




CONSERVATION CONNECTION

A report of Minnehaha Conservation District

A publication of the
Minnehaha Conservation District

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 <https://minnehahacd.org>

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The Minnehaha Conservation District Board of Supervisors meets on the second Monday of every Month at 3:00 pm. Meeting times are subject to change. Visit our website for exact dates and times: <http://minnehahacd.org>.

All programs and services of the US Department Of Agriculture, Natural Resources Conservation Service, and the Minnehaha Conservation District are offered on a nondiscriminatory basis of race, color, sex, religion, sexual orientation, gender identity, national or ethnic origin, age, disability, veteran status or other protected class.

ABOUT THE DISTRICT

Created in 1941, Minnehaha Conservation District administers resource conservation within the boundaries of Minnehaha County in southeastern South Dakota. The District is self-governed and has the authority to enter into working agreements with government agencies and private citizens to carry out its purposes. MCD will consult with, and make recommendations to, all agencies or organizations helping to promote conservation activities to coordinate efforts into comprehensive conservation programs in Minnehaha County.

ACCOMPLISHMENTS IN 2023

- 48 acres of trees were machine planted for farmsteads, feedlots, field windbreaks, and wildlife habitats.
- The survival rate for new plantings was 88%.
- Approx. 75 producers/landowners participated in grass seeding over 1,000 acres throughout Minnehaha County, with: alfalfa, cool season grass, native grass, and cover crops.
- 17,100 bare root and potted trees were sold, with approx. 318 customers purchasing.
- The City of Sioux Falls continued a valued partnership, receiving services such as dispersal of bio-solids and soil sampling, along with various urban conservation efforts like our Prairie and Pollinator Program.
- Outreach efforts: The Big Sioux River Project, SD Soil Health Conference, Queen Bee Day, Pollinator Day at Good Earth, Future of Water event, Big Sioux River and Sustainability Summit, state technical meetings, various conferences, our website, social media, and our annual tree flyer.
- Educational activities: 30th Annual Sioux Empire Water Festival (area 4th graders), land judging contest for FFA students, Earth Team volunteers, state speech contest, Arbor Day contest, urban conservation outreach and handouts, Dewey C. Gevik Outdoor Conservation Learning Area, and various projects with local community groups to enhance habitat.

Interested in being a Minnehaha Conservation District Advisor, attending monthly meetings, and giving input on conservation matters in the county? Contact us to learn more.

SERVICES OFFERED BY THE MINNEHAHA CONSERVATION DISTRICT

- All varieties of grass seed available (native, crops, traditional lawn, etc.)
- Fabric Installation
- Habitat development through wildlife plot and pollinator seeding
- Native grass seeding for: tree rows, waterways, terraces, pastures, and yards
- No-till drill seeding for: soybeans, alfalfa, oats, and wheat
- Shelterbelt rehabilitation and brush removal
- Tilling for tree planting or grass seeding preparation
- Tree plantings for: shelterbelts, windbreaks, and wildlife plantings (machine only)
- Weed control (mechanical and chemical)

SERVICE HIGHLIGHT: SHELTERBELT REHABILITATION AND BRUSH REMOVAL

To maintain the health of trees and shelterbelts, it is important to consider having brush work done to get rid of problematic excesses. Removing lower branches to limb trees allows for greater mobility within rows and creates opportunity for more light to get in. Doing this also mimics what naturally happens within a forest environment. Additionally, removing other concerning ground vegetation decreases possible risk of fire danger from dead/dry plants while allowing for more nutrients to be available for the trees.

If wanting Minnehaha Conservation District to assist in cleaning up tree rows in this way, please contact us to discuss your property.

BEFORE



AFTER



DEWEY C GEVIK OUTDOOR CONSERVATION LEARNING AREA

Wanting to experience nature in Minnehaha County? Located just one-half mile west of Wall Lake, the Dewey C. Gevik Outdoor Conservation Learning Area showcases natural resources and conservation practices. Created to help filter the water flowing into Wall Lake, the learning area features rock crossings, shelterbelts, native grass plantings, observation decks, and more. The Minnehaha Conservation District proudly manages and maintains this area for the public with support from various local volunteer groups. Several improvements/additions are made every year, such as new tree plantings, with more planned in the future.



A sitting area made possible by thoughtful donations from Roger and Marilynn Parham and Ray Brooks.

Scenic area on the walking trail.



2024 ORDER FORM

Minnehaha Conservation District
2408 E. Benson Road
Sioux Falls, SD 57104-7018
PHONE: 605-330-4515, ext. 3
EMAIL: info@minnehahacd.org

Date _____
 Customer _____
 Billing Address _____
 City, State & Zip _____
 Phone _____
 E-mail _____



Please Note: Bare Root and Machine Planting Orders are due by March 8, 2024. Prices are effective 10/01/2022.

NO WARRANTY ON TREES - \$4.25 per tree or (bundle of 25 - same species - \$95.00 - NO WARRANTY ON TREES

BARE ROOT SHRUBS				BARE ROOT TALL TREES				MISCELLANEOUS PRODUCTS			
QTY.		HT.	COST	QTY.		HT.	COST	QTY.		PRICE	TOTAL
	Almond, Russian 'Regal'	5'			Aspen, Quaking	45'			WILDFLOWER MIX - Prairie Grass & Wildflower	\$48.00	
	Aronia 'McKenzie'	8'			Buckeye, Ohio	30'			(Covers approximately 1,000 sq. ft.)		
	Buffaloberry	12'			Catalpa, Northern	50'			WEED BARRIER - 4' x 4' Sq. (includes 5 staples)	\$7.00	
	Caragana	14'			Cherry, Black	50'			WEED BARRIER - 6' x 500' roll	\$230.00	
	Cotoneaster, Peking	8'			Cottonwood, Northwest	80'			WEED BARRIER - 6' wide	\$0.75/ft.	
	Cranberry, American Highbush	10'			Cottonwood, Seedless	80'			8" FABRIC STAPLES	\$0.25	
	Currant, American Black	5'			Elm, American	50'			8" FABRIC STAPLES - Box of 500	\$85.00	
	Dogwood, Red Stemmed	7'			Hackberry	55'			TREE SHELTER - 4'	\$5.64	
	Indigo, False	8'			Honeylocust	50'			TREE SHELTER - 5'	\$6.90	
	Juneberry	15'			Kentucky Coffee Tree	75'			STAKES	\$3.50	
	Lilac, Common	12'			Linden, American (Basswood)	60'			PLANTSKYDD - 1 lb. box powder concentrate	\$29.95	
	Rose, Hansen Hedge	5'			Linden, Little Leaf	40'			PLANTSKYDD - 2.2 lb. box powder concentrate	\$49.95	
	Sumac, Smooth	10'			Maple, Silver	60'			PLANTSKYDD - 1 lb. granular	\$12.95	
	Sumac, Skunkbush	8'			Oak, Bur	30'			PLANTSKYDD - 3 lb. granular	\$26.95	
	Willow, Sandbar	10'			Oak, Swamp White	45'			PLANTSKYDD - 7 lb. granular	\$44.95	
					Poplar, Lombardy	50'			PLANTSKYDD - 1 qt. pre-mixed spray	\$21.95	
					Walnut, Black	50'			PLANTSKYDD - 1.3 gal. pre-mixed spray	\$59.95	
					Willow, Golden	40'					
				QTY.	BARE ROOT CONIFERS	HT.	COST				
					Pine, Ponderosa	75'					
					Red Cedar, Eastern	50'					
					Spruce, Black Hills	50'					
					Spruce, Colorado Blue	50'					
Subtotal											
Sales Tax (4.2%)											
TOTAL PAYMENT											
METHOD OF PAYMENT:											
___ Cash ___ Visa ___ MasterCard ___ Check # _____ Card no.: _____ - _____ - _____ - _____ Exp. Date: ____ / ____ CVC Code: ____											
QTY. BARE ROOT MEDIUM TREES				QTY. LARGE POTTED CONIFERS - Price is \$34.00 per pot							
	Apricot, Manchurian	24'			15" Black Hills Spruce	50'					
	Cherry, Pin	30'			15" Colorado Blue Spruce	50'					
	Chokecherry	24'									
	Chokecherry, Amur	25'			QTY. BARE ROOT APPLE TREES - 4-5' - Price is \$65.00						
	Chokecherry, 'Schubert'	24'			Cortland	20'					
	Crabapple, Midwest	30'			Honey Crisp	20'					
	Crabapple, Red Splendor	30'			Red McIntosh	20'					
	Crabapple, Siberian	30'									
	Maple, Amur	20'									
	Mulberry	24'									
	Olive, Russian	20'									
	Pear, Harbin 'McDermand'	15'									
	Plum, Native	18'									
	Plum, 'Prairie Red'	18'									
	Willow, Laurel Leaf	40'									
Ht. = maximum height at 20 yrs.											

Payment is due at time of order.

VIEW TREE SPECIES AT:
<http://www.minnehahacd.org>
We design shelterbelts!
Call 605-330-4515, ext. 3
or email: info@minnehahacd.org



Sioux Empire Water Festival

This past year the Sioux Empire Water Festival celebrated its 30th year of educating area youth. The two-day event at the University of Sioux Falls welcomed 2,318 students from 45 schools to learn about all things water, from lessons on fur traders and their canoes to talking about the animals that call water home. Each class does this by participating in hands-on activities performed in classroom presentations and touring the exhibit hall. With over 50 different learning opportunities provided, there is never a shortage of things to do.



Those who are unable to attend in-person can take part online, having established digital presentations starting in 2020. Classes compete in Quiz Bowl through an online resource as well, studying in the weeks leading up to the festival to answer various trivia questions on water. The addition of these digital platforms has allowed for greater participation, which is something we strive for when planning this event. Adapting and incorporating changes like these is also what has kept us providing quality water education over the last 30 years.



As this next event approaches, we are getting excited to greet the many smiling 4th graders that will be coming March 12-13. We feel fortunate to have this tradition and are truly thankful for all those that help to make the Sioux Empire Water Festival possible each year. It takes many hands to keep this going, and we could not ask for a better community of help. Here's to the next 30 years!

Become A Sioux Empire Water Festival Volunteer

Want to help Minnehaha Conservation District at this year's Sioux Empire Water Festival (March 12-13)? Volunteers will assist with tasks like daily set-up, clean-up, staffing hospitality tables, running education stations, and helping school groups. Those interested will need to work at least a half day (8:30AM-11:30AM if wishing to help in the morning, or 11:30AM-2:30PM if wishing to help in the afternoon) if unable to come for the full event time. If possible, volunteers helping on the afternoon of March 13 are also asked to stay longer to assist with taking down the event. All volunteers will receive a gift and refreshments throughout the day as a thank you for their help. Volunteers helping for a full day will also receive lunch.

Anyone who has questions or is looking to volunteer should contact Alina Krone-Hedman at minnehaha.urbanconservation@gmail.com, or call (605) 595-8052.



NEW PROGRAM WITH INCREASED FUNDING FOR PASTURELAND

SRAM/RBI STACK PROGRAM



Big Sioux River Project

The Big Sioux River Project is partnering with the South Dakota Department of Agriculture and Natural Resources to offer a combined Seasonal Riparian Area Management (SRAM) and Riparian Buffer Initiative (RBI) Stack program for marginal pastureland. New contracts in 2024 qualify for an additional payment incentive for enrollment into this SRAM/RBI Stack Program.

SRAM and RBI are flexible innovative conservation programs designed for producers to increase soil health, pasture vigor, forage biomass, and overall herd health. The goal is to restore water quality in the Big Sioux River watershed by decreasing the bacteria, sediment, and nutrient loading in the water. Grazing livestock with fresh and clean drinking water leads to healthier herds, resulting in an increased rate of gain, which ultimately provides a greater return on investment. The SRAM/RBI Stack program can result in direct benefits to livestock health, pasture health, and improved stream health and stability.

General requirements for enrollment:

- SRAM/RBI Stack program participants defer grazing on enrolled acres in riparian areas adjacent to creeks and rivers, from April 1st - September 30th of each contracted year.
- Enrolled acres of pasture can be hayed during the summer months so long as a 4"-6" stubble height is maintained.
- Grazing is allowed for the entire pasture, including SRAM area, between October 1st - March 31st.
- Producers are not required to fence SRAM area but are required to provide an alternative water source for livestock if grazing is planned. The BSRP can provide cost share for new water developments and fencing projects at 75% of cost if needed.

Payments:

- Landowners who enter a contract will receive a one-time up-front payment in full on enrolled pastureland for the lifetime of the contract (10 years).
- Operators/Renters can split the payment with landowners within the contract, if agreed, at a defined percentage to each entity or individuals.
- The SRAM/RBI Stack payment of **\$178.85/acre/year** will extend out to 120 feet from the edge of the riverbank of eligible streams. Additional eligible acres (up to the 100-year floodplain) will qualify for payment of **\$140.00/acre/year** in accordance with 319 guidelines through the SRAM program.
- Example: 25 acres SRAM/RBI Stack = 25 acres x \$178.85 x 10 years = \$44,712.50
 - Additional 25 acres SRAM = 25 acres x \$140.00 x 10 years = \$35,000.00

****** The total for this example of 50 acres enrolled for 10 years would = \$79,712.50 ******

SRAM/RBI funding is currently available to those landowners who own or operate riparian pastureland immediately adjacent to the Big Sioux River, Skunk Creek, West Skunk Creek, Colton Creek, Willow Creek, West Pipestone Creek, Pipestone Creek, Split Rock Creek, and Beaver Creek to name a few. Please contact the Big Sioux River Project (BSRP) for more information. **Enrollment is currently open.**

Contact the Big Sioux River Project to learn more and enroll in SRAM for 2023!

www.bigsiouxriver.com | (605) 759-2650

Pheasants Forever and CREP

Pheasants Forever offers a variety of programs, including Big Sioux River Watershed CREP. CREP (Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program) is a voluntary program in which participants enroll their land into CRP (Conservation Reserve Program) for 10 years to 15 years. Cropland and marginal pastureland are restored to native grasses, shrubs, and wetlands. Participants receive an annual rental payment & additional incentive payment for installing conservation practices. One of these incentive payments comes from South Dakota Game, Fish & Parks for providing public hunting and fishing access. This incentive is applied as a 34% increase on top of the weighted soil average, which provides an extra boost towards the annual rental payment.

Participants interested in learning more about the program can reach out to the following individuals:

SD Game, Fish, and Parks: *Luke Silverburg (612) 865-9980*

Pheasants Forever: *Nick Goehring (605) 216-4390 or Will Gallman (704) 689-9091*



SD Soil Health Coalition

Soil health is a hot topic that has gained increased attention in the last few years with information being shared in nearly every farming publication in addition to a plethora of programs available to help producers transition to various conservation related practices. Transitioning to reduced or no-tillage and implementing cover crops can present challenges, which is where the SD Soil Health Coalition (SDSHC) can help! SDSHC's team of staff is available to support those implementing new production practices that have questions. As a free resource, we can consult over the phone or meet in your field to develop a plan to help ensure success! In addition to consulting, we offer cost-share assistance for new cover crop or no-till producers and host field tours along with educational events throughout the year.

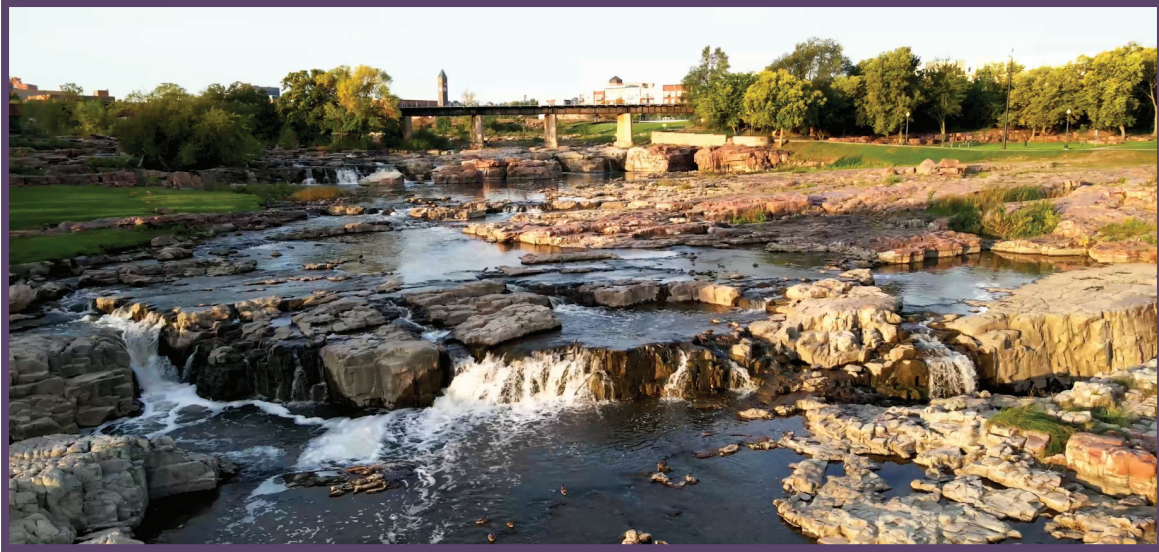
Check out our website: <https://www.sdsoilhealthcoalition.org/> to learn more about cost-sharing opportunities, upcoming events, or to connect with supportive staff and board members!

For Local Support:

Austin Carlson, SDSHC Soil Health Technician, (605)-323-8061 or austin.soilhealth@sdconservation.net



TEN THINGS YOU CAN DO FOR A CLEANER RIVER



Friends of the Big Sioux River is a small grassroots nonprofit on a mission to protect and restore the Big Sioux River and its watershed, improve the water quality, and educate our community to build a conservation ethic. As citizens of the watershed community, you can join Friends of the Big Sioux River in improving our local water quality by completing any of the following actions at your home or business.

- 1. Improve your soil quality to prevent urban runoff, hold stormwater, help filter chemicals, and provide a healthy green landscape.**
- 2. Reduce your lawn size. Replace grass by landscaping with native plants.**
- 3. Mow your lawn a notch higher.**
- 4. Leave grass clippings on your lawn; the clippings act as organic fertilizer.**
- 5. Don't over fertilize your lawn. The best times to fertilize are in spring and late fall.**
- 6. Keep fertilizers and chemicals on your lawn. Sweep fertilizer off streets, sidewalks, and driveways.**
- 7. Redirect your downspouts away from foundations onto permeable surfaces.**
- 8. Add a rain garden of native plants to your landscaping to hold water, filter chemicals, and add beauty.**
- 9. Install rain barrels to catch stormwater.**
- 10. Keep pet wastes, trash, and yard wastes from streets and storm sewers. Storm drains run directly into the river and do not remove pollutants.**

By being proactive, we can avoid the struggles and costs associated with the maltreatment of an important resource. Learn more about Friends of the Big Sioux River and their work throughout the watershed at fbsr.org!





Looking at ways to improve your operation or address resource concerns? Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) provides technical assistance by a variety of professionals. There are also several financial assistance opportunities through USDA conservation programs, including: Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP), Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP) and Agricultural Conservation Easement Program (ACEP). Contact the Minnehaha NRCS office to start the planning process and ask about what opportunities might be out there to address your resource concerns. To receive the most up to date information on NRCS financial opportunities, you can sign up for announcements on [Farmers.gov](https://farmers.gov). There you can select topics and receive county specific information.

Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP):

Applications can be continuously taken at the local NRCS office. Application deadline is typically in the fall of each year. NRCS provides conservation planning and cost share assistance to help implement conservation practices on a variety of resource concerns. The practices included below are available, plus many more:

Ag Waste Systems	Cover Crops	Fencing	Grassed Waterways
High Tunnels	Pipelines/Tanks	Residue Management	Windbreak/Shelterbelt Renovation

For additional information, visit www.nrcs.usda.gov/EQIP

Conservation Stewardship Program (CstwP):

Applications can be continuously taken at the local NRCS office. This conservation program is built to assist producers in taking their operation to the next level by implementing enhancements. Whether you are looking for agricultural improvements or are experimenting with new ideas, this program could be ideal for you.

For additional information, visit www.nrcs.usda.gov/CSP

Agricultural Conservation Easement Program (ACEP):

Applications can be continuously taken at the local NRCS office. NRCS provides financial and technical assistance to help conserve agricultural lands and wetlands, through agricultural land easements (ALE) or wetland reserve easements (WRE). ALE allows eligible partners financial assistance to protect agricultural and conservation uses of eligible lands. WRE helps restore, protect, and enhance wetlands and associated upland acres.

For additional information, visit www.nrcs.usda.gov/ACEP

GROWING SEEDS OF CHANGE FOR USDA

Written by Rachel Lawton

Previously, USDA programs (NRCS, etc.) primarily focused on large-scale, commercially focused row crops like corn or soybeans. This left urban, small-scale, and specialty producers unable to compete for funding and programs that did not offer equitable or worthwhile financial assistance – but that is all changing. USDA and their many agencies are placing greater emphasis on assisting these producers through both technical and financial assistance. This is being done by expanding USDA opportunities in creating additional programs, conservation practices, and grant opportunities. As South Dakota NRCS moves into this new year, I am delighted to be contributing to this expansion by adding two new, small-scale focused practices to our conservation list: Low Tunnels and Raised Beds!

This is particularly exciting because it is not every day that NRCS adds new practices, as doing so can be lengthy and scrutinizing to ensure the creation of the best practice. Often, the new practices we add are versions of existing practices, adapted to better address resource concerns and usability. During this process, a practice is in “interim” status to provide states the ability to adapt the practice to their specific needs, requiring we document and analyze its success – all with hopes that one day it becomes a permanent practice.

Low Tunnels are an example of an existing practice that was adapted into a new one. The High Tunnels Practice is where NRCS can cost share both High Tunnels and Caterpillar Tunnels (a slightly smaller version of the traditional High Tunnel). Low Tunnels are even smaller versions of Caterpillar Tunnels that cover crop rows individually, making the High Tunnel Practice a logical one to adapt. High Tunnels are also a popular practice for specialty producers, with many unaware we cost share Caterpillar Tunnels. With the addition of Low Tunnels, we expanded the selection of tunnel types and now hope to create greater awareness of these other season extension practices we assist with.

Per NRCS specifications, we have various factors used to differentiate between the three tunnel systems, with size and materials being the two largest. High Tunnels are the largest, most structurally stable tunnel, with end walls, roll-up sides, truss supports, and various automated features. Caterpillars are slightly smaller, having the minimum height requirement of 6ft (like High Tunnels) without ends walls, separate side panels, and often no truss supports. The benefit of this Caterpillar Tunnel is to be a more user-friendly experience, as it has a smaller footprint and can be managed by one or two individuals. Then, Low Tunnels have a maximum height of 4ft and like a Caterpillar tunnel, no end walls, sides, or truss supports. They are also highly adaptable, having multiple types of cover materials that can be switched out within a season (plastic filming, shade cloth, pest netting, frost cloth, etc.). Personally, I like to think of Low Tunnels like little bags of bread on your field!



Figure 1. A traditional gothic style high tunnel.



Figure 2. A gothic style caterpillar tunnel.



Figure 3. Low tunnels over raised beds. The Wonder Bread added for comedic comparison.



Figure 4. A type of raised bed.

As for Raised Beds, this is a completely new practice that consists of utilizing above ground growing beds. This practice was created by New Jersey NRCS where urban farming is often limited by heavy metals in the soil. The idea of the Raised Beds practice was to address this concern through creating a safe environment in places where contaminated soils are your only in-ground option.

Here in South Dakota, we are less limited by heavy metals, but have our fair share of soil concerns. Many areas have heavy clays, sandy or gravelly soils, and shallow bedrocks that limit crop production. Additionally, urban environments can often have other factors that make spaces unable to be utilized for garden beds. Raised Beds offer growers an alternative means of production on areas that would otherwise not grow anything.

Raised Beds and Low Tunnels are just two of many possibilities USDA can assist producers with in pursuing the needs of urban, small-scale, and specialty producers. With the many programs already provided, further adaption for small-scale environments will only open doors to expand our food system. You could say that the seeds are planted, now it is time to watch USDA grow!



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