



## **2018 Report**

*Narrative of the year's activities*

### **I. Introduction**

The mission of the South St. Louis Soil & Water Conservation District is to provide technical, educational, and financial resources to land occupiers in order to implement practices and projects that preserve, protect, and enhance water quality and other natural resources.

The purpose of this report is to briefly discuss items that were completed in 2018.

### **2. Description of services provided by the District**

All SWCD services are designed to achieve our mission. Services provided by the SWCD include the following: Technical & Financial Assistance, Native Tree & Shrub Sale, Watershed Assessments, Watershed Projects, Private Forest Stewardship, Sediment and Erosion Control, Wetland Conservation, Conservation Education, and Conservation Engineering.

### **3. Listing of supervisors and their offices**

Dave Davis Chair Term of office 2017 – 2020	Al Moline Treasurer Term of office 2019 - 2022	Michael Lindgren Secretary Term of office 2017 - 2020	Marcia Stromgren Member Term of office 2019 - 2022	Debra Taylor Vice-Chair Term of office 2019 - 2022
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### **4. Office personnel and cooperating agencies**

#### **Staff**

Keith Anderson, P.E. Senior Conservation Engineer (TSA – Shared Position)	Tim Beaster Conservation Specialist	R.C. Boheim District Manager
Kate Kubiak Conservation Specialist	Beth Kleinke District Forester (shared position with North St. Louis SWCD)	Mary Krueger Engineering Technician (TSA – Shared Position)
Ben Larson Engineering Technician (TSA – Shared Position)	Ann Thompson Conservation Specialist	Paul Vartmann Engineering Technician (TSA - Shared Position)
Matias Valero Conservation Engineer (TSA – Shared Position)		

### ***Cooperating Agencies***

Area 3 SWCD Technical Service Area  
City of Duluth  
Duluth Cooperative Invasive Species Management Area  
Laurentian Resource Conservation and Development Council  
Minnesota Association of Soil and Water Conservation Districts  
Minnesota Board of Water and Soil Resources  
Minnesota Department of Natural Resources  
Minnesota Forestry Association  
Minnesota Pollution Control Agency  
Minnesota Trout Unlimited  
Regional Stormwater Protection Team  
Saint Louis County  
USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service

## **II. Annual Objectives – Soil and Water Conservation Problems**

### ***Lake and Stream Protection***

#### **A. Annual Objectives**

- To protect, preserve, and enhance streams, inland lakes, and Lake Superior.
- To work to implement projects and encourage practices that correct situations that are causing, or could cause, these waters to be impaired.

#### **B. Actions**

- Provided technical, educational, and financial assistance for land occupiers to install and use best management practices.
- Provided assistance for Lake Superior shoreline erosion problems.
- Reviewed DNR water permits and provided input to help limit negative impacts.
- Initiated transition to One Watershed One Plan Watershed-level planning with St. Louis County and BWSR.
- Worked to meet the State’s framework for water quality assessment and improvement by monitoring, assessing, setting goals, and implementing projects within target watersheds.
- Partnered with the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency to complete major Watershed Restoration and Protection Strategy (WRAPS) activities for the St. Louis River, Cloquet River, Lake Superior South, and Duluth Urban Watersheds.

#### **Activities included:**

- Engaging and educating the public about the MPCA’s WRAPS process and progress in the Cloquet River, St. Louis River and Lake Superior South Major Watersheds.
- Deploying temperature loggers in the Midway River (St. Louis River) and Cloquet River watersheds.
- Assisting the MPCA in stressor identification report writing in the Cloquet River major watershed.

- Starting work on a implementation-focused report for the Cloquet River
- Performing desktop GIS reconnaissance of Silver Creek (Lake Superior South) in preparation for a planned 2019 geomorphic assessment of the watershed.
- Completing a detailed geomorphic report with implementation recommendations for the Sucker River (Lake Superior South).
- Conducting a stream channel assessment of Mission Creek, Sargent Creek, Stewart Creek and Coffee Creek (Duluth Urban watershed).
- Reviewing and commenting on documents and attending watershed meetings as requested
- Serving on the Duluth Urban WRAPS advisory committee (DUWAC).
- Continued working on planning and engineering design for Mission Creek, funded by DNR - LSOH and slated for construction in 2019.
- Completed the final stages of construction on a restoration project on Chester Creek, in Chester Bowl, funded by the MN DNR.
- Completed a restoration project on almost a mile of Sargent Creek, our largest stream restoration project to date. Funding provided by MN DNR.
- In cooperation with Minnesota Trout Unlimited and other partners, completed a 2000-foot restoration project on Chester Creek.
- In cooperation with the City of Duluth, applied for and received funding from the Conservation Partners Legacy grant program to restore a Tischer Creek tributary in Hartley Park.
- Worked on watershed protection and restoration projects in the four identified priority watersheds for 2018:

#### **Miller Creek**

- Secured funding from the MN DNR for a 3,500-foot restoration project on Miller Creek.
- On behalf of the City of Duluth, applied for and received a Clean Water Fund Grant to implement stormwater BMPs at 2 parks in the Miller Creek Watershed.

#### **Chester Creek**

- Completed the final phase of restoration (riparian planting) on Chester Creek through Chester Bowl and completed a 2000-foot restoration project upstream of Madison Ave.

#### **Knife River**

- Continued to support activities related to the Knife River Implementation Plan for the Knife River Sediment TMDL.

#### **Amity Creek/Lester River**

- With funding from Conservation Partners Legacy, worked with private landowners and MN DNR Fisheries to remove buckthorn and other invasive species along the Lester River.
- Continued to work with local partners to create a detailed plan outlining prioritized stream restoration and protection activities in the Amity Creek Watershed (Amity Creek Master Planning).

## ***Reducing Environmental Impacts***

### **A. Annual Objectives**

- To reduce, mitigate, or eliminate environmental impacts caused by development-related activities.

#### B. Actions

- Remained a member of the Regional Stormwater Protection Team (RSPT) and provided technical assistance for implementing their educational programs. Continued to serve as their fiscal agent.
- Reviewed construction erosion control and stormwater plans for the City of Duluth and completed more than 20 site inspections.
- Completed Minnesota Wetland Conservation Act responsibilities:
  - Completed administrative-type aspects of WCA through an agreement with Duluth, proctor, St. Louis County, and Rice Lake.
  - Served on all required Technical Evaluation Panels.
  - 135 WCA technical assistance contacts with landowners or consultants were completed. 37 WCA applications were processed.

### *Outreach and Education*

#### A. Annual Objectives

- To educate youth and adult audiences about high priority SWCD soil and water conservation topics.

#### B. Actions

- Worked with the media to publicize SWCD programs and policies.
- Updated the district website, distributed electronic newsletters (ENews), distributed annual print newsletter as part of the annual tree sale, and continued using social media to increase public awareness of SWCD programs.
- Gave presentations to schools and community groups about various water quality, forestry and soil – related topics, as requested.
- Attended and provided information to the public about SWCD programs at annual regional events including the South St. Louis County Fair and the ‘Treasures of the Earth’ art festival.
- Continued to communicate with other agencies and user groups to discuss available district programs and services.
- Participated in and supported the Area 3 Envirothon Program.
- Continued participating in annual regional education events including DNR’s Forestry Field Days and Stowe and Lakewood Elementary’s Field Days.
- Conducted Civic Engagement meetings in the St. Louis River and Lake Superior South Watersheds to share information about the completed WRAPS document and associated TMDLs.
- Served on the Duluth Urban Watershed Advisory Committee, which included educating and engaging local township leaders about water quality, wetlands and other SWCD priorities.
- In cooperation with Laurentian RC&D and other agencies, planned and held a 2-day stream restoration conference in Two Harbors.
- Held an April invasive species workshop as part of District Forestry program.
- Held an October Forest Fire Workshop as part of District Forestry program

### *Forestry*

#### A. Annual Objectives

- To provide assistance to private forest landowners, such as stewardship plan-writing, financial assistance and advice.
- To provide technical assistance in an effort to limit negative environmental impacts from forest harvesting and management activities.
- To provide a source of conservation-grade trees and shrubs.

#### B. Actions

- Held our annual native tree and shrub sale to provide affordable native trees and shrubs to private landowners for conservation and education uses.
- Continued to work with North St. Louis SWCD to support a shared District Forester, which included the following activities:
  - NRCS project plan applications completed for 7 landowners with a total of 10 projects covering 132 acres.
  - Forest stewardship plans written for 13 landowners, with a total of 1,200 acres.
  - In-person site visits and consultation for 30+ landowners with tree and land management questions.
  - In cooperation with other Area 3 SWCDs, received an NRCS Technical Assistance grant to assist with developing project plans and certifying projects.

### ***Ground Water***

#### A. Annual Objectives

- To protect and improve ground water quality.
- To protect ground water quality in areas where land occupiers rely on private wells for water supply, particularly in developing suburban and rural areas.
- To protect ground water that contributes critical base flows for streams, especially streams that support cold-water fish species.

#### B. Actions

- Provided well-sealing cost-share assistance to three property owners in 2018.

### ***Protection of Natural and Community Resources***

#### A. Annual Objectives

- To protect and preserve critical lands and maintain existing ecological integrity.
- To enable the continued enjoyment and use of public resources and minimize negative impacts.

#### B. Actions

- Utilized the tree and shrub sale and related technical assistance to support community resource restoration and protection projects.
- Partnered with local agencies including the City of Duluth and MN DNR – Ecological Waters to begin to better understand the flood risks to the Fond du Lac neighborhood caused by Mission Creek and the St. Louis River Estuary.

## ***Agricultural***

### A. Annual Objectives

- To provide financial and technical assistance to agricultural operations to minimize negative environmental impacts.
- To support sustainable agricultural initiatives and operations that protect the environment, preserve family farming, and conserve energy.

### B. Actions

- Maintained agricultural best management practice revolving loan funds for animal waste practices and equipment. One loan was issued for a skid steer.
- In cooperation with BWSR, provided assistance for the implementation of the State Buffer Law, as needed.

## ***Wildlife Management***

### A. Annual Objectives

- To protect and enhance wildlife habitat.

### B. Actions

- Continued to offer selections of native trees and shrubs through the annual sale that benefit wildlife.
- Routinely include trout and other aquatic species habitat in all stream restoration project designs.

## **III. Annual Objectives – Administration**

### A. Objective

- Ensure efficient administration and fiscal management of SWCD.
- Effectively utilize SWCD technical resources.
- Provide administrative support for multi-district organizations, partners, and grant projects.

### B. Actions

- Maintained financial, personnel, and management policies and procedures that ensure efficient and effective SWCD operation.
- Carried out all administrative functions for TSA #3.
- Acted as fiscal agent for the Regional Stormwater Protection Team.
- Performed administrative, fiscal, and management functions for current watershed and other special projects.
- Completed plans and reports.
- Provided appropriate resources and time for staff and Supervisors to attend applicable training.