



2019 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 2019.

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, P.E. Conservation Engineer (TSA – Shared Position)	Julie Venhuizen Administration & Communications Specialist	

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
St. 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.
- Made progress towards One Watershed One Plan Watershed-level planning with St. Louis County, Carlton County, Fond Du Lac Tribe and BWSR. Applied for and acquired planning grant for \$320,000.
- 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, Lake Superior South, Cloquet River and Duluth Urban Watersheds.

Activities included:

- Engaging and educating the public about the MPCA’s WRAPS process and progress in the Cloquet River Watershed.
- Completing water monitoring at six St. Louis River watershed sites
- Assisting the MPCA with temperature and biological monitoring in the Midway River watershed
- Assessing stream/road crossings in coldwater tributaries in the Cloquet River watershed

- Completing a report focused on restoration opportunities in the Cloquet River Watershed.
- Performing a geomorphic assessment of the Silver Creek watershed in Lake Superior South.
- Conducting a stream channel assessment of Mission Creek, Sargent Creek, Stewart Creek and Coffee Creek (Duluth Urban watershed).
- Assisting the MPCA with data collection to support TMDL development on four impaired Duluth beaches
- Reviewing and commenting on documents and attending watershed meetings as requested.
- Participating on the Duluth Urban WRAPS advisory committee (DUWAC).
- Completed a 2,000-foot restoration project on Mission Creek, funded by DNR - LSOH.
- Collected and analyzed geomorphic data to support stream assessments and restoration designs
- Began planning for and designing the restoration of Tischer Tributary 6.5 through Hartley Park, in cooperation with the City of Duluth. Construction summer of 2020.
- Completed a sediment-mitigation cost-share project with a private landowner on Beartrap Creek in Industrial Township.
- Worked on watershed protection and restoration projects in the four identified priority watersheds for 2019:

Miller Creek

- Began planning for a 3,000-foot restoration project on Miller Creek, funded by DNR - LSOH. Construction summer of 2021.
- Continued making progress towards implementing stormwater BMPs in Piedmont and Lincoln Parks in cooperation with the City of Duluth. Funded with Clean Water Fund.

Chester Creek

- Started planning for Phase 3 restoration project with MN Trout Unlimited and landowners and acquired GLRI funding through the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

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, continued to work 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.

- 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.
 - 175 WCA technical assistance contacts with landowners or consultants were completed. 23 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, Harvest Fest and the Arrowhead Master Gardeners’ Gardening Extravaganza.
- 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, Stowe Elementary Field Days and Earth Tracks.
- Conducted Civic Engagement meetings in the Cloquet River Watersheds in cooperation with North St. Louis and Lake County SWCDs to share information about the completed Stressor ID document including a kayak tour/float, a community meeting at Boulder Lake ELC and a community meeting at Ault Township Hall.
- Held a March tree care class.
- Presented at the MN DNR School Forest Program.
- Participated in a Duluth Township meeting regarding Spruce Budworm.

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 as partner in the Arrowhead Forest Partnership NRCS Initiative/Grant including the following activities:
 - 6 NRCS EQIP Projects completed and certified.
 - 16 NRCS project plans and applications completed.
- Continued to work with North St. Louis SWCD to support a shared District Forester, which included the following activities:
 - Forest stewardship plans written for 7 landowners.
 - In person site visits and consultation for numerous landowners with tree and land management questions, several assisted with applications for DNR cost share.

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 four property owners in 2019.

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.

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.

- Provided assistance for the implementation of the State Buffer Law, including monitoring compliance on 1/3 of the parcels in the District, in accordance with the District’s Buffer Monitoring and Compliance Policy.

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.
- Met with legislators to discuss the continuation of Capacity Funding at MASWCDs annual Legislative Days with other staff and Board from Area 3.
- 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.