

2023 Annual Report

Sherburne Soil and Water Conservation District



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OUR MISSION

Partnering with the community to preserve and enhance our natural resources and native habitats for present and future generations.



SWCD INFORMATION

Services

Financial Assistance

Percentage and flat rate reimbursement options available for projects such as: shoreline stabilization, stormwater mitigation, native prairie, and agricultural practices

Technical Assistance

On site consultations to address resource concerns with both private and public landowners

Education and Outreach

Provide education opportunities for adults and youth upon request, coordinators of the Metro Area Envirothon

Forest and Tree Health Consultations

On site consultations to diagnose tree pests and disease, provide recommended mitigation plans and replacement tree species options

Sherburne SWCD provides programs to protect our soil & water resources and promote best management practices for the land & water use. Following is a list of some of the programs and services provided by the Sherburne Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD).

Forestry Management

- Tree Health assessments
- Citizen Pruner Program
- Woodpecker Activity Survey
- Gravel Bed Tree Program
- Urban Forestry Program

Water Management

- Well Sealing Program
- AIS
- AIS Grant Program
- Shoreline Stabilization
- WRAPS
- Rain Gauge Reader
- Stormwater Mitigation
- 1W1P
- TEP for WCA
- WPLMN

Rural Resource Management

- Soil Health
- Pasture Management
- AgBMP Loan Program
- Nutrient Management
- Irrigation Scheduling
- Cover Crop Program
- MN Buffer Law

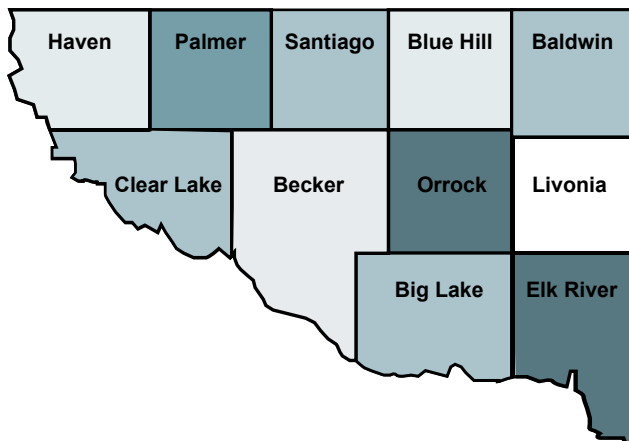
Habitat Enhancement Program

- Planting Program
- Small Native Gardens
- Native Prairie Incentive Program

Education and Outreach

- Watershed Cleanup
- Nitrate Clinics
- Webinars
- Field Days
- Poster Contest
- Pollinator Week
- Starry Trek
- Plant Material and Evaluation Site
- Metro Area Envirothon
- Tree and Native Plant Sale

The primary focus of the Sherburne SWCD is implementing voluntary, non-regulatory conservation programs to protect and enhance soil, water, native habitat and other natural resources. We utilize partnerships and programs to assist agricultural producers, rural and urban landowners, municipalities, lakeshore and shoreline owners, in addition to providing educational and outreach services on natural resource issues to all residents of Sherburne County.



SHERBURNE COUNTY INFO

- Total Land Area:** 451 Square Miles
- Total Water Area:** 11,520 Acres
- Lakes:** 127
- Rivers and Tributaries:** 493 Miles
- Population:** 104,283 *2023 Estimate
- Native Vegetation:** Oak Savanna Sandy Soils/ Conifer Forests

2023 SWCD CONSERVATION FAST FACTS



Starry Trek

In August 2023, 15 volunteers surveyed Sherburne County lakes with our annual Starry Trek program, looking for starry stonewort and other potential non-native plants and animals. Thankfully, no new invasive species were found in 2023. Find out more on Starry Trek by clicking [here](#).



Stormwater Education and Permitting

Since 2014, the SWCD has worked with Sherburne County and other Municipal Separate Storm Sewer System (MS4) permitted governmental units on permit documentation and outreach; events are held each year to provide education targeted towards diverse groups and this group developed an Adopt-A-Storm-Drain program.



Elk River Cleanup

The SWCD has coordinated a watershed wide river clean up since 2008; volunteers picked up trash at 14 different bridge crossings that feed into the Elk River and its tributaries. An estimated 250 lbs of litter was collected including tires, shingles, car roof rack, and scrap metal.



2023 Annual Tree and Native Plant Sale

Almost 20,000 trees, more than 70 native seed mixes and 100 native plants kits were sold in 2023. The seed mixes and plant kits will be enough to provide new pollinator habitat covering roughly 53,000 square feet. The sale originated in order to provide landowners with an affordable and convenient way to purchase trees and shrubs for conservation practices. Find more out about our tree sale by clicking [here](#).



Groundwater Monitoring

Over the course of 2023, the SWCD monitored 24 obwells quarterly. The data collected is used by State agencies to monitor groundwater trends during normal, drought, and flood periods.



Poster Contest

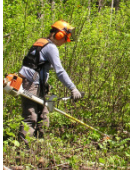
The SWCD has hosted an annual poster contest since 2016 for Sherburne County 5th grade students. The theme for 2023 was "One Water." SWCD staff provided an in-person presentation or digital recording to 6 schools in Sherburne County, reaching approximately 700 students. The students with the top 4 posters were awarded with prizes.



Cost Share Programs

In 2023, the District funded approximately 15 acres of native prairie habitat that will benefit numerous native pollinator and animal species including at-risk species like the Monarch Butterfly and Rusty Patched Bumblebee. The District also funded one stormwater project that included a dry creek bed and raingarden to capture stormwater runoff from impervious surfaces before entering a nearby wetland in Becker township. *Find more out about our Native Prairie Planting Program and our backyard conservation program*

2023 SWCD CONSERVATION FAST FACTS



Forest Management Support

The SWCD assisted the Sherburne County Parks Department with over 50 hours of habitat restoration work involving critical period cutting, vegetation surveys, native plantings, and prescribed grazing.



Wetland Conservation Act

During 2023, the SWCD completed 5 County wetland delineations for future road projects and County Trail expansions. SWCD staff attended more than 20 Technical Evaluation Panel meetings and wetland site visits with the County and Cities of Elk River and Zimmerman. Staff also worked to correct more than 10 wetland violations.



Tree Health Assessments

Over 55 site visits were conducted to assist landowners with forest management and disease control/mitigation. Bark beetles, Emerald Ash Borer, and Oak Wilt were the majority of concerns.



Buffer Law

During 2023, the SWCD completed the fourth year of monitoring for parcels deemed compliant. The SWCD staff is working with the Board of Water and Soil Resources (BWSR) to bring all parcels into a compliant status. Find more out about our Minnesota Buffer Requirements by clicking [here](#).



Native Planting Program

The SWCD assisted 4 landowners with planting and enhancing over 20 acres of prairie in 2023. The District performs small scale custom plantings for landowners using a Truax no till seed drill. The District also rents a John Deere end wheel grain drill that was used to plant over 50 acres of horse and cattle pasture during the fall of 2023.



Nitrogen Fertilizer Management Plan

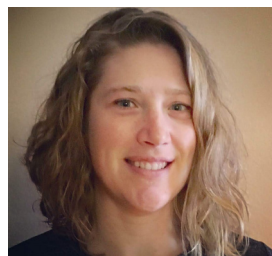
The SWCD, in partnership with the Minnesota Department of Agriculture (MDA), has participated in a pilot Nitrogen Fertilizer Management Plan process since 2018 with high levels of Nitrates detected in several satownships. A Local Advisory Team (LAT) was formed to discuss an identify Best Management Practices (BMPs) and Alternative Management Tools (AMTs) to implement in Sherburne County to reduce Nitrate leaching to groundwater.

SWCD ELECTED SUPERVISORS



The Board of Supervisors is comprised of five members elected to staggered four year terms in county wide elections, but representing different nominating Districts throughout the county.

Soil and Water Conservation Districts (SWCDs) are special purpose units of government that manage natural resource programs. Minnesota's 88 SWCDs cover the entire state; their boundaries usually coincide with the County lines. The Board of Supervisors is responsible to set the goals, policies and priorities of the District and employ a staff to work toward those goals. *Find more out about our SWCD Supervisors by clicking here.*



Shelly Binsfeld
District I



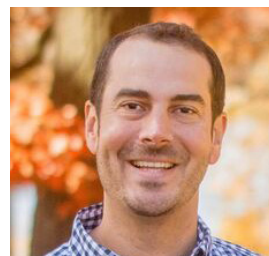
Chris Jurek
District II



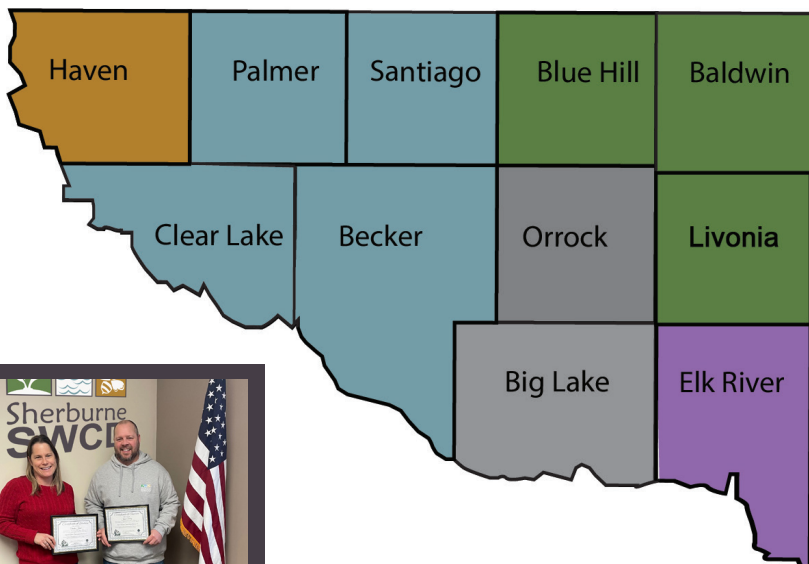
Larry Goenner
District III



Jason Selvog
District IV



Zach Guttormson
District V



SWCD STAFF

The friendly and professional staff of the SWCD works cooperatively with private landowners on soil and water related projects, such as cost share programs, lakeshore protection, soil health, and pasture management to name a few. It is our goal to coordinate plans that will enable landowners to utilize their natural resources while improving water quality, conserving soil integrity and promoting plant and animal health. *Click on the images below to learn more about our staff.*



Francine Larson
District Manager



Dan Cibulka
Sr. Water Resource Specialist



Franny Gerde
Urban Conservationist



David Wick
District Technician



Miranda Wagner
Agricultural Conservationist



Andie Bumgarner
Marketing/Admin Asst.



CONSERVATION ON THE LAND

Grams Park HELP Grant

Sherburne SWCD in partnership with the Sherburne County Parks Department received a Habitat Enhancement Landscape Pilot (HELP) grant in 2022. The HELP grant is being used to fund a 24-acre prairie restoration at Grams Regional Park located near Zimmerman. The park was acquired by the County in 2002 and consists of over 100 acres of wetlands, oak forest and open meadow. The goal of the grant program is to restore the prairie with minimal use of herbicides as that is a priority of the park currently due to the high traffic of pedestrians.



Activities Completed in 2023



Spring – Native Prairie Installation

The 2022 season was dedicated towards preparing the site for native prairie seed. Site preparation is crucial for the success of any native seeding due to the slow establishment period of most native plants from seed. During the first 2-3 years many native plants direct energy towards root growth rather than above ground plant material, this is what makes native plants so resilient to harsh conditions like drought or extreme cold. In the spring of 2023, the site was ready for planting the 3 different native seed mixes that were specially designed for the different soil types found in the project area.



Late Spring – Conservation Grazing

After the seed was installed and weedy vegetation started to sprout back after the winter, sheep were re-introduced to the site. Their job included more than just grazing down the unwanted vegetation, their hoof action was also helping to tamp down the newly installed seed to create the soil to seed contact that is necessary for germination.



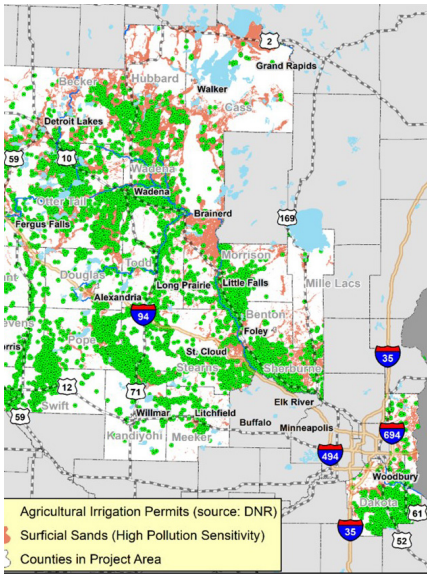
Planned for 2024

- Prescribed mowing to reduce annual weed competition while the seed is establishing.
- Installing live plants that were difficult to acquire in seed form or in areas where seeding was not possible.

Find more out about the Grams County Park Restoration by [clicking here](#).

CONSERVATION ON THE LAND

Regional Conservation Partnership Program



The Minnesota Department of Agriculture (MDA) partnered with over 30 organizations, including USDA-Natural Resource Conservation Services (NRCS), soil and water conservation districts (SWCDs), institutes of education, Mille Lacs Band of Ojibwe, state agencies, irrigator's associations, and businesses, to provide financial and technical support for precision irrigation to irrigators.

This 5-year project was designed to work directly with agricultural producers using irrigation in the project area to:

- Apply conservation practices that protect groundwater quality and quantity.
- Promote expanded precision irrigation practices.
- Build technical expertise among NRCS and SWCD staff to guide farmers in applying conservation practices.
- Promote and organize farmer to farmer learning opportunities,
- Utilize partners' expertise to design innovative approaches to expand conservation efforts, and to quantify the environmental, economic, and social impacts of the implemented practices.

Areas of the state being irrigated often have coarse textured soils where the groundwater is susceptible to nitrate contamination. The groundwater has elevated levels of nitrate in some of these areas. Most of the population in the irrigated areas obtains their drinking water from either private or public groundwater wells. Groundwater withdrawals for agricultural irrigation may impact on the groundwater-surface water hydrology, such as reduced streamflow. The Groundwater and Agriculture Report that was done by the EOT SWCD and the Freshwater Society documents that agricultural producers are willing to adopt BMPs that address these issues if some education and financial assistance are available.

A few other take-aways from the report include:

- New technologies in irrigation and nitrogen management is released at a rapid rate and this has resulted in challenges for producers to keep up with and understand those technologies.
- New technologies also provide massive amounts of data and require time and education to interpret for applying to the individual farm business. A typical farmer can handle selected data, i.e. yield data, but is often uncomfortable with the learning curve associated with incorporating larger amounts of data from additional new technologies into management decisions.

Almost 2.5 million was spent to help irrigators in participating counties install upgrades and new technology to their irrigation systems. Additional funds were used by SWCDs to assist in planning and certifying these projects. Of these projects, three were granted funding in Sherburne County.

For more information click here.



FOREST RESOURCES

Gravel Bed Tree Program

During the summer of 2023, we maintained the community gravel bed program. Over the course of the summer, 50 six-foot saplings grew in the gravel bed and were able to develop amazing root systems! In the early fall, the saplings were removed from the gravel bed to be on both public and private lands that were affected by the recent drought or to replace trees killed by diseases and pests.



Citizen Pruner Program

The SWCD hosted 3 pruning events across the County in 2023. The citizen pruner program started in 2014 to increase the capacity of city parks in their maintenance efforts. The SWCD hosts volunteer events at parks and public spaces selected by the cities in need of structural pruning. For more information, visit [click here](#).

Woodpecker Activity Survey - Emerald Ash Borer

The SWCD organizes, trains, and collects data for Woodpecker Activity Surveys; there is a strong correlation between woodpecker activity and the presence of EAB). Volunteers canvas local areas with known populations of ash trees to observe any sign of heavy woodpecker activity, reporting to the MDA any suspect trees. In 2023, woodpecker activity surveys helped identify EAB in Big Lake, Zimmerman, Becker, and Clear Lake. 2023 concludes woodpecker activity surveys due to the prevalence of EAB throughout the County. Find more out about our Forestry Program by [clicking here](#).



WATER RESOURCES

Aquatic Invasive Species Prevention Plan

In 2023, the SWCD continued to utilize funds provided through the State of Minnesota to prevent the introduction and spread of AIS in Sherburne County. This was the ninth year of active AIS prevention through this program and the fourth year of implementing the 2020-2024 AIS Prevention Plan that was created by the SWCD and AIS Task Force in late 2019. A summary of 2023 activities are outlined below:

Public Awareness / Education	AIS Monitoring & Inspections	Community Capacity
7 AIS related events were held engaging 166 residents and visitors.	16 lakes and streams were surveyed for AIS through a variety of programs and tools. For the first time, the locations of golden clam populations were documented within the Mississippi River.	The AIS Grant program provided \$17,851.50 towards eligible projects being completed in the County for AIS surveys, control, and capacity building.
Funding was provided to assist Minnesota Traditions with a state-wide social media marketing campaign that has over 46,000 followers.	3,263 total watercraft inspections occurred during 1,110 hours at 11 lake public access points. Data shows 96% compliance with AIS transport laws. Sherburne County Water Patrol spoke with 438 boaters about AIS.	Sherburne County AIS programs empower communities to learn more about our waters and protect them. In 2022, 89 volunteers completed over 251 hours of AIS work in Sherburne County.

Find more out about the AIS Prevention Plan by clicking here.

Sherburne County Coalition of Lake Associations (COLA)

The SWCD works very closely with the COLA to help protect our lakes. In 2023, the SWCD and COLA teamed up to work on several important projects:

- The partnership evaluated opportunities with the “Keep It Clean” Campaign to inform ice anglers of the importance of removing trash and debris from the lake ice.
- The SWCD and COLA discussed water quality monitoring projects and compared different baseline monitoring initiatives each lake group is involved with. Conversations will continue into 2024 with potential ways of streamlining efforts.
- In April 2023, the COLA and SWCD sponsored “Lake Detective” Steve McComas to give a presentation on harmful algae blooms and facilitated a conversation with attendees on ways to minimize algae in lakes.



Find more out about the Sherburne COLA by clicking here.

WATER RESOURCES

We Are Water MN Exhibit

Sherburne SWCD, on behalf of the Mississippi River St. Cloud Watershed Partnership, hosted the We Are Water statewide traveling exhibition in spring 2023. We Are Water explores the connections between the humanities and water, inviting visitors to reflect on local stories and the meaning and experiences of water in Minnesota – and add their own stories to the mix. The exhibit, established from March through April at the Sherburne History Center in Becker, featured informative booths, hands-on tools, listening stations, and interactive displays to communicate the importance of water to residents of the watershed. Several events were held to attract the public to the exhibit including a World Water Day presentation and Water Tasting Bar, Youth Water Festival, Harmful Algae Blooms Presentation, and Agricultural BMPs Field Day.



Fremont Lake Carp Study

The Sherburne SWCD partnered with the City of Zimmerman, Livonia Township, and Fremont Lake Improvement Association in 2023 on a carp study for Lake Fremont. Anecdotally, there have been accounts of excessive carp in the lake but no true population estimate had ever been completed. Common carp (*Cyprinus carpio*) are a non-native fish that can reduce the quality of a lake by disturbing the sediment, increasing water

turbidity, damaging native vegetation and contributing nutrients to the water through their excrement. Field studies have shown that the carp in Lake Fremont are at an estimated 744 kg/ha (kilogram per hectare) with the “management threshold” or point in which carp can begin to show impacts on a lake, is when the population reaches 100 kg/ha. This indicates that the Lake Fremont population exceeds the management threshold by 7 times. Further conversations with this partnership will continue in 2024 on potential management actions to improve the lake water quality.

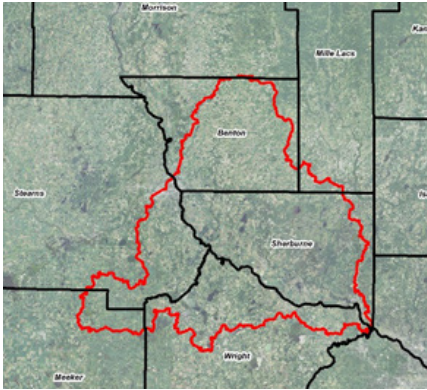
Golden Clam Research and Publication

After the initial discovery of golden clams in Briggs Lake, the Sherburne SWCD continues to monitor the lake for this non-native clam; however, no living clams were found in Briggs Lake in 2023, likely due to a long and cold winter in 2022-2023. Sr. Water Resource Specialist Dan Cibulka, along with 2023 Conservation Corp Placements Mary and Lily, spent a day visiting six sites on the Mississippi River in search of clams. In their monitoring they found live clams at four of the six sites and evidence of multiple age groups indicating likely reproduction within the river.



WATER RESOURCES

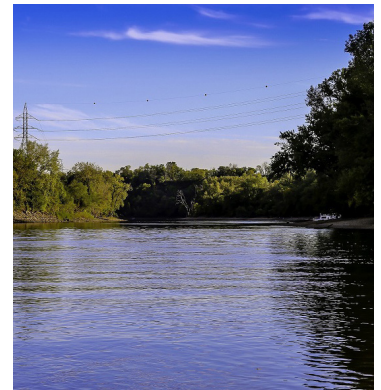
Mississippi River St. Cloud Watershed Restoration and Protection Strategies



The Watershed Restoration and Protection Strategies (WRAPS) project is sponsored by the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency (MPCA). The MPCA has adopted a “watershed approach” to addressing the state’s 81 major watersheds. In 2022, the local partner team (LPT) of Stearns, Benton, Wright and Sherburne counties and the Clearwater River Watershed District carried out Phase II of the WRAPS project for the Mississippi River St. Cloud watershed. The project includes watershed analysis, civic engagement, development of restoration and protection strategies, and planning. The information obtained will serve as a precursor for One Watershed, One Plan for this watershed.

Mississippi River St. Cloud One Watershed, One Plan

One Watershed, One Plan (1w1p) is a comprehensive planning process to bring upstream and downstream partners together to manage water on a watershed basis. Sherburne County and SWCD are taking part in this initiative for the Mississippi River St. Cloud Watershed. The plan, comprehensive in nature, will identify and prioritize resources and issues in the watershed while setting measurable goals for protection and restoration. The project began in November 2022 and will include 11 local governmental units along with a variety of state and federal agencies to support local efforts. We anticipate completion of this effort in December 2024 and are looking forward to carrying out the plan actions in 2025.



Rum River Comprehensive Watershed Plan Implementation



With the Rum River Watershed Comprehensive Management Plan in place, Sherburne SWCD is partnering with other districts and counties in this watershed to carry out the plan. In its first year, the partnership focused on Tier 1 waterbodies for protection and restoration. In Sherburne County this includes areas draining to the mainstream Rum River and the watershed area near Blue Lake (Isanti County).

WATER RESOURCES

William H. Houlton Conservation Area Riverbank Stabilization

The WHHCA is a 336 acre piece of land owned by the City of Elk River for numerous forms of recreation. With seven miles of shoreline at the confluence of the Mississippi and Elk Rivers, it was previously one of the largest pieces of unprotected land along this stretch of the Mississippi River. Acquired by the City in 2015 through assistance with the Trust for Public Land and Outdoor Heritage Fund, the land has gone through extensive restoration including floodplain forest, oak savanna and prairie management projects with a 1,100 foot section of riverbank that was experiencing severe erosion still needing attention. The SWCD obtained grant funding through the Outdoor Heritage Fund as part of the Clean Water, Land and Legacy Amendment to stabilize the riverbank which was estimated to be losing multiple feet of soil each year from its 25 foot vertical slopes. Over an eight week span in late summer 2023, construction crews established 1,100 feet of toewood protection along with constructing two floodplain benches and a regraded slope that was planted to native upland prairie. The project is estimated to reduce 1,067 tons of sediment and 907 lbs of phosphorus to the Mississippi River, protecting sensitive freshwater mussel species and the drinking source water for millions of downstream residents. Additionally, the natural engineering of this project will provide increased habitat for both terrestrial and aquatic organisms while protecting the loss of soil on the WHHCA property.



Before



During



After



WATER RESOURCES

Drinking Water and Nitrates Outreach

In 2022, the District entered into a partnership with the Minnesota Department of Health (MDH) to provide education and outreach regarding drinking water and Nitrates. In 2023, the SWCD held two nitrate clinics in conjunction with this partnership; one in Big Lake Township and one in Haven Township. The District also held two workshops, one for municipalities on Turf Best Practices Workshop in partnership with U of M Extension Turf Sciences and one on lawn alternative for private landowners. Both workshops demonstrated best management practices to help improve soil health, reduce the need for watering and fertilizing, or discussed reducing lawn and replacing it with hearty native vegetation. Lastly in 2023, a water testing cost share program was launched to help offset the cost of testing well water that is primarily used for drinking. Tests had to include the following parameters: nitrate, bacteria, lead, and arsenic.



Rain Gauge Readers



The SWCD partners with the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources State Climatology Office to facilitate and collect rain gauge reader data on a monthly basis. The measurements collected by the 10 SWCD rain gauge readers are used for:

- weather
- water supply
- flood forecasts
- assessing drought severity
- severe storm prediction
- crop growth and yield forecasts
- assessing hail damage
- contracting snow removal
- predicting mosquito outbreaks
- planning fishing trips
- snowmobiling

Find more out about Rain Gauge program by clicking here.

EDUCATION AND OUTREACH

Pollinator Week: Photo and Coloring Contest, Prairie Walk

Staff kicked off Pollinator Week with a guided prairie walk at Clear Lake Township Park. Participants learned about the prairie restoration that occurred over 10 years ago at the park and how it benefits a plethora of pollinator species. Clear Lake Township has worked diligently on the restoration and ongoing maintenance which includes periodic prescribed fire, woody species removal, and over seeding to refresh the native plant community. SWCD staff also discussed how smaller pollinator plantings can be installed on residential lots and even those small plots can make a huge difference for our essential pollinator species.



Also, as part of the 2023 Pollination Celebration, the SWCD hosted a Pollinator Photo and coloring contest. The coloring contest was focused towards Sherburne County's budding artists, happily awarding Blaire E. of Zimmerman as the winner of our 4-6 year old division and Silas D. also of Zimmerman as the winner in our 7-11 year old division. Both winners received prizes and certificates. The pollinator photo contest was open to the general public; many terrific images of bees, moths and butterflies were submitted! The Burth family from Becker was selected as our winner with their photo capturing a bumblebee visiting a white rose shrub. Lauren received a \$25 gift card to a local native nursery.



Click on the images to view highlights from each contest.



Envirothon

In 2023 the Sherburne SWCD assumed the role as the lead coordinators for the Metro area Envirothon. The event was held in April at the Elm Creek Park Chalet in Maple Grove. There was a total of 18 teams that competed, 7 junior and 11 senior teams. Students made their way through each learning station that covered topics such as forestry, aquatics, wildlife, soils, and a rotating current event issue, which included an exam at the end of each session. Senior teams were also tasked with creating a presentation based on a scenario relating to the current events topic of the year, "Adapting to a Changing Climate in Minnesota". The presentations were reviewed by 2 judges and scores were totaled along with the exams from each learning station. The top senior teams moved on to the State Envirothon, which was held in May at the Prairie Wetlands Learning center in Fergus Falls. One of the Metro teams from Hopkins High school placed 2nd at the State Envirothon. [Click here for more information on Envirothon.](#)

EDUCATION AND OUTREACH

ECFE Event in Big Lake



Big Lake Early Childhood and Family Education hosts “In the Park” days during the summer season to give families with young children the opportunity to get outside and learn something new. SWCD staff participated in the event that was focused on Lakes, Rivers and Streams. Children were able to learn about the benefits of different aquatic animals, look at live aquatic insects, and play in a sensory bin.

Wildlife Festival

The SWCD participated at the Wildlife Festival in Zimmerman with a booth. Staff provided information on available SWCD services and programs. The staff fielded questions throughout the day on native plants and pollinators. Offered on site nitrate testing and handed out information on SWCD services. Sherburne SWCD has been a presence at the festival for several years. Visitors to the booth also had the opportunity to color bee rocks or make native seed bombs.



Prairie Day Festival at Prairie Restoration

SWCD staff hosted a booth at Prairie Restoration, Inc.’s Prairie Fest Day. Staff demonstrated how stormwater runoff impacts local water ways and how using native plants can significantly reduce pollution.



EDUCATION AND OUTREACH

SWCD Day at the Capitol



Supervisors and staff members from Sherburne SWCD attended the annual legislative briefing day at the State Capitol. During their visit they met 2 of our local legislators; Senator Andrew Mathews and Representative Kurt Daudt (shown here). These meetings gathered support for the Conservation Districts' programs and issues. Soil and Water Conservation Districts like Sherburne, play an integral role in enhancing Minnesotan's quality of life through conservation services to owners of private lands.

Conservation Corps Host Site

The Conservation Corps of Minnesota and Iowa has coordinated the Individual Placement program since 2011. Many SWCD's throughout the state serve as host sites to these Individual Placement Corps members to serve alongside natural resource professionals for the summer months. Sherburne SWCD had one full time member and one part-time member that was shared with a neighboring District from May-August. Throughout the summer they assisted staff with prairie plantings, project status review, water quality monitoring, AIS early detection, and invasive species removal.



Dig It Booth at the State Fair

SWCD staff spent a day at the "Dig It" Booth at the State Fair. Miranda engaged visitors, asking and answering questions about soil health in the Eco Experience Building.

EDUCATION AND OUTREACH

Women in Agriculture

Sherburne and Benton SWCDs hosted a Women In Agriculture Event at the Farm Friends barn in Becker. Women from five counties came together to learn and share about their operations including alpacas, direct farm marketing and specialty products.



Lunch N Learn

SWCD staff hosted a Lunch and Learn in Becker focusing on irrigation water management topics as well as soil health. Speakers included industry professionals from the University of MN Extension, Grand Irrigation, and Centrasota Co-op. The presentations can be found on the SWCD Youtube page.

Irrigation and Soil Health Workshop

SWCD staff hosted an irrigation workshop for SWCD Board Members, County Commissioners, and Extension staff at A & L Peterson Farms to showcase their new Variable Rate Irrigation Technology funded through the Regional Conservation Partnership Program and Clean Water Funds. Additionally, we visited a cover crop field that has been a demonstration project in partnership with the SWCD for three years to discuss the benefits, challenges, and learned lessons from implementing soil health practices in typical farming rotations.



EDUCATION AND OUTREACH

2023 Annual Tour of Conservation Practices

The SWCD held their annual tour of conservation practices for elected officials on September 21st. The tour is held each year to highlight the annual progress being made to conserve natural resources and to discuss escalating topics in conservation throughout Sherburne County. This year's tour included presentations on farm direct marketing, grazing systems, an electro shocking demonstration for carp, and feature the streambank stabilization project at William H. Houlton Conservation Area. Each stop gave the opportunity to ask questions about the conservation practice being showcased and fostered conversations about conservation at the local government level.

Click here to watch our tour highlights video.



PARTNERSHIP WITH NRCS

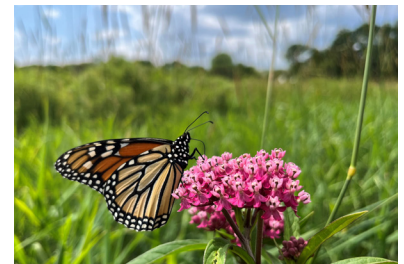
Natural Resources Conservation Service

Conservation Reserve Program (CRP)

CRP is a land conservation program administered by the Farm Service Agency (FSA). In exchange for a yearly rental payment, farmers enrolled in the program agree to remove environmentally sensitive land from agricultural production and plant species that will improve environmental health and quality. Contracts for land enrolled in CRP are from 10 to 15 years in length. The long-term goal of the program is to re-establish valuable land cover to help improve water quality, prevent soil erosion, and reduce loss of wildlife habitat.

Signed into law in 1985, CRP is one of the largest private-lands conservation programs in the United States. Thanks to voluntary participation by farmers and landowners, CRP has improved water quality, reduced soil erosion, and increased habitat for endangered and threatened species.

- Active contracts in Sherburne County = 82
- Total acres in CRP in Sherburne County = 1,183.97 acres
- Total annual rental payments to Sherburne County landowners = \$137,390
- Conservation practice types enrolled in CRP:



Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP)

CSP is a voluntary program that helps agricultural producers maintain and improve their existing conservation systems and adopt additional conservation activities to address priority natural resource concerns.

- Payments made in FY2023 to Sherburne County producers for completing conservation practices and enhancements = \$15,527
- CSP contracts obligated in FY2023 in Sherburne County = 2 contracts, total of \$80,735



[Click here to visit the NRCS web page.](#)



PARTNERSHIP WITH NRCS

Natural Resources Conservation Service

Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) and Regional Conservation Partnership Program (EQIP-RCPP)

EQIP is a federal program administered by the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) and assisted by the Sherburne Soil & Water Conservation District. EQIP provides financial and technical assistance to agricultural producers to address natural resource concerns and deliver environmental benefits, such as improved water and air quality, conserved ground and surface water, reduced soil erosion and sedimentation, and improved or created wildlife habitat.

Payments made in FY2023 to Sherburne County producers for the installation of conservation practices = \$27,740

Conservation practices installed in 2023 through EQIP & EQIP-RCPP:

- 1 energy improvement plan written
- 1 comprehensive nutrient management plan written
- 584 acres of irrigation water management
- 1 water well
- 1 well decommissioning
- 28.4 acres of hayland planting

EQIP and EQIP-RCPP contracts obligated in FY2023 in Sherburne County = 10 contracts, total of \$654,869

Meet the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) Staff

NRCS provides farmers, ranchers, and forest managers with financial and technical assistance to voluntarily put conservation on the ground, not only helping the environment but agricultural operations, too. NRCS's goal is to help landowners develop conservation plans and provide advice on the design, layout, construction, management, and evaluation of voluntary conservation practices.



Kelly Bistodeau, John Brezinka, Katie Evans, Logan Berg

Sherburne County NRCS Staff:

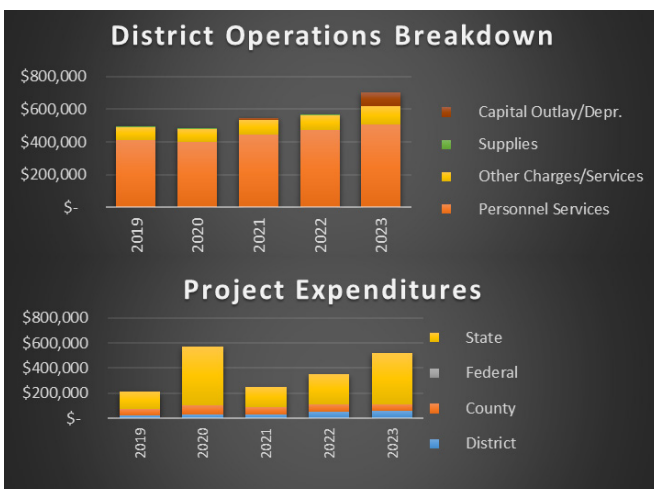
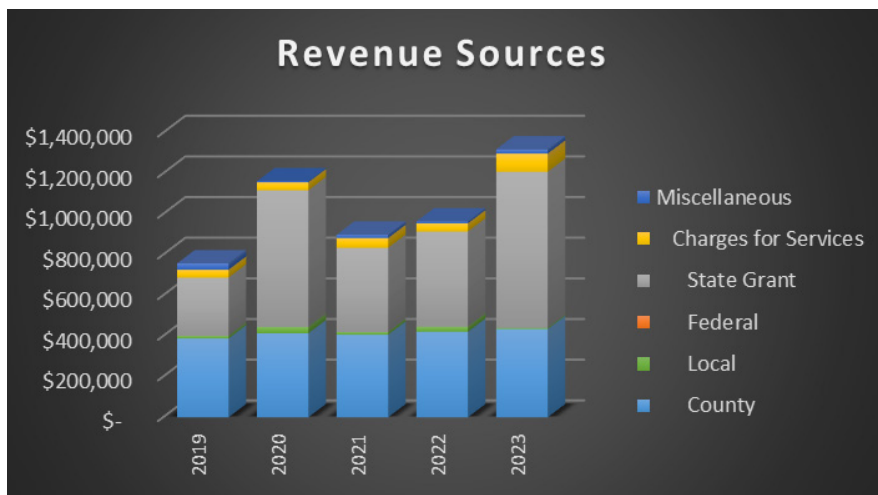
- **Katie Evans, District Conservationist**
- **Logan Berg, Soil Conservationist**
- **Kelly Bistodeau, Soil Conservation Technician**
- **John Brezinka, Urban Soil Conservationist**

2023 FINANCIALS

Sherburne SWCD operates on a combination of County, State, Federal, and nonprofit grants and other agreements. Much of the funding is allocated via competitive grants, so the sources, amounts, and partnerships vary by year. These sources include County and Local Grants, State Grants, Charges for Services, and other Miscellaneous Income.

Programs that SWCD staff administer go towards improving the quality of our land and water resources in many ways:

- Increasing crop yields by improving soil health
- Maintaining aquifer reserves and reducing farming costs through irrigation efficiency programs
- Retaining riparian property values through increasing lake and stream quality
- Improving the quality, aesthetics, and wildlife within our county parks
- Improving the outdoor experience for residents and non-residents by increasing wildlife habitat



Much of the technical resources and programs the Sherburne SWCD coordinates are free of charge to county residents. District staff work hard to secure grant funding from local, state and federal programs to cover implementation of projects. New resource concerns continue to arise, and they require increased financial support, continued staff education and training, and efforts to re-prioritize and focus staff time and resources. The elected Board of Supervisors make strategic determinations where to prioritize staff involvement related to these issues.



Sherburne Soil and Water Conservation District
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