



# Conservation Update

West Polk Soil and Water Conservation District

Crookston MN 56716

218-281-6070

[www.westpolkswcd.org](http://www.westpolkswcd.org)

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WINTER 2021

EQUAL EMPLOYEMNT OPPORTUNITY

Volume 64 ISSUE 1

## Office Hours

Monday—Friday  
8:00 am - 4:30 PM

## Phone Numbers

West Polk SWCD  
218-281-6070  
NRCS  
218-281-1445 x3

## SWCD Staff

Nicole Bernd  
*District Manager*  
Duane Steinbrink  
*District Technician*  
Aaron Habermehl  
*District Technician*  
Morgan Torkelson  
*District Technician*

## NRCS Staff

Luther Newton  
*District Conservationist*  
Jessica Tiedemann  
*Soil Conservation  
Technician*  
Tony Anastas  
*Soil Conservationist*  
Justin Carlson  
*Civil Engineering Tech*  
Jennifer Sanchez  
*SINEW Admin. Clerk*

## SWCD Supervisors

Christian Pester  
Derek Peterson  
Chris Cournia  
Mark McWalter  
John Sorenson

## Pollinator plantings, big or small

Most tend to think pollinator plantings as an area put into a set-aside program consisting of many acres. This is true but not all pollinator plantings have to be of this magnitude. Pollinator plantings can be of any size. They can be as small as an area around your mailbox or a corner of your garden. If you have areas around your house or in your yard that you may be tired of mowing, think about putting in a pollinator planting. Even containerized plants are another way you could help support and provide for the pollinators.

Successful pollination is not dependent on the size or method of the planting but more importantly it's the variety of the plants to support the array of pollinating insects. Diversity is the key to a good pollinator garden. Growing a mixture of annuals, perennials and even flowering trees and shrubs will help as pollinators are not just bees. Yes, that's right, pollinators are not just bees! Bees share the job of pollinating with birds, animals, wind, water and humans.

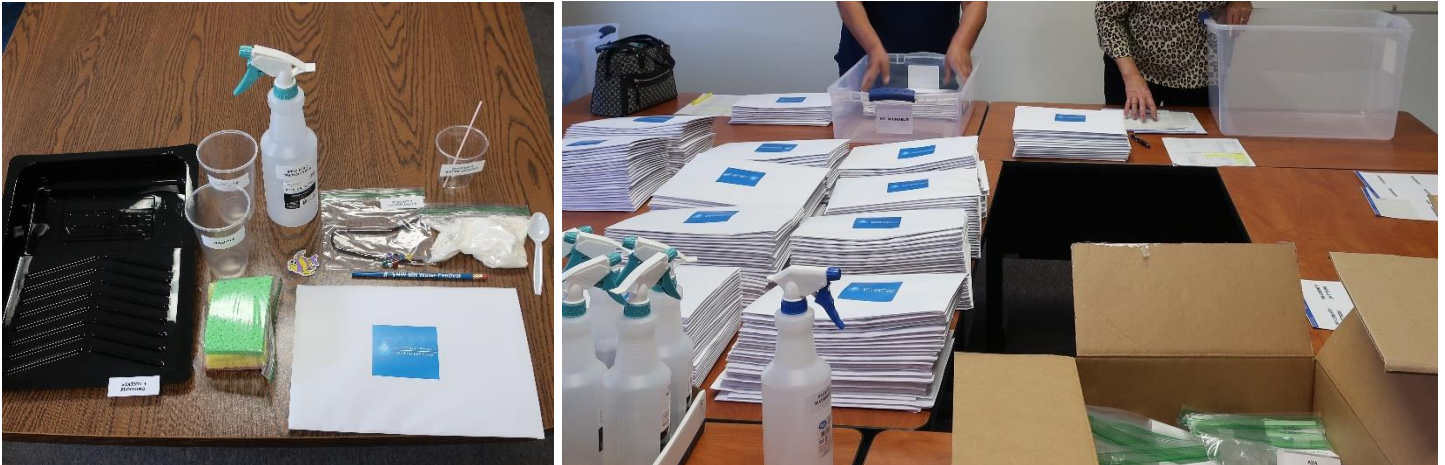
Some birds, especially hummingbirds, pollinate plants. The plants that attract birds are generally brightly colored, with red, orange or yellow flowers, but are often odorless, since birds have a poor sense of smell. The flowers are often long and tubular, with lots of nectar, and are sturdy enough for perching on. Many animals that pollinate plants, such as bats, are nocturnal, meaning "active at night," and so the flowers that need to attract them often have a strong smell, but may not be too colorful. The wind pollinates many plants. Usually they have less colorful, unscented flowers and do not produce nectar. Their pollen is usually lighter in weight than other plant pollen and is carried from one plant to another. A small number of plants, particularly those in rivers and streams, are pollinated by water and lastly, humans. We are pollinating while out in our gardens, yard, fields, anytime outdoors by the pollen catching on our clothing, hands, or stirred up by walking.



## The Northwest Minnesota Water Festival goes virtual

The Northwest Minnesota Water Festival has been an annual fall environmental education event hosted by area water resource professionals for 4th grade students. This event provides the opportunity for students to enjoy the outdoors and participate in activities to learn about our water resources. But due to COVID-19, the normal planning and educational outreach effort was forced to make a change.

Instead of cancelling the festival, planners grasped the situation and put it to their advantage creating new innovations of environmental education outreach. This effort initiated the first virtual Northwest Minnesota Water Festival reaching 589 4th grade students from 24 area schools from 8 counties in northwest Minnesota! Participating teachers received a packet of information, lesson plans, materials/supplies and educational videos to be used in the classroom or at home.



## One Watershed One Plan (1W1P) in West Polk County

The MN Board of Water and Soil Resources 1W1P program brings together MN's water authorities: SWCDs, counties, watershed districts and cities to collaborate for the improvement of water quality through projects. These projects are part of an implementation structure that accelerates conservation practices on the ground to improve water quality faster than current efforts. These partners have longstanding, trust-worthy relationships with agricultural producers, private landowners and forest landowners within the watershed to assure participation.

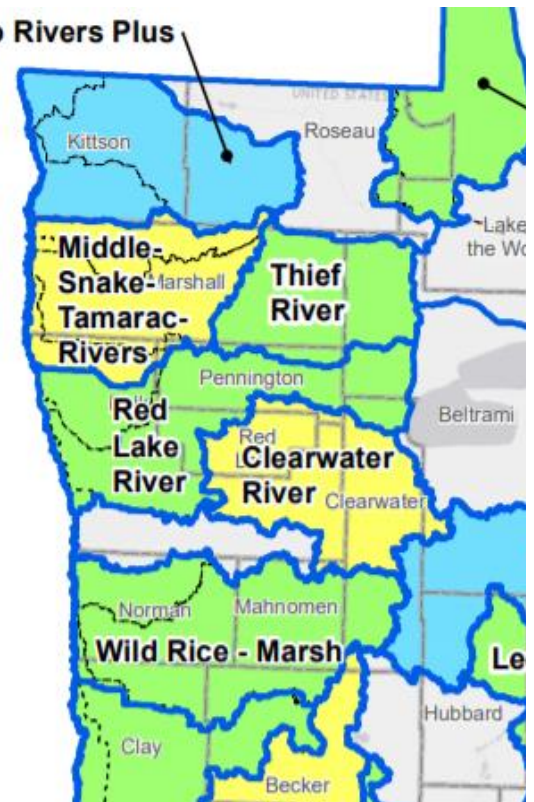
West Polk SWCD is an active partner with three 1W1P efforts within watersheds that encompass West Polk County such as the Red Lake River 1W1P, Wild Rice-Marsh River 1W1P and Middle Snake-Tamarac River 1W1P.

The Red Lake River 1W1P is now in the implementation stage with projects completed or under construction.

The Wild Rice- Marsh River 1W1P has just been recently approved by the MN Board of Water and Soil Resources (BWSR) Board of Directors with anticipation of project implementation in 2021.

The Middle Snake Tamarac-Rivers 1W1P has just received the planning grant award to start the plan writing process.

Two Rivers Plus



Map provided by MN BWSR

## West Polk SWCD welcomes new Supervisor

"My name is Christian Pester. I am currently the 5th generation to farm near Crookston with my father Mark. We have been using more and more soil health practices producing better crops and taking care of our soil.

Married to my wife Sarah and have a son named Arlie.

I am excited to serve and help producers and landowners in any way I can."

Mr. Pester will be serving as Supervisor for 4 years representing District 4 which contains townships: Lowell, Crookston, Gently, Andover, Fairfax and Kertsonville.

For more information on SWCD's Supervisor elections and role, visit our website at <http://westpolkswcd.org/supervisor-elections.html>

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## potential WCA wetland impacts

The regulatory provisions of the Minnesota Wetland Conservation Act (WCA) Rules MN Chapter 8420 differ from FSA (or NRCS) wetland regulation, so before you begin a project, please contact the West Polk SWCD to discuss your proposal. Under the Wetland Conservation Act, wetlands may not be filled, excavated or drained unless they are determined to be exempt from the replacement requirements of WCA. Failure to comply with the MN Wetland Conservation Act may result in a violation that will require restoration to the pre-altered condition.

If your project includes tiling, please note that in the proximity of wetlands, setbacks based on soil types will need to be determined and employed. West Polk SWCD can assist in determining appropriate setback distance(s) and depth(s) and may consult with tiling contractor/firm. Your tiling project may not be approved as planned, even if you have been issued a permit from your local Watershed District, unless wetland impacts are avoided or replaced accordingly.

Prior to starting your project please contact the West Polk SWCD WCA Local Government Unit [aaron.habermehl@wpolk.mnswcd.org](mailto:aaron.habermehl@wpolk.mnswcd.org) 218-281-6070.

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## abandoned/unused well sealing cost-share \$

West Polk SWCD has Erosion Control and Water Management (State cost-share) monies available to help offset the costs of decommissioning (sealing) unused or abandoned wells in rural West Polk County.

Please contact [aaron.habermehl@wpolk.mnswcd.org](mailto:aaron.habermehl@wpolk.mnswcd.org) 218-281-6070 with inquiries or for any further information.

**ATTENTION: Due to the recent COVID-19 pandemic, the West Polk SWCD office is closed to the public until further notice. Please call West Polk SWCD @ 218-281-6070 to make an appointment to conduct business or contact our employees:**

- Morgan Torkelson – 309-299-1993
- Aaron Habermehl – 218-280-0036
- Nicole Bernd – 218-280-8989



## Conservation Reserve Program

The Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) lets landowners temporarily retire cropland and get paid for creating wildlife habitat and reducing sedimentation. Land is enrolled into a 10-15-year contract where the land is planted to grasses or trees and the landowner receives a yearly payment for keeping the cover.

There are many choices for CRP since there will be both a general and continuous signup in 2021. There are signing incentives for certain practices, and cost share available to help establish the CRP. CRP can be a great choice for land that may be difficult to farm or land for hunting. Some of the options for CRP include food plots, pollinator habitat, prairie strips, tree planting, shelterbelt; and whole field practices such as wetland restoration, native grasses, and introduced grasses. The general CRP signup starts January 4 and ends February 12. The continuous signup will be ongoing.

There will be a CRP Grasslands sign up from March 14- April 23. CRP Grasslands gives landowners a yearly payment for land that can be grazed or hayed. The land must be currently planted to a grass cover.

If you want to learn more about CRP options for your land, please contact



Jill Fejszes  
Farm Bill Biologist II  
Pennington, Marshall and West Polk Counties  
Pheasants Forever, Inc. and Quail Forever,  
Inc.  
218-681-1612 x 129



Natural Resources Conservation Service

## Project completed through the Red Lake River 1W1P Funding

While out surveying, West Polk SWCD staff identified resource concerns on a channel that enters into the Burnham Creek. These resource concerns were identified as “head-cuts”. A head cut is a physical feature found in a stream. It is an erosional feature found in both intermittent (flows only part of the year) and perennial (flows continuously all year) streams. A head cut occurs where there is an abrupt vertical drop in the streambed (Water & Land Solutions).

Through activities such as project development, engineering and technical assistance conducted by West Polk SWCD staff, this project was approved for funding by the Red Lake River 1W1P. This funding not only covered the construction cost of the project but also the time staff contributed.

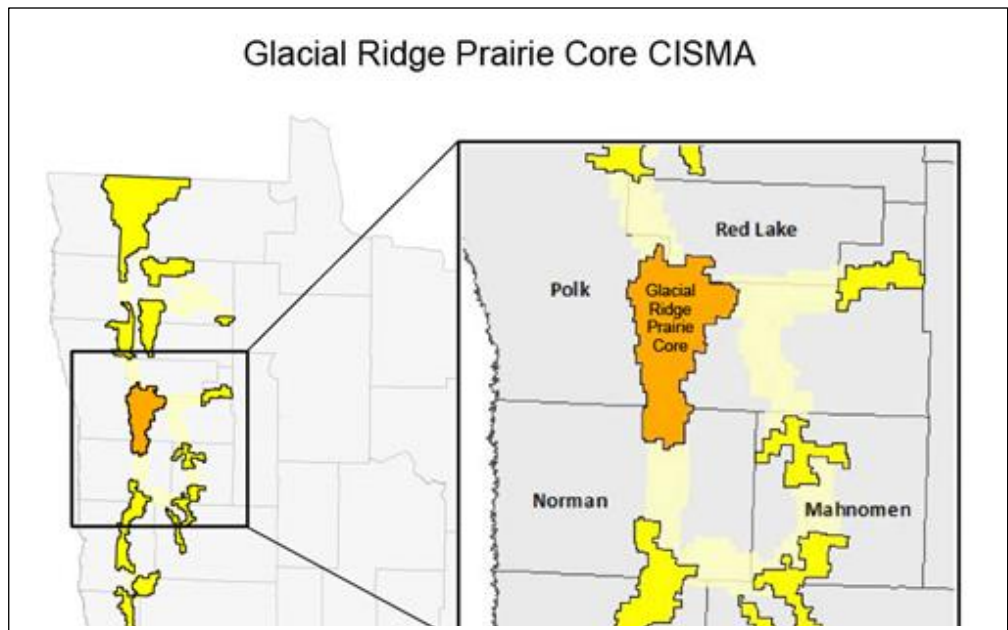


Mulching at the project site. Project completed June 2020.

## Partnerships to manage invasive species

The Glacial Ridge Prairie Core Area Cooperative Invasive Species Management Area (CISMA) project is a result of a collaborative partnership of 14 conservation partners through the Minnesota Conservation Prairie Plan. This group will develop and implement the Glacial Ridge Prairie Core Area CISMA plan to manage the threats of invasive and noxious weeds within the prairie corridor region of Polk, Red Lake and Norman counties (see map below). This partnership will become the planning group to develop the Glacial Ridge Prairie Core Area CISMA plan consisting of management strategies including: education/outreach, implementation, cost share incentives and monitoring efforts.

Funding for this project was awarded to West Polk SWCD through a Clean Water Legacy grant.



## West Polk Buffer Monitoring Continues

West Polk SWCD's 2020 buffer monitoring campaign came to a close in late December of last year. Thanks to a long field season and the efforts of district farmers and landowners, many buffers were seeded in 2020 (Thank you all on behalf of your friends and neighbors!). As the vegetation establishes it will begin reducing waterway sedimentation, surface water pollution from runoff and grade gulying. And in the meantime, these setbacks are already helping keep soil throw and chemical overspray out of our public waterways and ditches. Buffer monitoring will continue in 2021 and beyond to ensure that buffers that get infringed on or accidentally degraded are identified. The goal is to get them reestablished quickly and with as little hassle as possible. If you own or farm a parcel with a buffer that has been degraded, please contact our office or one of our technicians directly to notify us. We understand mistakes and miscommunications happen and we are here to work with you to help you come back into compliance.

If you own or farm a parcel on a DNR public waterway without a 50' average/30' minimum width buffer or you don't know if your buffer is sufficient or you aren't sure what the buffer requirements are, your SWCD is here to help. We can provide aerial imagery maps that take out the guesswork or even meet you onsite to discuss a compliance plan in person.

**West Polk Soil and Water  
Conservation District**  
528 Strander Ave  
Crookston MN  
218-281-6070  
[www.westpolkswcd.org](http://www.westpolkswcd.org)

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or handicap*

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**QUESTIONS contact: MORGAN TORKLESON**  
[morgan.torkelson@wpolk.mnswcd.org](mailto:morgan.torkelson@wpolk.mnswcd.org) 309-299-1993.