



Le Sueur County Soil and Water Conservation District 2024 Annual Report

January 1 - December 31, 2024



Patterson Water Storage Project after construction was completed in 2024

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Le Center, Minnesota 55057
(507)419-0365
www.lesueurswcd.gov



A Year In Summary

2024 saw some changes to the SWCD, along with accomplishing some major milestones. One change was that the SWCD added an Outreach Staff in 2024. Their responsibility includes promoting Soil Health and One Watershed One Plan (1W1P) Outreach for the SWCD. Furthermore, the SWCD 's Lower Minnesota River East 1W1P was completed and received comprehensive watershed funding from BWSR. The SWCD is actively targeting projects to implement in that watershed. The SWCD has also moved! Don't worry we didn't move far. We are across the hall and still co-located with USDA. Near the end 2024, the SWCD worked with USDA partners to swap spaces. The SWCD was then able to remodel their new space to create offices and a conference room in one location.

In June 2024, Le Sueur County suffered yet another large flood event. The City of Waterville, in the Cannon River Watershed, set record highs for water elevations with hundreds of homes impacted by the floods. This event ramped up the ongoing need for water storage in the county and, more specifically, the Upper Cannon Watershed. The SWCD and the County continues to be a driver for water storage on the landscape and market the need for funding to do this at the local, state and federal levels. The SWCD presented six times on water storage in 2024, showcasing successfully completed projects in the County.

Lastly, at the end of 2024, the SWCD and NRCS had two retirements. The SWCD Board wished farewell to SWCD District 4 Supervisor, Cletus Gregor, who did not run for re-election. Cletus has been on the SWCD Board from 2009-2024. Also, long time NRCS District Conservationist, Steve Breaker, retired at the end of 2024. Steve has been serving the people of Le Sueur County since 1993 and worked for NRCS for 37 years. The people of Le Sueur County will definitely miss their conservation leadership and years of experience. The SWCD would like to wish them the best in their retirement.

In the 2024 calendar year, The SWCD installed **\$383,682.78** in structural projects, **\$137,554.70** in CREP Easement Construction, **\$26,842.50** in non-structural practices such as cover crops and Strip-till/No-till, **\$162,328.13** Water Storage Easements and **\$46,611.70** in county drainage construction work through the SWCD Drainage Inspector.

The mission of the Le Sueur County Soil and Water Conservation District is to educate and assist the public in land and water conservation.





Education & Outreach

SWCD Legislative Days

In March of 2024, 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 2024. Staff Members met with local legislators:

- Rep. Brian Pfarr
- Sen. Nick Frentz
- Sen. Rich Draheim
- Sen. John Jasinski



SWCD Staff Joe Jirik (left) and Michael Schultz (right) in front of the Minnesota capitol building.



Meeting with Senator Nick Frentz



Education & Outreach

SWCD Events



Le Sueur SWCD Manager Michael Schultz Presents along site Ayers Associate Inc. a GIS Consultant on the newly acquired Le Sueur County Lidar Tool.



Adam Derringer Senior Project Manager for Ayers Associate Inc. presenting on the Le Sueur County Lidar Tool at the SWCD Annual Convention.

In December, District Manager, Michael Schultz, presented alongside Adam Derringer, who is a Senior Project Manager for Ayers Associate Inc., at the Annual Minnesota Association of Soil and Water Conservation Districts (MASWCD) Convention. They presented on the overall functions of the tool, how it can be utilized and how these data points were collected.

Bottom left two pictures: These are screen grabs from the updated Lidar tool for Le Sueur County



Education & Outreach

MN Association of Soil and Water Conservation District Convention



The Le Sueur SWCD Supervisors with the 2024 Outstanding Conservationists, the Lake Washington Improvement Association (LWIA) at the MASWCD Annual Convention.

The LWIA being presented at the Outstanding Conservationist Awards Luncheon.





Education & Outreach

SWCD Board Conservation Tour

The SWCD Board and staff held their Conservation Tour in July. The tour highlighted the southeast part of Le Sueur County. The focus of the tour was several of the SWCD conservation projects along with touring flooding damage from the June rains.



2024 Outstanding Conservationist Tour

1. Peach No-Till/Cover Crops
2. Tim Labbs Wetland Restoration
3. Stangler Walk In Access Site
4. MN DNR Horseshoe Lake AMA
5. Sediment Basins/Erosion Issues (Hering/Schwichtenberg)
6. Waterville Flooding Sites (FEMA Flood Study Follow Up)
7. Gorman Lake Outlet (Get Out More Funding)

Lunch at Toy Box Saloon
Kilkenny

July 9, 2024



Map of the conservation tour sites.



Wetland Restoration on the Tim Labbs Property



Gorman Lake Outlet



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 initial Flood Study for the Cannon River Watershed was put on hold due to lack of funding. Le Sueur County applied for a grant through the FEMA Hazard Mitigation Grant Program to obtain federal dollars to help pay for the study. The County was recently awarded the funds. The funds will cover 75% of the total costs and there is a required 25% match component. Le Sueur County will partner with Bolton & Menk to continue efforts with the study.

The work that has already been completed thus far for the flood study includes preliminary watershed modeling and calibration of the Upper Cannon River Watershed. Tasks that still need to be completed include: finishing up modeling of existing conditions in the Upper Cannon River Watershed, installing the flood warning gauge coordination, assessing different concepts for flood reduction alternatives (locations, cost-benefit analysis), developing a report, and hosting public meetings. Projects and practices will be identified within the watershed and assessed on what will provide the greatest benefit for storing water on the landscape, reducing flooding impacts, and building resiliency for all communities within the study area. The study will provide opportunities for organizations to apply for different funding streams in order to implement projects and practices.

The image located below is the study area. The study area includes the entire Upper Cannon River Watershed.

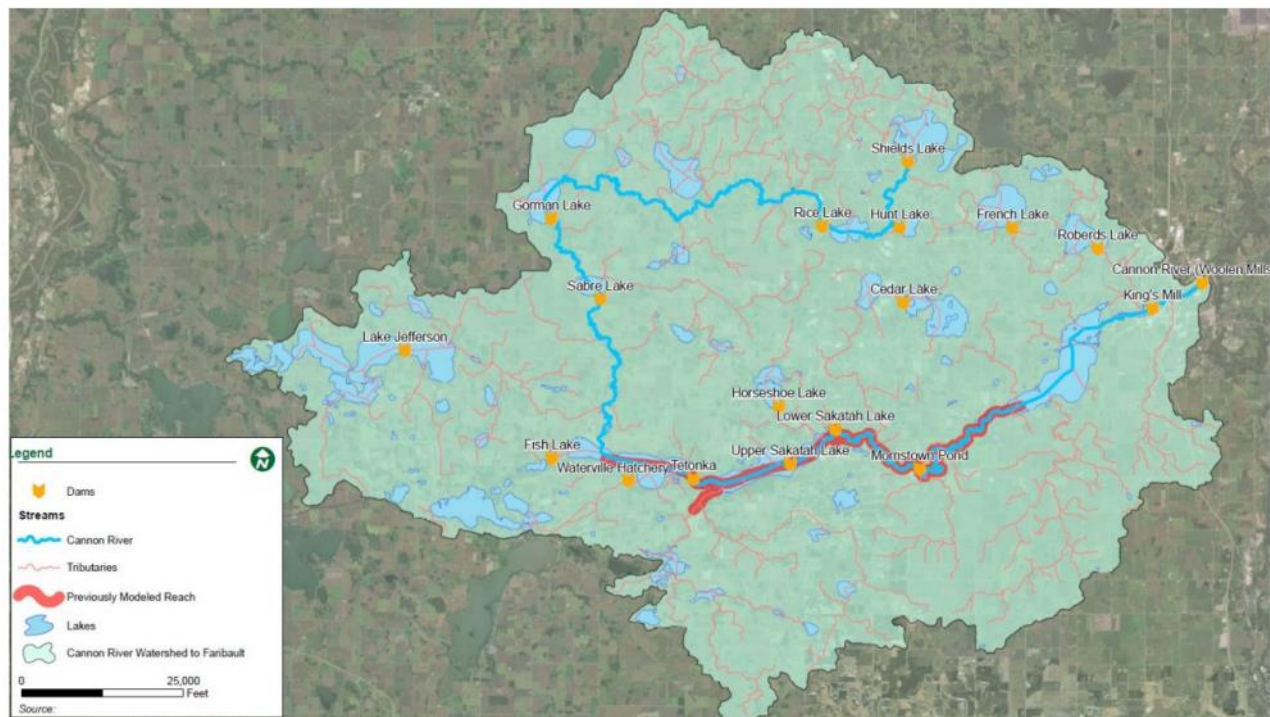


Figure 3. Upper Cannon River Watershed Flood Study Area

Photo Credit: Bolton & Menk

Article From Le Sueur County Environmental Services Newsletter



SWCD Programs

Outstanding Conservationist– Lake Washington Improvement Association

The Le Sueur County SWCD Board of Supervisors has chosen the Lake Washington Improvement Association (LWIA) for the 2024 Outstanding Conservationists of the Year. Lake Washington is approximately a 1,516 acre lake, located primarily in Le Sueur County.

The Lake Washington Improvement Association is a volunteer board made up of 16 residents from Lake Washington, with one Director at Large that does not live on the lake. The overall goal of the association is to maintain and improve the water quality of Lake Washington. The association was first established in 1978. In 1991, they changed their name to the current version, the Lake Washington Improvement Association (LWIA), and became a nonprofit corporation.

The LWIA was selected as outstanding conservationists due to their dedication of maintaining and improving water quality. Over the years, the LWIA has been involved with constructing a dam on the outlet of the lake to help with water levels, countless conservation projects, easements and water quality monitoring. In 2020, the LWIA partnered with the Le Sueur County SWCD for a water storage pilot program, which created settling ponds and restored wetlands. These projects focus on capturing and reducing the amount of phosphorus that enters into the lake, reducing erosion, and improving the overall water quality of the lake.



Le Sueur SWCD Board and Staff presented the LWIA with an Outstanding Conservationist sign to display at Lake Washington Park



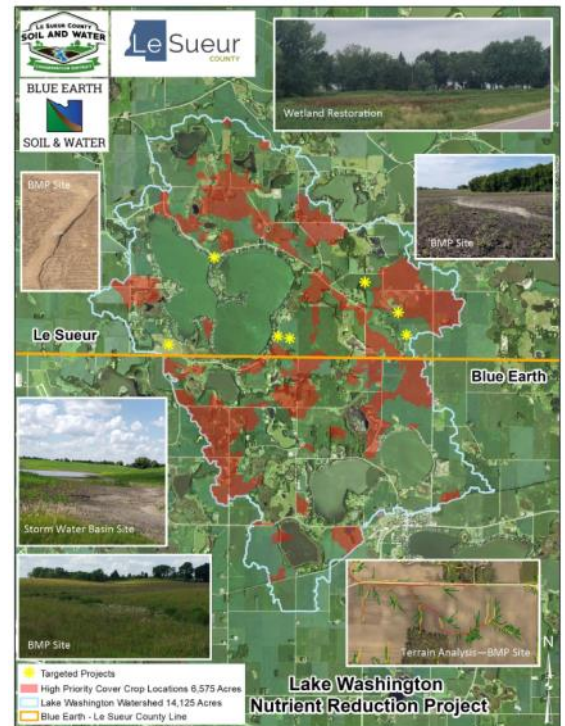
SWCD Programs

Lake Washington Nutrient Reduction Project

In 2020, the Le Sueur County SWCD was awarded \$310,250 from the Minnesota Board of Water and Soil Resources (BWSR) to address resource concerns in the Lake Washington watershed. These resource concerns were targeted in partnership with Le Sueur County and the Blue Earth SWCD. The Lake Washington Improvement Association pledged to pay all of the matching funds needed for the grant in the amount of \$87,563. They have provided much needed support for this project and partnership. A total of \$373,443.45 has been spent to date in the Lake Washington Watershed.

Projects Completed to Date:

- 9 Water and Sediment Control Basins
- 4 Critical Area Planting Sites
- 5 Wetland Restorations
- 2 Grade Stabilization Structure
- 193 Acres Cover Crop With No-Till/Strip Till



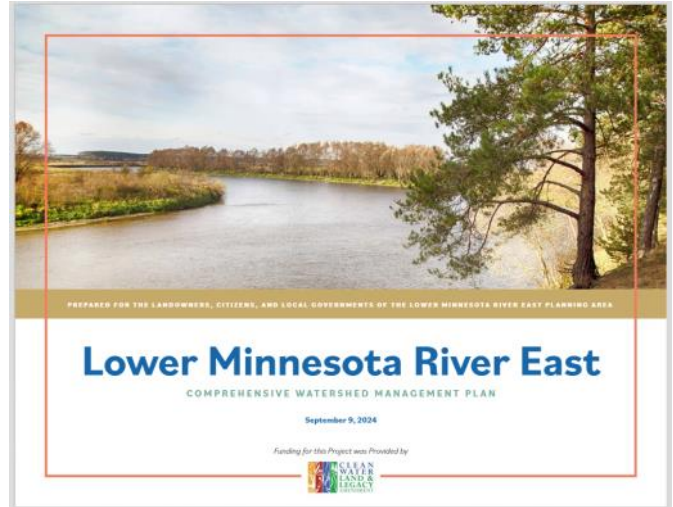
Drilled cereal rye and winter wheat in the Lake Washington Watershed. This picture was taken in the spring of 2024



SWCD Programs

One Watershed One Plan, Lower

The Lower Minnesota River East One Watershed One Plan was approved by BWSR in August 2024. This was a big step for the Lower Minnesota River East (LoMRE) Watershed Joint Powers Board. The partners that are associated with the JPB are as follows: Le Sueur County and SWCD, Rice County and SWCD and the Scott County SWCD. The JPB was awarded \$538,000 to implement the plan and are currently working on implementing projects.



Lower Minnesota River East Watershed Plan

One Watershed One Plan, Middle Minnesota River– Mankato

In 2024, Le Sueur SWCD continued working towards completing the remaining comprehensive watershed plan for Le Sueur County, which is the Minnesota River - Mankato. Throughout the year, the watershed partnership hired a consultant, Houston Engineering, to write the plan. In July, the public kick off meeting took place. The remainder of the year staff worked on identifying priorities with all of the partners. Meetings continue to happen monthly and the plan is slated to be approved in 2026. The following webpage is dedicated to the Middle Minnesota River-Mankato One Watershed One Plan:
<https://www.co.lesueur.mn.us/755/6616/Middle-Minnesota-River-Mankato-One-Water>.



July Public Kick Off Meeting St. Peter

**Minnesota River - Mankato
WATERSHED**

PUBLIC KICKOFF MEETINGS

Join us for the public kickoff meeting of the One Watershed One Plan initiative! Be part of the conversation shaping the future of our watershed. Your input matters in developing a comprehensive plan to safeguard our water resources for generations to come. Don't miss this opportunity to contribute to the preservation and enhancement of our local environment. See you there!

5:00 – 7:00 P.M.

TUESDAY, JULY 23
Nicollet Conservation Club
46045 471st Lane, Nicollet 56074

&

TUESDAY, JULY 30
Land of Memories Park
Floyd Roberts Jr. Pavilion
100 Amos Owen Ln, Mankato 56001

Appetizers & refreshments provided

www.co.nicollet.mn.us/mnrivermankato

Questions?
Kenny Famakinwa, Nicollet County Environmental Specialist
507-934-7073
kenny.famakinwa@co.nicollet.mn.us



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 2024.

- 64 landowners consulted
- 5 WCA applications were approved
- 12 potential WCA Violations were investigated
- 1 Wetland bank seeding and construction was completed
- 4 Wildlife Pond Requests



Summer Intern Tim Tutlam tile probing a potential WCA violation

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 22 producers in Le Sueur County certified through the MAWQCP.





SWCD Programs



Cost Share Program

SWCD staff had consistent work throughout 2024 with four construction projects dispersing **\$42,526.73** of SWCD cost share funds and total project cost with partner funds of \$54,349.23. The following projects were completed:

- 7 Water and Sediment Control Basins
- 1 Grade Stabilization Structure
- 1 Well Sealing





SWCD Programs

Patterson Watershed Storage Project

In 2021, the Minnesota Legislature appropriated \$2 million in grant funding for BWSR to develop a water storage program. The Le Sueur SWCD applied and was awarded a \$408,000 grant to complete a water storage project, with \$77,047 of matching funds coming from Lake Washington Improvement Association. Construction began in the spring of 2024 but was delayed due to extreme rainfall. The project was then completed in November. The project created 158 acre feet of water storage. The project will provide reductions of 274 pounds of phosphorous, 8,224 pounds of nitrogen and 44.9 tons of Total Suspended Solids annually. Roughly 32,000 cubic yards of soil was excavated to create the storage area, equivalent to 2,280 dump truck loads of soil.



Patterson Storage Project Weir and Storage Area in the Fall of 2024



Patterson Water Storage Project Photos





SWCD Programs



Soil Health

2024 SWCD Cover Crops

- 882 Total Acres Seeded
- 396 Aerial Applied Acres Helicopter & Plane
- 486 Acres Drilled or Broadcasted after Harvest
- 9 Producers Planted Green into Standing Rye

2024 Strip-till/No Till

- 138.5 Acres New Acres Enrolled
- 218.5 Total



Aerial Applying Cover Crops Sept. 2024



Cereal Rye and Winter Wheat In Spring of 2024



Drilled Cereal Rye After Corn Silage Harvest



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 2024, the dew drop was used two times for a total of five 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 2024, 14 producers rented the drill totaling 147 acres.



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 Projects: Cover Crops



Drilled Cereal Rye After Corn Silage Harvest— Spring 2024



Aerial Applied Cereal Rye and Turnips Fall 2024



Seed Delivery for Aerial Application— Sept. 2024



Vertical Tilled Cereal Rye— Fall 2024



SWCD: 2024 Spring Erosion



Due to the heavy rainfall that occurred this spring, staff noticed a significant increase in erosion on disturbed or conventionally tilled fields. When compared to fields that had soil health practices established on the landscape, there was significantly less or no erosion.



No-tilled Beans into Cereal Rye after a large spring rain event



SWCD: 2024 Spring Flooding





SWCD: 2024 Spring Flooding



The community coming together to help fill sandbags at the City Shop in Waterville.

These pictures are from the flooding event that occurred around the city of Waterville in June of 2024.





SWCD Programs



Conservation Partners Legacy Grant MN DNR

In the spring of 2021, the SWCD was awarded a \$34,903 Conservation Partners Legacy (CPL) Grant through the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources. In the fall of 2021, the brome was cut and baled, and then the trees were removed in preparation for farming. Soybeans were planted by a local farmer in 2022. In 2023, the same farmer planted oats for weed control and to aid in the eradication of the brome. To increase the chances of seed to soil contact, the DNR recommended that some light tillage should be completed prior to broadcasting natives. In the fall of 2023, a local contractor broadcast seeded natives on 23 acres of the project. Three different seed mixes were used depending on the various soil types present. In the spring of 2024, a berm and rock weir were constructed to restore a one acre wetland. The CPL grant was closed out in December of 2024.



Red: CPL Project Area **Purple:** Murphy WMA



Berm & Rock Weir



Restored Wetland Summer 2024



SWCD Programs



RIM Riparian



**16.9 ac. Easement
Sharon Township**



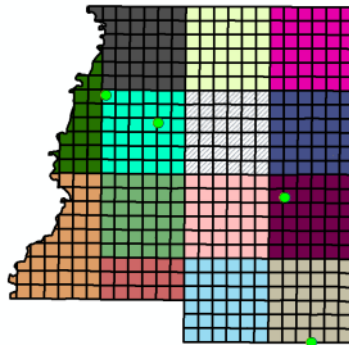
**76.0 ac. Easement
Sand Creek Township,
Scott County**



**6.2 ac. Easement
Waterville Township**



**37.2 ac. Easement
Kilkenny Township**



**44.0 ac. Easement
Sharon Township**

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 2024, the SWCD helped five landowners get their applications accepted into the RIM Riparian program, which totaled 180.3 acres that will be permanently protected.



SWCD Programs



RIM Wetlands



121.4 ac. Easement
Lanesburgh Township



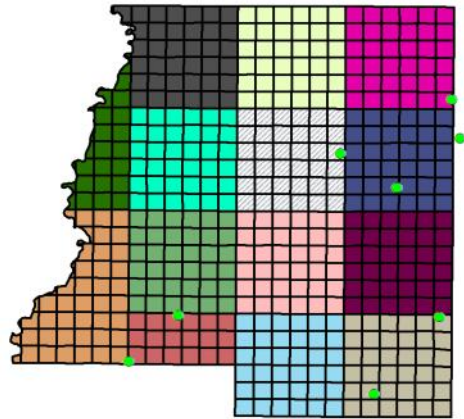
78.8 ac. Easement
Lexington Township



50.5 ac. Easement
Waterville Township



61.6 ac. Easement
Waterville Township



68.8 ac. Easement
Erin Township, Rice County



71.2 ac. Easement
Washington Township



37.1 ac. Easement
Washington Township



34.2 ac. Easement
Montgomery Township

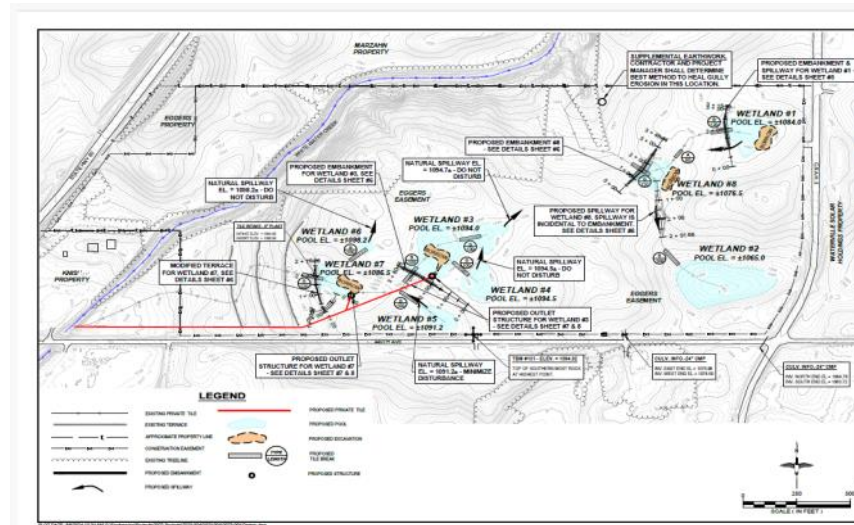
RIM Wetlands is a conservation easement program that targets drained wetlands to be restored on both crop and non-cropland. When landowners enroll in the RIM program they enter into an agreement with the State of Minnesota to put a perpetual conservation easement on their land. The landowners are required to maintain the conservation practices in place, while not farming or building within the conservation easement boundary. In 2024, the SWCD helped eight landowners get their applications accepted into the program, totaling 523.6 acres that will be permanently protected.



SWCD Programs



RIM Wetlands Completed Wetland Restoration



Berm & Outlet Structure



Berm

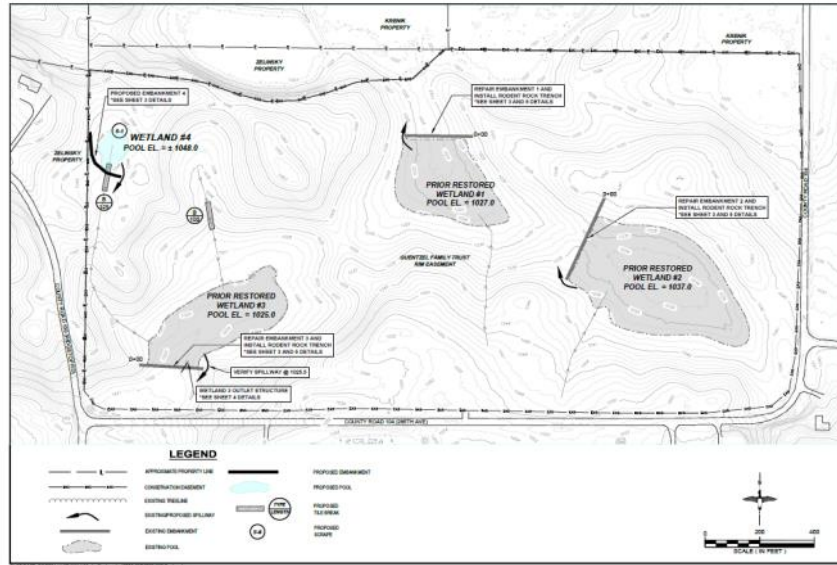
In August of 2024, the SWCD, with BWSR assistance, completed an 87 acre wetland restoration that was part of the RIM Wetlands Program located near Waterville. Eight small to medium basins were restored on the landscape. The restoration work consisted of berms, tile breaks, tile reroutes and outlet structures.



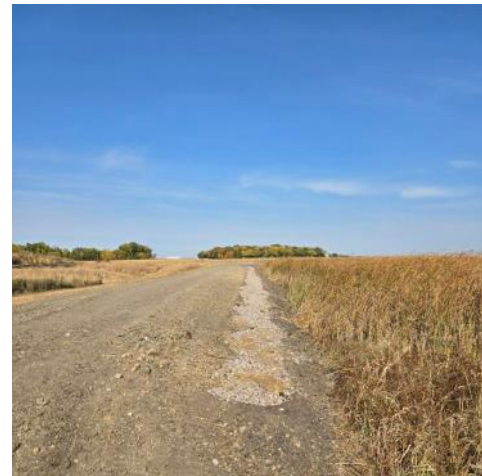
SWCD Programs



RIM Wetlands Completed Wetland Restoration



Outlet Structure & Existing Wetland



Berm & Rock Rodent Trench

In August of 2024, the SWCD, with BWSR assistance, enhanced an existing three basin CRP wetland restoration, while also restoring a fourth basin on the property. The work was done through the RIM Wetlands program. Construction on the existing wetlands consisted of fixing the existing berms from muskrat damage, digging rock rodent trenches to prevent future muskrat damage, and putting in an outlet structure on wetland #3 to protect its berm from erosion. The construction for the new wetland consisted of a berm, tile break, and scrape to restore wetland #4.



SWCD Programs

Water Sampling Middle Minnesota River Watershed



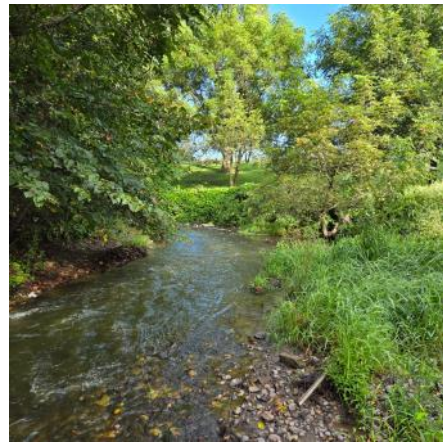
Intern Tim collecting water chemistry data on Shanaska Creek



Holly Bushman with LSC collecting water chemistry data on Lake Emily



Blue Green Algae Lake Washington



Shanaska Creek Low Flow

In partnership with Le Sueur County, the SWCD sampled three lakes and one stream in the Middle MN River Watershed from May to September of 2024. The water bodies that were sampled are Lake Washington, Lake Emily, Scotch Lake and Shanaska Creek. 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 the stream in the watershed. From this data, the MPCA can identify if the lakes and stream are in need of restoration or protection strategies.



SWCD Programs



Walk-In Access

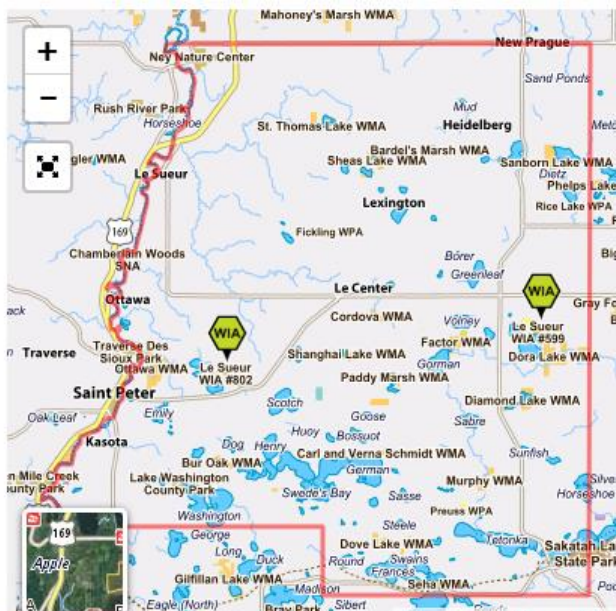
Walk-In Access (WIA) is a voluntary program that compensates landowners to allow public access for hunting on their land from September 1st through May 31st. With the number of hunters diminishing in the past decades, largely due to the lack of quality hunting land, the WIA program is more important 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.



103.04 acres located in Cleveland Township



69.05 acres located in Kilkenny Township



Yellow: Locations of WIA sites in Le Sueur County



SWCD Programs

Tree Program

In 2024, over 7,300 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 2024, 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. The SWCD offered a variety of kits to plant in different soil conditions ranging from wet to dry and sun to shade. 28 kits were sold in 2024.



Native plugs planted in an urban pollinator plot.

Food Plots

In partnership with the Le Sueur County Pheasants Forever Chapter, the SWCD gave out 14 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.



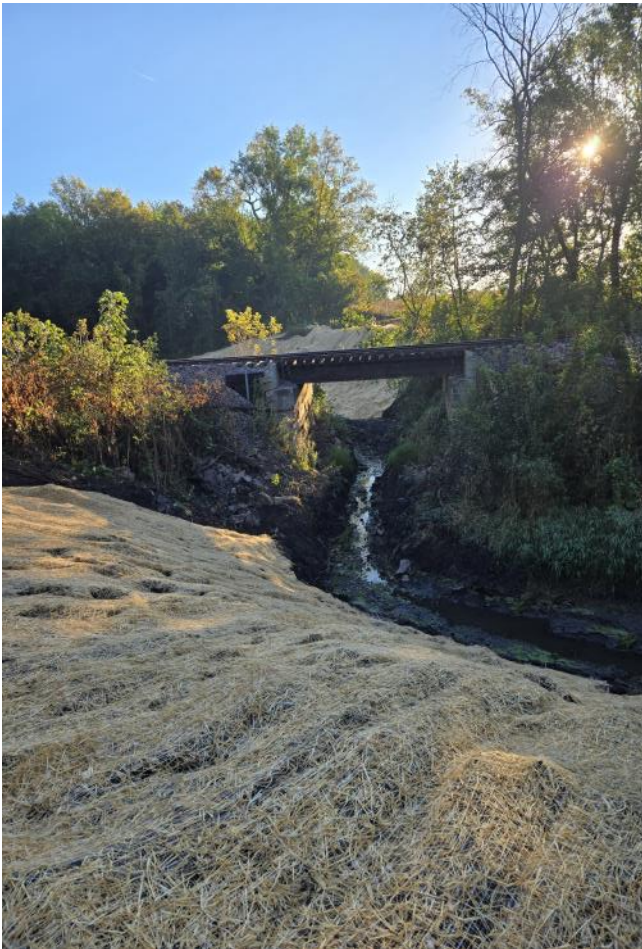
Le Sueur County Food Plot In September with seed from Le Sueur County Pheasants Forever.



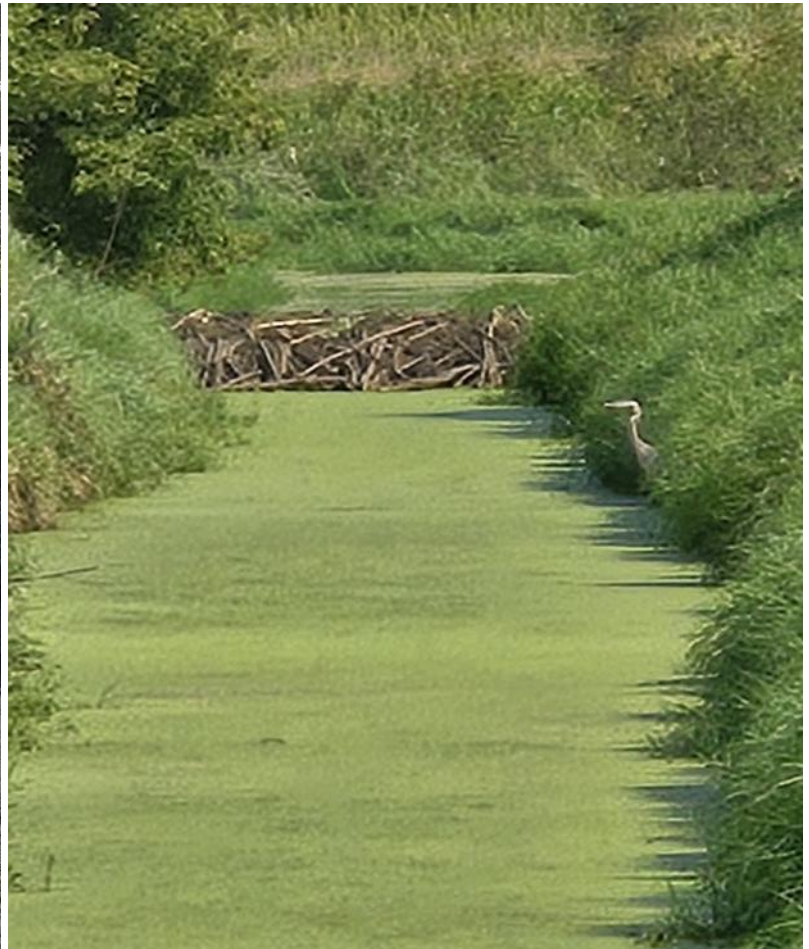
Ditch Inspector

Drainage Ditches

The drainage ditch system completed 22 projects throughout 2024. Some of the projects included ditch cleanings, bank slough repairs, culvert replacements, farm crossing repairs, tree removal, trapping beavers and removing their dams. The Le Sueur County Drainage Authority initiated \$497,095.86 of work on the county's drainage systems. This included ditch improvements and engineered repairs. The Ditch Inspector oversaw \$46,611.70 worth of that amount on construction work. All drainage systems incurred costs were from repairs, engineer reports, correction of records, redetermination of benefits, ditch spraying/mowing, general inspections and labor.



CD 62 repair South of New Prague.



A beaver dam on CD 40 holding back four feet of water



County Ditches/ Buffer 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 2024, the Le Sueur County SWCD completed field checks, measured buffers, staked out non-compliant parcels and sent out 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



2024 FEMA Flood Repairs

County Ditch FEMA

In the spring of 2024, Le Sueur County had record levels of rainfall. These rains caused significant damage on multiple County Ditch Systems. The Ditch Inspector applied for FEMA to help with the costs of these repairs. FEMA staff and the Ditch Inspector documented the damage and started repairs on these systems. There were ten FEMA repair projects in the county. At the end of 2024, eight projects were completed, with the other two slated to be repaired in 2025.



CD70 tile blow out



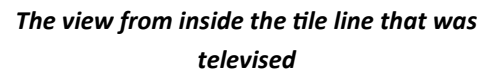
CD44 Spur 6 priority tile repair project



CD23 slough repair



In December 2024, a televising project of a tile repair for CD 35 was completed. This tile was originally repaired due to a collapsed and cracked tile on the system. Once this tile system was completed, they televised the tile and discovered a sag in the tile line. This sag occurred from the construction of a new gas line that occurred after the county tile had been fixed. This discovery showed the importance of double checking completed work on tile systems.



On CD 23, repairs were done to fix bank erosion that occurred from the spring flooding. Contractors fixed the bank sloughing and placed riprap to help stabilize and protect the banks from future erosion.





2024 County Ditch Mowing

County Ditches

Throughout the summer of 2024, one third of the county's public ditches were mowed and sprayed to help control the establishment of woody vegetation and weeds on the buffers and ditch banks. This year, the County Ditch Authority awarded this contract to a new company, rather than the one that they have used in the past years. This company utilized a few different types of machinery to get this job done. They used a skid steer with a brush grinder on the front to help control the woody vegetation and a bat wing mower to control the other vegetation. Also, they made use of ATVs with tanks to help spot spray invasive weeds and vegetation. Between the years 2019 to 2024 the Le Sueur County/SWCD has sprayed and mowed all ditch systems in the county



On CD51, the skid-steer was able to get into tight places.



On CD59 Skid-Steer was able to grind down woody vegetation to make it easier for the bat wing mower to get through.



SWCD Office

Le Sueur SWCD Supervisors



Greg Entinger (District 1)



Earle Traxler (District 2)



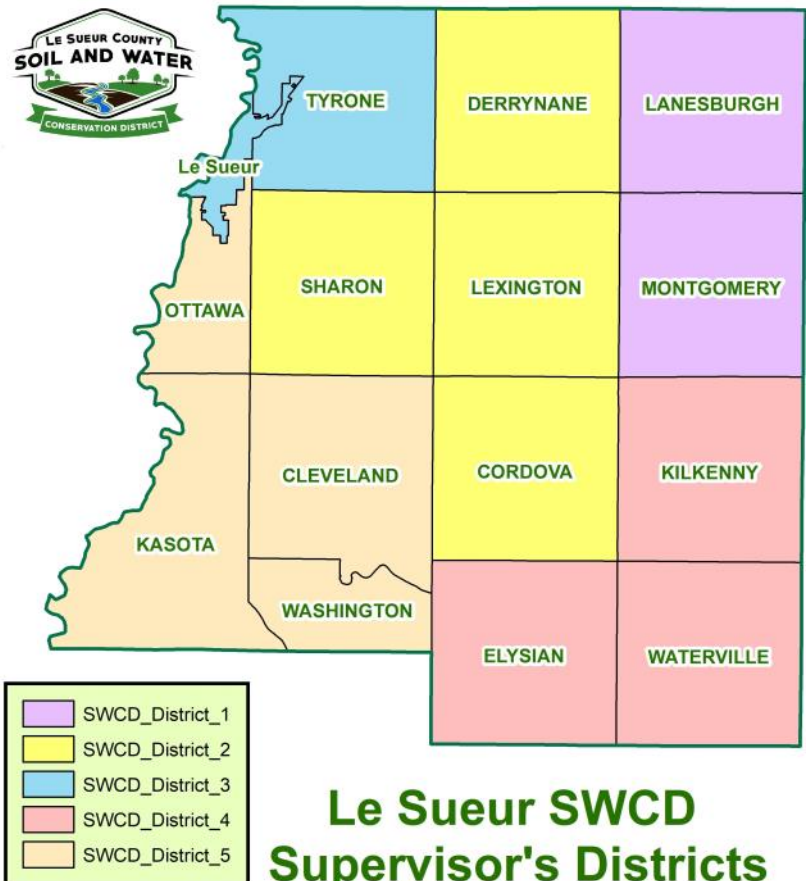
Pete Thelemann (District 3)



Ken Mader (District 4)



Jim Struck (District 5)





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