

Dakota County Soil and Water Conservation District

Partners in Land and Water Conservation

2019 Annual Report



Dakota SWCD Highlights

In 2019, the Dakota County Soil & Water Conservation District...

- Provided technical assistance on land and water issues at over **250** sites around the county
- Provided cost-share funding and technical assistance for **111** rural & urban conservation practices, including raingardens and native gardens through our Landscaping for Clean Water program
- Assisted MDA on **12** applications for the Minnesota Ag Water Quality Certification Program
- Gave presentations that reached over **1500** people
- Hosted **885** students at our Outdoor Education Days
- Monitored water quality in **21** water bodies across **4** watersheds



2019 was a banner year for the Dakota County Soil and Water Conservation District (Dakota SWCD). Residents around the county contacted our office looking for **assistance** with a variety of issues – drainage concerns following large rain events, wanting landscaping solutions to attract pollinators, or needing smart planting ideas to help prevent soil erosion after crops came off in the fall.

We took every opportunity to **partner** with state and local organizations, both within the county and the greater metro area to best **promote conservation** practices in rural and urban communities alike.

Thank you to all who helped promote and achieve our mission in 2019! Land and water conservation takes good ideas, strong partnerships, and hard work! We look forward to working with you in the future, capitalizing on the energy from 2019!

In total, the urban and rural projects completed in 2019 will:

*Prevent **1,172 lbs of phosphorus** from entering local waterbodies*

*Reduce erosion, retaining **1,311 tons of soil** on the land*



Connections through Conservation

Need some information about programs we offer? Head over to our **website** to learn more and get your questions answered!

Connect with us on one of our social media platforms—**Facebook, Instagram, or Twitter**

Got conservation on your mind? Shoot us an **email** and we can discuss partnerships and available grant opportunities!

DAKOTA COUNTY



— **SOIL & WATER** —
CONSERVATION DISTRICT

Conservation Work : Urban

In 2019, we worked with residents, cities, schools, churches, and businesses to improve stormwater management, water quality, and pollinator habitat. Projects include:

- Installed **5** bioretention basins
- Completed **1** slope stabilizations
- Connected with over **500** residents through the Landscaping for Clean Water program and installed **77** raingardens, native gardens, and

Conservation Work : Rural

Dakota SWCD works with rural landowners and operators on projects to promote soil health, reduce erosion, and protect local water quality. We worked with landowners and operators to install:

- **9,495** linear ft of grassed waterways
- **4** WASCBs (sediment basins)
- **1** wetland restoration



New Programs: Cover Crops

In 2019, Dakota SWCD developed a new cover crop program. Cover crops promote soil health which is beneficial for surrounding waterways and yields as it prevents erosion supports water infiltration.

SWCD provided local producers with **technical assistance** and **funding** to plant **over 1000 acres of cover crops** in 2019 alone!

New Programs: Native Prairie Restoration

Native plants benefit local water quality, soil health, and pollinator species. With our new program, cost-share funding is available for the installation of native vegetation that protects surface waters and groundwater, reduces erosion, or provides wildlife habitat.

In 2019, Dakota County residents **restored 22 acres of native prairie** in areas all across the county.

2019 Partners

This is a partial list of partners worked with in 2019:

- Black Dog Watershed Management Organization
- Cities and Townships of Dakota County
- Cannon River Watershed Partnership
- Conservation Corps of Minnesota & Iowa
- Dakota County
- Eagan-Inver Grove Heights Watershed Management Organization
- Lower Minnesota River Watershed District
- Lower Mississippi River Watershed Management Organization
- Metropolitan Council
- Metro Conservation Districts Joint Powers Board
- North Cannon River Watershed Management Organization
- State of MN: Board of Water & Soil Resources (BWSR); Department of Agriculture; Department of Health; Department of Natural Resources; Pollution Control Agency; Minnesota Zoo
- USDA: Natural Resources Conservation Service
- Vermillion River Watershed Joint Powers Organization

Project Partnerships



Major conservation projects can only happen as a result of partnerships! Dakota SWCD worked on projects around the County with several projects partner this year, including:

- Dakota County Western Service Center Bioretention Pond
- Spring Lake Park erosion and gully stabilization
- Crystal Lake Shoreline Stabilization with the City of Burnsville
- Jordan Wetland Bank
- Holland Lake Channel Stabilization
- Bioretention projects constructed by Conservation Corps of Minnesota crews
- Cannon River One Watershed, One Plan
- Dakota County Groundwater and Land Conservation Plans



Education and Outreach

Dakota SWCD spent much of 2019 engaged in soil and water education with Dakota County residents.

Utilizing Dakota County natural resources as a backdrop, SWCD staff promoted **pollinator friendly habitats** while leading prairie restoration tours at the County Fair and when partnering with the City of Burnsville to promote pollinator lawns and plantings.

Staff worked with high school students from around Minnesota while participating in the 2019 Minnesota Envirothon in the spring. In September, close to 1,000 5th graders participated in our **Outdoor Education Days** program hosted in the restored prairie on the Dakota County Fairgrounds.

Dakota County residents of all ages participated in the third annual Starry Trek event, the statewide AIS volunteer monitoring effort held in August.



2019 Outstanding Conservationist

Rodney and Bryce
Kimmes

For the past 19 years, the DCSWCD has selected an individual, a family, or a group as our **Outstanding Conservationist**. This year, we were proud to select Rodney and Bryce Kimmes for the honor!

Over the past decade, Rodney and Bryce have worked with the DCSWCD and the Natural Resources Conservation Service to **install grassed waterways, establish cover crops to protect, and improve soil health**. They have supported research done by the University of Minnesota Extension on irrigation water management techniques, adopting irrigation water management practices to reduce groundwater use into their farming operation.

Landscaping for Clean Water Program Highlights



Raingarden



Native Planting



Shoreline Restoration

2019 was a fantastic year for our **Landscaping for Clean Water (LCW)** program! The year started with SWCD staff hosting Garden Maintenance Workshops. LCW participants from past years learned how to keep their gardens healthy and beautiful year-round to provide maximum water quality benefits and property beautification. Participants found value in the program as they were provided with trouble shooting tips and best practices for proper maintenance.

For the first time, a group of **volunteers** assisted SWCD staff at Introductory Workshops and Design Courses. Their presence enabled participants to receive more **one-on-one assistance** with garden design and plant selection. Many volunteers were **past participants** of the LCW program, so attendees benefited from their **experience and knowledge**.

Since its inception, the Landscaping for Clean Water program has grown as Dakota County residents continue to look for new ways to **attract pollinators and benefit local water quality**. 2019 saw a record number of projects completed (77 raingardens, native gardens, or shorelines), as well as the installation of the **500th project!**

Water Quality Monitoring

Our Water Resources Specialist travels the county year-round, testing various measures of water quality. This year's activities included:

- 79 days of monitoring in the field
 - 21 water bodies visited & tested
 - 329 samples collected
- Monitored for temperature, dissolved oxygen, pH, conductivity, and transparency
 - Lab analyses included sediments, nutrients, and *E. coli*

Dakota County SWCD partnered with local watershed organizations and Dakota County Parks to collect samples in lakes and river in watersheds all around the county.



Cannon River: One Watershed, One Plan (1W1P)

The Comprehensive Watershed Management Plan (Plan) for the Cannon River Watershed reached its final stages of development. The Plan went out for public review in the summer of 2019, and then to the Board of Water and Soil Resources (BWSR) for review in the fall of 2019. Final approval and adoption of the Plan is expected to occur in early 2020. The planning partners continued to work on items necessary for implementing the Plan including a grant workplan, policies, operational handbook, and more.

At the end of 2019, all planning partners signed the Joint Powers Agreement to create the Cannon River Watershed Joint Powers Board (CRWJPB). The CRWJPB will help coordinate and direct implementation of the Plan.



Campus Groundwater Conservation Planning (CGCP)

As groundwater is a limited resource, practicing sustainable use and implementing conservation practices where possible are important for meeting current and future water needs. In 2018, the Metropolitan Conservation Districts developed a monitoring protocol for use on large commercial and institutional campuses to identify and rank potential water conservation practices.

Dakota SWCD used this protocol to identify water conservation opportunities at Dakota County's Western Service Center in Apple Valley. At the conclusion of the assessment, facilities management received a prioritized list of 52 potential water conservation opportunities (22 with estimated payback periods shorter than the estimated lifespan of the project) that could result in a 42% reduction in annual water use and \$4,425.51 in annual costs.



DAKOTA COUNTY



— SOIL & WATER —
CONSERVATION DISTRICT

Dakota County Staff & Supervisors

December 2019

Staff

Brian Watson, District Manager
Curt Coudron, Supervisor, Project Management
Joe Barten, Sr. Resource Conservationist
Todd Matzke, Resource Conservationist
Ashley Gallagher, Resource Conservationist
John Stelzner, Resource Conservationist
Lindsey Albright, Water Resource Specialist
Liz Dengate, Outreach and Education Coordinator
Mollie Annen, Conservation Technician
Dave Holmen, GIS Specialist
Lana Rotty, Finance & Grants Coordinator
Diane Schmidtke, Administrative Specialist

Board

District 1: Kevin Chamberlain, Vice Chair
District 2: Laura Zanmiller, Chair
District 3: Chelsea Skog, Secretary
District 4: Bruce Johnson, Public Relations & Information Officer
District 5: Jayne Hager Dee, Treasurer