Operator Opportunities
In Sherburne County

October 2026

Women In Ag Night

December 10th, 2026

Doors open at 4:30 for crafting and networking
Coyote Moon Grille, St. Cloud

Please join us for an evening celebrating women in agriculture!

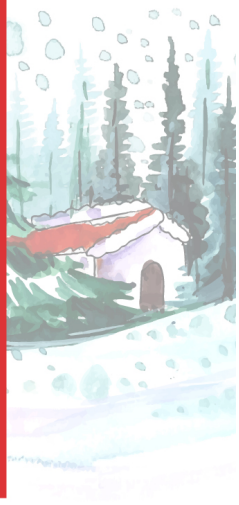
Presentations include:

- A Shared Harvest: Habitat to Nourish both People and Wildlife
- Importance of Drinking Water Protection for Private Wells
- Farm Succession Planning: How to Start the Conversation and Tools to Move Forward

Reserve your spot today!

mwagner@sherburneswcd.org or 763-220-3434 x 105

More details to come!



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DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH

BENTON SOIL & WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICT

Sherburne SWCD

Irrigation Technology Upgrades

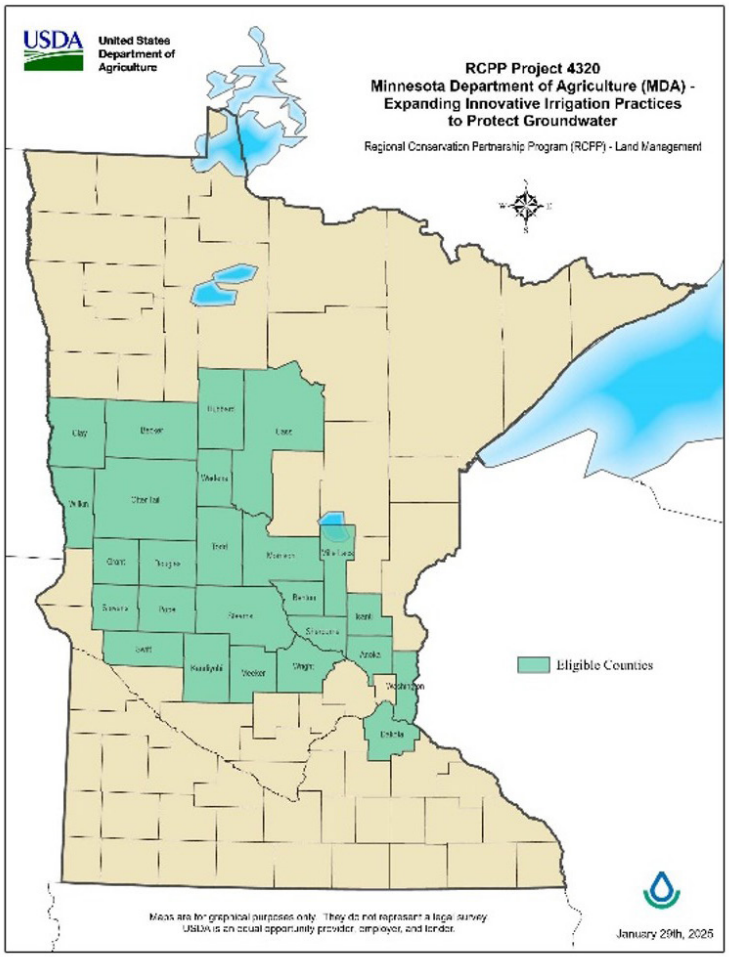
Financial Assistance Available for Irrigation Technology Upgrades

By Jeppe Kjaersgaard, Minnesota Department of Agriculture

Minnesota irrigators in 25 counties will soon have access to financial assistance for irrigation technology upgrades. The program will provide both financial and technical assistance to producers.To apply for funding contact your local SWCD office and submit a conservation program application. **The deadline for applying for financial assistance is expected to be February 12, 2027**, but contact your SWCD office early to ensure a timely application.

Irrigation technologies available for financial assistance include e.g., soil moisture sensors, irrigation water management, remote data access and remote operation control, upgrades of sprinklers or panels, fertigation retrofits, pump upgrades including upgrades to variable frequency drive pumps, irrigation pipeline, variable rate irrigation technology, and drip tape system upgrades.

Financial assistance is available for technology upgrades to irrigation systems located within the Anoka, Becker, Benton, Cass, Clay, Dakota, Douglas, East Otter Tail, Grant, Hubbard, Isanti, Kandiyohi, Meeker, Mille Lacs, Morrison, Pope, Sherburne, Stearns, Stevens, Swift, Todd, Wadena, Washington, West Otter Tail, Wilkin and Wright Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD) service areas (green shade on the map).



This program is offered through a broad coalition of partners. The Minnesota Department of Agriculture, USDA-NRCS, the SWCDs listed above, the Irrigators Association of Minnesota, Central Lakes College Ag & Energy Center, AgCentric-Minnesota State, University of Minnesota, state agencies, irrigator's associations, and irrigation businesses have partnered to offer this program.

Irrigators receiving financial assistance will also receive a discount to participate in the Minnesota State Farm Business Management Program which provides an annual financial analysis of their operation.

The funding is provided through a renewed agreement with the USDA's Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP). It builds upon a $3.5 million award for similar projects in 2021.

The program will also help build irrigation-related technical expertise and information sharing among SWCD, NRCS and irrigation industry staff, and organize field days and irrigation technology demonstration events.

For more information, contact your local SWCD or see the program website at: https://agcentric.org/rcpp-precision-irrigation/

DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Farm Service Agency

Elections

Elections and enrollment are now open for 2026 ARC/PLC. The deadline for 2026 is December 11, 2026. Producers will have the opportunity to elect PLC (based on price only), ARC-County (based on county revenue), or ARC-IC (based on an individual farm revenue). 2027 enrollments will begin on November 2, 2026.

The drought conditions have triggered the Livestock Forage Program (LFP) in Sherburne County. Any farmer with pastureland that was actively grazed is eligible for assistance through this program. Producers will need to provide the number of cattle that were grazed, lease agreements if the pasture is rented (CCC-855 form), and sign the application.

The USDA service center is beginning to be remodeled. If you need assistance from our office, please call ahead to ensure we have all our utilities and someone is present in the office to assist.

Contact Ryan with any questions or needs at 763-241-1150 x 2 or ryan.brunn@usda.gov

MAWQCP Staff

Welcome Spencer Herbert!

Spencer Herbert recently joined the Minnesota Agricultural Water Quality Certification Program (MAWQCP) staff to support and recognize farmers for their conservation and water quality efforts. In this role, Spencer will work with farmers and landowners throughout the nine-county metro area, including Sherburne County, through this voluntary program. He will help assess water quality risks, implement new conservation practices, and recognize farms that demonstrate exceptional stewardship throughout their farming operations.

Farms that are MAWQCP certified, as well as those working toward certification, have access to technical and financial resources to implement conservation practices that benefit water quality. In addition, Spencer will support statewide field staff through new employee onboarding, technical training, and implementation of financial assistance programs.

Prior to joining MAWQCP, Spencer spent the first part of his career working on public-sector conservation efforts with NRCS, SWCDs, and MDA. More recently, he worked in the private sector, supporting ag retailers and cooperatives as they integrated conservation services and regenerative agriculture programs into their businesses.

Please reach out to Spencer with any MAWQCP questions or needs at 651-418-6668 or sherbert@state.mn.us.

NRCS

Trees as Part of the Farm

Trees and shrubs are commonly relied on in windbreaks and shelterbelts, as well as for shade in pastures and backyards, but there is a variety of other applications where we can put trees to work for us. This is the idea of agroforestry —to combine strategies of agriculture and forestry for improving productivity, economic returns, and environmental quality on the land.

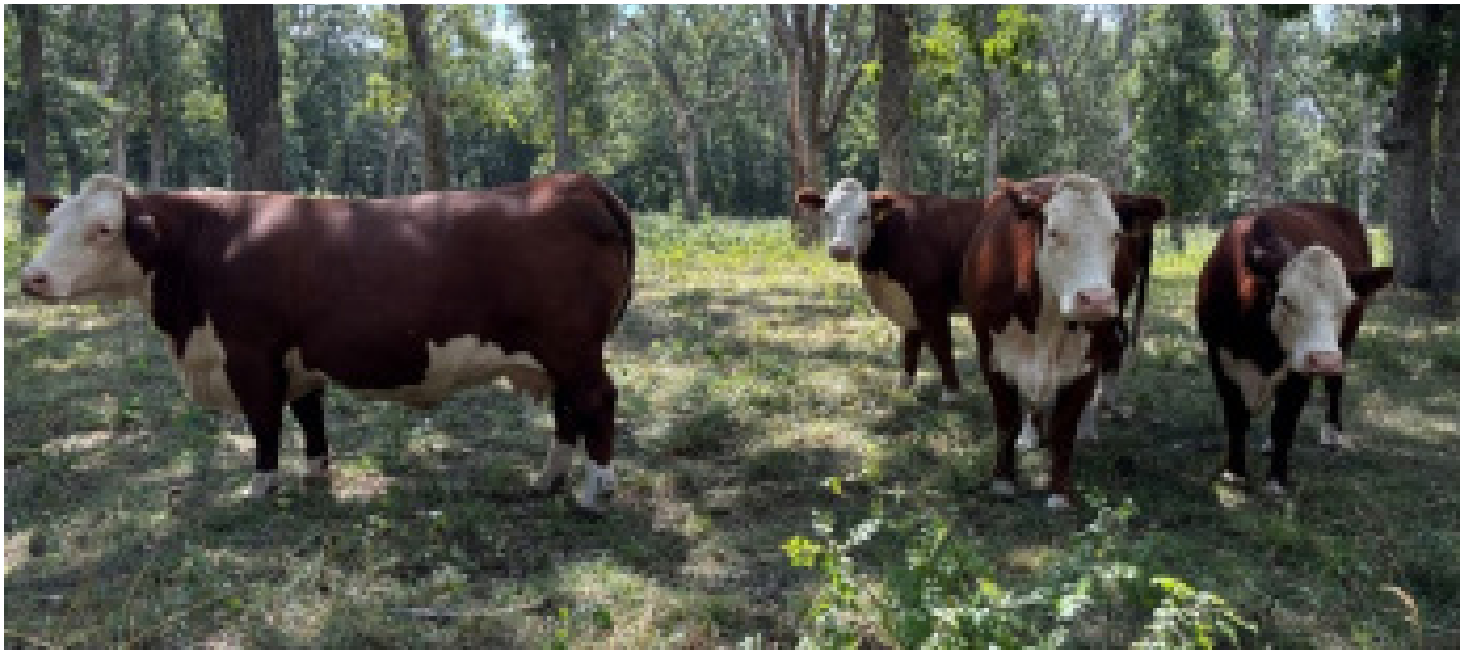
Agroforestry can include practices like forest farming, alley cropping, silvopasture, riparian buffers, and windbreaks. Forest farming involves the cultivation of high-value specialty crops, including timber, fruits, nuts, and mushrooms, in a strategic design to provide suitable shade and employ multi-tiered canopy structures to maximize productivity. Silvopasture integrates trees and forages for grazing livestock to create a balanced system of feed and shelter provisioning while protecting soil resources, enhancing wildlife habitat, and sequestering carbon. On the cropland side, alley cropping is a method of planting trees or shrubs wide enough to accommodate planter and harvester passes so that grain, forage, or other agronomic crops can be grown in the 'alleys' between trees or shrubs. Alley cropping can act as a strategy to diversify income with nuts, fruits, or biofuel crops, as well as prevent soil erosion and enhance wildlife habitat.

Windbreaks and riparian buffers are used as tools to prevent erosion by wind and water, respectively, or snow loading and drifting. However, they can be multifunctional; by selecting the right species for desired wildlife or, in some cases, even produce marketable fruits and nuts.

To learn more about agroforestry practices contact:
Galen Bergquist, NRCS Soil Conservationist (galen.bergquist@usda.gov; 612-477-2422) or
David Wick, Sherburne SWCD Resource Conservationist (dwick@sherburneswcd.org; 763-220-3434 x 102)

Sherburne SWCD

USDA NRCS
United States Department of Agriculture
Natural Resources Conservation Service



Weed Management

Managing Weeds for the Future During Harvest

By Jackie Estrem, University of Minnesota Extension

Weed management is a season-long fight for Minnesota row crop growers. While competition from weeds is of low concern for a maturing crop, the weeds themselves can complicate harvest and the seeds they produce can create problems in future years. Harvest season is an important time for weed management because it provides opportunities to mitigate weed seed abundance and record weed presence to better plan for next year.

Good weed management starts in-season with the use of pre-emergence herbicides and timely post-emergence applications. Pre-emergence herbicides are important because they delay the need for a post-emergence herbicide, allowing for more effective timing of post applications. Because herbicide resistance is increasingly common, weeds should be sprayed while they are still small, at the labelled rate, and the application should include multiple effective modes of action. If your crop rotation allows, consider mixing a residual herbicide with your post that has a different mode of action from your pre, to extend weed suppression later into the season.

Some weeds will exist around harvest time because they germinated and grew after the effective window of herbicides ended. Some might represent weed escapes as a result of unideal application conditions or herbicide resistance. In any case, allowing these weeds to produce viable seed encourages them to pass on their bad habits. If you have weeds poking out of the crop canopy ahead of harvest, here are a few management tactics you might consider.

Heavy weed presence in edge rows might indicate high populations of seed producers on field edges. Mowing along field edges to prevent seed production can be a valuable strategy to reduce invasion into the field. While mowing is less effective once viable seed is present, weeds germinate and mature at different times, which means more seed could become viable if the plants aren't set back in some way.

When it's time to harvest, remember that combines are an effective tool for spreading weed seeds within and between fields. If weed populations are low, hand pulling, removing, and destroying weeds can prevent seeds from entering the combine. Burning is a common destruction method and should be done outside of the field boundary. Individual weeds can produce thousands or tens of thousands of viable seeds that will require management in the future.

Plan your harvest so that the cleanest fields are harvested first, while weedy patches are harvested last. Good combine hygiene can prevent the spread of weeds between fields and daily removal of dust and debris using pressurized air helps prevent combine fires. For those who like to try new things, combine modifications, such as seed impact mills or narrow chaff chutes, are in development to support weed seed destruction during harvest.

While the growing season is in its final stretch, weed management remains important. Harvest season is a valuable time for weed management to protect the quality of the current crop and mitigate weed challenges in the future.

Comedy Corner

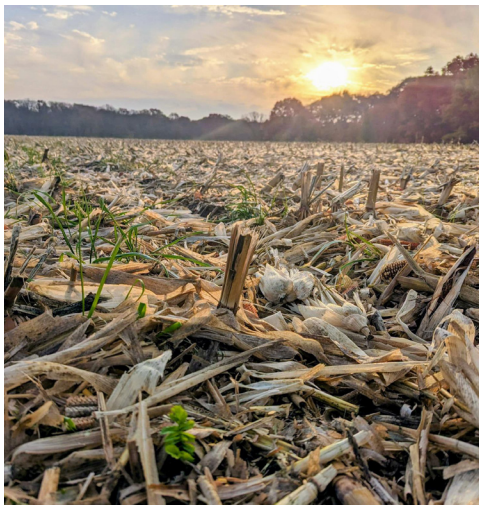
Why did the Apple join the gym?

To work on its core!

Soil Management

Residue Management in Sandy Soils

By Matt Preis, Sherburne SWCD
mpreis@sherburneswcd.com



Residue, stover, trash, or pain in your backside. Considerations for managing crop residue in sandy soils.

Whatever name you call it by, it needs to be managed in our sandy, lower biologically active soils. In our region's systems, it is common to see corn stalks from previous years remain in our soil through a couple years of management leading us to ask - how can we accelerate the breakdown of these residues, how can we get them to work for us, and what other benefits can we extract from these pesky residuals in our fields?

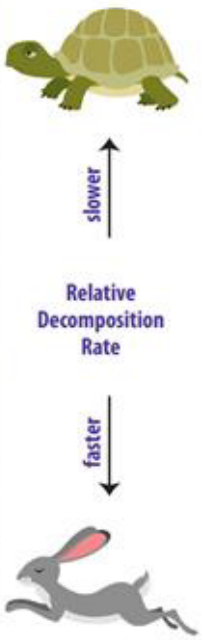
The breakdown of organic material in soil is driven by key factors including biologic activity, Carbon to Nitrogen Ratio, and the physical management of these residues.

When looking at the biology in soil, we rely on the decomposers; they shred crop residue into smaller chunks and help process the organic material back into plant available nutrients. Supporting and growing these populations using diversity in cover crops and rotation equips biology to handle the influx of a large carbon source like corn stalks being introduced to their environment.

How about your Carbon to Nitrogen Ratio or C: N, which has to do with the chemical make-up of organic material. Materials with a high C: N like corn stalks take more energy and time to break down, whereas legumes, brassicas, young grasses, and animal manure have lower C: N and break down into the soil faster. Finding a balance between these materials helps support the soil biology, leading to larger residues like corn stalks being broken down faster and with more ease.

Table 1. Carbon to nitrogen ratios of crop residues and other organic materials

Material	C:N Ratio
rye straw	82:1
wheat straw	80:1
oat straw	70:1
corn stover	57:1
rye cover crop (anthesis)	37:1
pea straw	29:1
rye cover crop (vegetative)	26:1
mature alfalfa hay	25:1
Ideal Microbial Diet	**24:1**
rotted barnyard manure	20:1
legume hay	17:1
beef manure	17:1
young alfalfa hay	13:1
hairy vetch cover crop	11:1
soil microbes (average)	8:1



Last to consider is our role in physically breaking down cornstalks; chopping stalks creates more surface area and helps kickstart decomposition. By harvesting corn with a chopping head, you can leave 12-18 inches of corn stalk standing, decreasing your crop residue by 15-20%. These standing stalks can also improve moisture by trapping snow and keeping it on the field, maintaining that soil moisture and recharging the profile for next year's cash crop. These stalks are then laid down, typically with a planting pass the following spring, and are then broken down throughout the growing season. This maintained cover through the non-growing season protects from wind and water erosion, helps with moisture retention and limits evaporation through the early growing season. Through management of these crop residues we can increase moisture availability, improve nutrient cycling, and reduce topsoil loss.

Funding Assistance

Two Grants Open to Support Minnesota Livestock Producers

St. Paul, Minn: The Minnesota Department of Agriculture (MDA) is now accepting applications for the **Agricultural Growth, Research, and Innovation (AGRI) Livestock Investment Grant** and the **AGRI Protecting Livestock from Avian Influenza (Protect) Grant**. The AGRI Livestock Investment Grant helps Minnesota livestock farmers and ranchers improve, update, and modernize their infrastructure and equipment. The AGRI Protect Grant helps livestock producers purchase equipment that reduces the risk of avian influenza transmission on their farms.

Up to $1.5 million is available for the AGRI Livestock Investment Grant, applicants may request $400 up to $25,000. Up to $250,000 is available for the AGRI Protect Grant, applicants may request $500 up to $10,000. Both are reimbursement grant programs and require recipients to contribute matching funds.

“Livestock production accounts for nearly half of Minnesota’s $22 billion agricultural economy and is essential to the strength of our rural communities,” said MDA Commissioner Thom Petersen. “Investments in equipment, infrastructure, and biosecurity not only help farmers strengthen their operations, but when livestock farms do well, so do the feed mills, veterinarians, processors, cooperatives and other local businesses that work with them, creating jobs and keeping dollars circulating in communities across the state.”

Both grant programs give priority to applicants who have farmed for 10 years or less. The AGRI Livestock Investment Grant also prioritizes:

- Generational farm transitions
- Technology improvements, including robotic dairy milking equipment
- Projects that respond to and prepare for extreme weather

Applications for both programs must be submitted by 4 p.m. on Tuesday, November 17. Visit the **AGRI Livestock Investment Grant webpage** and the **AGRI Protect Grant webpage** for eligibility requirements, application instructions, and information about previously funded projects.

Since the start of the Walz-Flanagan administration, the MDA has invested more than $10.3 million through the AGRI Livestock Investment Grant to help producers improve and modernize livestock operations across Minnesota.

Funding for both grant programs is made available through the MDA’s **AGRI Program**, which administers grants to farmers, agribusinesses, schools, and more throughout Minnesota to advance the state’s agricultural and renewable energy sectors.

DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Climate Resilience Cohort

Join a two-day Climate Resilience Cohort for farmers this fall!

"Something I'm really excited about is actually having a plan. I didn't realize before I got here how badly I needed one… I now have energy that I can focus."
- Past cohort participant

Connect with fellow farmers in your region and develop an adaptive whole-farm management strategy that builds on your experience and expertise during a two-day cohort hosted by University of Minnesota (UMN) Climate Adaptation Partnership, UMN Extension, Regional Sustainable Development Partnerships, and Land Stewardship Project. Over the course of the cohort, you will:

- ➢ Learn more about the potential impacts of increasing climate variability and change on your agricultural operation.
- ➢ Evaluate climate risk management options that best support your farm and family goals by reducing risks and capturing new opportunities associated with changing climate conditions.
- ➢ Make a plan to implement selected climate resilience strategies and evaluate their effectiveness over time.

Schedule Overview:

- ❖ **Day 1** *(9:30 am - 3:30 pm)*: Learning, discussion & beginning your farm's resilience plan.
- ❖ **Day 2** *(8:30 am - 2:30 pm)*: Developing your comprehensive plan, connecting with regional partners, and learning about resources to support your next steps.

Free to attend • Meals provided • Registration Deadline: Thursday, October 22

Availability is limited; cohorts are geared towards those who currently farm or actively participate in a farm operation. Register using the link for your region and we'll follow up to confirm your spot:

- ❖ z.umn.edu/cohort-NE — **Northeast:** Cloquet • November 9–10
- ❖ z.umn.edu/cohort-SE — **Southeast:** Chatfield • November 11–12
- ❖ z.umn.edu/cohort-NW — **Northwest:** Crookston • November 18–19
- ❖ z.umn.edu/cohort-SW — **Southwest:** Madison • November 16–17
- ❖ z.umn.edu/cohort-C — **Central:** Hackensack • December 1–2

Questions? Contact Tobin Tyler, tyler264@umn.edu, 401-787-0124

Upcoming Events

Upcoming Events

2026 County Committee Elections Stakeholder Toolkit