

# Sherburne Soil and Water Conservation District

## 2010-2015 Strategic Plan



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# **SHERBURNE COUNTY SOIL & WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICT**

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## **Sherburne Soil and Water Conservation District Mission Statement**

The Sherburne County Soil & Water Conservation District is dedicated to working directly with landowners and agencies in order to promote the wise and sustainable use of our land and water related resources to educate and inform the public about these uses; to help solve the resource problems within the District and to serve as a county wide natural resource information and referral center.

Working in Partnership with Federal, State and Local Governments

## **Sherburne Soil and Water Conservation District Goals and Strategies**

The Goals described below guide the implementation of strategies to address the natural resource threats in Sherburne County. The Sherburne Soil and Water Conservation District (SSWCD) uses three main techniques to implement Strategies: *Technical Assistance*, *Financial Assistance*, and *Educational Assistance*. To ensure the SSWCD is a leader in these techniques, staff training and office technology shall be assessed regularly and advanced as necessary.

Goals and Strategies are developed to address the following ten priority issues:

1. Surface and Groundwater – Conserving, restoring, and managing surface and groundwater issues are essential to preserve lakes, streams, wetlands, and manage water quality and supply. This requires new approaches and partnerships to promote Best management Practices to be effective.
2. Forest Resources – Long-term planning to slow the spread of tree disease by developing a disposal program that will benefit urban forest health.
3. Habitat & Bio-diversity – Conserving, restoring, and managing land at large scales are critical to preserving ecosystems. This requires new approaches and partnerships to promote Best Management Practices to be effective.
4. Education & Promotion – Education and promotion are a key element of developing and achieving goals and strategies.
5. Financial Stability - Long-term planning and project implementation is maximized when financial stability is secured.
6. Collaboration – Partnerships and effective government coordination are required to reduce duplication and provide efficient services.
7. Development - New and existing urbanization of land generates temporary and permanent impacts to natural resources.
8. Agriculture – Working with agricultural producers is an essential part of a healthy ecosystem.
9. Rural Land Goal – Work with rural landowners to institute programs that enhance and protect natural resources.

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### Surface and Groundwater Goal

The SSWCD shall minimize the adverse impacts from land use to water resources

#### Surface and Groundwater Strategies

1. Work with landowners and LGUs to implement land use practices that reduce nutrient loading to surface water resources
2. Work with the MPCA to establish TMDLs for impaired waters.
3. Work with landowners to implement BMPs toward maintaining water quality where surface water resources meet state standards.
4. Work with LGUs and landowners to retrofit stormwater treatment for developed areas with no or inadequate treatment.
5. Work with landowners and LGUs to establish innovative practices to reduce stormwater runoff
6. Work with landowners to establish riparian buffers on agricultural land
7. Work with landowners and LGUs to preserve and establish buffers of native vegetation on lakes and streams in urban and rural - residential areas.
8. Work with adjoining counties, SWCDs and watershed organizations to manage surface water on a watershed basis.
9. Work with landowners to implement land use practices that protect and improve ground water resources in Sherburne County.
10. Work with MPCA to establish protection plans for waters meeting water quality standards.

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### **Forest Resources Goal**

The SSWCD shall work to protect, improve and restore forest resources in the County.

#### Forest Resources Strategies

1. Develop and coordinate a diseased tree disposal system.
2. Encourage tree planting and forest restoration on public lands.
3. Provide trained staff and volunteer tree inspectors.
4. Monitor trends in disease and insect problems.
5. Promote the tree program. Investigate opportunities to provide incentives and discounted trees through partnerships with nurseries and others.

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### **Habitat & Bio-diversity**

#### Habitat & Bio-diversity Strategies

1. Promote and provide cost share to restore native plant communities.
2. Promote and continue the SSWCD's existing tree and prairie planting and restoration programs.
3. Encourage local Park committees to include native plantings in their park plans.
4. Promote Federal, State, and local habitat programs such as CRP, WHIP, Native Buffer, Roadsides for Wildlife, etc.
5. Develop and promote Backyard Conservation programs.
6. Minimize wetland impacts (conversion) through the Wetland Conservation Act.
7. Work with the County to control invasive weeds and prevent their introduction.

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### Education and Promotion Goal

The SSWCD shall conduct and participate in conservation education and promotional activities that actively engage Youth, adults, and local decision makers.

#### Education and Promotional Strategies

1. Develop an annual education plan.
2. Prepare a quarterly e-newsletter.
3. Submit by-weekly news articles to the West Sherburne Tribune.
4. Actively engage youth in conservation through programs such as Earth Day Expo, Environmental Education Days, Math Mentor, tree planting with Cub Scouts, etc.
5. Conduct regular tours of District projects with local officials and decision makers.
6. Sponsor annual Elk River Clean-up Day Event.
7. Conduct annual Pollinator Day celebration.
8. Make regular public appearances at events such as the County Fair, expos, etc.
9. Collaborate with the Rural Living Task Force to sponsor "Conservation Talks" and other adult education programs.
10. Maintain an up-to-date Website.
11. Promote and maintain the Plant Material Evaluation Site.
12. Partner with County and watersheds to develop educational techniques that show the surface and groundwater interactions in Sherburne County.

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### **Financial Stability Goal**

The SSWCD shall have long-term financial stability and adequate funding to support SSWCD mission and provide efficient implementation of cost-effective methods to address natural resource concerns.

#### Financial Stability Strategies

1. Work with County, Minnesota Association of Soil and Water Conservation Districts, and others to develop long-term stable funding for Conservation Districts.
2. Develop contracts with local, state, and federal agencies.
3. Work to ensure County levy adequately supports conservation efforts in Sherburne County and effectively addresses citizens concerns and needs.
4. Regularly prepare and submit targeted grant applications to achieve goals.

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### Collaboration Goal

The SSWCD shall develop and nurture collaborative partnerships to enhance natural resource conservation efforts.

### Collaboration Strategies

1. Continuation of the ERWSA JPB collaboration
2. Coordinate conservation efforts with NRCS to deliver efficient services and strengthen existing contribution agreement to deliver services.
3. Prepare collaborative grant applications to enhance conservation efforts and promote partnerships.
4. Enhance permit coordination between agencies through regular communications with DNR, County, MPCA, Cities, Townships, and others.
5. Strengthen existing relationships with local units of government through joint projects, cost-share, technical services, and personal contact.
6. Participate in the Rural Living Task Force with Sherburne County Zoning, Extension, NRCS, and the City of Elk River Environmental Department.
7. Update Plant Materials Learning Center Board Memo of Understanding between Sherburne, Stearns, Wright, Benton SWCD's and NRCS and the University of Minnesota.

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### Development Goal

The SSWCD shall work to minimize the impacts of new and existing development on natural resources.

#### Development Strategies

1. Develop and implement enhanced cost-share and voluntary incentive program for innovative stormwater management. Work with LGU's to develop Best Management Practice (BMP) programs countywide.
2. Partner with County and zoning authorities to implement groundwater protection strategies (proper individual septic treatment system installations, recharge area protection, stormwater infiltration, etc).
3. Minimize wetland impacts through implementation of the Wetland Conservation Act.
4. Work with land use decision makers to improve programs, ordinances, and rules for surface water, groundwater, wetland and upland habitat protection and enhancement.
5. Conduct educational and promotional activities targeting development issues.
6. Implement stormwater management retrofit program. Use existing cost-share and incentive programs and seek additional funding sources for incentive funding. Work with cities authorities to implement BMP programs.
7. Promote proper shoreland and vegetation management. Integrate with tree program, BMP programs, conservation easements, invasive weed control, and noxious weed control.
8. Work with municipal water supplies and large water users to develop irrigation water conservation programs.

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### **Agricultural Goal**

The SSWCD shall minimize the adverse impacts of agricultural activities on natural resources.

### Agricultural Strategies

1. Synchronize SSWCD, NRCS and watershed programs to maximize local, state and federal funds to implement agricultural conservation practices. Work with watershed authorities to develop agricultural BMP programs.
2. Implement and promote agricultural BMPs as identified in TMDL Implementation Plans
3. Implement and promote vegetated buffers.
4. Work with farmers to promote resource-sensitive drainage management and promote natural stream management. Integrate with comprehensive wetland management plans.
5. Enhance public-owned cropland management.
6. Promote conservation pasture, irrigation, and nutrient management.
7. Collaborate with DNR and County to ensure proper water appropriation management.
8. Conduct educational and promotional activities targeting agricultural issues.
9. Promote establishment and maintenance of field windbreaks.
10. Promote Federal conservation programs such as CSP, CRP, and EQIP.
11. Promote irrigation system efficiency through distribution testing (catch can).
12. Provide ET data to growers.

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### **Rural Land Goal**

The SSWCD shall work with rural landowners (non-ag) to institute programs that enhance and protect natural resources.

### Rural Land Strategies

1. Promote conservation land and vegetation management through multiple efforts such as:
  - a. State cost-share and other incentive programs
  - b. Wetland restoration and enhancement
  - c. Upland habitat management plans
  - d. Erosion control and gully stabilization
  - e. Shelter belts and trees for conservation
  - f. Invasive weed control program
  - g. Forest and timber management plans
  - h. Develop conservation Assessment Plans for the Rural Preserves Program
2. Minimize wetland impacts through implementation of the Wetland Conservation Act.
3. Partner with County to implement groundwater protection strategies.
4. Conduct educational and promotional activities nontraditional agricultural land occupiers.
5. Implement and promote rural BMPS as identified in TMDL Implementation Plans