

Nature Talks

Sherburne Soil and Water Conservation District

Nature Talks
July 2023

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Sherburne
SWCD

SWCD Podcasts



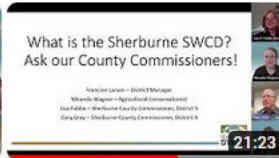
This summer, the SWCD started a brand new conservation podcast, covering important environmental topics impacting Sherburne County. Our podcast explores issues and topics regarding the protection and enhancement of natural resources, while trying to keep the mood light and adding a few laughs along the way.

We have had over 150 views on youtube as well as additional listeners on our website. Topics have included turf, Emerald Ash Borer and Irrigation! If you would like to listen, you can find the recordings here:

<https://www.sherburneswcd.org/podcasts1.html>



106 Conversations with the Conservation Corps



105countycommissioners
54 views • 2 weeks ago



104 All Things Pollinators Podcast



103 All about EAB
6 views • 1 month ago

Elk River Clean Up

Join us for the great
Elk River Clean Up



**Saturday, October 7th
9am-11am**

Register today by contacting Franny at
fgerde@sherburneswcd.org or 763-220-3434 x 104
Meeting Locations will be available in Big Lake & Elk River.



Great activity for small groups and families!

There's no better time to get involved in some good clean fun than at the Elk River Watershed Cleanup!
Since 2008 the Sherburne SWCD has removed over 4,000 pounds of trash from the river with the help of volunteers like you.
Let's make this year the largest clean up yet!

Click Here To Register

2023 Conservation Corps Interns

Conservation Corps Minnesota & Iowa is a nonprofit organization which engages hundreds of youth and young adults each year in programs and initiatives that improve access to outdoor recreation, restore natural habitat, protect waterways, and respond to community needs and natural disasters. This summer Sherburne SWCD hosted two Conservation Corps interns, Mary Mullane and Lilly Bowman. Lilly and Mary shared a little bit about their intern experiences below.



Name: Mary Mullane
School and year: University of Minnesota - Duluth, 2024
Major: Environmental Science



Why were you interested in working as a conservation corps this summer?

I was interested in working for the Conservation Corps of Minnesota & Iowa because I know how important conservation practices are to our environment. Getting to participate in conservation practices would expand my knowledge and understanding of the environment and the ecosystems within it.

Through my classes at UMD, it is heavily emphasized that almost everything you do as a person has some impact on the environment, positive or negative, big or small. In the end, those impacts will ultimately come back to you and impact your everyday life. We share the environment with so many other organisms that better our lives and I wanted to be a part of the conservation practices that improve those relationships.

What was your favorite project you have gotten to work on?

All the projects I have been a part of at Sherburne SWCD have been new and exciting. I have gained more experience than I ever could have asked for and a greater appreciation for soil health, pollinator habitats, and local parks because of all the great, passionate staff at Sherburne SWCD. But I never would have expected to go snorkeling for the invasive Golden Clam in local lakes and rivers. Senior Water Resource Specialist, Dan Cibulka, brought Lilly and I along for an AIS survey to investigate the presence of Golden Clams at an assortment of boat launches within the county. I found it very interesting to see the positive correlation between the population of clams to its proximity to the Monticello Nuclear Power Plant.

What type of conservation work are you interested in for a future career?

In the future, I hope to find a career in water quality because I have always enjoyed spending my free time on the water, whether that is through swimming, fishing, or kayaking. This summer, I have greatly expanded my skills in water quality. I have participated in various forms of water quality sampling in the Briggs Lake Chain and streams throughout the county. I have also participated in many site visits with landowners involving shoreline restoration and protection projects and AIS surveys to keep our waterways healthy, clean, and safe.



Name: Lilly Bowman
School and year: Senior at the University of Redlands
Major: Environmental Science

Why were you interested in working as a conservation corps this summer?

I was interested as soon as I saw the program title, "Clean Water Conservation Corps Member". Throughout my time in college, I have learned about the different kinds of contamination in our water and soil resources, and I felt that this internship was a great opportunity to see the conservation practices I learned in the classroom translated into professional work. This internship almost felt too good to be true, since my two favorite courses that I took in college were Soil Science and Hydrology.

2023 Conservation Corps Interns *(continued)*

What was your favorite project you have gotten to work on?

I have really enjoyed working on the prairie projects. Planting native prairie seed on what once was traditional agricultural land and increasing natural habitat for pollinator species was super cool. I got to drive a big tractor around a couple of fields, which is something I have never done before, nor did I think it would be something I would ever do in my future. It was a fun new experience and not as hard to drive as I thought it would be! I also have enjoyed increasing my native prairie plant identification skills. I recently attended a DNR training in a 50-year-old restored prairie and remnant prairie managed by The Nature Conservancy. We spent all day out in the field learning the names and characteristics of different woody, grassy, and forb prairie plants. It was awesome to see so many different professionals coming together to work on one program.

What type of conservation work are you interested in for a future career?

That is the million-dollar question! I feel lucky that I have enough interest and passion in my chosen career field that I would be happy working on any conservation or sustainability projects. So far this summer I have enjoyed working with landowners looking to improve the sustainability of their farmland and increase their soil health. I would also enjoy working with a non-profit organization like The Nature Conservancy or agencies like the DNR to keep native ecosystem intact and healthy. My main interests are sustainable agriculture and prairie ecosystem health. This really goes to show that even though I made the decision to attend college in Southern California; you can take the girl out of the Midwest, but you can't take the Midwest out of the girl!

For information on the Conservation Corps program,
visit <https://conservationcorps.org>



Irrigation Field Day at the Sand Plain Research Farm



University of Minnesota Extension invites you to a free field day at the Sand Plain Research Farm (SPRF) in Big Lake on Thursday, August 10th from 4pm to 7pm. The field day will highlight U of M research on advanced irrigation and nutrient management practices, and includes a complimentary dinner.

Irrigation Field Day
August 10, 2023
Sand Plain Research Farm in Becker

RSVPs are requested and can be found at z.umn.edu/IrrigationRegistration

We Are Waters Event

On July 13th, the Mississippi River-St Cloud Collaborative hosted a We Are Waters Agricultural Field Day at Brian and Glen Kaschmitter's farm near Sauk Rapids. The event highlighted steps taken toward soil health and irrigation efficiencies. Demonstrations included rainfall, slake, and variable rate irrigation as well as equipment presentations. Anna Brieger, Vice President of the Irrigators Association of Minnesota spoke about issues facing irrigators in Minnesota and legislative updates. There were 44 attendees, spurring great discussion and opportunities to learn.



Grams Park Prairie Restoration Update

If you have visited Grams County Regional Park in the last year you may notice a few changes. In 2022 the SWCD in partnership with Sherburne County Parks received a grant through the Board of Water and Soil Resources (BWSR) to restore a 24-acre portion of the park to native prairie. As part of the County's management goals, this restoration will be completed using chemical free methods. Last year the site underwent a prescribed burn in July followed by two grazing sessions to prepare the site for a native seeding during the spring of 2023. This year the site was seeded with a diverse mix of native flowers, grasses and sedges. Native seed takes its time to get established and needs all the help it can get to encourage germination, which is why a short time after planting, sheep were brought back on site to graze down the annual weeds that like to pop up after a new seeding. Routine maintenance on the new prairie site will be key to a successful establishment long term. The County Parks department and Sherburne SWCD also plan on grazing the site once more in 2024. Stop by each year to check on the progress of the new Grams prairie restoration!



Conservation Comedy



What did the limestone say to the geologist?

Rosholt Research Farm Field Day



ROSHOLT RESEARCH FARM FIELD DAY

FREE
TO ATTEND.
LUNCH INCLUDED.

9:00AM
-1:00PM

THURSDAY,
AUGUST 17

Rosholt Research Farm, 910 Old Hwy 28, Westport, MN 56385

AGENDA TOPICS:

- AgCentric Trailer
- AURI Kernza Update
- When Nitrogen is Managed Right in Irrigated Sands, Do Cover Crops Help Corn Yield and the Environment?
- Lessons learned from Irrigation and Nitrogen Management study in Minnesota Central Sands.
- Long-term Management of Kernza for Water Quality Protection
- Agricultural Fertilizer Research and Education Council (AFREC) Updates

RSVP:

Free to attend. RSVP is required by August 11th, 2023.

RSVP via Event Bright: <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/rosholt-research-farm-field-day-tickets-640547925087> or Pope SWCD at 320-634-5327.



SCAN QR CODE TO REGISTER

CONTACT:

Holly Kovarik | District Manager
Pope Soil & Water Conservation District
320-634-5327
www.popeswcd.org

***Continuing Education Units (CEUs) are pending approval**

Funding for work at the Rosholt Research Farm has been provided by the Minnesota Environmental and Natural Resources Trust Fund as recommended by the Legislative-Citizen Commission on of Minnesota Resources (LCCMR), Minnesota Department of Agricultural Fertilizer Research and Education Council (AFREC), and the Clean Water Fund as a part of the Clean Water, Land, and Legacy Amendment.



Funding for this project was provided by the Minnesota Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund as recommended by the Legislative-Citizen Commission on Minnesota Resources (LCCMR). For more information, visit www.lccmr.leg.mn.



Funding provided from the Clean Water Fund as part of the Clean Water, Land, and Legacy Amendment. For more information, visit www.legacy.mn.gov/clean-water-fund.



Meet the NRCS Staff

Kelly Bistodeau

Hello, my name is Kelly Bistodeau, and I am a Soil Conservation Technician at the Elk River Field Office. I started my career with the NRCS in 2020 here in Elk River. I grew up on a beef and dairy farm in southwestern Minnesota. I am a mom of a busy boy; in our free time we enjoy fishing, being outside and our most favorite thing helping on the farm with harvest and chores. I look forward to meeting people and hearing your story.

Email: Kelly.Bistodeau@usda.gov

Office: (763) 567-5371 Mobile: (763) 367-0347

John Brezinka

Hi, my name is John Brezinka and have been with the NRCS since July 2020. Just recently moved to the Elk River Field Office as the new Urban Conservationist. I live in Crystal with my fiancé Sarah and our dog Hamilton. After work you'll find me doing all the outdoor activities from tennis, softball, catching up with some friends or going to the park with Hamilton. I enjoy playing sports, fishing, hunting, hiking, and I love playing card games. Looking forward to assisting our urban producers and providing conservation assistance in any way I can!

Email: John.Brezinka@usda.gov

Office: (763) 567-5372 Mobile: (218) 407-7485

Katie Evans

Hi, my name is Katie Evans, and I am a District Conservationist at the Elk River Field Office. I started my career with the NRCS in 2010 and have been in Elk River since May 2022. I grew up on a dairy farm in Otsego, MN and graduated from the University of Wisconsin – Stevens Point with a Bachelor of Science degree in Wildlife Ecology and Management with minors in Soil Science and Biology. I am a mom to two boys; my husband and I love taking our family hiking and camping at MN State Parks and working together as small-scale beekeepers. I look forward to helping local landowners with their conservation goals.

Email: Katie.Evans@usda.gov

Office: (763) 567-5373 Mobile: (763) 367-0360

Logan Berg

My name is Logan Berg, and I am a Soil Conservationist with NRCS. Growing up I lived in Nowthen, MN and went to Elk River High School. I then attended North Dakota State University and graduated with a Bachelor of Science degree in Natural Resource Management, which gave me the opportunity to work with farmers, ranchers, and landowners in my hometown. When I am not working, I am an active sportsman that includes hunting, fishing, and a little bit of farming. I look forward to working with farmers and ranchers and hearing their history and goals for their operations.

Email: Logan.J.Berg@usda.gov

Office: (763) 567-5367 Mobile: (763) 290-3458



Pictured left to right: Kelly Bistodeau, Soil Conservation Technician; John Brezinka, Urban Soil Conservationist; Katie Evans, District Conservationist; Logan Berg, Soil Conservationist

Prairie Update

SWCD staff planted more than 20 acres of native prairie in 2023. The land planted will be protected for at least 10 years. Prairie habitat is important for pollinators such as the federally endangered Rusty Patched Bumblebee but also serves as a water quality practice by protecting against erosion and storing water on the landscape. If you want to plant prairie on your land, please contact David Wick, dwick@sherburneswcd.org. Financial assistance may be available.



Twolined Chestnut Borer Management

From the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources
www.dnr.state.mn.us

Oak stands stressed by drought and defoliation are vulnerable to attack by twolined chestnut borer and Armillaria root disease. The following tips will help minimize excessive twolined chestnut borer damage:

- Postpone harvesting or road-building for at least three years after defoliation and four years after drought.
- Salvage-harvest in infested stands only on frozen ground.
- Wait to salvage firewood for at least one year after oaks have completely died.
- Thin overly crowded oak forests when they are not stressed.
- Diversify oak forests.

Thinning during or shortly after a stress event can greatly increase mortality from twolined chestnut borer. It is important to stay out of stressed stands to allow them to recover. Attempting to “eradicate” twolined chestnut borer from a stand by removing infested trees is not possible; twolined chestnut borer outbreaks usually are the result of widespread drought, so it is not possible to manage populations. They naturally decline on their own.



Salvaging attacked and dead oaks is an option to utilize high-value timber before it degrades. Mark dead and dying oaks during late summer. Harvest marked oaks only on frozen ground, and do not harvest in areas of the stand unaffected by twolined chestnut borer.

If you want to make firewood from dead oaks, delay salvaging for at least a year after the oaks have died. Firewood quality will not deteriorate during this period, and waiting a year will prevent you from moving twolined chestnut borer into uninfested areas. Harvest only on frozen ground.

Some losses from twolined chestnut borer could be avoided by carefully tending forests before inevitable stresses. Thinning overly crowded forests and diversifying tree species within forests could decrease the impact of twolined chestnut borer.

Prevent twolined chestnut borer attack by keeping your oaks as free from stress as possible. Avoid adding soil over roots, do not fertilize stressed oaks, and do not allow herbicides to contact oak leaves. Mulch trees properly. If rainfall is inadequate, watering oaks weekly may be the best method to prevent twolined chestnut borer attack. Water with a soaker hose under the drip-line for several hours.



If an oak tree in your yard is infested (e.g., the top half of its crown died in one growing season), cut it down and dispose of it during the winter (but make sure you are not misdiagnosing oak wilt). Removing infested oaks may save your other oaks from being attacked.

Finally, avoid bringing fresh oak firewood into your yard. Make sure the firewood has been seasoned for at least one year before bringing it to your property, or use MDA-certified firewood.

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

2024 EQIP Funding Announced!

2024 EQIP Application deadline October 6, 2023

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 farmers, ranchers, and forest landowners to develop a plan that outlines conservation practices and activities to help solve natural 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. The Elk River NRCS staff can also be reached by email:

Katie Evans, NRCS District Conservationist, Katie.Evans@usda.gov;

Kelly Bistodeau, NRCS Soil Conservation Technician, Kelly.Bistodeau@usda.gov;

Logan Berg, NRCS Soil Conservationist, Logan.J.Berg@usda.gov;



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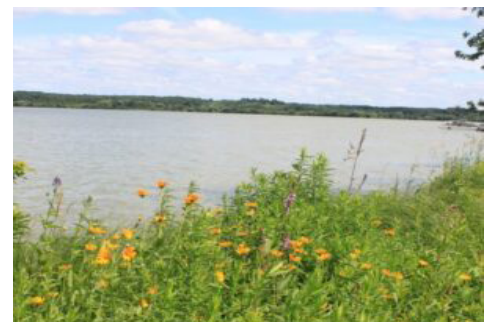


United States
Department of
Agriculture



Upcoming Events

Aug 10th	Irrigation Field Day
Aug 17th	Rosholt Research Field Day
Aug 19th	Starry Trek
Aug 23rd	Big Lake ECFE Water Fest
Sept 30th	Wildlife Festival at SNWR
Oct 7th	Elk River Clean Up



Meet the SWCD Staff



My name is Franny Gerde, I have been working with the Sherburne Soil and Water Conservation District since 2011. I initially joined the District as a Conservation Corps intern during the summer of 2011, I was fortunate enough to get hired on as a full-time employee after my internship ended. I graduated from UW-Stevens Point in 2011 with a degree in Water resources. I have a growing passion for all things pollinators and native plants, I'm always willing to talk native plants with anyone who is willing to listen!

I primarily work with private landowners on small scale conservation projects such as lakeshore stabilization and pollinator gardens. I also conduct some of the Districts water quality monitoring, mostly stream sites collecting samples for excess nutrients and sediment.

I live in Minneapolis with my husband and two fur babies, Alpine (dog) and Barney (cat). We love spending time outdoors, especially camping in the boundary waters in the summer or cross-country skiing at our local parks in the winter. I also love to garden and have been attempting to convert our small city lot into a pollinator haven with a bee lawn and native plant garden.

Questions about lakeshore stabilization or pollinator gardens?
please contact Franny Gerde at
(763) 220-3434 ext. 104 or
fgerde@sherburneswcd.org.



Starry Trek



Starry Trek is a statewide day of monitoring for aquatic invasive species (AIS). Sponsored by the Minnesota AIS Research Center and University of Minnesota Extension with support from local coordinators, this event first started in 2017 and since has identified 63 new AIS infestations across the state. Early detection of AIS is important to managing it and containing the spread to other waterbodies.

Sherburne County has sponsored a local event each year since 2017. This year's Starry Trek will be held Saturday, August 19th, 2023 at 8:30am at the Big Lake Township Lions Park (21960 County Road 5, Big Lake, MN 55309). Participants can expect light refreshments and snacks in the morning with a training session on how to look for AIS. Volunteers will then depart for area lakes and streams to conduct their monitoring, collecting specimens for evaluation as needed. Suspected AIS can be returned to the park and identified by SWCD staff. The event typically lasts until noon.

Please join us for a fun filled, family-friendly day of AIS exploration! If interested you can learn more and sign up at the following weblink: <https://maisrc.umn.edu/starrytrek>. Contact Dan Cibulka for more information, dcibulka@sherburneswcd.org.



Harmful Algal Blooms

From the Minnesota Department of Health
www.health.state.mn.us

Summertime in Minnesota: when in doubt, best keep out!

What are blue-green algae?

Blue-green algae are not algae at all, but types of bacteria called cyanobacteria that are normally present in many lakes. This type of bacteria thrives in warm, nutrient-rich water. When conditions are right, the bacteria can grow quickly forming "blooms."

What do blue-green algal blooms look like?

Blue-green algal blooms are often described as looking like pea soup or spilled green paint. However, blooms are not always large and dense and can sometimes cover small portions of the lake with little visible algae present. Blooms can also produce a swampy odor when the cells break down.

What are harmful algal blooms?

When blue-green algal blooms produce cyanotoxins that can make humans and animals sick, they are considered harmful. In general, algae are not harmful.

When do harmful algal blooms occur?

Blue-green algae prefer warm, calm, sunny weather and water temperatures higher than 75 °F. Blooms usually occur during summer and early fall, but can occur other times of the year, if conditions are right.

Where are harmful algal blooms found?

Harmful algae can be found everywhere in Minnesota, but thrive in warm, shallow, nutrient-rich lakes. They will often be found on the downwind side of a lake or in a secluded bay or shoreline.



What are the possible health effects?

You can become sick if you swallow, have skin contact with, or breathe in airborne water droplets while swimming, boating, waterskiing, tubing, bathing, or showering in water that has harmful algae or if you drink water that contains algal toxins. If you become sick, symptoms you might experience include vomiting, diarrhea, rash, eye irritation, cough, sore throat, and headache. Symptoms generally begin hours to 2 days after exposure.

Can animals be affected?

Pets, especially dogs, are susceptible to harmful algae because they swallow more water while swimming and doing other activities like retrieving a ball from the water. They are also less deterred by green, smelly water that may contain harmful algae. Animals can experience symptoms within minutes of exposure to the toxins. Symptoms they might experience include vomiting, diarrhea, weakness, difficulty breathing, and seizures. In the worst cases, animals have died. If your pet experiences these symptoms after exposure to algae, contact your veterinarian.

What should I do if I see blue-green algae in my drinking water source?

Avoid using untreated lake or river water for drinking, cooking, and brushing teeth, particularly for infants and small children. Boiling water will not destroy toxins and could actually increase toxin levels. Simple treatment options are also not effective, because multiple treatment steps are typically required to remove algal toxins. Water that may be contaminated can be used for handwashing, bathing, washing dishes, or laundry, though it may irritate skin. Young children should be supervised when bathing to prevent them from swallowing water. After washing, skin and items that go into the mouths of infants and young children (i.e., teething rings, nipples, bottles, toys, silverware) should be rinsed with uncontaminated water.

What should I do if I see a bloom?

There is no way to tell if a blue-green algal bloom is toxic just by looking at it. Adults, children, and animals should avoid contact with water with blue-green algae. The risk of illness after a bloom goes away is low however toxins can persist in the water after the bloom has cleared up. Watch for signs of recent blooms, such as green scum on the shoreline and keep pets from eating debris that has washed up on the shore.

When in doubt, stay out! If you or your pet go into water where there may be a bloom, wash off with fresh water immediately afterwards.

Pollinator Week Recap



Pollinator week is an annual celebration to bring awareness to the health of pollinators and their importance in our ecosystems. Each year the SWCD likes to highlight these essential insects by hosting a variety of events and contests.

Staff kicked off the week with a pollinator prairie walk at the Clear Lake Township Park. Participants learned about the prairie restoration that occurred at the park more than 20 years ago and the ongoing maintenance the township performs to prevent undesirable species from taking over.



In addition to the Prairie Walk, two Pollinator themed contests were held, a children’s coloring contest and a photo contest. The SWCD sends out Congratulations to the Kurth Family of Becker for their winning photo contest submission of “Bumblebee on White Flower”. We also congratulate Blair E. and Silas D, both from Zimmerman for their winning coloring contest submissions.

Pollinator Photo Contest Winner



The Kurth Family of Becker

Coloring Contest Winners

4 - 6 year olds

7 - 11 year olds



**Blair E.
from Zimmerman**



**Silas D.
from Zimmerman**

Pollinator Pop Quiz

- Q1. True or False: Native bees occur on every continent on the planet.
- Q2. True or False: There are about 4,000 species of bees in the U.S.
- Q3. True or False: Bees feed on both nectar and pollen.
- Q4. True or False. Along with bees, bats, birds and butterflies, some beetles are also pollinators.
- Q5. True or False: Cows and fire matter to butterflies.

A1. False no bees in Antarctica A2. True. A3. True. A4. True. A5. True For example, Minnesota’s tallgrass prairies depend on disturbance (e.g., fire, grazing, drought), without which they rapidly turn into woodland and forest. It has been found that burning and grazing favored different communities of bees, and butterflies, suggesting that each management type has a role in maintaining Minnesota’s prairies.