

# 2023 ANNUAL REPORT



Dakota County Soil and Water Conservation District

— SOIL & WATER —  
CONSERVATION DISTRICT

## Conservation work kept the Dakota County Soil and Water Conservation District busy in 2023.

Working towards clean water and healthy soil, the Dakota County Soil & Water Conservation District (Dakota SWCD)'s focus is to **reduce soil and nutrient loss, improve water quality in lakes and streams, protect groundwater resources and enhance wildlife habitat.** This work is done in partnership with federal, state and local governments, nonprofit organizations and most importantly, **the people that live and work in Dakota County.**


Thank you for partnering with us on land and water conservation projects. We look forward to continued partnerships in 2024!





## HIGHLIGHTS

In 2023, the Dakota SWCD...

 Assisted landowners with land and water issues at **over 200 sites** around the county.

 Provided technical assistance and cost share funds to **install 116 conservation projects** resulting in the removal of **1,270 lbs of phosphorous, 1,015 tons of total suspended solids (sediment) and 11,403 lbs of nitrogen** from reaching our lakes, streams or groundwater resources annually.

 **Engaged over 2,000 individuals through a variety of education and outreach programs** regarding ways to benefit water quality, improve soil health, and enhance wildlife habitat including the use of pollinators and plants.

 Monitored water quality in **26 water bodies across 4 watersheds.**

# CONSERVATION IN ACTION ACROSS DAKOTA COUNTY

In 2023, Dakota SWCD worked with landowners, residents, cities, schools, churches, and businesses to reduce and control erosion, limit the impact of floods through stormwater management, ensure soil health and productivity, protect water quality, and create and preserve pollinator and wildlife habitat.

Dakota SWCD staff provided technical assistance on projects that included evaluating the appropriate conservation practice, topographic surveys, feasibility studies, design, and construction oversight.

**Along with providing technical assistance throughout the planning and installation process, over \$396,000 of funding was provided through cost share programs that included:**



Restored 8 acres of native prairie



Constructed 8,257 linear feet of grassed waterways



Established cover crops on 2,502 acres of cultivated land



Developed restoration plans for native plant communities



Assisted Cities and Townships by developing model ordinances to protect surface water and ground water



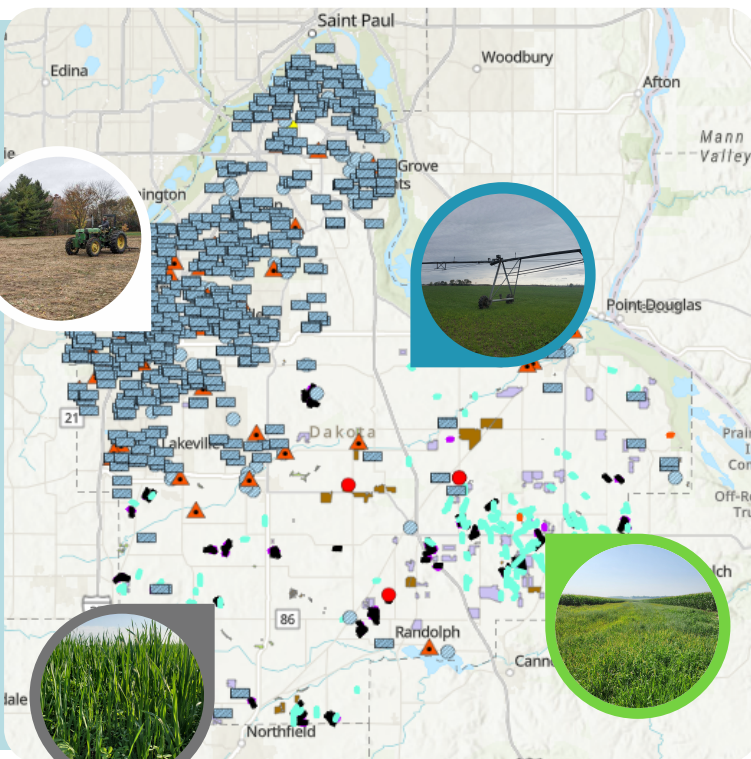
Stabilized shorelines in partnership with landowners, cities and watershed partners



Increased water storage capacity by restoring wetlands and installing water control basins



SCAN HERE TO CHECK OUT OUR CONSERVATION PROJECT MAP



**Conservation projects only happen because of partnerships big and small! The Dakota SWCD worked with partners on several projects this year, including:**

- Alimagnet Park Grade Stabilization
- **Burnsville Interlachen Park Native Prairie Restoration**
- Interstate Valley Creek Streambank Stabilization and Stormwater BMP Project
- **Fox Cover Crops**
- Kimmes Cover Crops
- **Winter Harvestable Covers**
- Swedin Trust Water and Sediment Control Basins and Grassed Waterway
- Nicollet Middle School Bioretention
- Victoria Curve Raingardens
- Blaha Native Prairie Restoration
- **Leifeld Grassed Waterway**
- Jordan and Braun Wetland Restoration Projects
- Vermillion River Watershed Joint Powers Organization and Conservation Corps - Vermillion River Stabilization



At the Minnesota Association of Soil and Water Conservation Districts' annual meeting in December 2023, the **Dakota SWCD was honored with the District of the Year award**. The award is given to one of 91 soil and water conservation districts statewide that has demonstrated leadership beyond the normal scope of services and provides increased conservation opportunities to landowners and residents.

“We are excited to receive this award from our peers and among the great conservation work occurring statewide” said Dakota SWCD Board Chair Laura Zanmiller, West St. Paul. “Dakota County has unique and diverse landscapes which encourages us to be creative in providing conservation opportunities – it’s a privilege to work with the landowners and residents of Dakota County to help protect soil health and water quality” said Zanmiller.

The Dakota SWCD was proud to announce Nancy Schumacher and Jim Sipe as the **2023 OUTSTANDING CONSERVATIONIST**

for being leaders in conservation and supporting water quality and soil health practices through the implementation of several land management practices including invasive species removal, establishing native prairie and oak savanna, and preserving and maintaining remnant prairie (less than 1% of remnant prairie remains across Minnesota).

Jim and Nancy have **restored agricultural land and areas overgrown by invasive trees to prairie and oak savanna**. To do this they have **implemented invasive species management, prescribed burns, and inner seeding**.



Establishing and managing native prairie and oak savanna has occurred over most of the property. Jim and Nancy can regularly be found outside managing these unique prairie and oak savannas they have worked so hard to establish. Over the years, they have allowed others to collect native seeds for establishing prairie in other locations and have been active with local native plant and pollinator organizations. Jim and Nancy have placed 42-acres of their native prairie and oak savanna into a Dakota County natural area easement that will protect this land and wildlife habitat for future generations.



**Native prairie restoration**

Congratulations to Nancy Schumacher and Jim Sipe and thank you for your continued partnership and being stewards of Dakota County’s natural resources!

# LANDSCAPING FOR CLEAN WATER

**2023 was the 17th year of our Landscaping for Clean Water program.** We partnered with watershed management organizations and cities to provide landowners with the skills and resources needed to protect local water quality and provide habitat for pollinators through the installation of raingardens, native gardens, and native shoreline plantings.

**252 individuals participated in an Introduction to Clean Water Class**, where participants learned about local water quality concerns and how residents can help improve water quality on their property. **158 individuals took part in the Design Course**, including 20 virtual consultations with SWCD staff. SWCD staff provided on-site project layout and installation guidance for participants installing a project on their property, resulting in **61 completed projects**.

**17 people participated in the Maintenance Workshop** and learned season-specific information on how to maintain and promote the health, performance, and beauty of their project. **29 residents attended the new Natural Shoreline Workshop** to hear how native plants provide shoreline protection, beauty, and pollinator and aquatic animal habitat.



## PARTNERS

This is a partial list of partners the Dakota SWCD worked with in 2023 (alphabetically):

- Black Dog Watershed Management Organization
- Cities and Townships of Dakota County
- Cannon River Watershed Joint Powers Board
- Clean River Partners
- Conservation Corps of Minnesota & Iowa
- Dakota County
- Egan-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; Department of Agriculture; Department of Health; Department of Natural Resources; Pollution Control Agency
- USDA: Natural Resources Conservation Service
- Vermillion River Watershed Joint Powers Organization

## TREE SALE

The Dakota SWCD held an annual tree sale in 2023 offering high-quality deciduous shrub, tree, and conifer bare-root seedlings at a low cost for urban and rural conservation purposes.

The 13,000 seedlings sold through the tree sale were all species native to Dakota County and were available in late April for early spring planting.

## CONSERVATION CONNECTION

Need some information about the many different programs we offer? Head over to our website - [www.dakotaswcd.org](http://www.dakotaswcd.org) - to learn more! Connect with us on—Facebook or Instagram! Got conservation on your mind? Stop by our office, give us a call at 651-480-7777 or shoot us an email at [SWCD@co.dakota.mn.us](mailto:SWCD@co.dakota.mn.us) with your questions and we can discuss potential partnerships and cost share opportunities!

**DAKOTA COUNTY**



— **SOIL & WATER** —  
CONSERVATION DISTRICT

## DAKOTA SWCD BOARD OF SUPERVISORS & STAFF DECEMBER 2023

### 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

### Staff

- Brian Watson, District Manager
- Curt Coudron, Project Management Supervisor
- Joe Barten, Sr. Resource Conservationist
- Ashley Gallagher, Sr. Resource Conservationist
- Dave Holmen, Sr. Resource Conservationist
- Todd Matzke, Resource Conservationist
- Matthew Sorvig, Resource Conservationist
- John Stelzner, Resource Conservationist
- Lindsey Albright, Water Resource Specialist
- Pam LaValle, Finance & Grants Coordinator
- Diane Schmidtke, Administrative Specialist