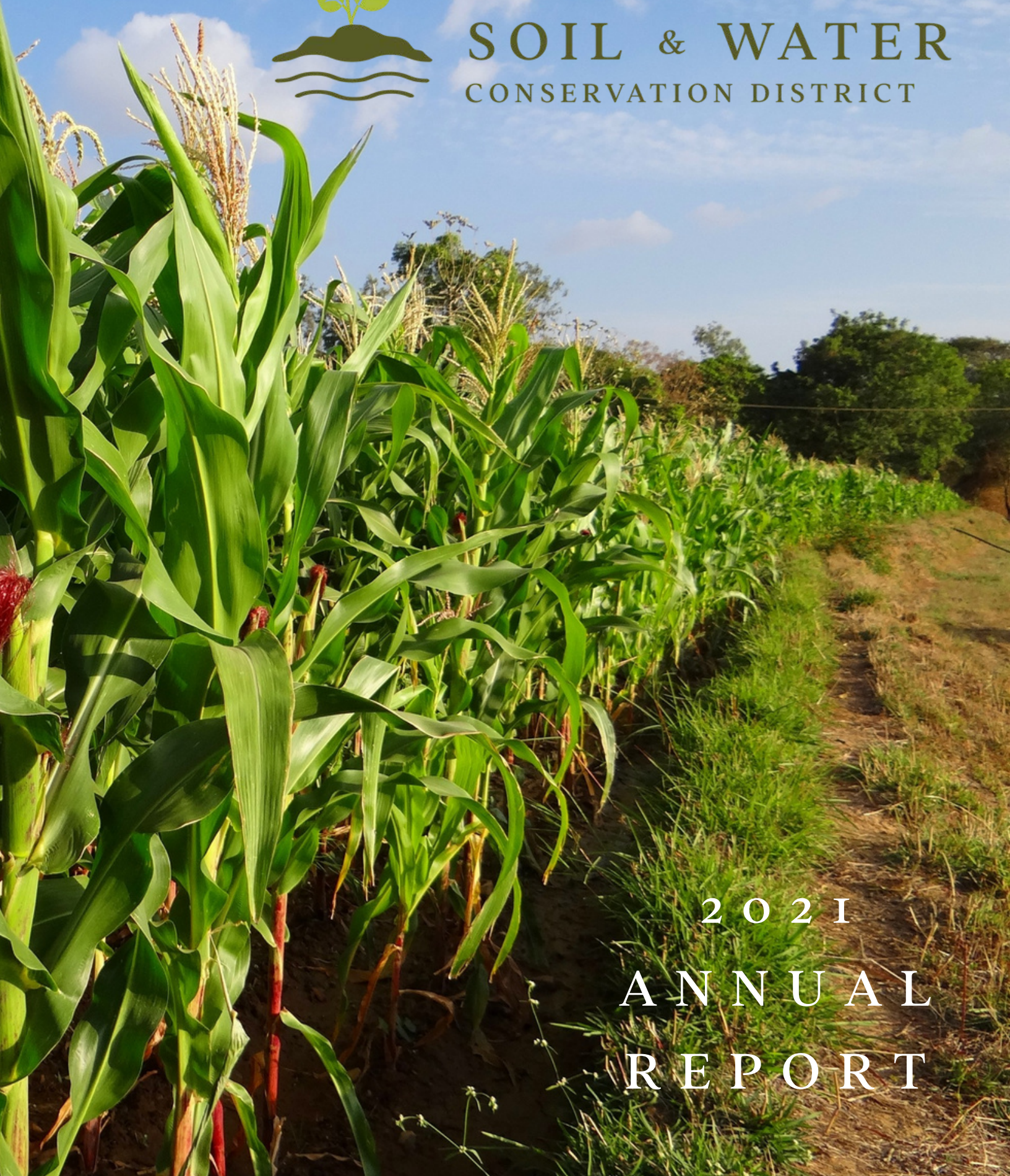




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REDWOOD  
SOIL & WATER  
CONSERVATION DISTRICT



2021  
ANNUAL  
REPORT



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# Message from the Administrator

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Even though our office doors were closed for the majority of the past 2 years, our communication with Redwood County landowners never slowed down. From a farmer interested in trying out cover crops for the first time, to a new homeowner looking for assistance in sealing an old abandoned well, we have continued to provide technical and financial assistance to the residents in Redwood County.

Due to the dedication of our staff we have been able to secure \$1,818,155 in competitive grant funding for various initiatives in the past 2 years. This includes funding for targeted engineered structural practices in specific watersheds, as well as 2 research projects aimed at providing us local, practice specific data to aid in the decision making needs of our landowners. These projects will not only provide immediate benefits to water quality, but they will also conserve our topsoil for highly productive farming in the future. These initiatives do not happen on their own and require a highly competent and dedicated staff.

We are here to provide you with technical or financial assistance on a wide range of practices. From looking to improve your grassland habitat to experimenting with a range of soil health practices on the farm, our team is here to assist. Give us a call or stop on by to see what we might have available to fit your needs. We hope to see you in our office in 2022!

*Scott Wold*



# Board of Supervisors



Jeff Potter  
Chair  
District I



Brian Timm  
Public Relations  
District II



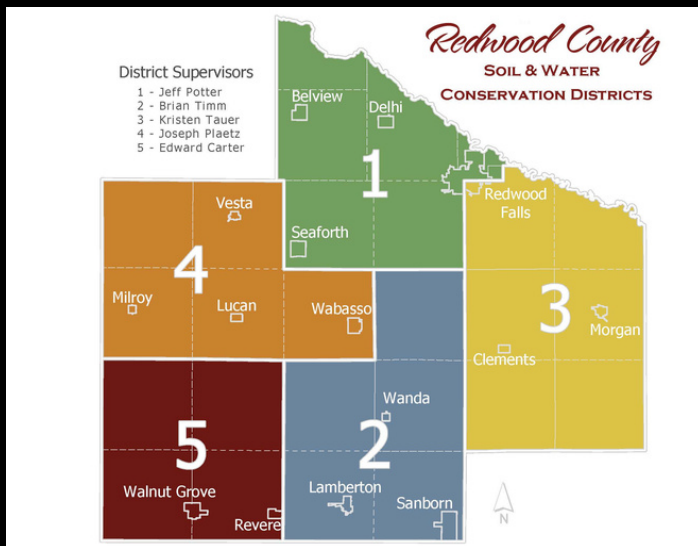
Rick Maurer  
Treasurer  
District III



Joe Plaetz  
Secretary  
District IV



Ed Carter  
Vice-Chair  
District V



Redwood Soil and Water Supervisors are elected to 4 year terms by the residents of Redwood County. The Board oversees operations and District priorities, while providing direction and guidance to District staff.

The Board meetings are held on the second Wednesday of every month at 8:30 a.m. The public is always welcome and encouraged to attend.

## Mission Statement

The mission of the Redwood Soil and Water Conservation District is to educate and assist the citizens of Redwood County to manage the soil and water resources of the county efficiently and economically, for present and future generations.





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# District Operations

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Scott Wold  
District Administrator



Jeanne Prescott  
Office Manager



Kurt Mathiowetz  
Water Quality  
Technician



Brian Pfarr  
Resource  
Specialist



Jennifer Hahn  
Conservation  
Specialist

The Redwood Soil and Water Conservation District was established in January, 1953. Citizens of Redwood County were concerned about soil erosion by wind and water and its effect on water quality. Since the district's inception, many refer to us as 'Redwood SWCD'. The district was authorized as a result of the state legislature passing the Minnesota Soil Conservation District Law in 1937. The law enabled farmers to organize for conservation purposes and gave them the power to enter into legal agreements and provide financial aid to landowners.

Our staff is highly trained and is able to assist landowners on a wide variety of issues and topics. We are continually seeking out new funding sources to provide cost share services to landowners in Redwood County to accomplish our mutual goals of furthering conservation on the landscape.

The Redwood SWCD is funded through a combination of non-competitive state aid, county allocations, and competitive grants. Funding sources in 2021 were:

## Staff Support Funds

- Local Capacity Services (BWSR)
- Wetland Conservation Act (BWSR)
- Buffer Law (BWSR)
- Conservation Delivery (BWSR)
- CREP Outreach (BWSR)
- County Allocation (County)

## Project Support Funds

- State Cost Share (BWSR)
- Local Water Management (BWSR)
- Clean Water Act 319 (MPCA/Federal)
- Plum Creek Turbidity Reduction (Clean Water Grant)
- Economic and Ecological Benefits of Soil Health (LCCMR)
- Rim Easement Evaluation and Outreach (LCCMR)





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# 2021 in Numbers

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\$464,000

TOTAL COST SHARE PROVIDED

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The Redwood SWCD provides up to 75% cost share for a wide variety of conservation measures. In 2021 this is how much was provided to landowners through the District.

21,481

TONS OF SOIL / YEAR

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Through the CREP program, this is how much soil loss has been averted.

2000

ACRES ENROLLED IN SOIL HEALTH STUDY

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The Redwood SWCD received \$288,000 from the Legislative-Citizen Commission on Minnesota Resources to conduct a study on the Economic benefits of soil health practices on working farms in Redwood Count.

502

TOTAL PARTICIPANTS

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The Redwood SWCD conducts many outreach and educational events every year.





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# 2021 in Numbers

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15

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## WATER AND SEDIMENT CONTROL BASIN STRUCTURES

This is an embankment built across a depression area of concentrated water runoff. It traps sediment and water running off farmland above the structure, preventing it from reaching farmland and water bodies below.

9

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## GRADE STABILIZATION STRUCTURES

Grade stabilization structures are installed to stabilize the channel grade and control erosion to prevent the formation or advance of gullies and headcuts.

\$1,932,740

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## COMPETITIVE GRANT FUNDS RECEIVED FROM 2020-2021

The Redwood SWCD is always looking for new funding initiatives in order to continue to assist our landowners with implementing conservation practices.

4,212

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## ACRES ENROLLED IN CREP

The Redwood SWCD assists landowners in enrolling in the Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP), and also helps the state complete the restoration initiatives on various parcels. This 4,212 includes closed easements, new easements, and previous easements where restoration is completed.













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# Project Spotlight

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## Springdale 19 Grade Stabilization

Discussions have been going on for years to try and figure out how to help reduce the impacts from flooding at and downstream of the Tracy golf course. Area II and the Redwood SWCD engineered and developed plans to help address the problem, however funding the project became the next hurdle. Area II secured state money to cover 75% of the project costs, but the remaining 25% still needed to be secured. The initial project estimates put the cost of the project at \$436,000, so the landowners needed to find a way to come up with around \$110,000 of local match.

Over the course of a few years, a few options were explored, one of which was a special taxing district. Unfortunately the creation of a special taxing district does not happen overnight and comes with its own timelines.

Finally, at an informational meeting, several landowners decided to throw out the idea of just funding the project amongst themselves without using a taxing district. And that is exactly what happened, in the course of the next couple weeks, enough landowners had called the SWCD to commit cash to the project, and the \$110,000 was raised. Additional cash contributions were provided by Redwood and Lyon Counties.

**4,226 Tons of Sediment  
loss per year prevented**





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# Project Spotlight

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## LCCMR Research Projects

In 2020 the Redwood SWCD applied for 2 grants through the Legislative-Citizen Commission on Minnesota Resources (LCCMR). The LCCMR committee recommended both projects for funding which was later approved by the legislature.

The first project was awarded in the amount of \$197,000 and will be focused on researching previously established CREP sites. The aim of this project is to quantify how successful historical CREP restorations actually are, and determine what value the public received for the large investment in conservation set aside lands.

The second project was awarded in the amount of \$288,000 and will be focused on researching the economics of adopting soil health practices on the farm. The goal of this project is to set up demonstration plots on working farms so that landowners in the County can see side by side comparisons of traditional vs soil health management systems. By tracking a multitude of economic parameters, we hope to show the benefit to the farms bottom line by adopting soil health practices. This is a three year study, but we hope to continue to work with our participants for many years to come and continue to track and record the data.





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# Conservation Farmer

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Mike and Mary Hewitt

The conservation farmer of the year is selected by the Redwood SWCD Board of Supervisors.

The Redwood SWCD selected Michael Hewitt for our Conservation Farmer of the Year in 2021. Mike is an expert in the field of soil health making the decision to nominate him for this award an easy one. Mike has been using soil health practices for the last twenty plus years before it became popular in this area. As Mike puts it "I'm a sucker for something new", which has proven to work out great for him. We appreciate his efforts to constantly research and work with others to improve his operation leaving a minimal impact on our environment for future generations to come. The dedication Mike has for farming and his willingness to share these experiences makes him an excellent nominee for this award.

## Area Finalist!

After being selected as the Conservation Farmer in Redwood County for 2021, the Minnesota Association of Soil and Water Conservation Districts (MASWCD) has named Michael & Nancy Hewitt of Walnut Grove as one of eight Area Finalists in the 2021 Outstanding Conservationist Award Program.

# *Congratulations!*

TO MIKE AND MARY!





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# WCPI

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The Watershed Conservation Planner Initiative provided a dedicated staff person to provide conservation planning in 8 Counties along the Middle Minnesota Watershed for a 3 year time period, hosted by the Redwood SWCD. The partnership consisted of working with area NRCS and SWCD's to provide customer service and support, helping to support field offices with workload. The Middle MN Watershed activities began October of 2018 and were completed December of 2021. Within the 3 years of the initiative, required results were exceeded due to the dedication and competency of staff within the watershed.

- Total Conservation Plans Completed: 223 (100 required)
- Total Acres Planned: 42,570
- Total Workshops Completed: 10 (6 required)
- Total Outreach Completed: 38 (6 required)

In addition to leveraging almost \$24 million through EQIP, CRP, CREP, and LCCMR funded projects, the initiative also funded \$71,616 to complete engineering designs to construction check out for erosion control projects.





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# Local Water Management

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Redwood SWCD is the coordinating agency for implementing Redwood County's Comprehensive Local Water Management Plan. In 2020 the water management plan was amended to include an implementation plan for 2021-2025.

## Task Force

Dennis Groebner – Redwood County Commissioner  
Rick Wakefield – Redwood County Commissioner  
Kerry Netzke – Redwood-Cottonwood Rivers Control Area  
Loren Clark - Natural Resource Conservation Service  
Brad Salfer – Banker  
Ryan Benedict – Ag Producer  
Jim Doering – City of Redwood Falls  
Ed Lenz – Board of Soil and Water Resources  
Tom Morley – Wildlife and Ag. Producer  
Bruce Tiffany - Ag Producer  
Mike Hewitt - Ag Producer  
Kurt Mathiowetz – Redwood SWCD, Water Plan Coordinator  
Scott Wold - Redwood SWCD, Redwood County

## Priority Concerns

1. Groundwater protection that will focus on wellhead protection for public or private water supply.
2. Drainage management focusing on wetland restorations and floodwater retention opportunities (altered hydrology).
3. Surface water quality addressing impaired waters by major watershed for these priority pollutants: phosphorus, nitrogen and fecal coliform bacteria.
4. Erosion and sediment control focusing on residue management county-wide, and gully and concentrated flow areas in the southwest portion of Redwood County.

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## 2021 Accomplishments

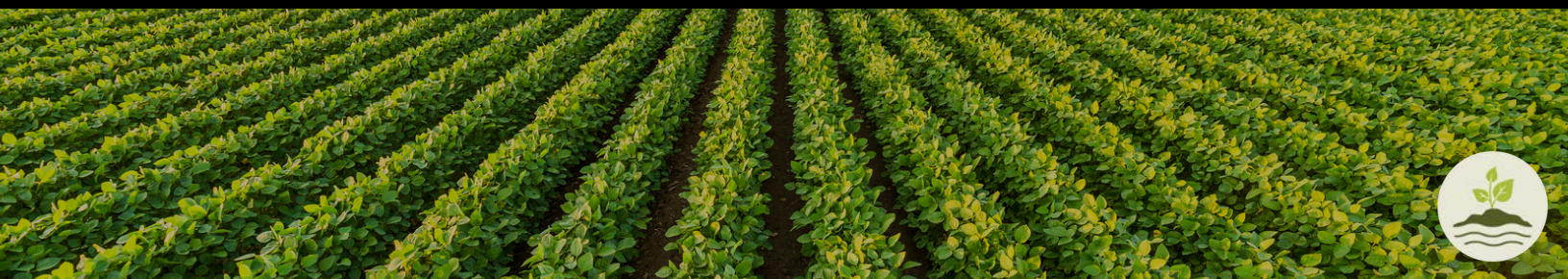
Held meeting for water plan task force to set 2021 priorities and budget

8 abandoned wells sealed

350 acres of No Till cost share provided

80 acres of cover crop cost share provided

\$1,800 in cost share provided for structural engineerd practices





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# Water Quality Certification

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## What Is Water Quality Certification Program?

The Water Quality Certification Program is a program that provides farmers an opportunity to take the lead in implementing practices that protect our water resources.

Farmers who execute and maintain good farm management practices will be certified and receive regulatory certainty for 10 years.



## Water Quality Certification Stats

- 3,196.77 Acres enrolled in 2021
- \$65,000 in grant funding provided to enrolled farms in 2021
- 23 Certifications overall
- 14 Certifications in process

## Why should Farmers Participate and how do they benefit?

- To receive access to financial and technical assistance.
- To help protect and improve water quality in Redwood County and in Minnesota.
- To help ensure land productivity for future generations.
- To receive regulatory certainty.
- To receive recognition for conservation stewardship.
- To receive stability to plan for and invest in conservation practices.
- To be part of the water quality solution.

## How do Farmers Become Certified?

- Application – first step is completion of an application indicating they are currently in compliance with existing regulations.
- Assessment – second step is the evaluation of each field within the operation using the computer model. The following items are assessed:
  - Nutrient Management Factors
  - Physical Field Characteristic
  - Tillage Management Factors
  - Pest Management Factors
  - Tile Drainage Factors
  - Conservation Practices





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# Wetland Conservation Act (WCA)

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Redwood SWCD is the designed Local Government Unit (LGU) for the Wetland Conservation Act (WCA) under a resolution from Redwood County Board of Commissioners, with oversight by the MN Board of Water and Soil Resources and enforcement from the MN DNR Enforcement Division. WCA requires anyone proposing “impacts” to wetlands to go through a permitting process. Certain activities are exempted from WCA. These exemptions vary by type, size and location.



A summary of 2021 activities:

- Assistance provided to 15 individuals
- Applications – 9
- Exemptions – 2
- Replacement Plan – 0
- Enforcement Actions - 0
- Potential Violations – 0
- Trainings – 1

In 1991, reacting to public concern about the disappearance of wetlands in Minnesota, the Minnesota Legislature approved and signed the Wetland Conservation Act. There are several purposes of the Wetland Conservation Act.

1. Achieve no net loss of wetland quantity, quality and biological diversity or existing wetlands.
2. Increase quantity, quality and biological diversity of wetlands through restoration or enhancements of previously impacted wetlands.
3. Avoid impacts that destroy or diminish quantity, quality or biological diversity.
4. Replace wetlands when avoidance of impacts is not feasible and prudent.





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# Reinvest in Minnesota (RIM)

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In 1986, the Reinvest in Minnesota Resources Act was enacted to restore certain lands to protect soil and water quality and support fish and wildlife habitat. RIM is a voluntary conservation easement program primarily designed to take sensitive cropland out of production to address a variety of concerns. The vast majority of RIM easements are permanent in duration. The RIM contract means the landowner surrenders certain rights they have to the property; cropping, haying/grazing (unless approved), general disturbance of conservation cover, and building structures or developing roads. Essentially, the landowner must keep the habitat intact. Landowners are compensated for granting these conservation easements, all the while the landowner still owns the land and manages access, pays taxes (typically reduced) and conducts the management on the parcel. This program is administered by the Board of Water and Soil Resources. Local Soil and Water Conservation Districts implement the program locally.



In 2008, the citizens of Minnesota voted to change to the constitution, increasing the sales tax and dedicating a large portion of that money toward clean water and wildlife habitat. It has been hugely successful, especially here in Redwood County. In addition to a large influx of money allocated by the legislature for RIM Bonding, we were able to enroll larger areas adjacent to rivers, ditches and lakes, and public water wetlands.



Currently, Redwood County has a total of 561 easements recorded or in process since 1986. These contracts total 19,590 acres. Local seed vendors, earthwork contractors, land management contractors, area elevators and farmers have been hired to perform the establishment, maintenance and management of these conservation lands.





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# Ag Best Management Loan Program

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Redwood Soil and Water Conservation District administers the Ag Best Management Loan Program offered by the Minnesota Department of Agriculture.



Some activities that have qualified for low interest loans in Redwood County include:

- Feedlot improvements to treat a pollution problem
- Manure handling equipment
- Conservation Tillage equipment to leave minimum of 30% residue
- Upgrade out-of-compliance individual septic systems
- New well construction if old well is contaminated by proof of water test

The loan program provides low interest financing to farmers, rural landowners, and agriculture supply businesses for the implementation of best management practices that improve water quality problems in Redwood County. Loans are provided for projects that meet the goals in Redwood County's Comprehensive Local Water Management Plan.

**FUNDS AVAILABLE FOR 2022  
BMP LOANS!**





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# Minnesota Buffer Law

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Since 2015, the MN Legislature passed a buffer law which essentially reinforced laws already on the books - the Shoreland Ordinance and Public Drainage Ditch buffers. The law requires a vegetated buffer be placed along Public Waters (50-foot average width) affected covered under the current Shoreland Ordinance and along Public Ditches (16.5-foot width). The Public Water buffers must be in place by Nov 1st, 2017 and the Public Ditches by Nov 1st, 2018. The purpose of the law is to help improve water quality in the State of Minnesota. We all know this will not fix water quality, but is one tool being used to help.

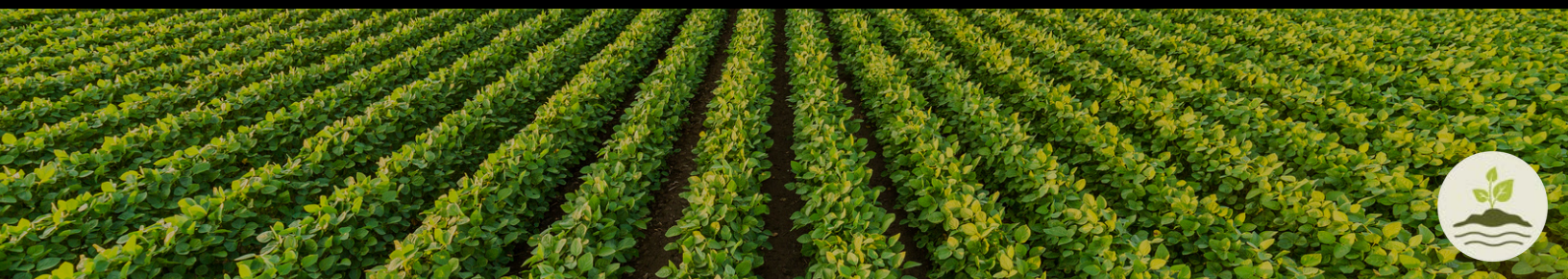


## Compliance in Redwood County as of 2022

Public Waters: 99%

103E Public Ditches: 95%

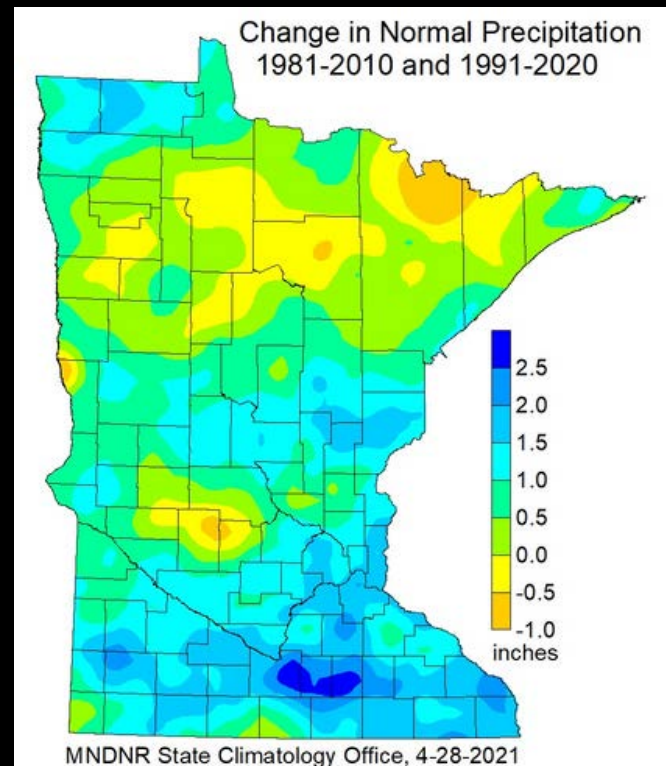
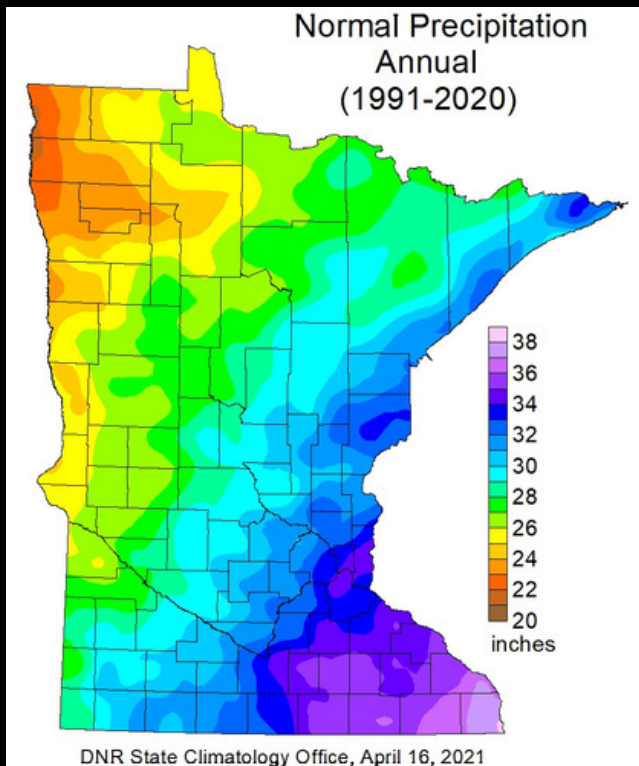
Part of the legislation included the SWCDs conducting a preliminary review of the waters in their county and assess compliance. In Redwood County, the buffer law impacts 2,737 parcels of land - overall compliance at the end of 2016 indicated Public Waters parcels were over 75% compliant, but Public Ditches are only 36% compliant.





# Rain Gauge Program

Redwood SWCD continues to cooperate with the State Climatologists Office to enlist individuals across the county to collect rainfall data. All SWCD's in the state select individuals every 12 miles across the state to collect this data. The data is used to record average rainfall data for the entire state.



## Help Wanted!

We are currently looking for individuals to collect rainfall data in the following townships: Delhi, Gales, Johnsonville, Kintire, Morgan, New Avon, North Hero, Sheridan, Sundown, Vesta, and Westline.







Find us on Facebook!



Check us out on YouTube!



For more information reach out to us or stop by anytime Monday through  
Friday 8:00 - 4:30

1241 East Bridge Street, Redwood Falls, MN 56283  
Redwoodswcd.org / 507-637-2427 ext. 3 /  
redwoodswcd@co.redwood.mn.us

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