



Conservation Update

West Polk Soil and Water Conservation District

Crookston MN 56716

218-281-6070

www.westpolkswcd.org

www.facebook.com/WPSWCD

WINTER 2022

EQUAL EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITY

Volume 65 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
Team Lead
Jessica Tiedemann
Soil Conservation Technician
Tony Anastasi
Soil Conservationist
Justin Carlson
Civil Engineering Tech

SWCD Supervisors

Christian Pester
Derek Peterson
Chris Cournia
Eric McWalter
John Sorenson

Soil and Water Conservation District History

The roots of Soil and Water Conservation Districts in the United States started to materialize in the mid-1930s. According to Milton S. Heath, Jr. (2004) the idea of conservation districts was a result of leadership from Dr. Hugh Hammond Bennett, who is credited as being the “Father of Soil Conservation”.



“Almost invariably, conservation farming—which, after all, is common sense farming with scientific methods—begins to show results the very first years it is applied.”

-Hugh Hammond Bennett

The creation of Soil and Water Conservation Districts in the United States can be attributed to the on-going work of Bennett, a.k.a. “Big Hugh” in combination with a national crisis that resulted in the collision of the economy and natural resources. On October 24, 1929 the stock market crashed, sending the country into an economic depression. This date would come to be known as “Black Thursday”. **The depression would last over a decade!**



Then in 1931 a severe drought hit the Midwest and Southern Plains. As the crops died, the “Black Blizzards” began. Dust from the over-plowed and over-grazed land began to blow.



Dust Bowl: black blizzard, 1936-Students/Britannica Kids

In May of 1934, National leaders in Washington, D.C. and President Franklin Roosevelt recognized the need to address the growing problem (Egan, 2006, p.134). Leaders began to recognize that farmers struggling in a difficult economic climate increased crop yields in order to make ends meet. As a result, as supply and demand theory illustrates, high production drove prices down, yet farmers continued to increase production in an attempt to cover costs. Increased production lent itself to greater land management troubles and thus when the drought hit, both economic and land management problems were multiplied.



President Roosevelt wrote to each state governor, urging each to approve legislation that would create Soil and Water Conservation Districts. All 50 states have since passed what is known as “District Law” and established soil and water conservation districts.

Soil and Water Conservation in West Polk County

West Polk SWCD works in both urban and rural settings with landowners, other units of government, conservation groups and private industries, to carry out programs for the conservation, use, and development of soil, water, and other related resources. West Polk SWCD provides the needed technology, funding, and educational services in each community governed by local leaders and focuses on conservation of local soil and water resources.



Helping people help the land and educating our youth about our natural resources.



West Polk SWCD 2022 Tree Program



West Polk SWCD is now accepting orders for the spring 2022 tree planting season. Please make selections on the enclosed order form and submit it with your payment (cash or check only, please). Bare root trees and shrubs are sold in bundles of 25 (minimum order) and container grown evergreens are sold individually. **Orders should be placed by February 13th, 2022 to ensure fulfillment and all orders must be paid in full before any trees can be released.**

Trees are delivered to us in late April/early May depending on weather. Expect a post card from us around that time with specific dates and times when your trees will be available for pick-up. You can also check our website for updates: www.westpolkswcd.org/tree-page. West Polk SWCD does not accept any responsibility for the survival of any trees, and we are unable to offer leftover discounted trees.

If you want assistance with designing a windbreak, we have GIS mapping tools that can help us plan your project and estimate cost.

We also provide a bare root tree planting service for windbreaks, wildlife habitat and living snow fences. (You provide worked soil; utility tractor and driver and we provide tree planter and labor.) **Cost-share is available for field windbreaks** – we can offset up to 75% of the total cost of installation (tree and planting cost).

Feel free to call me at (218) 281-6070 or (309) 299-1993 or email me at morgan.torkelson@wpolk.mnswcd.org if you have any questions about selecting trees that will fit your needs and thrive on your property.

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 218-281-6070 with inquiries or for any further information.

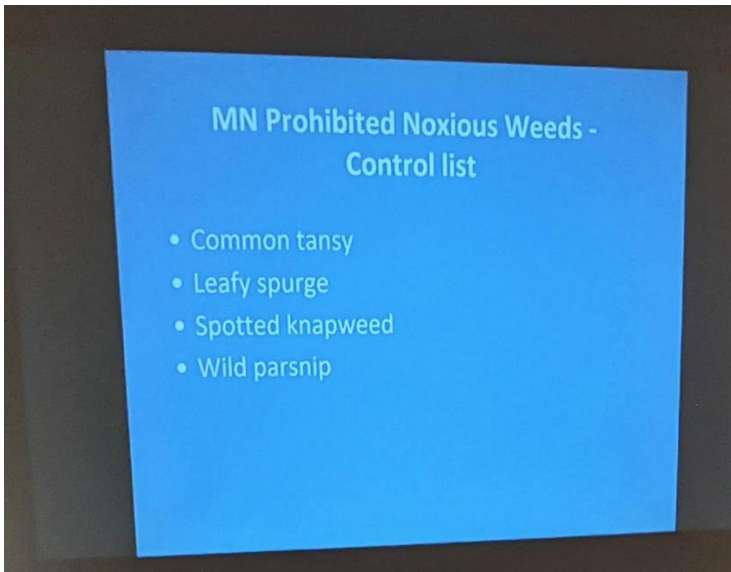
ATTENTION: Due to the recent COVID-19 pandemic, the West Polk SWCD office is closed to the public until further notice. Please call West Polk SWCD @ 218-281-6070 to make an appointment to conduct business or contact our employees:

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

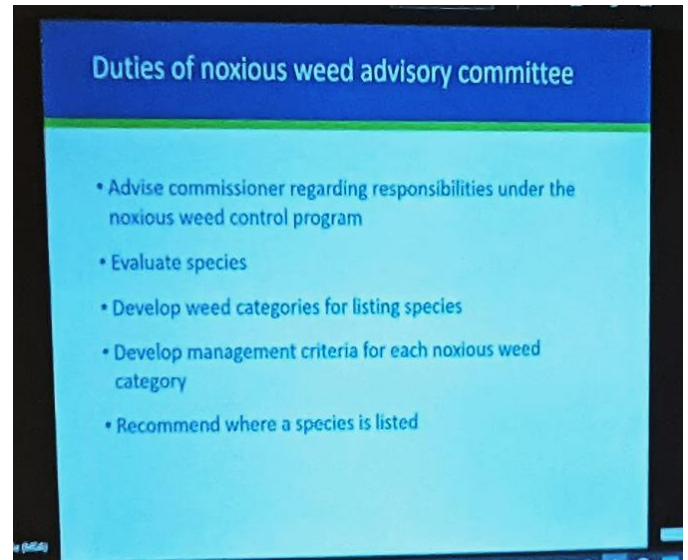
ATTENTION: Board of Supervisors meet every 3rd Thursday of the month at 7 am, at the Carnegie Library, 110 N Ash, Crookston MN and/or via conference call, until further notice. Please contact the District Manager, Nicole Bernd, for any questions. 218-280-8989

Invasive Weed Workshop a Success!

The Glacial Ridge Prairie Core Cooperative Invasive Species Management Area (CISMA), in cooperation with the Polk County Highway Department, MN Department of Agriculture and MN Department of Transportation, held an invasive weed workshop August of 2021. Presentations focused on 4 prominent noxious weeds within the Glacial Ridge Prairie Core area; Leafy Spurge, Wild Parsnip, Spotted Knapweed and Common Tansy. Discussions were held on what is a noxious weed, local weed policies, noxious weed identification, management strategies and eradication methods followed by a field visit to see each plant in its habitat. A 2022 mid-summer Invasive Weed Workshop is now in the midst of planning. Please contact the West Polk SWCD office for any questions or information. 218-281-6070



MN Department of Agriculture



MN Department of Natural Resources

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



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 218-281-6070.

West Polk Buffer Monitoring Continues

West Polk SWCD's 2021 buffer monitoring campaign has come to a close and once again this year continued the trend of more parcels being brought into compliance with the state law. Along with new strips just getting their start protecting vulnerable areas, older buffers seeded a few years ago are now beginning to develop strong roots and a thick thatch layer. As simple as they appear, living roots and soil coverage are the prairie's natural means of keeping our water clean and the soil where it's supposed to be.

As tools to limit soil loss and prevent surface water pollution in the Red River Valley, buffers provide definite benefits but will likely be outperformed by upstream practices like fall cover crops and reduced tillage. These practices are gaining popularity as more farmers move toward maintaining soil health and protecting surface water quality (as well as reducing operating costs and buffer width requirements!), but until more acres are under this care, much of that important work falls in the lap of the lowly buffer.

On our landscape, perennial soil cover in riparian buffer areas will help:

- hold valuable soil on the field in spring after cash crop roots are long gone
- slow the rate of runoff into rivers and ditches allowing sediment to filter out
- provide, improve and protect habitat for riparian and aquatic species
- reduce gully and head cutting in areas of concentrated flow
- limit chemical overspray into waterways by providing an uncropped setback
- improve soil structure and permeability – allowing runoff to infiltrate
- increase soil organic matter that will adsorb fertilizer and pesticides before reaching surface water
- reduce salinity near ditch slopes by keeping salt moving downward instead of up into your topsoil

If you want help determining if your cropland has a sufficient riparian buffer, West Polk SWCD is here to help. We can perform an onsite inspection to determine compliance and mark any potential shortcomings with lath to eliminate guesswork. Please call (218)281-6070 or (309)299-1993 with any questions.

DISTRICT CHARGES FOR SERVICES & MATERIALS

PLANTING CHARGE

\$.50/tree

Min. Charge (less than 400 trees) - \$200.00

DISTRICT DOES NOT PLANT POTTED SPRUCE OR STOCK BIGGER THAN 24"

Sales tax will be added to trees NOT planted by the District

MATERIALS

48" Tube Enclosure \$3.50/each

1"X1"X48" Stake \$1.50/each

36"X36" Fabric Mats \$2.50/each

ENGINEERING/SURVEYING

Side Water Inlet (SWI's) \$250/survey and design

MN DNR Public Water \$.25/ft, \$500 minimum

NO sales tax for engineering/surveying.

For more information on other services and programs offered through the West Polk SWCD, scan our QR code with your phone.



This Conservation Update Newsletter, Volume 65, Issue 1, is dedicated to West Polk Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD) Supervisor, Mark McWalter. Mark served on the West Polk SWCD Board of Supervisors for 25 years, 1996-2021. Mark farmed in the East Grand Forks, MN area alongside his son, Eric McWalter. Mark's insight, ingenuity, common-sense approach and most importantly his laughter and humor will be greatly missed.



Minnesotans entrust soil and water conservation district (SWCD) supervisors with some of the state's most precious assets: our natural resources. Their primary responsibility is to ensure that their community uses its natural resources wisely, with an eye toward the future. (Board of Water and Soil Resources)

**West Polk Soil and Water
Conservation District**
528 Strander Ave
Crookston MN
218-281-6070
www.westpolkswcd.org

*Services may be obtained without regard to race,
color, religion, sex, national origin, age, marital status
or handicap*

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ORDER YOUR TREES BY FEBRUARY 13TH, 2022
SUBMIT YOUR PAYMENT WITH YOUR ORDER
QUESTIONS contact: MORGAN TORKLESON
morgan.torkelson@wpolk.mnswcd.org 309-299-1993.