

Dakota Ringnecks Chapter of Pheasants Forever Named 2004 Outstanding Conservationist of the 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 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 towards 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 60 farmers participate in the program every year.

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 within Dakota County. 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 in order to work towards 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 of Pheasants Forever and their 1,200 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 towards conservation education and equipment have had a tremendous impact on wildlife habitat and water quality.