

# NOBLES SOIL & WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICT



2017

Annual Report

The Nobles Soil and Water Conservation District was organized in 1954 as a legal subdivision of the state operating under a charter insured by the Secretary of State. The District is governed by a five-member Board of Supervisors who is responsible for directing all District activities and establishing operational policies. Each supervisor is elected for a 4-year term. Each supervisor lives in a different geographic area of the District and represents that portion of the District. By utilizing a combination of available local, state and federal assistance, the District directs conservation programs to service the resource management needs of all those who live within Nobles County.

The District cooperates with the U.S. Department of Agriculture, Natural Resources Conservation District under a Memorandum of Understanding whereby full-time technical assistance on soil survey, engineering, agronomy, biology, woodland conservation and administration is furnished to the District by the Natural Resources conservation District's field, area and state office staff. The Nobles SWCD share the Agriculture Service Center at 1567 McMillan St., Worthington Minnesota, with several USDA agencies.

## District Supervisors

Ken Wolf, Chairman	Westside, Olney, Grand Prairie & Little Rock Townships
Jim Knips, Vice-Chairman	Leota, Wilmont, Lismore, & Larkin Townships
Paul Langseth, Secretary	Lorain, Ransom, Bigelow, & Indian Lake Townships
Rick Nelsen, Treasurer	Seward, Graham Lakes, Elk and Hersey Townships
Lynn Darling, PR & I	Bloom, Summit Lake, Dewald & Worthington Townships

## District Staff

John Shea, District Manager  
Sabrina Raddle, Accountant/Administrative Assistant  
Austin DeWitte, Farmbill Technician  
Joey Boyer, District Technician

## Meeting Schedule

Meetings are held the 3<sup>rd</sup> Wednesday of each month at 7:30 a.m.

**“Protecting our soil and water resources and promoting their wise use”**

## Southwest Prairie Technical Service Area

Russell Hoogendoorn, Engineer  
Michael Skoglund, Engineering Technician  
Ben Matthys, Engineering Technician  
Tom Foerster, Engineering Technician

## Natural Resource Conservation Service

Loren Clarke, Acting District Conservationist  
Karen Boysen, Soil Conservationist  
Paul Spartz, Civil Engineer

## Heron Lake Watershed District

Jan Voit, District Administrator  
Catherine Wegehaupt, District Technician  
Wayne Rasche, Board Manager  
Jim Buschena, Board Manager  
Gary Ewert, Board Manager  
Harvey Kruger, Board Manager  
Bruce Leinen, Board Manager

## Kanaranzi–Little Rock Watershed District

John Shea, Executive Secretary  
Jerry Brake, Board Manager  
Coleen Gruis, Board Manager  
Layton Gruis, Board Manager  
Tim Taylor, Board Manager  
Anthony Boyenga, Board Manager

## Okabena–Ocheda Rock Watershed District

Dan Livdahl, District Administrator  
Casey Ingenthron, Board Manager  
Lester Johnson, Board Manager  
Rolf Mahlberg, Board Manager  
Jeff Rogers, Board Manager  
Jay Milbrandt, Board Manager

# ANNUAL REPORT

## TREE PROGRAM



The Nobles SWCD offered for sale different tree and shrubs species native to Minnesota. Producers purchased the trees to plant into windbreaks, urban and rural conservation, and wildlife food and habitat. Through the annual tree program the Nobles SWCD is able to promote conservation practices and the value of forestry resources in preventing soil loss and improving water quality. In 2017, the District sold over 9,400 trees and assisted 17 landowners with tree planting. More than 1,000 tree mats were sold and over 16,000 feet of matting was installed in 2017.

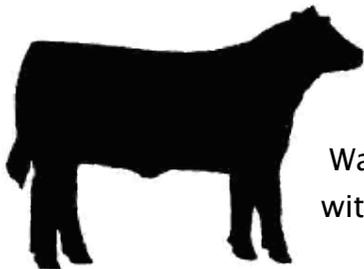
## AgBMP LOAN PROGRAM

During 2017, the Nobles SWCD in conjunction with the Nobles Co. Commissioners, Southwest State Bank Worthington, United Prairie, Fulda Credit Union and MinnWest Bank worked with local landowners to obtain MN Department of Agriculture AgBMP Loans. During 2017, over \$367,820 worth of loans were dispersed related to conservation tillage, ISTS, and Ag waste management.



## CLEAN WATER ASSISTANCE FUNDS

The Nobles SWCD applied for and received grants from the Clean Water Assistance Funds for over the past 6 years. In 2014, the Nobles SWCD received funding for a Feedlot Accelerated Implementation grant to complete level III inventories for feedlots in the Rock River Watershed. The first half of the feedlots were inventoried in 2016 with the remaining contracts completed in 2017.



## STATE COST-SHARE

The State Cost-Share program is a viable source of funds that provides financial incentives to landowners that wish to install conservation practices on their land. In addition to the State Cost-Share program, landowners were given an opportunity to participate in various other cost-share or financial incentive programs, such as the Federal EQIP program and the State Revolving Loan Program. The SWCD and NRCS provide technical assistance for the survey, design and installation of water quality practices. The SWCD received \$17,383.00 for FY 2017 allocations.



## WETLAND CONSERVATION ACT PROGRAM



The Nobles SWCD assists cities, townships, citizens, and county departments in the administration of the Minnesota Wetland Conservation Act. Nobles SWCD staff provides technical and administrative assistance for wetland related activities throughout Nobles County. Common activities involved with the program include tile and drainage applications as well as wetland banking. The Nobles SWCD has continued its commitment to ensure that staff is adequately trained and updated on current wetland rules and policy. In 2017, Nobles SWCD worked on over 200 landowner drainage requests.

## REINVEST IN MINNESOTA - WETLAND RESORATION PROGRAM

In 2017, Nobles SWCD received a grant for financial assistance to complete Intensive Hydraulic Conditioning on the remaining 60% of the Missouri River Basin. The watershed will be able to utilize the Prioritize, target, and Measure application (PTMApp). The basin has 1.1 million acres of drainage with approximately 630,000 acres remaining to be hydro conditioned. With the advancement in targeting pollution sources within the watershed and state, the partners intend to be able to more accurately target conservation practices with the hydraulic conditioning completed. Over 50% of the grant was completed in 2017 and the remaining hydro conditioning will be completed in early 2018.

## ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION

Environmental Education is an important part of our SWCD office. Classes and materials are offered to school and churches throughout Nobles County.

- Second Grade Arbor Day Presentations
- Fifth Grade Environmental Learning Area Tours in Adrian and Worthington
- Ecology Bus Presentations
- Fifth and Sixth Grade Environmental Fair



## CONSERVATIONIST OF THE YEAR

Rolf Mahlberg was the 2017 Nobles County Outstanding Conservationists. Mahlberg has spent nearly his entire life along the shores of Lake Ocheda, just south of Worthington in Bigelow Township. Conservation-mindedness has been a huge part of the Mahlberg family past and is carried on through Rolf and the younger generations of Mahlbergs. Mahlberg has a



willingness to implement projects that benefit the soil. A few practices that are common in the Mahlberg family are: Terraces, Waterways and Cover Crops. After 2017 harvest, Mahlberg will be 100 percent no-till on his 200 acres of crop ground. Recently, Mahlberg



installed a desilting basin, which collects water from gullies from the southwest and the southeast. As water enters the basin, the sediment has the opportunity to settle out, creating cleaner water that will eventually make its way into Lake Ocheda. One practice Mahlberg would adopt instantly would be technology to remove nitrates. The SWCD Board of Supervisors accepted the award for Mahlberg at

the Minnesota Association of Soil and Water Districts Annual Convention on December 5, 2018. The board presented the award to Mahlberg at the December 20<sup>th</sup>, 2017 board meeting.

## FLOOD RELIEF COST-SHARE



Nobles County was hit with a large rain event in the summer of 2014. Flood Relief funds of over \$600,000 were granted to Nobles SWCD in two phases. The funds are designed to help repair existing BMP's, establish new BMP's and to prevent sediment pollution in the future. In 2017, the Nobles SWCD signed an additional 33 contracts and completed over 25 projects.

## LOCAL CAPACITY

The Nobles SWCD received \$120,337 from the state to use towards Local Capacity. Not only was the District able to add staff and equipment, but an additional \$100,000 of the funds were set aside for cost-share contracts.

- 2016 & 2017 Local Capacity Funds were partnered with Murray and Pipestone Counties to hire a technician for the Southwest Prairie Technical Service Area.
- Leased a Gator Side-by-Side for SWCD staff to use in the field. Field activities included: buffer checks, survey and design, field visits and tree plantings.
- Set aside an additional \$100,000 for cost-share projects.

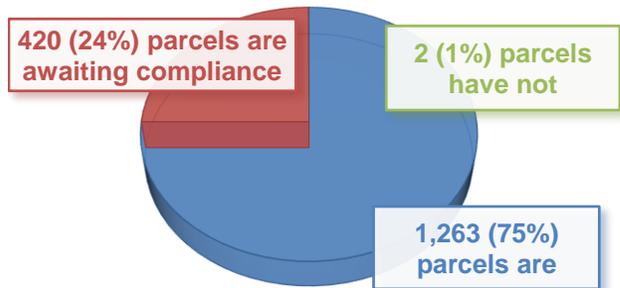
## ONE WATERSHED, ONE PLAN



The Missouri River Watershed One-Watershed One Plan brings 6 counties, 6 Soil and Water Conservation Districts and 2 Watersheds together to develop a comprehensive plan that will address water management in the Missouri River Watershed. Prior to this evolutionary process each public entity developed their own strategic water plan. This new process will build off these existing local water management plans and priorities as well as align the local water planning process on major watershed boundaries. The Missouri River Watershed One Watershed-One Plan will be locally led and utilize state strategies towards prioritized, targeted and measurable implementation plans.

## BUFFER LEGISLATION

The Nobles SWCD received an additional \$35,000 from the state to use towards buffer implementation in Nobles County. In 2017, two mailings were sent out to landowners affected by the legislation. In June, the mailing was sent to over 253 landowners that had not yet made contact with the SWCD regarding their parcels. The second 2017 mailing was sent in early October as a final notice to 54 landowners. The Public Waters had a buffer legislation deadline of November 1<sup>st</sup>, 2017, but extensions were granted until November 1<sup>st</sup>, 2018 for those who have made contact with the SWCD. The Public Ditches have an upcoming deadline of November 1<sup>st</sup>, 2018 and the SWCD is still waiting to hear from 12 landowners on the 18 affected parcels. The SWCD completed over 93 site visits in 2017 and plan to do more in 2018 to verify compliancy. The State is also providing cost-share for projects related to the Buffer Legislation. More information on this will be available in 2018.



## REINVEST IN MINNESOTA - WETLAND RESTORATION PROGRAM

In 2017, a Reinvest in Minnesota - Wetland Restoration Program project occurred in Summit Lake 32. The tile was rerouted to provide drainage for adjacent land. Numerous tile blocks were also completed as part of the restoration project. SWCD staff was on-site for a majority of the project.



## SUMMIT LAKE 11

In 2015, the District acquired 277 acres of RIM property in Section 11 of Summit Lake Township. In 2017, a wetland restoration was completed throughout the 277 acres. All 13 wetland basins were restored, with the largest nearing 65 acres. Along with the restorations, a



water control structure was installed to better hold the water off the county tile that runs near the property. The SWCD enrolled the site in the Walk-In Access program in 2017. Signs were placed on the perimeter of the property as there are plans to continue this program in the future. Also in 2017, two clippings were completed around the trees and throughout the site for weed control. Over 75 Black Hills Spruce trees that didn't survive the first planting were replaced in 2017 with hopes of replacing the damaged dogwoods in 2018.

## CONSERVATION RESERVE ENHANCEMENT PROGRAM

Minnesota is implementing a Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP) that will directly address resource problems with strategic, long-term solutions. Five Minnesota agencies have come together to support MN CREP. Landowners who choose to voluntarily enroll in the CREP will not only provide significant progress for the state's water quality goals and habitat needs, but will also be part of a national model for local-state-federal partnerships. In 2017, the SWCD completed six estimates for the CREP. By April 2018, the SWCD staff plans on sending out over 100 estimates to landowners within Nobles County.

