



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 2024

- 57 acres of trees were machine planted for farmsteads, feedlots, field windbreaks, and wildlife habitats.
- The survival rate for new plantings was 92%.
- Approx. 80 producers/landowners participated in grass seeding over 3,100 acres throughout Minnehaha County, with: alfalfa, cool season grass, native grass, and cover crops.
- 18,479 bare root and potted trees were sold, with approx. 307 customers purchasing.
- The City of Sioux Falls continued a valued partnership, receiving services such as dispersal of bio-solids and assisting in various urban conservation efforts, like our Prairie and Pollinator Program and a community garden space that is being developed.
- Outreach efforts: The Big Sioux River Project, National Pheasant Fest & Quail Classic, National Trappers Association Convention, Queen Bee Day, Pollinator Day at Good Earth, Future of Water event, various Earth Day events, state technical meetings, various conferences, our website, social media, and our annual tree flyer.
- Educational activities: 31st Annual Sioux Empire Water Festival (area 4th graders), Dewey C. Gevik Outdoor Learning Center, Range and Land Judging contest for FFA students, Arbor Day contest, State Speech contest Stewardship Week, Earth Team volunteers, Conservation Craft Kits, other urban conservation outreach and handouts, and various projects with local community groups to enhance habitat.

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

The Minnehaha Conservation District (MCD) proudly manages the Dewey C. Gevik Outdoor Learning Center for the public with support from various volunteer groups. Created to help filter the water flowing into Wall Lake, this area is regularly tested with other local sites by Friends of the Big Sioux River, which has continually shown positive impacts to water quality of Wall Lake. Additionally, this learning area showcases natural resource conservation, featuring: rock crossings, shelterbelts, native grass plantings, observation decks, and more. MCD is continuing to make improvements/additions to enhance the experience for those visiting, with us planning to add a digital kiosk and increased trail signage within the next year with help from the SD Soil Health Coalition.



Minnehaha
**Conservation
District**

Date _____

Customer _____

Billing Address _____

City, State & Zip _____

Phone _____

E-mail _____

NO WARRANTY ON TREES - \$4.75 per tree or \$106.00 per bundle of 25 of the same species - NO WARRANTY ON TREES

[illegible]

Subtotal	
Sales Tax (4.2%)	
TOTAL PAYMENT	

METHOD OF PAYMENT:

☐ Cash
 ☐ Visa
 ☐ MasterCard
 ☐ Check # _____

Card no.: _____ - _____ - _____ - _____

Exp. Date: ____ / ____ CVC Code: _____

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

National Outreach

2024 provided multiple opportunities for Minnehaha Conservation District to take part in conservation outreach at large-scale events, including National Pheasant Fest & Quail Classic and the National Trappers Association Convention. Both events took place in Sioux Falls, allowing South Dakota conservation to be showcased to people from around the country. Several activities and displays were utilized during these multi-day experiences, with a favorite part being a large light-up mural of the grasslands that was created through a partnership between a variety of conservation organizations. Other activities that were enjoyed were handing out various seed mixes and taking part in crafts, with close to a thousand conservation bookmarks being created at the National Trappers Association Convention. Most of all, many good conversations were had, and important information was shared amongst everyone who stopped by.



Creating the SQUARE

Minnehaha Conservation District (MCD) is excited as we work toward finishing the installation of our community garden and education space, the SQUARE (Space for Quality Urban Agriculture Resource Education). The space on Ditch Road is coming along, despite having a setback with flooding this past June. Currently, we are developing education demonstrations, having installed a high tunnel, raised beds, fruit trees, various native plantings, and other examples of soil health practices. Heading into Spring/Summer, these areas are planned to be finished so we can start having individuals come to learn, while then focusing on getting a community garden area established for local individuals to utilize for growing food.



MCD is extremely grateful for the financial support it received to execute this project from NRCS and NACD grants, along with the support of the City of Sioux Falls in leasing the land for the site. Without partnerships like these, none of this would be possible.



Sioux Empire Water Festival

In 2024, we celebrated the 31st year of educating local youth at the Sioux Empire Water Festival. The event was once again held at the University of Sioux Falls, where 2,317 students from 45 schools participated in hands-on activities to learn anything and everything about water. Classes also competed in Quiz Bowl through an online resource, studying in the weeks leading up to the festival to answer various trivia questions on water and, hopefully, take home a prize. This multi-day event is done through having amazing presenters perform classroom presentations and exhibits, an unbelievable group of volunteers that assist year after year, and a dedicated committee that diligently works to not just keep the event going but regularly improve it.

The next event is fast approaching, so we are excitedly working to be ready to greet the many smiling 4th graders March 4-5.

Become A Sioux Empire Water Festival Volunteer

Minnehaha Conservation District needs help at this year's Sioux Empire Water Festival, happening March 4-5. Volunteers assist with tasks like daily set-up, clean-up, staffing hospitality tables, and running education stations. Volunteers will need to work at least a half day (8:30AM-11:30AM for the morning session, or 11:30AM-2:30PM for the afternoon session), or support both shifts and come for the full event time (8:30AM-2:30PM). 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.

If interested, please contact Alina Krone-Hedman at minnehaha.urbanconservation@gmail.com, or call (605) 595-8052.

MINNEHAHA CONSERVATION DISTRICT OPPORTUNITIES



SEASONAL HELP NEEDED

Minnehaha Conservation District (MCD) once again needs seasonal help to assist with tree planting, fabric work, seeding, order fulfillment, and other tasks this summer. Interested parties must be comfortable in agricultural settings, be able to regularly lift/move items up to 50 lbs., negotiate tough terrain, and be comfortable working primarily outdoors. Individuals must have strong public relations skills, a valid driver's license, pass any necessary background check requirements, understand the operation of farming equipment, and should be age 16 or older to apply.

For further information or to apply for this position, please contact MCD at info@minnehahacd.org, or call (605)330-4515 Ext. 3.

BIG SIOUX RIVER PROJECT

SRAM/RBI STACK PROGRAM



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 2025!

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



Natural Resources Conservation Service

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) provides technical assistance from a variety of professionals and offers 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. 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. Contact your local office to inquire about eligible practices.

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

Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP):

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

LEARN MORE ABOUT THE SOUTH DAKOTA SOIL HEALTH COALITION

The South Dakota Soil Health Coalition continues to offer resources to producers and landowners seeking to improve their soils while maintaining profitability. Our team is available to answer questions and offer advice to maximize success when implementing different conservation related practices like transitioning tillage systems, incorporating cover crops, or diversifying crop rotations, to name a few! Upcoming opportunities to discover how soil health practices may benefit you include attending:

- **2025 Soil Health School in Huron, SD September 3-5**

This school provides a hands-on, small group setting to view soil health practices in action while offering tools to improve your operation's soil and financial resources. In addition to this event, our team is available to discuss goals and discover opportunities for your operation! Find us at www.sdsoilhealthcoalition.org.



What is Water Quality?

Water quality is the condition of a body of water, including its chemical, physical, and biological characteristics. Water pollution occurs when harmful substances enter a river, lake, or stream, thereby contaminating the water. Clean, safe water is a critical component of a healthy freshwater ecosystem.

Why is Water Quality Important?

There are a multitude of benefits to healthy local water. At Friends of the Big Sioux River, our top four benefits are:

- **Safe Local Water:** Protecting local water allows communities to source water locally, which is cheaper and simpler than piping it in from long distances. Cleaner water is cheaper water.
- **Recreation & Tourism:** A clean river attracts tourists and residents who want to fish, kayak, and swim. According to a 2022 report by the Bureau of Economic Analysis, outdoor recreation in the United States generates 5 million direct jobs and \$1.1 trillion in consumer spending. In South Dakota, outdoor recreation generates 18,134 direct jobs and \$1.7 billion in consumer spending. A healthy river equals a healthy economy.
- **Growth & Development:** People are attracted to a community for its quality of life, which includes clean water, scenery, and recreation.
- **Health of People & Wildlife:** Every living creature needs clean water for healthy development. Unclean water can be hazardous and even deadly to aquatic critters.

Is There a Statewide Report on Water Quality?

Yes! Every two years, the South Dakota Department of Agriculture and Natural Resources (DANR) produces an Integrated Report for Surface Water Quality Assessment for all waterbodies in the state. This report is a statewide assessment of lakes and streams created to inform the EPA and South Dakota citizens about the condition of the state's water resources. It serves as the basis for management decisions surrounding surface waters in South Dakota. The 2024 Integrated Report can be found at danr.sd.gov/OfficeOfWater/SurfaceWaterQuality.

Does Friends of the Big Sioux River Collect Water Samples?

Yes, we do! The water testing data collected by Friends of the Big Sioux River (FBSR) is collected for the South Dakota Volunteer Water Quality Monitoring Program through DANR. All samples collected by FBSR are sent to the State Public Health Laboratory in Pierre for testing. These data are included in the Integrated Report and the State's Water Quality Monitoring Access Portal. We recently released our 2024 Water Quality Report based on the 2024 Integrated Report and our water quality testing data. Grab a cup of coffee, cozy up in your favorite chair, and read this in-depth report at fbsr.org/water-quality-monitoring!

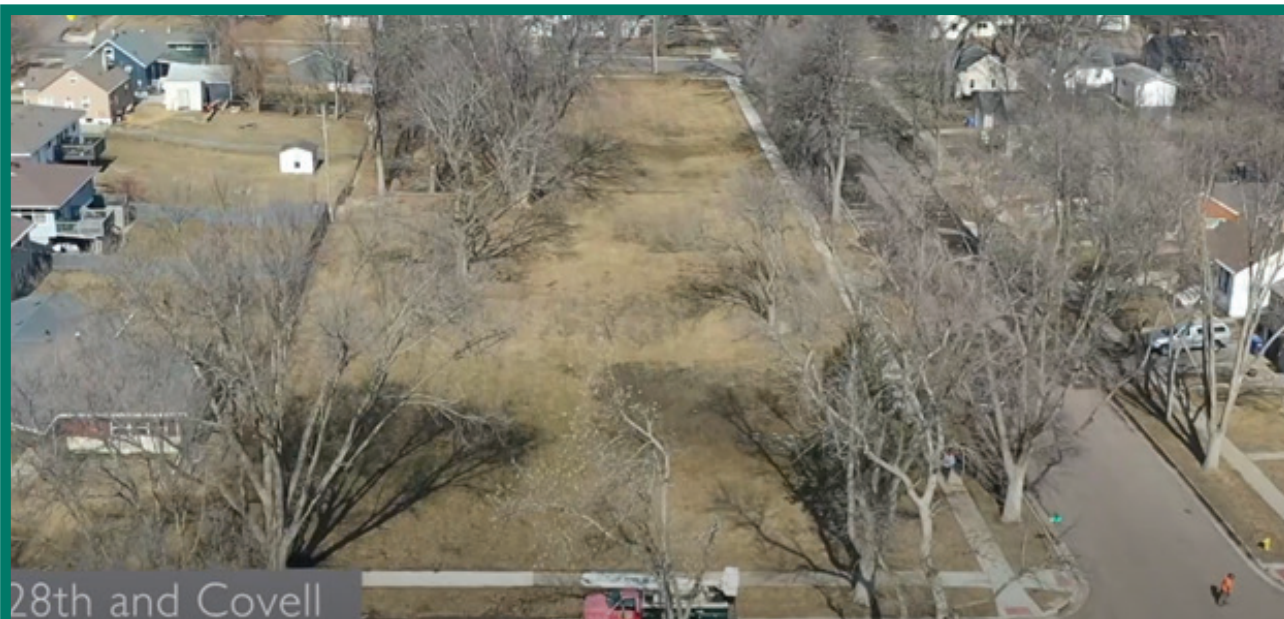


CENTRAL SIOUX FALLS GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE IMPROVEMENT

Written by Troy Lambert, Environmental Analyst with the City of Sioux Falls

The first City owned Green Infrastructure (GI) pilot installation is located along south Covell Avenue between 28th Street and 29th Street. This area of south Covell Avenue consists of highly impervious surfaces with minimum stormwater detention. Additionally, a significant bottleneck in the storm drainage system would cause severe localized flooding during heavy rain events. Storms in 2015 and 2019 highlighted this problem.

A means to solve this issue began in 2012 when the City began offering buyouts for property owners along Covell Avenue. Green space in the area slowly expanded over the next few years, leading to planning for a GI project to start in 2020. Project design and bidding occurred through mid-2021. Construction began in October 2021 and was completed one year later.



Aerial view of the site before construction.



Aerial view of site in December 2024.



Initial grading and excavation of the bioretention cell began in October 2021.



Underdrain and stormwater infrastructure install in November 2021.



Bioretention cell media installed during December 2021. Note the installation technique. Care was taken to avoid heavy equipment compacting media within cell.



Seeding and planting occurred through spring of 2022.



Site in October 2022 after first growing season.

The centerpiece of the project is a bioretention cell that utilizes native plants and landscaping to maximize water detention during rain events and improve stormwater quality. The area also adds aesthetic beauty to the neighborhood and an educational showcase for residents. Two years after construction the native plants and vegetation have established nicely within the greenspace in the neighborhood. Flood control, the primary goal of this project, proved successful as heavy rain events during the summer of 2024 resulted in minimal flooding issues. The secondary goal of stormwater quality improvement has not yet been analyzed.

Now that the area is fully established, the City plans to do some initial water testing in 2025. The testing will be used to gauge the project's effectiveness in reducing stormwater contaminants. While this GI project was relatively small, the City hopes that it will highlight the benefits of GI and promote further GI development throughout town.

MINDFUL BIRDING AT THE DEWEY C. GEVIK OUTDOOR LEARNING CENTER

Written by Amanda Booher, Communications Manager for Audubon Great Plains

Selected as the host site for Mindful Birding, a short drive from the hustle of Sioux Falls, South Dakota, this Dewey C. Gevik Outdoor Learning Center is situated on approximately 100 acres that is managed by the Minnehaha Conservation District. The space provides beautiful scenery of tallgrass prairie, a shimmering reflection of Wall Lake, and in mid-July, the buzzing sound of insects flapping their wings.

My name is Amanda Booher and I serve as the Communications Manager for Audubon Great Plains and I am a certified Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (MBSR) coach. To expand our outreach in South Dakota, I hosted a Mindful Birding experience at the Dewey C. Gevik Outdoor Learning Center. Mindful birding is the practice of observing birds with a heightened sense of awareness and presence, combining elements of mindfulness and birdwatching. The emphasis is on connecting with nature and taking notice through deep listening, layered viewing, and sensory engagement.

During each Mindful Birding experience, participants are invited to share their name and a nature moment to set the tone of the event. Nature moments don't have to be good, bad, big or small – it's a reminder that even the smallest bits of nature can be appreciated, whether it be a bird feather found in a parking lot or catching sight of a rare species in a nest, anything goes. Often sharing these nature moments evokes memories, emotions, and appreciation for our natural surroundings.

In this group, a woman shared that she recently lost her sister, and birding often brought them together even though they lived a distance apart. She would share sightings of common loons spotted on the lakes near her housing development, and her sister shared the sightings of cardinals frequenting her feeders, both a bit envious of each other's frequent visitor. The day of her sister's passing she was visited by cardinals, giving her a sense of hope and renewal, knowing her sister was at peace. By being vulnerable and sharing her story, a larger connection was developing in our group, and we began our journey of birding at a slow, intentional pace.

Walking the trails, keeping conversations at a minimum, and pausing if something would catch our eye – we were fully engulfed in the experience. A flock of little brown birds, possibly marsh wrens, were spooked and ventured to a location further up trail to skulk through the reeds. With mindful birding, identifying the species is not the main goal, instead, taking notice of their actions, what they look like – shape, size, color – and how they interact with their habitat is the goal.



The birding group from the event that took place in July.



One of the sharing activities that took place during the event.

At Audubon Great Plains, our mission is to protect birds and the places they need. Places like the Dewey C. Gevik Outdoor Learning Center is a prime example of such a haven, offering a pristine environment where birds of all shapes and sizes flourish. Whether nesting in the wetlands, foraging in the grasslands, or teaching their fledging's how to swim, birds find diverse habitats here that support their needs.

By fostering community connections and encouraging mindful engagement with nature, we inspire people to notice and appreciate these special places. Together, we can deepen our connection to the natural world and ensure the protection of critical habitats for generations to come.



Minnehaha Conservation District

2408 E. Benson Road
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Phone: 605-370-3480

Check out our website: <https://minnehahacd.org>

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