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NEWSLETTER

Local Conservationists Honored at State Soil and Water Conservation District Convention

Conservation practices are increasing across Minnesota to protect the land and waters, and those leading the efforts on their land were recently recognized at the state level. Church Lake Farm of Pennock was honored as outstanding conservationists at the annual meeting of the Minnesota Association of Soil and Water Conservation Districts (MAS-WCD). They were selected by the Kandiyohi Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD) for the award. Each year, the state's SWCDs recognize individuals and organizations for outstanding accomplishments in implementing conservation practices and improving Minnesota's natural resources. The award program is done with support from The Farmer magazine.

Church Lake Farm was recognized for using a wide variety of conservation practices on their farm, said SWCD District Technical Coordinator, Ryan Peterson. Church Lake Farm has constructed water and sediment control basins to help manage water runoff and control erosion on their land. They primarily grow alfalfa and



are use cover crops along with conservation plantings to help protect their soils from eroding year-round. A variety of wildlife and pollinators also benefit from the native buffers installed to help filter and keep water clean. Solar panels, irrigation water management, wetland restorations, and nutrient and pest management are some additional examples of Church Lake Farm conservation efforts.

"We're really proud of Church Lake Farm and what they have done for

conservation in Kandiyohi County," said Peterson. "Church Lake Farm provides a wonderful example of how conservation can be successfully implemented using modern technology and farming practices. They are excellent stewards of the land and great models for future conservationists".

For more information on conservation programs, contact Ryan Peterson at the Kandiyohi SWCD, phone 320-235-3540.



Church Lake Farm, Pennock MN

2022 Kandiyohi Outstanding Conservationists

SWCD Flashback



Eddie Rasmussen "proudly showing his Big Blue Stem, Switchgrass and Indian Grasses" near East Solomon Lake, Circa 1980.

Kandiyohi SWCD Board Supervisors:
Donnel Williamson, Chairman District 2
Jane Youngkrantz, Vice Chairman District 4
Vacant, Secretary District 1
Brandon Smith, Treasurer District 5
Doug Hanson, Public Relations and Information District 3

Kandiyohi SWCD Staff:
Margaret Johnson, District Manager
Ryan Peterson, District Technical Coordinator
Ellie Faber, Conservation Technician
Sandy Laumer, Office Manager

Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) Staff:
Melanie Dickman, District Conservationist
Rick Gronseth, Civil Engineer Technician

Pheasants Forever:
Aaron Wilson, Farm Bill Biologist II

Out with the Old, In with the New!

The Kandiyohi SWCD has upgraded to a NEW website! Be sure to check out all the local conservation information at www.kandiyohiswcd.org



Free Drinking Water Testing for nitrates on Earth Day (April 20th)

Clean drinking water is a concern in many regions, including the Bonanza Valley Groundwater Protection Area of northern Kandiyohi and surrounding counties. The Kandiyohi Soil and Water Conservation District is excited to partner with Goat Ridge Brewing Company to provide free nitrate testing of your drinking water. On April 20th, stop by Goat Ridge Brewery with your tap water sample. Provide 1 cup of tap water (after the tap has run for a minute or more) in a clean plastic or glass container. SWCD staff will be "live



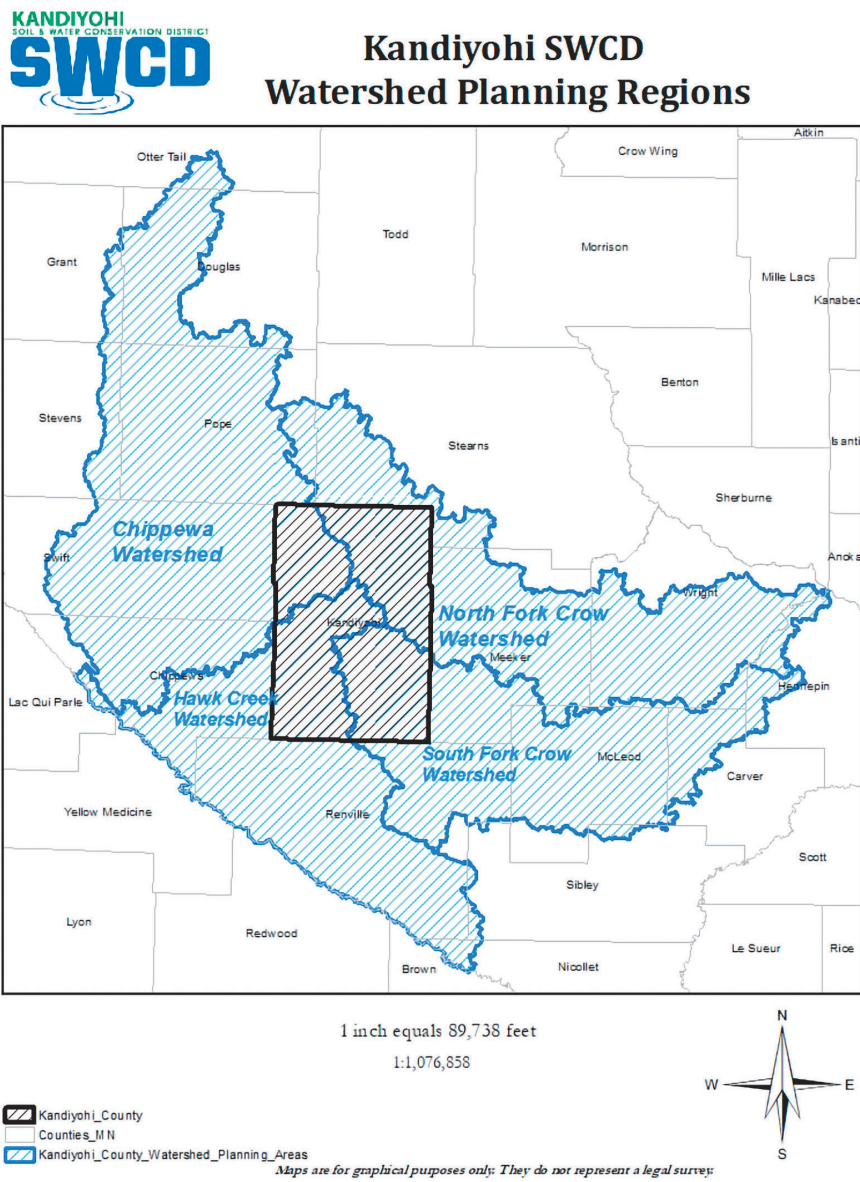
testing" water samples with immediate results and providing drinking water health information and water testing advice from 3-7pm at the Brewery in New London. Samples can also be dropped off in a cooler from 8am to 3pm, if you can't make it from

3-7pm, please label your sample with your name and phone number. In addition to the April 20th event, SWCD staff will be testing for nitrates at the Earth Day Celebration at Prairie Woods Environmental Learning Center from 8am-1pm on Saturday April 22nd.

To a dedicated conservationist Ron Dilley 1955-2023



Kandiyohi SWCD
Board Supervisor 2012
- 2023 & Outstanding
Conservationist Award
Recipient - 2011



One Watershed One Plan

Water doesn't follow political boundaries, it follows a hydrologic boundary, running off the land surface and into creeks, ditches, rivers, through wetlands, and lakes, and with outlets to bigger and bigger rivers or lakes.

Each of these areas are called a watershed. Which provides an inherent challenge for those of us managing the water or the pollution ending up in those waters. Kandiyohi County has four major watersheds, Chippewa River, North Fork Crow River, Hawk Creek, and South Fork Crow River.

Each major watershed requires different management techniques and strategies depending on the level of need and priority, land use characteristics, soils, water quality, and water quantity.

Historically counties planned water on a county boundary scale, the science in management is tied to the hydrologic boundary. Minnesota Statute 103B.801 allows local government to develop implementation plans based on these hydrologic boundaries (major watershed boundaries). This program is called One Watershed One Plan. This is the next step in the development of water planning in Minnesota.

Each plan will have a series of implementation strategies focusing on priority resources, targeting projects within those priority areas that can show measurable results.

Because District funding is limited, prioritizing project location and project type will help make meaningful progress towards the goal of resource protection and improvement.

For questions, please contact us at 320-235-3540 ext. 3.

Minnesota Ag Water Quality Certification Program:



In order to encourage landowners and farmers to become certified to promote and implement appropriate water quality practices on their farm, the Kandiyohi County SWCD has partnered with the Minnesota Ag Water Quality Certification Program (MAWQCP).

The MAWQCP's main goal is to conserve our water quality within MN's agricultural lands by working with farmers and landowners to be better stewards of the land.

Why would this benefit your farm?

Farmers and landowners will receive a special sign that can be placed at the location of their business to show other locals that their business is doing the best they can do for water quality management.

Certified farmers will become a priority for assistance. When a farmer/landowner becomes certified, they are eligible for financial assistance and technical services to do water quality improvement projects on their farm/land. Some practices that have been installed are grass waterways, cover crops, nutrient management, buffers, water and sediment control basins and conservation tillage.

The certified farmer/landowner will gain regulatory certainty.

The landowner/farmer will be deemed compliant for at least 10 years with any upcoming new water quality rules and regulations.

Kandiyohi County currently is climbing rapidly in certifications numbers, and we are always looking for more! Not sure if you want to be certified, but you want to go through the process to find out? No problem! For just going through the process, farmers have access to MN Dept of Ag funds for specific conservation practices on the farm.

For questions and/or an application to sign up, please contact the Kandiyohi SWCD.



Grassland Management Series

Are you looking for help on managing your native grasslands/prairies? There are several management activities to choose from, but they are not all created equal. Having a management goal will help you choose the appropriate activity. Are you needing to control woody vegetation, invasive cool season grasses, or are you attempting to increase the diversity of the native wild flowers within your prairie? This 7-part grassland habitat management video series discusses topics like woody vegetation control, mowing, grazing, light disking, prescribed fire, and Canada this-

To access the video series, scan the QR code.



Kandiyohi Lakes and Rivers Join Keep It Clean MN



The Kandiyohi Soil and Water Conservation District is excited to announce that Kandiyohi County lakes and rivers are now officially part of the grassroots Keep It Clean MN conservation program. The sport of ice fishing is booming! And thanks to better technology, better equipment, and wheelhouses, it's now more comfortable than ever to stay on the ice for extended periods.

As a result, our area lakes have seen a dramatic increase in winter activity. With the increased activity has come more pressure on the natural resources, including an increase in the amount of garbage and human waste left on the ice.

Although it's exciting to see more people enjoying the sport of ice fishing, the removal and safe disposal of garbage and human waste from frozen lakes is reaching unmanageable proportions. To help address these issues, Keep It Clean MN promotes 5 principles to help stop litter and human waste from spoiling our lakes, rivers, and shorelines:

Make a plan for trash and waste removal before you arrive.

Whether you access the ice from a public or private entrance, plan to take off the ice what you put on to it. Many access points and resorts offer garbage collection services. If your site doesn't, make a plan to transport it home for disposal.

Use colored garbage bags.

Brightly colored bags or black bags are easier to spot making it less likely trash will inadvertently be left behind.

Keep garbage and human waste off the ice.

Store it in your vehicle, trailer, or fish house. Make sure it's secure before traveling so that it doesn't blow out of truck beds or off trailers and sleds.

Check for trash before departing.

Make sure that you have picked up any garbage in your area. And if you notice someone else has left something behind, please take a moment to pick it up and bring it with you.

Allow time and bring the tools you need to move or remove your fish house.

Take support blocks, insulation, landscaping fabric, wood, and other materials with you and properly dispose of them.

It takes all of us working together to Keep It Clean! Thank you for doing your part to ensure the health of our lakes and rivers. The Kandiyohi SWCD invites you to join us in increasing awareness and taking steps to bring about meaningful change. For more information or promotional items call the Kandiyohi SWCD at 320-235-3540.

Kandiyohi County's Volunteer Rain Gauge Reader's

Do you like to keep track of the rain fall in your area? For many years, the Kandiyohi SWCD has been collecting rain fall data from local members of our community. The information collected goes to the state climatology office, then the state will publish monthly precipitation records of the entire state of Minnesota. When you sign up for this program, the Kandiyohi SWCD will provide you a rain gauge to place in your yard, and you will oversee collecting the data and providing it to us. The Kandiyohi SWCD is looking for rain gauge monitors in the areas of Burbank, Colfax, Roseville, Harrison, Genessee, Lake Elizabeth, Fahlun, Whitefield, Kandiyohi, Edwards, Green Lake & Dovre Townships. We only need a select number of monitors, so if this is something you would like to do, and you are in the areas listed, please call us as soon as possible.





RIM Wetlands Sign-Up Underway

Willmar, Minn. — Landowners have a new option to restore their environmentally sensitive cropland with the reintroduction of the Reinvest In Minnesota Wetlands Program (RIM Wetlands). Signup for RIM Wetlands began earlier this month. Funding decisions will be made via quarterly batching periods while funds are available.

The most recent RIM Wetlands Program took place in 2015. RIM Wetlands is a voluntary statewide program designed to improve water quality and habitat, which is administered by the Minnesota Board of Water and Soil Resources (BWSR). The program aims to protect and restore habitat on marginal cropland across Minnesota through wetland restoration. The program is funded through the Outdoor Heritage Fund (OHF) and the Clean Water Fund (CWF).

“Wetlands provide diverse wildlife habitat and water quality improvements, and restoring and protecting them benefits all Minnesota citizens,” said BWSR Executive Director John Jaschke. “Local Soil and Water Conservation District staff are ready to help landowners on conservation options that work for them.”

Landowners accepted into the RIM Wetlands Program place their land into a permanent conservation easement through the state’s Reinvest in Minnesota (RIM) easement program. Private ownership continues, and the land is permanently restored and enhanced for water quality and habitat benefits.

The Kandiyohi Soil and Water Conservation District is now accepting applications. Landowners wanting to learn more should call the Kandiyohi SWCD (320) 235-3540 or stop in the office located at 1005 High Ave NE in Willmar. More information about the RIM Wetlands Program can be found at <https://bwsr.state.mn.us/rim-wetlands>



RIM Grassland Reserve Program

Willmar, Minn. — Landowners in Minnesota have a new option to permanently protect, enhance and restore remnant native prairies with the Reinvest In Minnesota Grasslands Reserve Program. The RIM Grassland Reserve Program offers landowners with remnant prairie (lands identified as never being disturbed by tillage or farmed) an option to enroll into a perpetual conservation easement. Landowners accepted into the RIM Grasslands program enroll their land into a permanent conservation easement through the state’s Reinvest in Minnesota (RIM) easement program. Private ownership continues, and the prairie is permanently protected and enhanced for habitat benefits.

The RIM Grasslands program is a great option to protect these historically undervalued tracts of land which have become increasingly rare as land clearing equipment has gotten larger and less labor intensive. In Kandiyohi County, over 98% of the original native prairie has been converted for other uses such as development and farming. Some remnant prairie tracts have avoided the plow and development through the past century because they were not easily accessible, while other prairie tracts survived because they served as pastures. Whatever the reason remnant prairies have survived this long, they now face their biggest challenges ever in the form of invasive species and woody vegetation encroachment. Historically, grazing and grassland fires at regular intervals has kept prairies clear of most tree species while clearing the thatch layer, recycling nutrients, and keeping prairie plants healthy.

Why protect native prairie with RIM Grass-

lands? Landowners are compensated for the easement with a one-time easement payment rate specific to the township. RIM Grasslands also helps plan and fund restoration and enhancement activities that improve habitats and functionality of a grasslands (prescribed burning, conservation grazing/haying, control of invasive species). These activities benefit many rare and endangered plants, insects, birds, reptiles and mammals which are dependent on native prairies.

The Kandiyohi Soil and Water Conservation District is now accepting applications. Landowners wanting to learn more should call the Kandiyohi SWCD. More information about the RIM Wetlands Program can be found at RIM Grassland Reserve | MN Board of Water, Soil Resources (state.mn.us)

Well Sealing & Abandoned Wells: Funding Available!

The Kandiyohi SWCD has FUNDING available to assist you with sealing your unused wells! The funding of you well sealing will depend on the location. For more information, call our office to chat with staff.

Why is it so important to seal unused wells?

Do you own or know of an abandoned farmstead? If so, has the old abandoned well been properly sealed? No matter if you live in a small town, farm country, the woods or even a city, there is a possibility that you could have one or more wells on your property. Wells do not last forever, so if a well was the main source of water for that particular property at one time, there is a good chance you could have multiple wells. Every unused well that is NOT properly sealed poses a safety, health, and environmental threat to the family of the property and the community.

Physical Safety: Children or small animals can easily fall into unprotected and open wells. Accidents could also occur with equipment when they are



accidentally driven over.

Health & Environment: An unused well can act as a drain which allows surface water runoff, contaminated water or improperly disposed waste a direct pathway into the drinking water source. When this occurs, it can affect your current well, your neighborhood or your community. Consider the liability and responsibility issues if your old well is holding contaminants that leak into your city or communities drinking water. It is also recommended to get your currently used wells tested

on an annual basis just to be sure it is clear of contaminants.

Not sure if you have an abandon well? Here is what to look for:

Outside

- Low spot or sunken area in the ground
- Metal, wood or concrete cover or manhole
- Areas that stay wet can possibly be caused by an unsealed flowing well
- Windmill, old shed, well house or old pump

Inside

- Glass block or concrete patch in an exterior step
- Wells are often housed in a small room in the basement or under exterior concrete steps
- Pipe sticking out of the floor in your basement or a concrete patch in the floor where the well was located.

Once you have located an abandon well, give your local licensed well and boring contractor a call to get a quote and call the SWCD for funding options. Questions? Don’t hesitate to call the SWCD or go online to the MN Department of Health for more information on Sealing Unused Wells.

Windbreaks: Why are they so important?

Windbreaks are linear plantings of trees and shrubs designed to provide environmental and community benefits. The main purpose of most windbreaks is to slow the wind, which creates a more beneficial condition for soils, crops, livestock, wildlife, and people. Windbreaks can be designed to serve more than one purpose at a time. The location, orientation to the wind, height, width, density, and species selection all play a roll in determining the benefits of what that windbreak could provide.

There are several types of Windbreaks that serve purposes:

- Field Windbreaks protect wind sensitive crops, control soil erosion, increase crop yields and increase bee pollination, irrigation,



and pesticide effectiveness. Field Windbreaks can also be designed to spread snow evenly across a field, which will increase spring soil moisture.

- Livestock windbreaks help reduce stress and morality from cold weather, animal stress and feed consumption. They also reduce noise and odor from livestock.
- Living Snow fences can help reduce drifting snow on roads which increases driver safety.
- Farmstead Windbreaks help reduce heat-

ing costs in buildings and improve outdoor working conditions.

When designing any type of windbreak, you can select species types that are good for wildlife and pollinators, such as fruit-bearing trees and shrubs.

If you are considering planning a windbreak for your property, come talk to the staff at the Kandiyohi SWCD. We can assist you with design, species selection, purchase of trees, planting the trees and potential cost share assistance.



Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) Update

2022 was a busy year for CRP in Kandiyohi County, with nearly 300 contracts up for re-enrollment. Fortunately, the options for re-enrollment and new enrollment are plenty and the rental rates have been up. Sign-up options included the General, Continuous, and Grasslands. In Kandiyohi County, 96% of contracts enrolled through the Continuous sign-up. The average rental rate for General sign-up contracts was \$140.50/ac. and the average rental rate for Continuous sign-up contracts was \$250/ac.

The Clean Lake Estuaries and Rivers (CLEAR30) option was once again available to those re-enrolling contract holders with select water quality practices like filter strips and wetland restorations. This 30-year re-enrollment

option offers a few incentives, such as an increased rental rate and maintenance cost share. The average rental rate for CLEAR30 contracts was \$298/ac and has a maximum of \$380/ac.

The CP38E-Back Forty Pheasant Habitat practices were moved to from the General sign-up to the Continuous sign-up. This made it much easier for landowners with non-hydric/wetland soils to enroll under the Continuous sign-up. In past sign-ups, this practice was limited to 40 acres; this cap has been doubled to 80 acres.

For those with contracts expiring Sept. 30 of 2023, please notify Kandiyohi Farm Service Agency with your intentions on re-enrolling and to discuss your options.

If you are interested in enrolling new land, there is never a bad time to start the process. A

couple of items that are useful to have when inquiring about CRP are the recorded deed, a FSA producer/farm map, or at least the FSA Farm# and Tract#. If you don’t know the FSA Farm# or Tract#, the county tax parcel ID can come in handy as well. Remember, there is a one-year ownership requirement to enroll land into CRP.

The 2023 Continuous sign-up is currently open, more information to be released regarding the General sign-up soon. It is also expected that there will be a CRP Grasslands sign-up as well.

For CRP related questions, please contact Kandiyohi Co. FSA at (320) 235-3540, x2 or Pheasants Forever Farm Bill Biologist, Aaron Wilson at (320) 235-3540, x125.