



2025 ANNUAL REPORT

Le Sueur County Soil & Water Conservation District





A Year In Summary

In 2025, the SWCD navigated several operational challenges while continuing to advance conservation efforts across Le Sueur County. Early in the year, a remodel of the Agriculture Service Center temporarily displaced staff, resulting in a space exchange between the SWCD and NRCS offices. Despite these changes, programs and services continued without interruption. Later in the year, during the 43-day federal government shut-down, the SWCD remained fully accessible and assisted customers in navigating concerns related to the temporary USDA closure and SWCD day to day operations.

The Lower Minnesota River East One Watershed One Plan was officially initiated, with project implementation beginning during the year. More than \$160,000 was invested in priority watershed projects. The SWCD also hosted a tour highlighting work completed through the Lake Washington Grant, showcasing several successful projects, including the Patterson Water Storage Project, which functioned effectively throughout the summer months.

Later in the summer, the SWCD was awarded nearly \$400,000 in Regional Conservation Planning Project funds from the Board of Water and Soil Resources (BWSR), in partnership with NRCS, to support soil health implementation. Through this effort, nearly 7,000 acres were enrolled in soil health practices for the fall 2025—representing a significant advancement for soil health in Le Sueur County.

After nearly two years of planning, the Minnesota River-Mankato One Watershed One Plan was submitted to BWSR for final approval, anticipated in early 2026. Upon approval, this plan will fulfill the final comprehensive watershed planning requirement for Le Sueur County as mandated by statute.

Lastly, the SWCD had its most successful year receiving nearly \$6 million dollars through grants and project funds for Soil Health, Wetlands, Water Storage, Conservation Delivery, Cost Share and RIM projects. Nearly 3-times the amount of any other year. What a great opportunity for the people of Le Sueur County.

In the 2025 calendar year, The SWCD installed **\$336,575** in structural projects, **\$98,859** in Easement Construction, **\$201,625** in non-structural practices such as cover crops and Strip-till/No-till and **\$99,386** in county drainage construction work through the SWCD Drainage Inspector.



SWCD Conservation Tour July 2026



SWCD Secures Nearly \$6 Million in Project Funds for 2025

SWCD Secures Record Funding for Conservation Projects in Le Sueur County

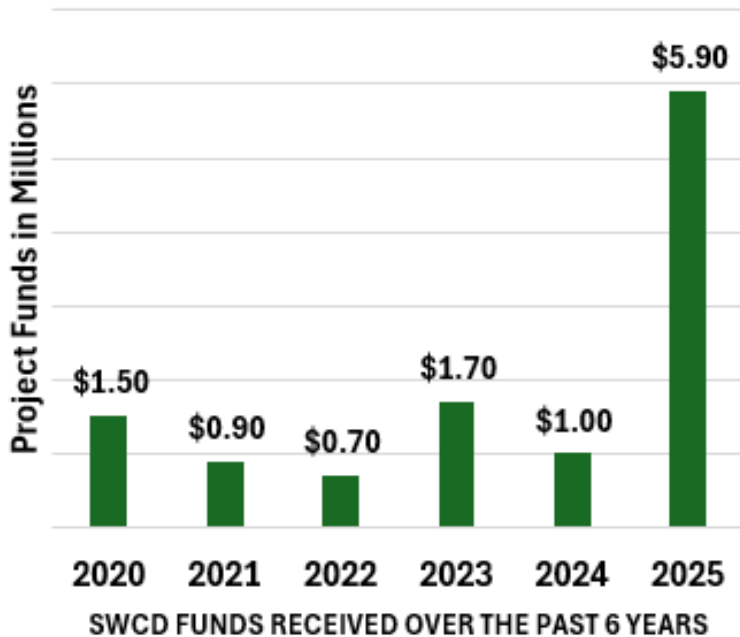
In 2025, the Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD) marked one of the most successful years in its history, bringing unprecedented conservation funding to Le Sueur County.

The SWCD was awarded eight grants from the Minnesota Board of Water and Soil Resources, totaling \$1,103,000. A significant portion of this funding—\$420,000—came from three Soil Health Grants, while an additional \$563,000 supported a major water storage project aimed at improving watershed resilience.

Beyond grant funding, the SWCD also had success through the Re-Invest In Minnesota (RIM) program. In 2025, the district secured 20 conservation easements valued at \$4,790,000, representing nearly three and a half times the funding received in any of the previous six years.

Together, these achievements underscore a landmark year for conservation investment in Le Sueur County, significantly expanding the district’s capacity to support soil health, water quality, and long-term environmental stewardship.

SWCD SECURES NEARLY \$6 MILLION IN PROJECT FUNDS IN 2025



2025 SWCD PROJECT FUNDS IN MILLIONS





SWCD Outstanding Conservationist

Outstanding Conservationist– Jerry Beckel and Jim Beckel

The Le Sueur County SWCD Board of Supervisors chose brothers Jerry and Jim Beckel of rural Le Sueur County as the 2025 Outstanding Conservationists of the Year. The Beckel farm is located on the southeast side of Lake Washington and has been in the family since 1946. The brothers have been farming together for the past 55 years. When they first started farming together, Jerry had a dairy operation, and Jim had a farrow to finish hog operation.

Over the years, they have utilized many conservation practices on their land to improve the productivity and management of their soil. Structural practices, like grade stabilization structures and water and sediment control basins were constructed to help control erosion on the land. When the Beckel's had more livestock, a diverse cropping rotation of oats, alfalfa, corn and soybeans were planted. All of these practices combined help increase soil health and organic matter while reducing nutrient leaching. Currently, they grow corn, soybeans and hay and have a small beef herd.

Recently, a 24.8-acre water storage project was completed on their land. This project has the potential to reduce 274 pounds per year of total phosphorous, 8,224 pounds per year of total nitrogen and 44.9 tons of total suspended solids. The results of this project will improve water quality in the immediate 900-acre watershed and reduce nutrient runoff into Lake Washington.



Above photo from Left to Right: Jerry Beckel, Jim Beckel and Joe Jirik (Le Sueur County SWCD District Technician)

Below photo: a snapshot of the water storage project completed on the Beckel Family property in Washington Township.





Education & Outreach

SWCD Soil Health Workshop



In February, the SWCD hosted a soil health workshop in Le Center. Over 60 people attended the workshop that showcased local farmers and speakers. A variety of soil health practices were discussed, such as cover crops, no-till, strip-till, biologicals, different application methods and equipment modifications. To host this workshop we partnered with the Minnesota Office of Soil Health (MOSH), the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), and the Scott Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD).



Top Left: Justin Goettl speaking at the event. Middle Left: Joe Jirik speaking on SWCD programs. Bottom Left: David Voigt speaking on his experiences with soil health. Bottom Right: event flyer for the soil health workshop



Soil Health Workshop

FEBRUARY 26, 2025

10 AM - 2:30 PM

LE CENTER AMERICAN LEGION
97 S Park Ave Le Center, MN 56057



Join us for a workshop that will cover both the basics of soil health and advanced strategies to ensure successful outcomes, while incorporating soil health practices. If you are interested in starting your soil health journey or are already on the path, this workshop will provide valuable information for your operation. Cost share opportunities for Le Sueur County and surrounding watersheds will also be discussed, as new funding sources have become available!

SPEAKERS

TRAVIS & TERRY HAMILTON

Based out of southeastern Minnesota, Midwest Ag Air has flown on and managed their fair share of cover crops, as both a business and a farming operation. They will share their knowledge and experience with making in-season decisions to manage cover crops and adjustments that can be useful when incorporating soil health practices.

DAVID VOIGT

From Le Center, David recently started his journey into soil health. He will be sharing information on how he gathered data, collaborated with soil health mentors/SWCD, and how he accomplished establishing his first cover crop planting in the fall of 2024.

JEFF SCHULTZ

Jeff Schultz is an instructor with the Farm Business Management Program at South Central College in Faribault. He will share insights on the Return-on-Investment (ROI) on soil health and other farming practices.

JUSTIN & ROBERT GOETTLE

Justin and Robert have been experimenting with biologicals for over five years in Le Sueur county. They will discuss local data from their on-the-farm trials and explain the basics of biologicals.



RSVP deadline February 20th.

Scan the QR code or call
(507) 419-0365 to register





Education & Outreach

SWCD Legislative Days

In March of 2025, the SWCD participated in the Minnesota Association of Conservation Districts Legislative Days. The focus of the event was to advocate that SWCD Aid payments stay at their current rate, rather than decrease after 2025. Staff Members met with local legislators:

- Representative Terry Steir
- Senator Rich Draheim
- Senator Nick Frenz
- Senator John Jasinski
- Representative Erica Schwartz



Top left: District Manager, Michael Schultz, in front of the Minnesota Capitol Building. Top Right: Michael Schultz, on the left, standing with Representative Terry Steir. Bottom: Michael Schultz, on the right, standing next to Representative Erica Schwartz.





Education & Outreach

Future of Southern Minnesota Lakes Conference

District Manager, Michael Schultz, was a speaker at the third annual Future of Southern Minnesota Lakes Conference in March. He spoke on the SWCD's success with the Lake Washington Nutrient Reductions Project. This project implemented Best Management Practices (BMP's) strategically throughout the watershed to help improve the overall water quality in Lake Washington.

Later in the evening, Schultz was a round table facilitator where he met with individuals to ask questions, share experiences, and brainstorm solutions to common lake management challenges. Overall, this conference shared a lot of information on lakes, along with various experiences between lakeshore owners, lake associations, and other organizations.



Bottom left: Holly Bushman presenting on the Lower Minnesota River East One Watershed, One Plant to attendees.



Top Right: Michael Schultz presenting on the success of the Lake Washington Nutrient Reductions Project that was recently completed



Education & Outreach

MASWCD Leadership Program

The 2024-2025 MASWCD Leadership Program brought together 21 participants from across the state to expand their leadership capacity for conservation work in Minnesota. The group was comprised of local SWCD staff and board members, as well as staff from the Natural Resources Conservation Service. Joe Jirik, the District Technician for the Le Sueur County SWCD, was part of this graduating class.

The group met for seven in-depth multi-day sessions focused on leadership topics including: building personal leadership skills, developing shared vision, practicing ethical leadership, strengthening team leadership, growing emotional intelligence, and communicating to make a difference.

This was the 15th class to complete the statewide leadership program, and these graduates join more than 337 staff and elected supervisors from county, state, and federal agencies working in conservation who have also completed it. The content is designed and delivered by staff of the University of Minnesota Extension in partnership with the president of Leadership Tools consulting firm. For further information about the MASWCD Leadership Program, contact the Minnesota Association of Soil and Water Conservation Districts at 651-690-9028 or visit the MASWCD website at www.maswcd.org.



Group Photo of all of the Graduates from the MASWCD Leadership Program



Education & Outreach

SWCD Summer Conservation Tour



In the middle of July, the SWCD held a summer conservation tour that showcased completed Clean Water Fund and water storage Conservation Projects around Lake Washington and the German-Jefferson Chain of Lakes. It was an opportunity to learn about what we do as a Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD) and why state and local funding is important to the community and SWCD. During the tour, we stopped by five sites that had multiple conservation practices completed on their land.

The conservation practices that were established on these sites include:

- Water and Sediment Control Basins (WASCOB)
- Water Storage
- Grade Stabilization Structures
- Wetland Restoration
- Conservation Reserve Program (CRP)
- Reinvest In Minnesota (RIM) Wetlands Easement



Top Left: group picture of some attendees in front of the tour bus overlooking the CRP/RIM property. Middle Left: Clean Water Land and Legacy Amendment sign in front of a funded wetland restoration. Bottom Left: wetland in the low spot of a field where conservation practices were installed. Bottom Right: native grass establishment showcased during the bus tour.





Education & Outreach

We Are Water Exhibit — Ney Nature Center

The Ney Nature Center, located near Henderson, was a host location for the “We Are Water” traveling exhibit from August 14th—October 6th. The traveling exhibit “examines water issues statewide and in local communities through personal stories, histories, and scientific information. It strengthens Minnesotans’ relationships with water, exposes visitors to new perspectives, and increases participation in water stewardship activities” (We Are Water MN).

Attendees were able to connect with water by learning about the water cycle, private well water, common contaminants, ways to improve our lakes and rivers, and gain inspiration to move forward to protect our natural water sources. Attendees could also listen to stories from individuals in the watershed and learn about how they are connected to water resources in the region. Topics ranged from what people can do in cities and in rural areas where agriculture might be more prevalent.

“We Are Water” is funded from the Clean Water Land and Legacy Amendment, Minnesota Pollution Control Agency, MN Board of Water and Soil Resources, Minnesota Department of Health, Minnesota Department of Natural Resources, Minnesota Department of Agriculture, Minnesota Historical Society and the University of Minnesota Extension. The Minnesota Humanities Center runs the We Are Water Programs.

Bottom Left: the water cycle. Top Right: We Are Water sign out front of the main building. Middle Right: staff listening to water stories. Bottom Right: sign at the exhibit






Education & Outreach


Le Sueur County & SWCD Water Testing Clinic

The Le Sueur SWCD partnered with Le Sueur County to provide two water testing clinics. One clinic was held in May and the other in November. The water samples were tested for Arsenic, Lead and Coliform Bacteria. A total of 15 homeowners attended the clinics.

Le Sueur County Water Testing Clinic

Wednesday, October 30 2024





Why Should I Test My Water?

Le Sueur County's drinking water is predominantly groundwater dependent (public or private wells). Additionally, aquifers that are present in Le Sueur County, supply drinking water to the metro area.

It is recommended to test your drinking water at least once per year. It is important to test your water in order to monitor potential contaminants that could be a risk to your health.

Sources of Pollutants & Contaminants In Drinking Water:

- Septic systems
- Fertilizers
- Pesticides
- Animals/Feedlots
- Landfills
- Mining activities
- Hazardous materials-paints, oils, cleaners, detergents, chemicals, etc.
- Abandoned or poorly constructed wells
- Naturally occurring
- Stormwater

Water Testing Clinic

Pollutants that will be offered include:

- Nitrates
- Coliform Bacteria
- Lead
- Arsenic

Each Test is \$17.00

To access a water testing order form, please contact the Environmental Services Department or visit the following website: <https://www.co.le-sueur.mn.us/684/Water-Testing>.

The water testing order form **must** be submitted prior to receiving your water testing kit. Please submit the form to our department address or email address.

- **Address:** 88 South Park Ave, Le Center, MN 56057.
- **Email:** environmentalservices@co.le-sueur.mn.us

Drop Off Day for kits will be on **Wednesday, October 30th** from **9:00am-5:30pm**. Any kits dropped off after 5:30pm will not be accepted.

- **Drop off location:** 100 W Minnesota Ave, Le Center, MN 56057.

Please note that the Coliform Bacteria samples need to be submitted to the lab within 24 hours to get an accurate test result. Additionally, Lead Samples should be taken right away on Wednesday morning before any water is ran (water in pipes should sit for at least 6 hours).

Samples should not be taken until Wednesday, October 30th, at 8:00am.

Questions?

Holly Bushman
Phone: 507-357-8540
Email: holly.bushman@lesueurcounty.gov





Education & Outreach

Upper Cannon River Watershed Flood Risk Reduction Study

The Upper Cannon River Flood Study is a multi-phase effort to better understand flooding dynamics within the Upper Cannon River Watershed and to identify effective, long-term flood mitigation strategies that also support water quality and landscape storage.

Phase 1: Hydrology and Hydraulics Study — Completed

Phase 1 of the Upper Cannon River Flood Study is complete. This phase focused on the development of the Upper Cannon River Hydrology and Hydraulics Study, which provides a comprehensive analysis of existing hydrologic and hydraulic conditions throughout the watershed.

The completed report documents current watershed behavior, flood risks, and baseline conditions and is now available for review. This work establishes the technical foundation for evaluating flood mitigation alternatives in Phase 2.

Phase 2: Flood Mitigation Alternatives Analysis — In Progress

Phase 2 of the Flood Study is well underway and is focused on assessing flood mitigation alternatives to determine which projects and practices provide the greatest benefit for flood reduction, water retention, and water quality improvement.

Bolton & Menk is approximately 30% complete with modeling efforts. Nearly 40 different alternatives are being evaluated across a range of practice types and locations, including: Bridge replacements, Channel improvements, Dam modifications, Diversions, Dredging, Levees and floodwalls, Lake outlet modifications, Upland storage, Wetland restorations, and Landscape modifications.

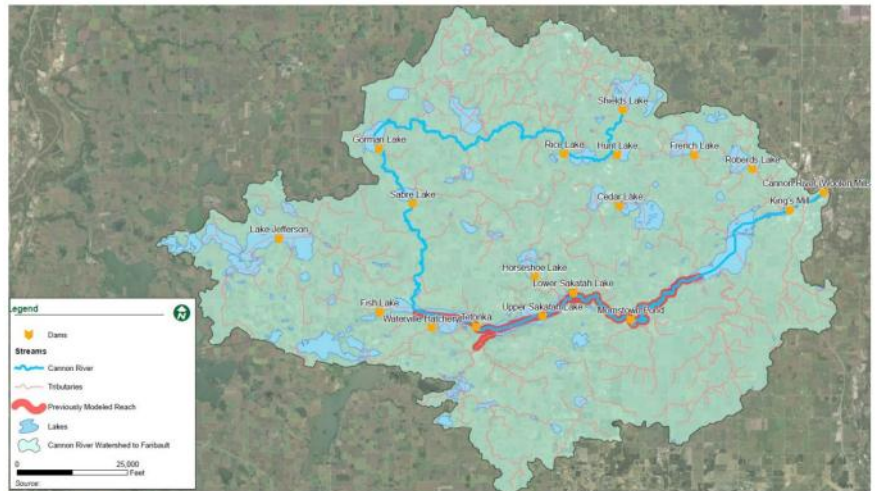


Figure 3. Upper Cannon River Watershed Flood Study Area
Photo Credit: Bolton & Menk

Preliminary Engineering Report sites funded by the Cannon River Watershed Joint Powers Organization (CRWJPO) are included within these modeling scenarios.

Once modeling is complete, results will be synthesized to identify priority sub watersheds where targeted investments will have the greatest impact on flood reduction and landscape storage. Bolton & Menk is concurrently developing the final report. Key components of the report will include:

- Recommended short-term and long-term flood mitigation strategies
- Local and state policy recommendations
- Detailed appendices with fact sheets for each alternative evaluated

Project Timeline

Spring 2026: Rough Draft of the Upper Cannon River Flood Study available

Summer 2026: Final Draft of the Upper Cannon River Flood Study available

Summer–Fall 2026: Community engagement and project development phases

FEMA Grant and Budget Update

Le Sueur County serves as the grantee for FEMA funding supporting the Flood Study.

Total anticipated project cost: **\$399,862.00**

Federal grant funding: \$299,896.50

Required local match: \$99,965.50

Article From Le Sueur County Environmental Services Newsletter



SWCD Programs

One Watershed One Plan, Lower Minnesota River East (LoMRE)

This following summarizes current implementation activities, feasibility studies, and monitoring efforts funded through LoMRE WBIF and partner programs.

IMPLEMENTATION ACTIVITIES & PROJECT STATUS

WBIF Projects

- 2 Grassed Waterways
- 2 WASCObS
- 1 Wetland Restoration
- 1 Well Sealing (completed)

CRP Incentive Grant

- \$19,500 allocated for incentives
- 23 applicants covering approximately 100 acres
- Additional enrollments anticipated
- Funding remains available next year but will not be renewed

Smart Salting Campaign

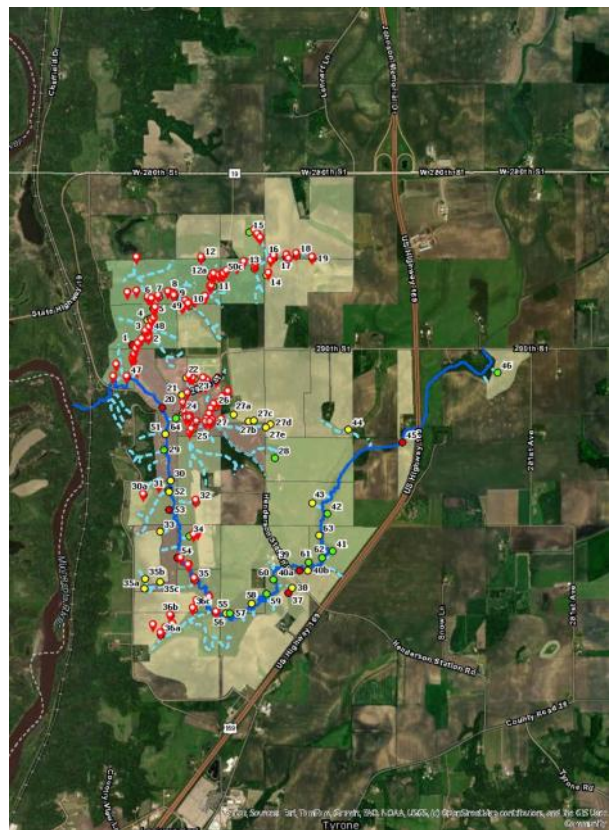
- A Smart Salting Certification Workshop is being planned in coordination with Minnesota Pollution Control Agency

Target audience: highway and road staff

Ongoing Studies & Special Projects

Unnamed Creek 761 Erosion Study

- Field investigations are ongoing
- Several sites require verification
- Additional site visits may be needed in spring, depending on winter conditions



Above: an overview look at the watershed for the Unnamed Creek 761 Erosion Study being completed.



SWCD Programs

One Watershed One Plan, Lower Minnesota River East (LoMRE)

Industrial Well Sealing Project

Original plan to seal a “sister well” near the Minnesota River was modified due to complexity and cost. An alternative well was located beneath utility infrastructure in the City of Le Sueur. The project is awaiting final bids and confirmation regarding landowner agreement.

Monitoring & Outreach

October Water Testing Clinic

- Eight participants tested private wells for multiple contaminants

Results included:

- 1 elevated nitrate result (just below drinking water standard)
- 1 arsenic result above standard and 3 elevated results
- 1 lead result above standard and 1 elevated result
- Presence of bacteria in 1 sample
- 4 elevated manganese results

Stream & Watershed Projects

- Raven Creek Stream Stabilization is ongoing; Scott WMO is exploring full project funding
- A potential alternative project is being discussed with PLSLWD
- Feasibility studies for Ravine Stabilization and Le Sueur Creek Stream Restoration have been completed, with expenditures encumbered



ISG Architecture • Engineering • Environmental • Planning | 656.255.1100

LE SUEUR CREEK
Le Sueur, MN | 2025-08-27 | Project #32728

Above: after picture of what the stream could look like after the dam removal and restoration.

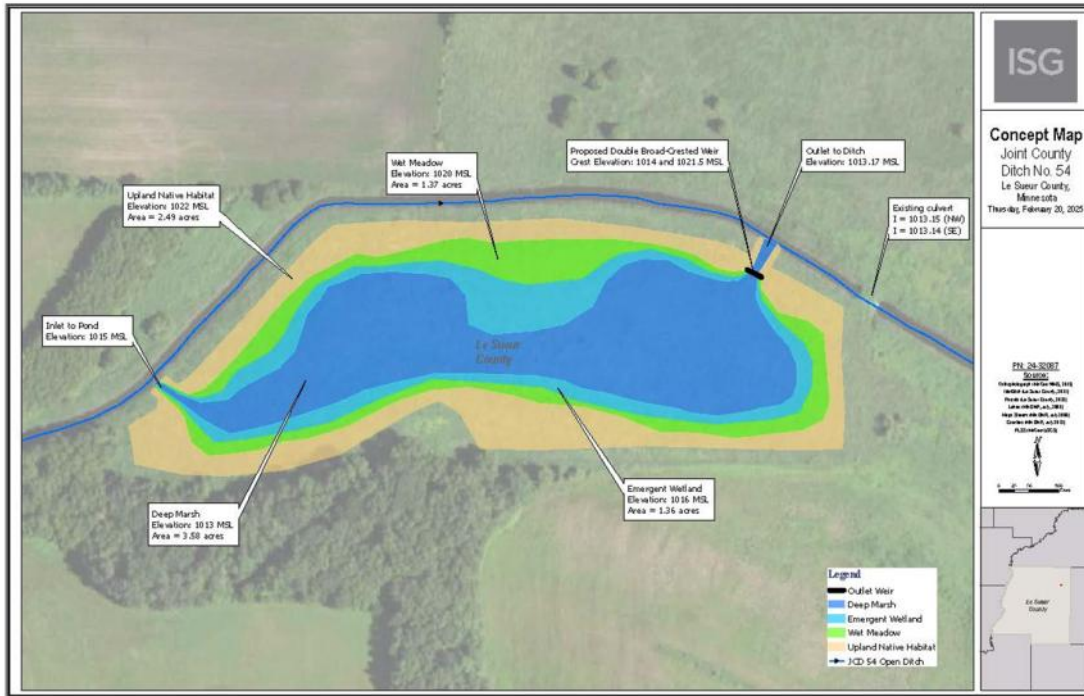


SWCD Programs

One Watershed One Plan, Lower Minnesota River East (LoMRE)

City of Montgomery Water Storage Feasibility Study

- Partnership with the City of Montgomery and Rice County
- Project area: Joint County Ditch 54 subwatershed
- Proposed creation of 8.79 acres of wetland storage within a city park and adjacent lands
- Kickoff meeting was held on November 20th
- Study includes peak flow analysis, pollutant reduction estimates, and cost projections



Above: Concept map for the city of Montgomery water storage feasibility study that is in the JD 54 subwatershed.

One Watershed One Plan, Minnesota River—Mankato

In 2025, Le Sueur SWCD worked towards completing the last comprehensive watershed plan for Le Sueur County, which is the Minnesota River - Mankato. Throughout the year partners worked on finalizing the plan and addressing comments. The plan has been sent to BWSR for approval in early 2026.





SWCD Programs

Water Sampling Middle Minnesota River Watershed



Trevor Rudenick observing Secchi depth on Trib. To Judicial Ditch 2



Collecting water chemistry data on Lake Emily



Blue Green Algae Clear Lake



Shanaska Creek Moderate Flow

In partnership with Le Sueur County, the SWCD sampled one lake and one stream in the Middle MN River Watershed along with 1 lake and 3 streams in the Lower MN River Watershed from May to September of 2025. The water bodies that were sampled include Lake Emily, Shanaska Creek (Middle MN), Clear Lake, Forest Prairie Creek, Le Sueur Creek, and Tributary of Judicial Ditch 2. The parameters sampled for the lakes included total phosphorus, chlorophyll, hardness, chloride, water clarity and temperature. The parameters for the stream sampled include total suspended solids, total phosphorus, chloride, hardness, e. coli, water clarity, specific conductance, temperature, pH and dissolved oxygen. This data was sent to the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency (MPCA) to help them determine the overall health of the lakes and streams in the watersheds. From this data, the MPCA can identify if the lakes and streams are in need of restoration or protection strategies.



SWCD Programs

Wetland Conservation Act

Le Sueur SWCD is the Local Government Unit (LGU) that oversees the Wetland Conservation Act (WCA) on behalf of Le Sueur County. The SWCD addressed several wetland inquiries in 2025.

- 71 landowners consulted
- 10 WCA applications were approved
- 24 potential WCA Violations were investigated
- 1 Wildlife Pond Request



Photo taken from a site the LGU reviewed for potential wetland impacts

Minnesota Agriculture Water Quality Certification Program

The Minnesota Agricultural Water Quality Certification Program (MAWQCP) certifies producers for managing their land in a way that protects water quality.

The Le Sueur County SWCD is the producer's first point of contact when applying for the program. The SWCD assists with the application process, in which compliance is necessary for all existing applicable state water protection rules and regulations. Producers must have, if applicable, a feedlot permit, be in compliance with the MN WCA, a non-violating septic system, be in compliance with pesticide and fertilizer application rates and follow shoreland and riparian protection rules.



Producers need to complete a Certification of Identity form giving permission to the SWCD to request records from the Farm Service Agency for their farming operation. Records are then sent to the MN Department of Ag representative for further evaluation. Once the application and worksheets are complete, producers receive a payment of \$100. After final certification and authorization, a final payment of \$200 is given.

Certified producers receive regulatory certainty. They are deemed to be in compliance with any new water quality rule or law during the period of certification which is 10 years. They may use their status to promote their farm and/or business as a steward of water quality and will receive priority when applying for financial technical assistance on projects that promote water quality.

The Le Sueur County SWCD works to promote this program by sending out information encouraging producers to sign up. Letters were sent out, posters are on display in the lobby and information is available on the SWCD Facebook page or www.lesueurswcd.gov. Currently there are 23 producers in Le Sueur County certified through the MAWQCP.



SWCD Programs



Cost Share Program — Structural Projects

SWCD staff had consistent work throughout 2025 with nine construction projects dispersing **\$24,755.00** of SWCD cost share funds and **\$222,022.67** of One Watershed, One Plan Implementation funds. The following structural conservation projects were completed:

- 11 Water and Sediment Control Basins
- 3 Grade Stabilization Structure
- 1 Grassed Waterway

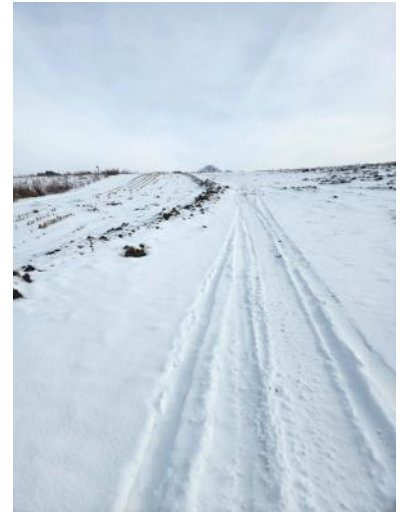




SWCD Programs



Cost Share Program — Structural Projects Pictures





SWCD Programs



Soil Health

2025 Cover Crops

Total Acres Seeded 3,885.38

- Multiple funding pools were used to fund these acres.
- Producers aerially applied cover crops prior to harvest with a plane or a drone.
- Post harvest, producers either drilled or broadcasted with incorporation.

2025 Strip-till/No Till

4,521.32 acres of strip-till and/or no-till

- Multiple funding pools were used to help fund these acres.



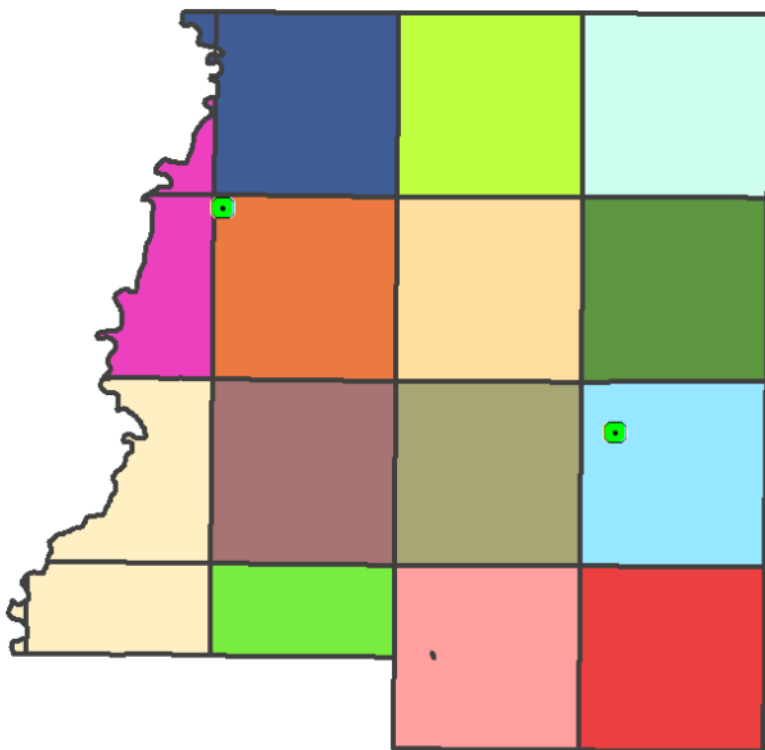


SWCD Programs



RIM Riparian

RIM Riparian is a conservation easement program that targets riparian lands directly adjacent to public waters that are actively farmed. When landowners enroll in the RIM program, they enter into an agreement with the State of Minnesota to put a perpetual conservation easement on their land. The landowners are required to maintain the conservation practices in place, while not farming or building within the conservation easement boundary. In 2025, the SWCD recorded 3 RIM Riparian easements which totaled 154.5 acres that will be permanently protected.



**37.1ac. Easement
Kilkenney Township**



**41.4 ac. Easement
Sharon Township**



**76.0 ac. Easement
Sand Creek Township,
Scott County**



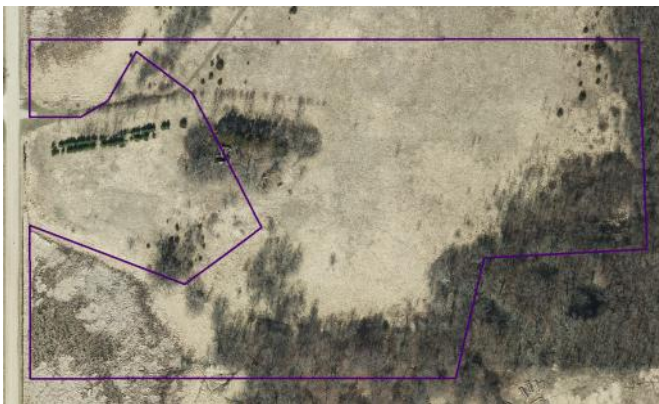
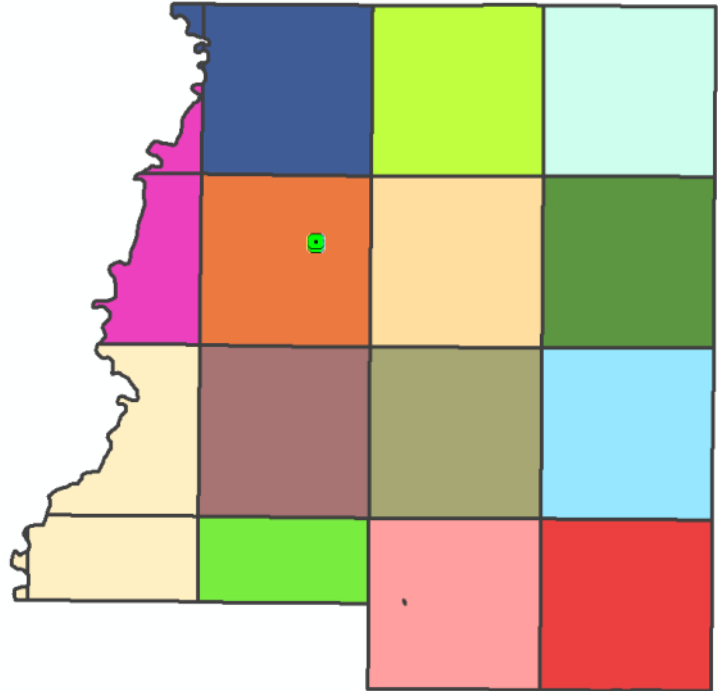
SWCD Programs



RIM 1W1P

RIM 1W1P is a conservation easement program that targets habitat priority areas. When landowners enroll in the RIM program, they enter into an agreement with the State of Minnesota to put a perpetual conservation easement on their land. The landowners are required to maintain the conservation practices in place, while not farming or building within the conservation easement boundary.

In 2025, the SWCD rerecorded 1 RIM 1W1P totaling 16.7 acres and helped 1 landowner get their applications accepted into the RIM Riparian program, which totals 11.0 acres that will be permanently protected.



**11 ac. Easement
Sharon Township**



**16.7 ac. Easement
Sharon Township**



SWCD Programs

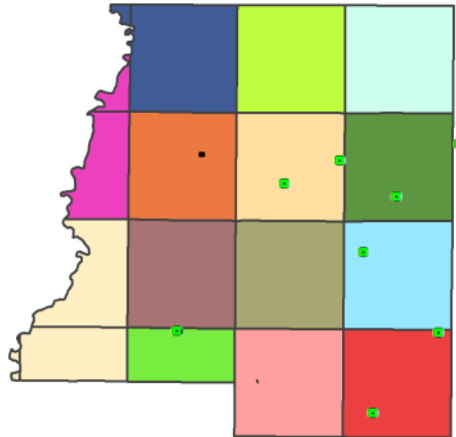


RIM Wetlands

RIM Wetlands is a conservation easement program that targets drained wetlands to be restored on both crop and non-cropland. When landowners enroll in the RIM program they enter into an agreement with the State of Minnesota to put a perpetual conservation easement on their land. The landowners are required to maintain the conservation practices in place, while not farming or building within the conservation easement boundary. In 2025, the SWCD recorded eight RIM Wetlands easements totaling 530.6 acres. Additionally the SWCD helped 5 landowners get applications accepted totaling 276.3 acres that will be recorded in 2026.



**58.6 ac. Easement
Montgomery Township**



**61.6 ac. Easement
Waterville Township**



**68.8 ac. Easement
Erin Township**



**34.2 ac. Easement
Montgomery Township**



**37.1 ac. Easement
Washington Township**

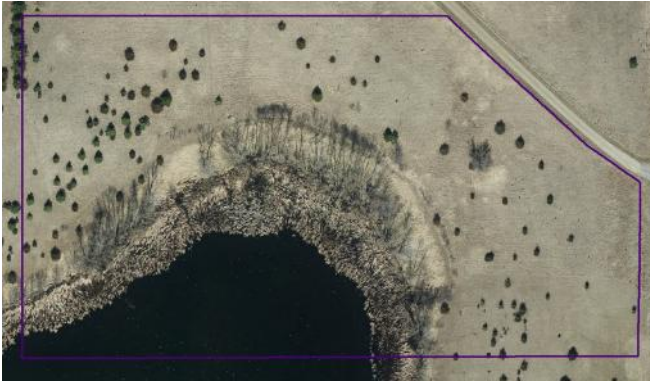


**78.8 ac. Easement
Lexington Township**



**50.5 ac. Easement
Waterville Township**

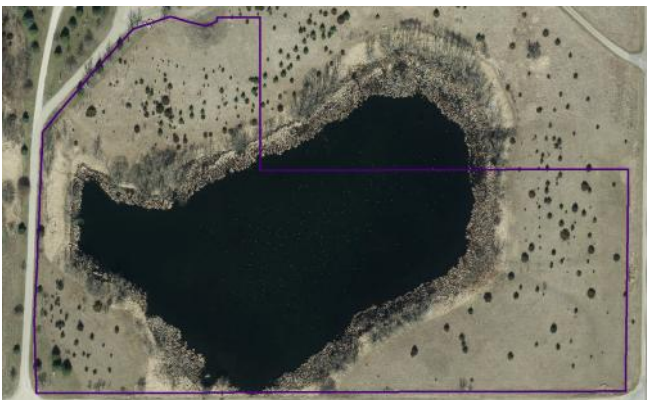
RIM Wetlands — Projects in Progress



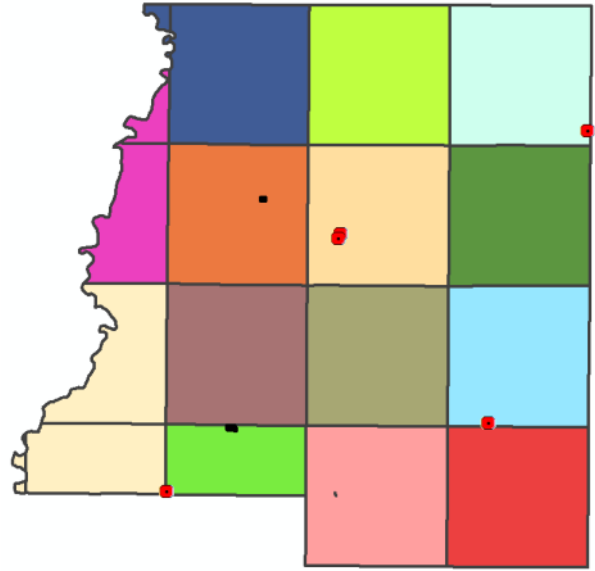
6.3 ac. Easement
Lexington Township



62.9 ac. Easement
Kilkenny Township



14.5 ac. Easement
Lexington Township



71.2 ac. Easement
Washington Township



121.4 ac. Easement
Lanesburgh Township



SWCD Programs



Walk-In Access

Walk-In Access (WIA) is a voluntary program that compensates landowners to allow public access for hunting on their land from September 1st through May 31st. With the number of hunters diminishing in the past decades, largely due to the lack of quality hunting land, the WIA program is more important than ever. A decrease in hunters means less support for wildlife and habitat; which in turn will have a negative effect on local wildlife populations. The WIA program will help sustain future generations of hunters while creating more local hunting opportunities. Le Sueur County currently has two parcels enrolled in the Walk-In Access program. Le Sueur County SWCD works with landowners to enroll land into the program.



Yellow: Locations of WIA sites in Le Sueur County



69.05 acres located in Kilkeny Township



103.04 acres located in Cleveland Township



SWCD Programs

SWCD Drill Programs

The SWCD has two seeders available for rent, which include a Dew Drop Seeder and a Truax No-Till Drill. The Dew Drop seeder is used for seeding small areas and can easily be used with an ATV, UTV or small tractor. It has an electric lift so no hydraulics are necessary to operate the seeder. Rent is \$60 per day. In 2025, the dew drop seeder was used once for a total of three acres.

The Truax No-Till Drill is used for planting larger areas. It can be used to plant cover crops, small grains and native seed mixes. The drill has a seeding width of eight feet. The drill is available to rent for a minimum charge of \$120, or \$12 per acre. The rental charge includes delivery to your farm, calibration/set up and pickup of the drill when the seeding is completed. In 2025, 16 producers utilized the drill, totaling 185 acres of land in Le Sueur County.



Above: Le Sueur SWCD using the Dew Drop Seeder to seed buffers. Below that is a photo of the inside of the small seed box on the Dew Drop Seeder.



Left: Le Sueur County producer seeding Native Grasses with the Truax Drill .



SWCD Programs

Tree Program

In 2025, 8,235 new trees and shrubs were planted in Le Sueur County as a result of the annual SWCD tree program. A variety of hardwoods, potted evergreens and shrubs were available. Species such as oaks, maples, aspen and birch to shrubs like lilac, dogwood and plum were all available for purchase.

The SWCD District Technician assisted landowners with planning and designing new windbreaks on their properties and worked with Le Sueur County residents on replacement varieties favorable for old shelterbelts.



SWCD District Technician leaving with the tree planter and a load of trees for a Le Sueur County resident.

Plant Kits

In 2025, the Le Sueur County SWCD once again offered native plant kits for sale. The kits consisted of 36 individual plugs and had six different species. We also offered native seed mixes for the first time. The SWCD offered a variety of kits and seed mixes to plant in different soil conditions ranging from wet to dry and sun to shade. 24 native plant kits and 1 native seed mix were sold in 2025.



Native plugs planted in an urban pollinator plot.

Food Plots

In partnership with the Le Sueur County Pheasants Forever Chapter, the SWCD gave out 12 acres worth of food plot corn to nine landowners. The Le Sueur SWCD has been in partnership with the local Pheasants Forever Chapter since the 1990s.



Le Sueur County Food Plot In September with seed from Le Sueur County Pheasants Forever.



County Ditches — Ditch Inspector

Drainage Ditches

As the Drainage Ditch Inspector, I oversaw 18 projects and repairs along our county ditches, while the Drainage and Environmental Specialist oversaw approximately 32 projects and repairs. Seven ditch systems had their Redetermination of Benefits finalized through the Drainage Ditch Authority. These systems included county ditch 9, 36, 40, 45, 51, 59 and 68. These redeterminations updated the property benefits and damage assessments when maintenance and repair costs get distributed among property owners in the ditch watershed.

During the spring and summer months, drainage ditch systems had their banks mowed and sprayed. 28 systems were mowed and 10 systems were sprayed during that time period. The following county ditch systems were mowed: 6, 16, 19, 21, 22—spur B, 23, 26, 28, 29, 31, 40, 41, 42, 43, 44, 45, 46, 48, 49, 53, 56, 62, 69 and 70. The following joint ditch systems were mowed: 1, 4, 18 and 54. For spraying, several landowners opted out of having this service completed or the system was in good condition and didn't need to be sprayed. The following systems were sprayed: county ditch 22—spur B, 28, 41, 44, 49, 56, 62 and 69. Joint ditches 1 and 54 were also sprayed.



Top Left: outlet structure on CD 15.



Top Right: Beaver dam on CD 44 before it was removed.



Bottom Left: after photo of a ditch cleanout on CD 34



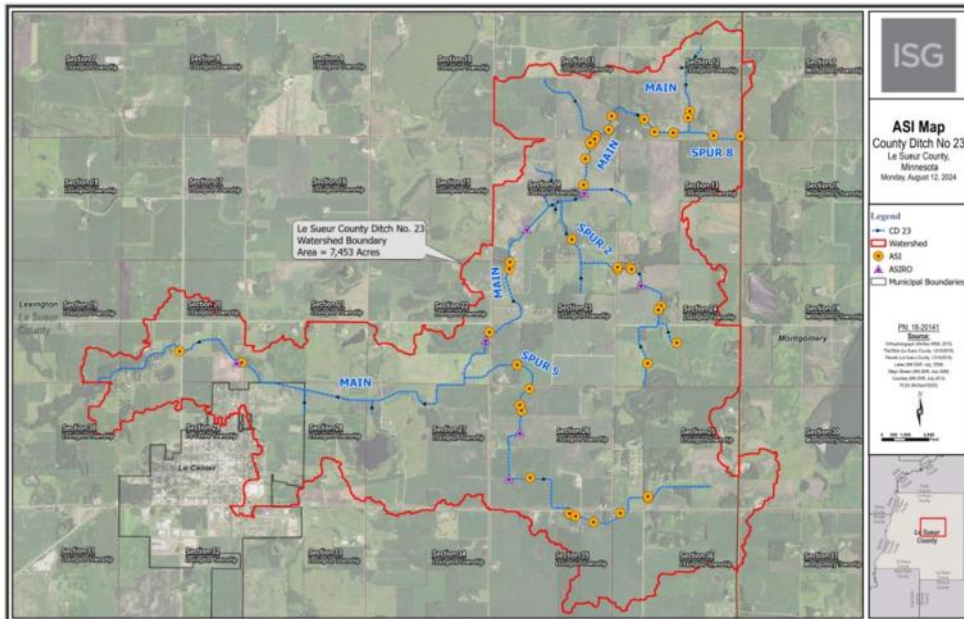
Bottom Right: Beaver dams located on CD 64 prior to being removed.



County Ditch Projects & Repairs

County Ditch 23 — Alternative Side Inlet (AIS) Project

The Alternative Side Inlet (AIS) project was completed in 2025 on county ditch 23. This project was initiated to implement Best Management Practices (BMP’s) on the county drainage systems. BMP’s, such as alternative side inlets, help manage field runoff, reduce erosion, stabilize ditch banks and, eventually, reduce the need for reoccurring ditch cleanouts. These alternative side inlets replaced a lot of the traditional side inlets, which often lead to more sedimentation in ditches. This project was contracted for a total of \$125, 613. Approximately \$100,000 in grants will help cover the total for this project, reducing the amount being encumbered by the ditch system.



Left: locations of the ASI’s in County Ditch 23’s watershed. Top Right: ASI structure. Bottom Left: ASI Structure.

County Ditch 23 — Repairs

County Ditch 23 had some repairs completed in 2025. Trees were removed, a culvert was replaced, the ditch was cleaned out and some bank sloughs were repaired and reinforced for stability. These repairs were completed due to landowner concerns and the county drainage authorities’ need to maintain the ditch.

Left: reinforced bank with rip rap rock to help reduce bank sloughing and erosion issues. Right: Completed culvert replacement with reinforced ditch banks.





County Ditch Projects & Repairs

County Ditch 62

In the months of April and August, repairs occurred in two different sections of Lanesburgh Township on county ditch 62. In section 22, landowners brought up some tile drainage issues. After investigation, it was determined that a portion of tile had collapsed and another portion was blocked due to tree root growth. Further down the tile line, there was another issue that arose due to erosion occurring near a road and residential dwelling. The tile was repaired. In section 10, bank sloughing occurred near two separate railroad crossings. These issues were address and fixed accordingly.



End of the repaired tile system.



Tile blowout that was located on the system.

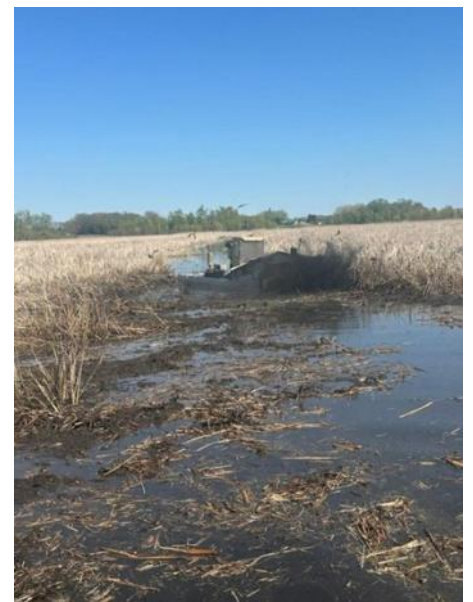


Bank repair near one of the railroad crossings.

County Ditch 4

On CD 4, the process of getting the vegetation moved out of the ditch channel through Harrison Slough was completed in May. The vegetation was causing obstructions, which was impacting the efficiency of the system.

Vegetation was removed with a cookie cutter, which is a mechanical control method to deal with aquatic vegetation. The cookie cutter itself is a small barge designed to shred aquatic vegetation and to cut openings through emergent wetland plants. The vegetation was harvested and removed from the waterbody to prevent future issues



The cookie cutter in action removing vegetation on CD 4.



Minnesota Buffer Law Compliance



State Buffer Law & Compliance

In 2015, Minnesota established a statewide Buffer Law that requires a 50 foot buffer of perennial vegetation on Public Waters (DNR lakes and streams) and a 16.5 foot perennial vegetation buffer on public county ditches. These buffers help filter out phosphorus, nitrogen and sediment. The deadline for implementation of buffers for public waters was on November 1, 2017, while the deadline for public county ditches was November 1, 2018.

In 2025, the Le Sueur County SWCD completed field checks, measured buffers, staked out non-compliant parcels and sent letters to non-compliant landowners in an effort to obtain to 100% compliance. The SWCD will monitor the public water and county ditch buffers at least once every three years. Le Sueur County is currently at 99% compliance on public waters and at 97% compliance on County Ditches.



Established Ditch Buffer in Le Sueur County



SWCD Office

Le Sueur SWCD Supervisors



Greg Entinger (District 1)



Earle Traxler (District 2)



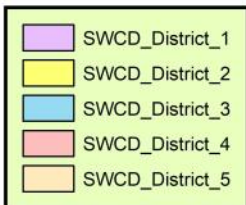
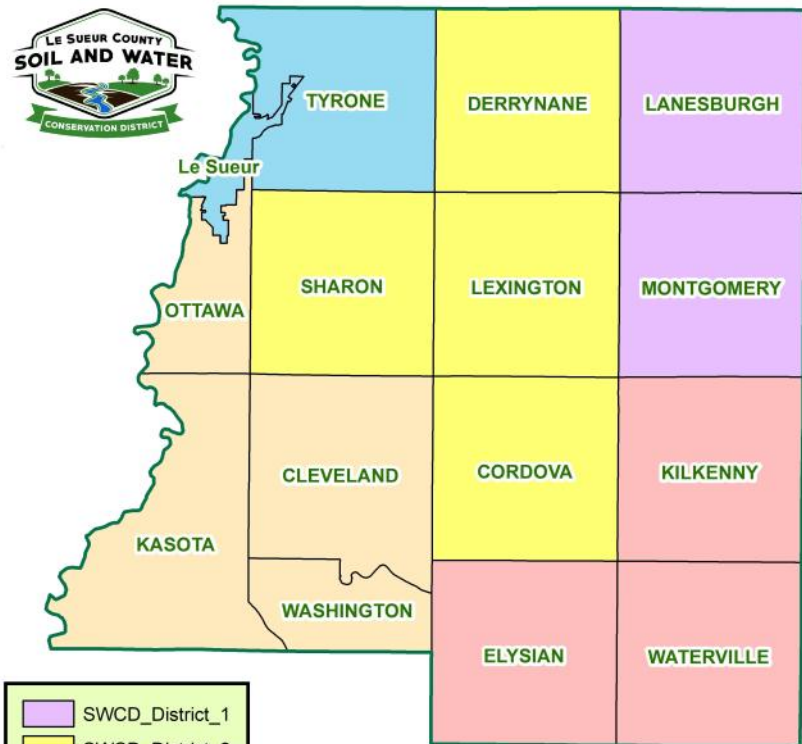
Pete Thelemann (District 3)



Ken Mader (District 4)



Jim Struck (District 5)



Le Sueur SWCD Supervisor's Districts



SWCD Office

Le Sueur County SWCD Staff



*Michael Schultz,
District Manager*



*Sue Prchal,
Program Specialist*



*Joe Jirik,
District Technician*



*Karl Schmidtke,
Resource Technician*



*Kourtney Spitzack,
Outreach Specialist*



*Nik Kadel,
Ditch Specialist*

Le Sueur Natural Resource Conservation Service Staff



*Kim Scheffler,
Soil Conservation Technician*



*Colin Williams,
Civil Engineering Technician*



*Jessica Beske,
District Conservationist*