Nature Talks November 2022

In This Issue SWCD Tour Tree Sale Cibulka Award OCC Award Sustainability Tour EQIP Recycle Pumpkins EAB Winter Tree Prep Soil Summit Extension Educator Alternative Turfs Wetlands



Cover Crop Demo

Election Info

SWCD Tour of Conservation Practices

Sherburne Soil and Water Conservation District held their annual tour of conservation practices for elected officials on September 13th. 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 strip-till, irrigation water management, cover crops, aquatic invasive species, and featured the Grams County Park conservation



grazing project as part of the newly implemented HELP grant. Each stop gave the opportunity to ask questions about the conservation practice being showcased and fostered conversations about conservation at the local government level.



The tour departed from the Oak Savanna Learning Center, located in the National Wildlife Refuge, with the first stop at A&L Peterson Farmers Inc. near Palmer. In 2020, the Sherburne Soil and Water Conservation District entered into a partnership with The Nature Conservancy, with support from Cargill, to implement more cover crops in Sherburne County. The goal of the program is to encourage new ways of planting multi species in a field, three years consecutively. Cover crops are an important tool in increasing soil health, decreasing erosion, scavenging nutrients, and managing water. This field has participated in the

project for the last two years and is also being monitored for nitrate leaching utilizing temporary and permanent lysimeters. Furthermore, this field highlighted strip-till work being done with support from Clean Water Funds and utilization of MDA's Ag BMP Loan program. During this stop, A& L Peterson Farms Inc. was also recognized as the SWCD's 2022 Outstanding Conservation Cooperator.

The tour's second stop featured research being done on Golden Clams found in Briggs Lake. In 2020, a 12-year old volunteer found a non-native golden clam at the Briggs Chain public boat launch through a sponsored AIS early detection program. This find, the first of its kind in Minnesota, spurred a year-long study involving SWCD staff and researchers from the University of Minnesota Extension and Minnesota AIS Research Center. More information about the SWCD's role in this research can be found in this newsletter.



Sherburne Soil and Water Conservation District

The third stop on the tour was Triple J Farms located near Becker. The group engaged in conversations surrounding irrigation water management and tools that irrigators use to maximize their efforts. The operators at Triple J Farms also demonstrated how the Conservation Reserve Program works on their land. The Conservation Reserve Program (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.



The final location on the tour was Grams Park located in Zimmerman. The Sherburne SWCD, in partnership with the Sherburne County Parks Department, received a grant from the Board of Water and Soil Resources (BWSR) to restore 24 acres of native prairie habitat at Grams County Park. The funding was made possible through an appropriation from the Environmental and Natural Resources Trust Fund (ENRTF). The program is focused on restoring and enhancing diverse native habitat throughout Minnesota to benefit pollinators and other beneficial insects. The project at Grams County Park will consist of a prescribed burn, three conservation grazing sessions using a combination of sheep and goats and seeding with a diverse mix of native grasses and flowers. The project completion date will be summer of 2023.

The Tour then returned to the Oak Savanna Learning Center where a brief history of the National Wildlife Refuge was present by Steve Karel, Refuge Manager. The 30,700 acre refuge was established in 1965 at the urging of local conservationists and hunters interested in restoring the wildlife values of the St. Francis River Basin. Following that, the refuge became and remains the largest public land holding in Sherburne County. The refuge is now a wild remnant at the meeting of the western prairies and the northern woods, with oak savanna, prairie opening, forest, wetland and riverine habitats. This area supports a wide variety of wildlife, ranging from sandhill cranes to bald eagles and badgers to wild lupine.



The SWCD annual tour is an excellent way to share the fantastic conservation projects happening in Sherburne County. Each stop gave the opportunity to ask questions about the conservation practice being showcased and have conversations about conservation on a local government level.



2023 Tree Sale



The Sherburne Soil and Water Conservation District is holding its annual tree sale to encourage tree planting in Sherburne County. The Tree Sale program originated in order to provide landowners with an affordable and convenient way to purchase trees and shrubs for conservation practices, such as, windbreaks, shelterbelts, living snowfences, scenic buffers, and wildlife habitat.

Trees

Bare root seedlings are easy to plant, grow quickly and come in bundles of 25. Many of the species being offered provide food and shelter for birds and wildlife year round. Additionally, trees can increase the value of your property and conserve energy by shading your house in summer and sheltering it from cold winds in winter. Tree orders will be available for pick-up the beginning of May at our office on Jackson Ave in Elk River. Stock is limited and orders are entered on a first-come,

first-serve basis.



The SWCD is again offering native plant kits and seed mixes during this years tree sale. All plants and seeds are provided through Minnesota Native Landscapes and are specifically chosen to flourish in our Sherburne County soils. Plants and seed will be available for pick up during our regular tree sale pick up dates.



SWCD Tree Sale Opens Friday, January 6th Click here and visit our Tree Sale page for more info.

Elk River Clean Up

SWCD staff along with 9 volunteers participated in the 14th annual Elk River Clean Up last Saturday. The group covered a total of 15 bridge crossings or river accesses along the Elk River and some of it's tributaries. In the 2 hour time span 20 bags of trash were collected. The crew also retrieved 1 mattress, 7 tires, 2 packs of roofing shingles and a desk chair from near shore areas totaling 550 lbs! Thank you to our amazing volunteers for their hard work!

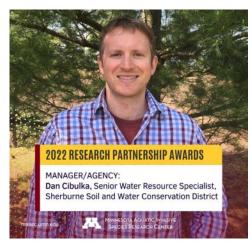


Cibulka honored with 2022 Research Partnership Award

The SWCD is thrilled to share our very own Dan Cibulka has been named a 2022 Research Partnership Award recipient by the Minnesota Aquatic Invasive Species Research Center (MAISRC). This award recognizes people, groups, and organizations who have gone above and beyond to contribute to MAISRC's mission: advancing aquatic invasive species (AIS) knowledge, and inspiring action to protect and restore Minnesota's cherished lakes, rivers, and wetlands. Dan is one of only 3 individuals/groups acknowledged for this honor.

Dan is recognized for his service as a co-investigator on a golden clam rapid response monitoring project funded by MAISRC, providing significant technical and field support to the study. This work has helped MAISRC gain a much deeper understanding of the threat this species poses to Minnesota lakes.

Congratulations Dan, the SWCD is proud of you and your accomplishments!











2022 Outstanding Conservation Cooperator

A & L Peterson Farms Inc, operated by Ryan and Nick Peterson, are a cash grain, edible beans, and small grains operation that continues to diversify with every opportunity. Within the last year, Ryan and Nick have become MAWQCP certified with the Irrigation Enhancement, worked with the U of MN to plant Winter Camelina for harvest, and purchased strip-till equipment. The brothers have also been a strong voice on MDA's Nitrogen Fertilizer Management Plan Local Advisory Team which will help address groundwater nitrate impairment, and worked along District staff and Nature Conservancy staff on a three year cover crop project to measure impacts on soil health and nitrates. They continue to do outstanding work, implementing conservation practices and carrying on the legacy of their father, Alan.









Sustainability Tour



District and NRCS staff had the opportunity on October 4th, to host the Cargill Sustainability Team and The Nature Conservancy for a regenerative agricultural tour throughout Sherburne County. The tour highlighted two farms, in Palmer and Haven Townships, and presented the fantastic work producers are implementing with soil health and irrigation water management practices. During the tour stops, SWCD's Agricultural Conservationist, Miranda, presented on the basics of soils and NRCS's District Conservationist, Katie Evans, demonstrated the rainfall simulator, which exhibits different ground cover types and their resiliency against weather events.

NRCS Accepting Applications for EQIP

2023 EQIP funding announced! Application deadline November 18, 2022

The NRCS is currently accepting applications for our Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP), a voluntary program that provides technical and financial assistance to agricultural producers interested in implementing conservation practices that optimize environmental benefits on the land.

How It Works – NRCS works one-on-one with producers to develop a conservation plan that outlines conservation practices and activities to help solve on-farm resource issues. Producers implement practices and activities in their conservation plan that can lead to cleaner water and air, healthier soil, and better wildlife habitat, all while improving their agricultural operations. EQIP helps producers make conservation work for them.

How To Get Started – The first step is to contact your local NRCS office. An NRCS conservation planner will schedule a visit to your property to discuss your goals and review any resource concerns. Conservation practice examples include cover crops, pollinator habitat, prescribed grazing systems, irrigation water management, nutrient and pest management, and more.

If you are interested in learning more about EQIP and discuss conservation practices on your land, please give the Elk River NRCS office a call at (763) 241-1170 ext. 3, or stop by the office at 14855 Highway 10, Elk River.



For more questions about this or other NRCS services contact:

Katie Evans – District Conservationist 763-567-5373 / katie.evans@usda.gov

Kelly Bistodeau – Soil Conservation Technician, 763-367-0347 /kelly.bistodeau@usda.gov

Logan Berg – Soil Conservationist, 763- 290-3458 or logan.j.berg@usda.gov



Upcoming Events

Nov 11 Veterans Day (Office Closed) Nov 24-25 Thanksgiving (Office Closed)

Dec 26 Christmas Day, Observed (Office Closed)
Jan 2nd New Years Day, Observed (Office Closed)

Recycle Those Pumpkins

According to the U.S. Department of Energy, most of the 1.3 billion pounds of pumpkins produced in the U.S. end up in the landfill! These discarded pumpkins add to the more than 254 million tons of municipal solid waste produced in the U.S. every year. When left to decompose in a landfill, pumpkins produce methane gas. Methane is a potent greenhouse gas, meaning it affects climate change by contributing to increased warming, according to the US Environmental Protection Agency.

Instead of throwing away your pumpkin this year, try recycling your pumpkin. Here are a couple suggestions:

Leave old pumpkins for local wildlife

A Jack-O'-Lantern is still a fruit. Instead of letting it go to waste, set it out for the wildlife in your ecosystem to enjoy. Animals like porcupines, deer, and squirrels all enjoy munching on pumpkins. Just make sure you cut the squash into bite-



sized pieces and don't scatter them too close to your house if you want to avoid attracting hungry animals to your garden.

Compost pumpkins in your garden

Pumpkins are biodegradable and contain between 80 and 90 percent water, which makes them great candidates for composting. Even if you don't have a dedicated compost pile, you can still dispose of old pumpkins naturally in your home garden. Just dig out space in the soil, add the pumpkin (either whole or chopped into piece to expedite decomposition), and bury it. Unless you want to see pumpkins growing in your garden next year, remove any extra seeds clinging to the inside before sticking it in the ground.

Bury it

If composting isn't available, burying it in your garden is another option. Microbes and other critters in the soil will start breaking down the pumpkin and turning it into rich soil.

Feed it to chickens

Loaded with vitamins A, B, C, E, and zinc, your old pumpkin can make a delicious snack if you have chickens or know someone who does.

Harvest the seeds

If you haven't carved your pumpkin, you can open it and retrieve the seed for a delicious and nutritious snack. Pumpkin seeds are low in carbs, high in protein and a good source of iron and calcium.

Make Pumpkin Puree

This is a simple method for preparing pureed pumpkin. The pumpkin may be stored in the freezer for later usage in pies, muffins, etc.

- 1. Preheat oven to 325 degrees F.
- 2. Cut the pumpkin in half, stem to base. Remove seeds and pulp. Cover each half with tinfoil.
- 3. Bake in the preheated oven, foil side up, 1 hour, or until tender.
- Scrape pumpkin meat from shell halves and puree in a blender.
 Strain to remove any remaining stringy pieces.
 Store in the freezer in freezer safe bags.



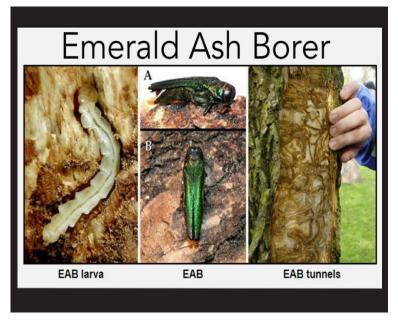
Emerald Ash Borer Found in Sherburne County

From the Minnesota Department of Agriculture, https://www.mda.state.mn.us

The Minnesota Department of Agriculture (MDA) has confirmed the presence of emerald ash borer (EAB) in Sherburne County for the first time. There are now 36 counties in the state, including Sherburne, with EAB.

A tree care company contacted the MDA after suspecting a tree in Elk River was infested with EAB. MDA and city staff were able to find live EAB larvae and collect samples. Federal identification confirmed emerald ash borer.

EAB was first discovered in Minnesota in 2009. The insect larvae kill ash trees by tunneling under the bark and feeding on the part of the tree that moves nutrients up and down the trunk. Often, the trees show several signs of infestation because of this. Woodpeckers like to feed on EAB larvae, and woodpecker holes may indicate the presence of emerald ash borer. Also, EAB tunneling can cause the bark to split open, revealing characteristic S-shaped galleries underneath.



Because this is the first time EAB has been identified in Sherburne County, the MDA is enacting an emergency quarantine of the county which limits the movement of firewood and ash material out of the area. The MDA issues quarantines for all areas known to have EAB to reduce the risk of further spreading the tree-killing insect.

A virtual informational meeting for residents and tree care professionals in Sherburne County was held on Wednesday, September 7, 2022. Experts from the MDA gave a brief presentation followed by a question-and-answer session. More EAB information can be found on the MDA website at www.mda.state.mn.us/eab.

Questions about EAB, please contact David Wick at (763) 220-3434 ext. 102 or dwick@sherburneswcd.org.

Winter Tree Prep

As winter fast approaches, now is the time to protect your trees for the coming cold months! Old, established trees are easy, all they need is a deep, slow, soaking water before the ground freezes. It is essential to water before the ground begins to freeze overnight. You don't want the water to freeze around your tree roots overnight.

Younger trees require a little bit more care. While they also will benefit from a deep watering, there are other steps that can be taken to protect your young trees. Trees with thin bark (maple, aspen, cherry, crabapple, honey locust, linden, plum) will need to be protected from sunscald. Sunscald injuries usually occur on the southern facing trunk of a tree. As the winter sun heats up the bark it stimulates activity beneath the bark. Then once the sun is blocked,



the temperature beneath the bark rapidly drops and kills all that newly active tissue. The warming and cooling all winter will cause large vertical cracks to form on the tree trunk. These cracks can be mitigated with the use of plastic tree guards or white tree wrap. Do not use black tree wrap as it will absorb heat and thus exacerbate the problem. Wraps and tree guards can be removed in the spring after the last frost. Additionally, adding a 4–6 inch layer of mulch around the base of young trees will increase soil moisture and act as an insulator to help keep soil temperatures higher.

If you have any questions please contact David Wick at (763) 220-3434 ext. 102 or dwick@sherburneswcd.org.

2022 Soil Management Summit



The 2022 Soil Management Summit will be held December 15-16 in St. Cloud, Minn.

Cultivating soil productivity and health

The Soil Management Summit emphasizes proven farmer experience and applied science. Straight from the fields, learn how heavier, colder soils aren't necessarily the challenge they're made out to be. Hear from long-time no-till, reduced tillage, and cover crop farmers as they share their experiences, so you can be spared the same hard-learned lessons. Additional topics will include managing controlled traffic, Kernza production, planting green , insect management, planter settings, farm economics, and more.

The summit features presentations and Q & A with researchers, farmers and agricultural advisors, information from sponsors, and conversations with farmers experienced in different soil health practices.

The format includes plenty of opportunities to interact with experienced producers and researchers. Break-out sessions provide presentations from researchers and practitioners. Table talk discussions give you a chance to ask questions of practitioners and specialists and panels of farmers and agronomists will share their practical experiences. Those who attend the entire conference will be offered CCA continuing education units (CEUs).

For more information or to register, click here.

Small Farms/Local Foods Extension Educator for U of M

Hello, Central Minnesota. My name is Anthony A. Adams. I am the new Small Farms/ Local Foods Extension Educator for the University of Minnesota Extension in Stearns, Benton, Morrison, and Sherburne Counties. I joined the Extension team on September 6, 2022, and will be working out of the Morrison County Extension office in Little Falls. Before accepting my current position, I was the Interim Extension Educator for Horticulture in Stearns, Benton, and Morrison Counties. I also acted a the Interim Extension Educator for the Farm Information Line (FIL) in the Center for Agriculture, Food, and Natural Resources.

I grew up in Brooklyn, New York, and earned my bachelor's degree in Environmental Studies and Biology with a minor in Geography from Gustavus Adolphus College. During my time at Gustavus, I was introduced to conservation and sustainability. Because of this, my summers were spent working for US Fish and Wildlife Services, National Wildlife Refuge, from New Jersey to Florida. Later, I would continue my federal career by



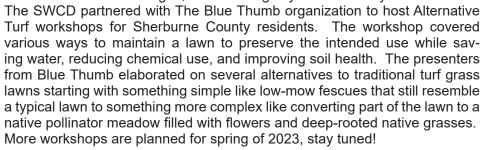
working for the US Department of Agriculture, Agricultural Research Service, and the Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service.

Currently, I'm working on completing a master's degree through Kentucky State University in Aquaculture and Aquatic Science; this land grant university was where I first interacted with Extension-based projects and support. My previous work on the UMN Farm Information Line has allowed me to aid commercial and local farmers in addressing problems ranging from production, explanations of new research findings, and cropland rental rates. As a local Extension educator, I will provide technical assistance to constituents of Stearns, Benton, Morrison, and Sherburne Counties on all aspects of small farms, and local foods. Extension staff reaches out in many ways, building, connecting, and strengthening the community, and I think that this is a role worth taking pride in. I am interested in expanding my understanding of small farm/local foods and aiding in Extension-led programs' continual growth. I am excited to bring the skills I've acquired throughout my career to improving our Small Farms/Local Foods in Stearns, Benton, Morrison, and Sherburne Counties.

Contact Anthony at: AnthonyA@umn.edu

Alternative Turfs Workshop

The SWCD recently received a grant through the Minnesota Department of Health to focus efforts on groundwater protection. Part of the grant funding is dedicated toward education for landowners and municipalities on lawn care best management practices. Traditional turf grass lawns account for higher rates of pesticides and fertilizer per acre than most agricultural fields, they are also the most irrigated single species in the country. Sherburne County is vulnerable to groundwater contamination from overuse of chemicals due to the nature of our sandy soils, this can lead to leaching of nitrates and other nutrients entering our groundwater. Reducing groundwater contamination seems like a daunting task but can easily be achieved with a few land use changes, even starting in your own backyard.









Strip Till Cover Crop Demo



The Sherburne SWCD staff hosted an in-field Demonstration of Strip-Till and Cover Crop Seeding. The September 26th event was held at A & L Peterson Farms near Palmer. During the event A & L Peterson Farms showcased a Soil Warrior Strip Till and Nutrien Ag Solutions demonstrated John Deere and Salford box interseeding set-up for cover crops. Operators and Ag Professionals came from several counties to discuss the ins and outs of strip till and cover crop seedings.

Conservation Comedy

How do you fix a broken pumpkin?



The Wonderful World of Wetlands



In the last issue of Nature Talks, we shared the details of how you can tell the difference between a lake and a pond. Did you know that wetland have their own unique characteristics as well, and that there are eight generally recognized categories of wetlands?

Wetlands are often described as the "sponge" of the landscape because of their ability to absorb water and pollutants. They cleanse the water of nutrients and sediments. Wetlands also play a critical role in mitigating floods. Additionally, they are an important resource for many species of fish, amphibians, birds and insects. Finally, wetlands are critical for commercial

operations such as sod farming, peat mining, minnow rearing, timber harvesting, and growing some crops such as rice and cranberries.

Only half of Minnesota's original 18.6 million acres of wetland remain today as many have been developed for other uses. Wetlands go by many names; bog, swamp, marsh, slough, etc. All wetlands have soils that are inundated with water for a period of time and have vegetation that has adapted to wet conditions. There are eight different types of wetlands recognized in Minnesota:

- **Type 1:** Wetlands are either seasonally flooded basins or floodplains with many different types of vegetation depending on the amount of time the areas are flooded.
- **Type 2:** Wet meadows. The soil is saturated below the surface and may have standing water in the spring or times of heavy rainfall. Vegetation includes grasses, sedges, rushes and various broad-leaved plants.
- **Type 3:** Shallow marshes. The soil is usually waterlogged early in the spring and often covered with six or more inches of water. Vegetation includes grasses, bulrushes, spikerushes, cattails, and smartweeds.
- **Type 4:** Deep marshes. The soil is usually covered with water during spring and summer, from six inches to three feet Vegetation includes cattails, reeds, bulrushes, spikerushes and wild rice. In open areas, pondweed, waterlilies or other floating vegetations may grow. These deep marshes may completely fill shallow lake basins, potholes, limestone sinks and depressions, or they may border open water.
- **Type 5:** Open water wetlands, including shallow ponds and reservoirs. The water is less than six feet deep and fringed by a border of emergent vegetation.
- **Type 6:** Shrub swamps. Soil is usually waterlogged during much of the growing season and is often covered with as much as six inches of water. Vegetation includes species such as alders, willows, and dogwoods.
- **Type 7:** Wooded swamps. Soil is waterlogged to within a few inches of the surface during the growing season, and can be covered with as much as a foot of water. Typical trees include tamarack, white cedar, arborvitae, black spruce, balsam, red maple and black ash.
- **Type 8:** Bogs. Soil is usually waterlogged and has a spongy covering of mosses. Typical plants include heath shrubs, sphagnum moss, sedge, leatherleaf, labrador-tea, cranberries and cottongrass, and scattered, often stunted, black spruce and tamarack.

As you can see, wetlands are incredibly diverse and all have a unique role in our ecosystem. Because of their importance and difficulty in determining where a wetland starts and ends, the Sherburne SWCD encourages landowners to contact a wetland specialist before starting any construction project near a potential wetland. US Federal laws are in place through the Wetland ConservationActandSWCDstaffcanassistlandownerstoachievetheirlandmanagementgoalswhilestayinginlinewithwetlandlaws.

For more information on wetlands, click here. Questions, contact Miranda Wagner at mwagner@sherburneswcd.org.

SWCD Election Information

On November 8th, voters in Sherburne County will head to the polls to elect, among other positions, Supervisors for the Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD). Positions on this year's ballot will include Jason Selvog running for District 4 and Chris Jurek running for District 2. District 2 includes Big Lake Township and Orrock Township, and District 4 includes Becker Township, Palmer Township and Santiago Township. SWCDs are local units of government, and Supervisors are elected to four year terms. The terms are staggered so either two or three Supervisors are up for election each two years. Candidates are elected county-wide, but must reside in one of the nomination districts up for election.



Supervisors play an important role in how the community deals with a wide variety of resource management issues, including wetlands, water quality, and soil erosion. Serving as a supervisor is a terrific opportunity for people who want a voice in how we manage our environment. SWCD's are special purpose units of government that manage and direct conservation programs, such as the State Cost-Share program and the Clean Water Land & Legacy Amendment Cost-Share program. Supervisors meet monthly to discuss the business of the SWCD, including state grant allocations to landowners, district conservation priorities, coordination with other local units of government and state agencies, and legislative priorities. Supervisors do not receive a salary but do receive compensation for attending meetings and are reimbursed for expenses.

Meet the Candidates



Chris Jurek is running for election in District 2. District 2 contains Big Lake Township, and Orrock Township. She and her husband Luke have 2 children and currently reside in Big Lake. Chris is employed as a Aquatic biologist at Minnesota Department of Natural Resources and has over 20 years of experience in the natural resource field working at the federal, state, tribal and a local units of government. Chris is also a member of the Wetland Professional Association. During her free time, Chris enjoys watching her son playing sports, skiing, camping, scrapbooking gardening, mountain biking, boating and going to festivals.

When asked what he felt the biggest environmental concern is for Sherburne County, Chris responded, "I believe Emerald Ash Borer has a huge potential to cause county-wide destruction to ash trees leading to a large economic loss, as well as, a drastic change in some communities and landscapes across Sherburne County."



Jason Selvog is running for reelection in District 4 and has served as an SWCD Supervisor since 2011. Jason's represents the areas of: Becker Township, Palmer Township, and Santiago Township. He and his wife Kathy currently reside in Clear Lake with their two children. Jason is employed as a Wildlife Habitat Specialist by Stearns SWCD. He also is involved in the Steans County Chapter of Pheasants Forever and is a member of the Minnesota Chapter of The Wildlife Society. During his free time, Jason enjoys hunting spending time with his family, watching the Vikings and admits to being a fantasy football junkie.

When asked what he felt the biggest environmental concern is for Sherburne County, Jason responded, "Because of Sherburne County's sandy soils and the potential for erosion and groundwater contamination I feel water quality is the biggest environmental concern for Sherburne County."

Remember to vote for SWCD Supervisor at the November 8 Election!