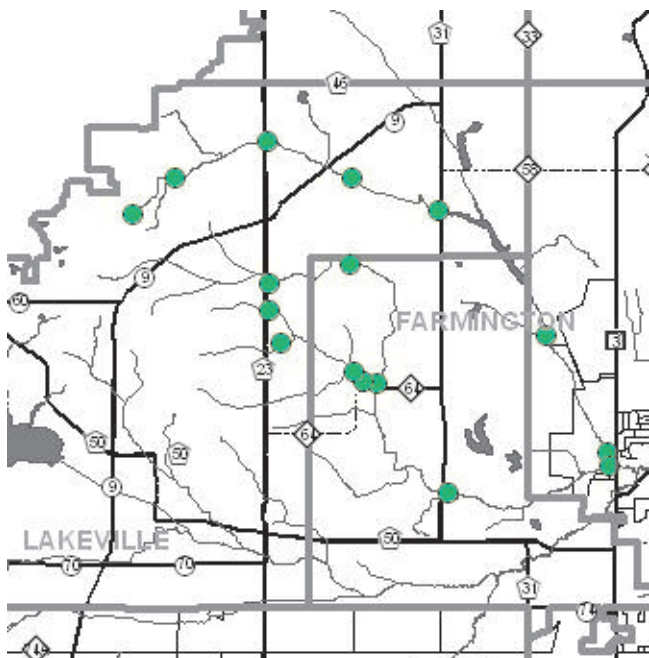
Additionally, we are now analyzing for caffeine as an indicator of septic system waste. This effort will help pinpoint if the bacteria source is from human or animal waste.

Septic systems are also being addressed through a Dakota County program to inspect all septic systems built prior to 1996 within three hundred feet of streams. Systems found to be failing will need to be upgraded. The program is currently working along the mainstem of the Vermillion River and will move to tributaries such as North and Middle Creeks in the coming months.



This year, the Dakota County SWCD, with funding from the Vermillion River Watershed Joint Powers Organization, is more closely studying the bacteria contamination in the Middle Creek and North Creek subwatersheds. This is due to the results of a 1999–2004 Bacteria Study which found high bacteria levels in these subwatersheds.

Starting in April, samples have been collected each week at sixteen sites on the two streams. Bacteria levels are indeed high! Average bacteria levels are 1,015 colony forming units (CFU)/100 ml and 339 CFU/100 ml on



Newsletter Contest!

As mentioned in our spring 2006 issue of *News and Notes*, the Dakota County Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD) is seeking your input to improving our newsletter. We are asking you to help us in determining a new name for our publication. *News and Notes* has been the SWCD newsletter publication name for more than ten years. The once-quarterly publication was reduced to twice annually in 2002.

If you have an idea for a new name to our newsletter, please send your idea to our office at 4100 220th Street West, Farmington, Minnesota. You can also e-mail us at swcd@co.dakota.mn.us.

The winner will be selected in December of 2006 and will be awarded a small prize. Newsletter name ideas must exemplify our organization and mission of providing high quality assistance to the citizens of Dakota County for the protection of land and water resources.

SWCD Board Adopts New Cost Share Policy

The SWCD Board of Supervisors recently approved new State Cost Share Program Policy and Cooperator Requirements. Our State Cost Share Program, funded by the Minnesota Board of Water and Soil Resources, provides financial assistance to landowners that install conservation practices designed for an effective life of not less than ten years. Conservation practices must meet at least one of the following objectives:

- Control nutrient runoff
- Stabilize critical eroding areas
- Divert runoff to protect and improve water quality
- Reduce wind erosion
- Control gully, rill, or sheet erosion
- Protect shoreland from erosion
- Control stormwater runoff
- Protect surface water and groundwater quality.

The most notable change in the new policy involves the creation of two annual application periods. The application deadlines will be February 15 and July 15. It is important for landowners thinking about installing conservation practices that they contact our office early in the process and ahead of these deadline dates. SWCD staff will then be able to better schedule an initial site review, recommend type of practice to be installed, and further refine preliminary cost estimate prior to the SWCD Board considering contract approval. The appli-

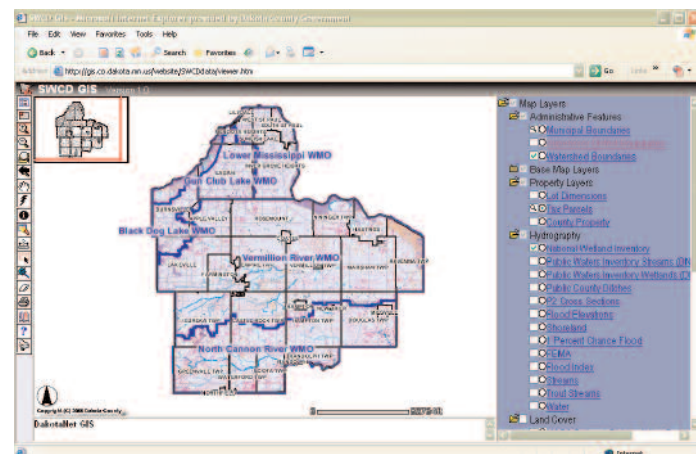
cation periods also allows the SWCD Board to better prioritize projects based on water quality threat and targeted watersheds.

In addition to the new application deadlines, contracts approved by the SWCD Board will in most cases initially be limited to a twelve month time frame for installation of the conservation practice. This provides greater ability for the SWCD Board to reuse State grant funds for projects prepared for installation.

The SWCD, in conjunction with our various partners, has numerous county or watershed based cost-share and financial assistance programs available to protect water quality and improve wildlife habitat. If you are interested in either rural or urban conservation projects, give our office a call at 651-480-7777 so we can determine if financial assistance would be appropriate.

SWCD and County Collaborate to Produce Online Maps

The SWCD has collaborated with the Dakota County Office of GIS to produce an online mapping feature focusing on conservation related information and historical aerial photography. This tool will allow the public to pan and zoom across the County while viewing commonly requested data such as land cover, soils, wetlands and aerial photography from 1937 to the present. Any landowner can use this tool to determine what type of soils occur on their property, whether wetlands may be present, or what their land may have looked like sixty years ago. From the SWCD web site, citizens can print this information and maps from home.



Capitalizing on this technology will reduce office workload and increase efficiency by allowing interested individuals to access this information from their computer rather than traveling to the SWCD office to view maps and photographs. The online mapping feature, SWCD GIS Version 1.0, will be available online at www.dakotacountyswcd.org later this fall.

Spring 2007 Tree and Shrub

Order Forms Available

The Dakota County SWCD is now taking orders for our spring 2007 tree and shrub sale.

Each bundle contains twenty-five bare-root trees or shrubs and is sold at a cost of \$30 per bundle. The varieties of trees and shrubs that are available are excellent for windbreaks, reforestation, erosion control, and for food and cover for wildlife.

Some varieties are in limited quantities so it is best not to delay. Orders will be taken until varieties are sold out or through April 1, 2007. All persons who place an order will receive postcards announcing the specific dates and times for pickup. The trees will be distributed from the Dakota County Fairgrounds in Farmington between mid to late April.

If you would like more information or an order form you can visit our web site at www.dakotacountyswcd.org or call Dee at 651-480-7776.

Dakota County Filter Strip Incentive Program

The Dakota County Board of Commissioners has approved one million dollars from the Farmland and Natural Areas Program (FNAP) to be spent on the acquisition of permanent easements for filter strips along wetlands and watercourses. Filter strips are segments of grass adjacent to water bodies that “filter” sediment, nutrients, and chemicals from upstream runoff before they enter surface waters.

Filter strips are an easy way to increase farm income, retire marginal cropland and improve water quality. In addition to the County’s new filter strip incentive program, landowners in Dakota County have a number of options available to establish filter strips on their property including, but not limited to:

Conservation Reserve Program (CRP): The CRP, administered by the USDA-Farm Service Agency, pays landowners annual contract payments for ten to fifteen years for planting native prairie grasses on eligible cropland along rivers, streams, and wetlands. Most of the cost in establishing the native prairie grasses is reimbursed to the landowner.



Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP): CREP is a cooperative program between the USDA and the state of Minnesota. The landowner receives all of the payments associated with the CRP to establish the filter strip. The state of Minnesota uses “Reinvest in Minnesota” (RIM) funding to provide a one-time bonus payment to the landowner in exchange for a 45-year easement.

CREP plus FNAP: Dakota County uses FNAP funding to double the RIM payment in exchange for a permanent easement on the filter strip. The County program will also purchase permanent easements on non-cropped land that does not meet CRP or

CREP eligibility between the filter strip and the water body.

Payment Summary:

<u>Program</u>	<u>Length</u>	<u>Estimated Payment</u>
CRP only	10 to 15 years	\$1,600 to 2,400/acre
CREP	45 years	\$2,600 to \$4,000/acre
CREP + FNAP	Permanent	\$3,600 to \$5,600/acre

For more information on any of the programs, or if you have any questions contact Brad Becker or Brian Watson at the SWCD office at 651-480-7777.

- ◆ New Cost-Share Policy
- ◆ Farmland and Natural Area Program Signup
- ◆ Tree Order Forms Available
- ◆ Supervisor Candidate Statements

An Inside Glance...

Dakota County Extension and Conservation Center
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 Phone: 651-480-7777 \ FAX: 651-480-7775
 Web site: <http://www.dakotacountyswcd.org>

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