

# CONSERVATION CONNECTION

## A Report of Minnehaha Conservation District

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Volume 39 Issue 1

### Conservation Connection

A publication of the  
Minnehaha Conservation District  
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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 without regard to race, color, national origin, religion, sex, age, marital status, or handicap.

### ABOUT THE DISTRICT

Minnehaha Conservation District was created in 1941 to Administer 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.

### ACCOMPLISHMENTS IN 2018

- Fifty-eight acres of trees were planted for Farmsteads, feedlots, field windbreaks, and wildlife habitats.
- The survival rate for new plantings was 93%!
- Thirty-seven producers rented the 10 ft. grass drill to plant 1050 acres of grasses. (Minnehaha & Lincoln counties)
- Thirty-nine producers rented the John Deere no-till drill and the 26" Great Plains drill, planting 2,050 acres to alfalfa, grasses, and cover crops.
- We sold \$28,597.57 (7,427 trees) in hand plants.
- We continued a partnership with the City of Sioux Falls for dispersal of bio-solids and soil sampling on 1,400 acres.
- Outreach and legislative efforts included our website, Pheasant Fest, National AgDay, a booth at the State Fair, Sioux Empire Farm Show, Central Big Sioux River Watershed project, State technical meetings and our annual tree flyer.
- Educational activities included the 25th Annual Sioux Empire Water Festival (2375 4th graders from the surrounding area), land judging contest for FFA students, Earth Team volunteers, state speech contest, Arbor Day contest, and Dewey C. Gevik Outdoor Conservation Learning Area.

## **SERVICES OFFERED BY THE MINNEHAHA CONSERVATION DISTRICT**

- Tree plantings for shelterbelts, windbreaks, and wildlife plantings (machine only)
- Fabric Installation
- No-till drill seeding of soybeans, alfalfa, oats, wheat, and rye
- Native grass seeding, tree rows, waterways, pastures and yards
- Food plot seeding
- Terrace seeding
- Grass seed available
- Tilling for tree planting or grass seeding preparation

## **MAINTENANCE OF WEED BARRIER**

Keep the edges and ends of weed barrier fabric covered with soil as wind, frost, and rain may cause the fabric to shift. When the fabric isn't anchored properly, it can be harmful to the tree. Also, check the older plantings as it may be necessary to make the opening around the base of a tree larger. If the opening is not large enough, the fabric will tighten around the trunk base and may cause damage or kill the tree or shrub (this is called girdling). When cutting the opening in the fabric larger for the growth of the tree, care should be taken not to harm the base of the plant!

Some weeds and grasses will emerge adjacent to trees. It is important to walk the tree rows two to three times during the growing season to pull weeds and grasses growing near the trees. If weeds grow tall enough to compete for light and fall over fabric and trees, some type of weed control would be necessary.

## **DEWEY C GEVIK OUTDOOR CONSERVATION LEARNING AREA**

The Gevik Learning Area makes possible an interpretive educational experience that is open to the public, featuring several conservation practices such as the restoration of a wetland, grassed waterway with a rock weir structure, rock crossings, shelterbelts, native grass plantings, and hiking trails. Located just one-half mile west of Wall Lake, the Learning Area showcases natural resources at their finest while also filtering the water flowing into Wall Lake. Three walking trails offer access to all the diverse environments, and ninety-four species of birds have been documented by bird watching clubs. Observation decks have been constructed so people can relax as they enjoy watching wildlife in their natural habitat.

The Minnehaha Conservation District has been honored to manage and maintain the Learning Area for the public. We would like to further enhance the Learning Area by installing descriptive signs of native grasses and tree species, building bird houses, and distributing informative brochures to build public awareness of this beautiful area just west of Sioux Falls.

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# MARK YOUR CALENDARS! BRING THE FAMILY!

*South Dakota's Celebration of National Agriculture Week  
March 23rd, 2019*

Saturday, March 23rd is Agriculture Day at the Washington Pavilion in Sioux Falls, South Dakota. All are welcome to join in the fun of three packed floors of all things agriculture in South Dakota and stay for the free lunch. There is free admission to Kirby Science Discovery Center and the Visual Arts Center as well. This educational and exciting program starts at 10:00am and goes thru 2:00pm. Ag Day gives children and families a wonderful opportunity to learn about agriculture's significance – in South Dakota and beyond. Our exhibits are exciting, educational hands-on activities – great for the whole family! A free lunch is offered, featuring South Dakota-made products. For more information go to *INTERESTING SOIL FACTS*: [pavilionagday.org](http://pavilionagday.org)

- Soil is living.
- There are more than 70,000 types of soil in the United States.
- One tablespoon of soil has more organisms in it than people on earth.
- The very best China dishes are made from soil (Kaolin, a type of clay).
- It can take more than 500 years to form one inch of topsoil. (This is being challenged with using soil health practices!)
- Nearly all antibiotics used to fight our infections are obtained from soil organisms.
- In one gram of soil, there are over 5,000 different types of bacteria.

## WINDBREAK RENOVATION

As windbreaks and shelterbelts age, it is wise to evaluate the overall condition of the windbreak to see if it still meets the objective of why it was originally planted. Many things can happen to a windbreak as it ages. The density can be reduced due to dead or unhealthy trees. Sod-forming grasses can become a problem as they take water and nutrients away from the trees. Shrubs or small trees can start growing in the understory, creating various problems.

Most windbreaks are planted to provide protection from cold winter and hot summer winds, to provide adequate snow distribution, to provide wind erosion control, to provide habitat for wildlife, or to provide a screen from neighbors or heavily traveled roads. If any of these objectives are no longer being met or only partially met, then it may be time to think about renovation of that windbreak.

There are three basic techniques of windbreak renovation as it involves tree removal and replacement. The first method is to remove the entire windbreak and replant it. The second method is to remove one or more complete rows of the windbreak. The third method is to thin or remove individual trees. These last two methods may or may not involve replanting trees to replace the trees removed.

Renovation technique 1 exposes the entire area needing protection, but does allow for repositioning of the windbreak to a better location. Technique 2 can thin an over-crowded windbreak and stimulate growth and increase vigor of the remaining trees. Growth in the middle and upper levels of the windbreak is given a chance to increase. Technique 3 helps strengthen remaining trees by removing dying or unhealthy trees.

One universal problem in most windbreaks needing renovation is the presence of sod-forming grasses. A general rule is that if 50 percent or more of the windbreak's undergrowth is made up of sod-forming grasses or broadleaved weeds, chemical weed control is needed. Mechanical weed control often times is not feasible as the tree crowns are close to each other and/or the tree roots can be disturbed.

If you need assistance with evaluating your windbreak or shelterbelt for renovation, please contact our local conservation district office located at the USDA Service Center in Sioux Falls.

## Big Sioux River Watershed

### Seasonal Riparian Area Management (SRAM) Project Application

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone #: \_\_\_\_\_ Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Farm # \_\_\_\_\_ Tract # \_\_\_\_\_ Legal Description: \_\_\_\_\_ Estimated Acres: \_\_\_\_\_

Note: Attach an air photo or similar map and indicate which acres of land are to be enrolled. If there is more than one tract of land to be enrolled, **please fill out another form.**

#### By signing this form I understand that:

- This application is subject to the approval of the Big Sioux (BS) Watershed Coordinator and the Moody County Conservation District (MCCD) based on project priorities **(You must get prior approval for any and all work planned in order to be eligible for cost-share)**
- Marginal pastureland within the 100 year floodplain immediately adjacent to Skunk Creek will be eligible for the SRAM program. Enrolled acres shall not be grazed April 1 through September 30.
- Payment is **\$60-75 per acre** and 50 - 75% of actual cost for additional approved supporting practices if applicable. Alternative water shall be provided if grazing is carried out October 1 through March 31.
- Haying will be allowed through the summer months and bales should be removed before inclement winter weather prevents removal which at no time shall be later than November 15th. Haying cannot begin until after June 1st.
- **For more info contact Barry Berg at 605-759-2650**

Applicant Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

[illegible]

Ht. = maximum height at 20 yrs.

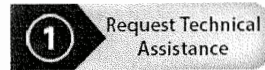


## Have you heard of the NRCS Client Gateway?

Conservation Client Gateway is an NRCS website that provides secure access to conservation plans, practice implementation schedules, financial applications and contracts, documents and payment information. Instead of driving to your field office multiple times, Conservation Client Gateway enables you to request assistance, sign documents and interact with NRCS field staff online. NRCS staff will still be available in field offices to work with you face-to-face - this online tool just provides another option.

Check it out at:

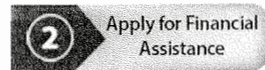
[www.nrcs.usda.gov/clientgateway](http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/clientgateway)



**Request Technical Assistance**

### **Client Gateway & Conservation Technical Assistance**

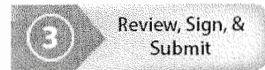
Request technical assistance or advice for your conservation needs. Access technical information, such as the Web Soil Survey, the National Plants Database, and the National Conservation Practice Standards and Specifications to learn more about soils, plants, and conservation practices.



**Apply for Financial Assistance**

### **Client Gateway & Financial Assistance**

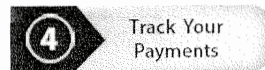
Apply for conservation program financial assistance. Manage your applications, contracts, conservation plans and the associated documents through Conservation Client Gateway. Report practice completion and installation, and request information and modifications to your conservation plans and contracts.



**Review, Sign, & Submit**

### **Client Gateway & NRCS Documents**

View, sign, and submit documents related to your conservation request. View and track the status of your requests for technical and financial assistance. View aerial maps of your property where you have requested technical or financial assistance.



**Track Your Payments**

### **Track Your Payments**

View and track the status of your financial assistance conservation program payments for completed conservation practices in your existing contracts.

## LOCAL LAND COVER CROP

The Minnehaha Conservation District partnered with Carl Eliason, new South Dakota Soil Health Coalition member and farmer near Renner, SD, to plant and showcase cover crop demonstration plots this last August through October. Eliason provided roughly a quarter acre of space at the edge of one of his fields for the project, a field where rye had been combined off and there was an existing stand of medium red clover which had been incorporated with a spring fertilizer application. The area which would become the demonstration plots was then sprayed on August 2nd in preparation for the cover crop seeding.

Seed for six different mixes was donated by a local company and was seeded into twenty-foot by fifty-foot plots on August 15th. Several larger fields near the demonstration plots were seeded approximately two weeks earlier by Eliason, which provided a very interesting comparison as it was seeded with one of the same mixes in the smaller plots. When asked what the goal of the demonstration plot project was for the Conservation District, District Manager John Parker said, "To increase awareness of the different cover crop species, their potential growth in this part of South Dakota, and the benefits they could provide to producers in the surrounding area."

In order to accomplish this goal a Cover Crop Mix Demo Plot Tour was then held on October 25th to showcase visually the different mixes, their relative growth in the approximately three months, and to compare what the different components of each mix can provide as far as soil health and grazing benefits. Representatives from the Minnehaha Conservation District, Natural Resources Conservation Service, Big Sioux Watershed Project, Millborn Seeds, the SD Soil Health Coalition were present to interact with those who stopped by and explain some of the many benefits that can be achieved when utilizing cover crops. For more information about this set of cover crop plots, specific mix composition or the benefits of cover crops, please contact John Parker at (605) 370-3480, [mcdjohn78@gmail.com](mailto:mcdjohn78@gmail.com) or the SD Soil Health Coalition at (605) 280-4190, [sdsoilhealth@gmail.com](mailto:sdsoilhealth@gmail.com).

## PROPER TREE PLANTING PREPARATION AND AFTERCARE

*Hersh Smith*

Proper tree planting and aftercare is the key to having good survival and growth out of your new seedlings. With grass competition, simply planting new seedlings in your yard and hoping for the best doesn't usually achieve very good results. The reason for this is because the root base of the sod is too thick to let an ample amount of water and nutrients to penetrate down to the tree roots. Here are a few tips to help your new trees grow faster and not only survive but thrive.

Locate a well-drained area that has the potential to be exposed as much as possible. Clear a 3ft. to 4ft. diameter area where you want the tree. Remove the sod and dig a hole just as deep as the roots of the tree you're planting and twice as wide as the root system. Set the tree in the hole and plant at the same height as the root collar or at the same depth as the tree was planted prior to you receiving it. It's very important to break up the soil to a very fine consistency and backfill it firmly by hand to avoid any possible air pockets in the soil that surrounds the roots. At this point, cover that 4' area around the new tree with any kind of mulch or tree fabric. This will help suppress any grasses and weeds from competing with the tree and prevent the soil moisture from evaporating. Installing a tree tube/shelter around tall trees will speed up growth, create condensation for extra water, and protect it from wildlife. These are NOT recommended for conifers or shrubs.

After planting your trees, a good soaking of water around each plant is necessary. Apply a pint of water to each tree daily for the first two weeks, every other day for the next two weeks, and then once a week for the remainder of the growing season. All watering should stop at the end of September. It cannot be stressed how important watering is in order for these new trees to thrive.

I hope you all have time this spring to get outside, enjoy creation and make an effort to leave the Earth in better shape today than it was when you arrived.

"The one who plants trees, knowing that he will never sit in their shade has at least started to understand the meaning of life." Rabindranath Tagore

## THE IMPORTANCE OF POLLINATOR HABITAT

*Hersh Smith*

With pest management practices being different now than they were 30 years ago, weed control and pest management (insects) practices have changed from a mechanical based practice to more chemical based practices. This has become detrimental to once common pollinator habitats.

We no longer have the overabundance of native flowers and forbs in road ditches, fence lines and CRP plantings. In turn we have seen a drastic decline in pollinator species that rely on these plants for reproduction. Three-fourths of the world's flowering plants depend on pollinators to reproduce. Some scientists estimate that one in every three bites of food we eat exists because of animal pollinators like bees, butterflies, and moths, birds and bats, and beetles and other insects. There has never been more of a need for pollinator habitat than there is today.

So how can I make a difference you might ask? For less than 50 dollars you can plant a small pollinator plot. Something as small as 1,000sq. ft. could be planted to a native grass/forb mix in your yard or on a field edge. For people in town or those without an abundance of space, wildflowers might be more up your alley. Along with all the natural beauty they can provide, they are fairly easy to establish and can provide an abundance of nectar and pollen. Perennial plants such as flowering shrubs and trees are also a very good option that one can plant with the bonus of having all the edible fruit to harvest each season.

Whether a hundred-acre field or unused lands along ditches, riparian areas or just around power poles; you yourself can take a step towards restoring the pollinator species' habitats and populations. It's our duty as good stewards of the land to do our part to restore and maintain the environment for all of us now and generations to come.



**Minnehaha Soil Conservation District**  
**2408 E. Benson Road**  
**Sioux Falls, SD 57104-7018**  
**Phone: 605-370-3480**

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*Check out our website: <http://minnehahacd.org>*

\*\*\*\*\*ECRWSS\*\*\*

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THANK YOU to our crew  
for a job well done, and to  
all our customers for a  
good year! Be sure to stay  
on top of what's going on  
by following our website at  
<http://minnehahacd.org>.

*John Parker,  
District Manager*



**To view TREE SPECIES or DOWNLOAD AN ORDER FORM visit our  
WEBSITE AT: <http://www.minnehahacd.org>**