

**BELTRAMI
Soil &
Water
Conservation
District**

**2009
ANNUAL PLAN**

BELTRAMI SWCD

2009 ANNUAL PLAN

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2009 Annual Plan

Beltrami Soil & Water Conservation District

I. INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this Annual Plan is to provide direction and set goals for implementing our conservation programs for the next year. In developing the Beltrami Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD) comprehensive plan, the Board of Supervisors identified five areas of prime concern which need attention for the conservation and wise management of the soil and water resources in Beltrami County. The Beltrami SWCD Board has adopted, by Resolution, the Beltrami County Comprehensive Local Water Management Plan as the SWCD's Comprehensive Plan. The Board retained Water Quality and Quantity Management as the Number One priority in the 2009 Annual Plan.

The five conservation objectives are listed below:

- 1) Water Quality and Quantity Management
- 2) Erosion Control
- 3) Forage Management
- 4) Forest Management
- 5) Wildlife Habitat Management

Information and education are deemed an essential part of each objective. The Annual Plan discusses the scope of the problems associated with each of the conservation objectives, and set goals or actions for 2009 that will attempt to meet these needs. The estimated staffing needs are listed for each of the actions.

II. OBJECTIVES

OBJECTIVE 1 - WATER QUALITY AND QUANTITY MANAGEMENT

Beltrami County is rich in both surface and groundwater resources. The county is endowed with over 350 lakes, and groundwater is relatively easy to access by wells in most parts of the county. The quality of life and the economic health of the county are all highly dependant on the quality and quantity of the area's water resources.

The Minnesota Board of Water and Soil Resources approved the updated Beltrami County Comprehensive Local Water Management (LWM) Plan, and the Beltrami County Board of Commissioners adopted the 4th generation LWM Plan in 2008. By Inter-governmental Agreement, the Beltrami SWCD has been delegated as the lead implementing agency and fiscal agent for implementation of the LWM Plan. All of the following action items are tied directly or indirectly to some of the critical issues identified by Beltrami SWCD's Local Water Management Advisory Committee.

ACTIONS:

- 1) Provide technical and advisory leadership to Beltrami County in implementing **Beltrami County's Comprehensive Local Water Management Plan (CLWMP)**. Staff and SWCD Board will provide leadership in initiating implementation strategies for 2009 from the newly approved (2008) 4th-generation LWM Plan. Work includes holding at least four CLWM Advisory Committee meetings, briefing the County Board, and education efforts through local media.

Staffing needs: Technical - 40 Staff Days
 Administrative - 20 Staff Days

- 2) **Assist the City of Bemidji** with the technical assistance requirements they identify in the course of administering City Ordinances and laws. Work will likely include development impact evaluation, stormwater management assistance, and Tree Ordinance applications.

Staffing needs: Technical - 6 Staff Days
 Administrative - 1 Staff Days

- 3) Implement a contract to **monitor groundwater** observation wells.

Staffing needs: Technical - 12 Staff Days
 Administrative - 2 Staff Days

4) Continue to provide administrative support to the **North Central Minnesota SWCDs Joint Powers Board**, the local functional mechanism for the State Non-Point Technical Engineering Assistance program.

Staffing needs: Technical – 2 Staff Days
 Administrative - 16 Staff Days

5) Continue administrative arrangements with the City of Bemidji, City of Blackduck, and the City of Wilton, to serve as their **Wetland Conservation Act (WCA)** Local Government Unit for administering the permanent rules of the WCA. Provide wetland information and assistance.

Staffing needs: Technical - 10 Staff Days
 Administrative - 3 Staff Days

6) Continue to provide wetland assistance for the **Wetland Conservation Act (WCA)** as stipulated in MN State Statute.

Staffing needs: Technical - 20 Staff Days
 Administrative - 6 Staff Days

7) Write at least six water quality related **news releases** for newspapers and newsletters.

Staffing needs: Technical - 3 Staff Days
 Administrative - 1 Staff Day

8) Utilize available programs to work with landowners on a voluntary basis to implement projects and practices to **improve agricultural operations** while reducing nutrient loading into affected surface waters.

Staffing needs: Technical - 7 Staff Days
 Administrative - 2 Staff Days

9) Assist 100 landowners with the **Well Water Testing Program**, by contracting with an independent water testing facility to test landowner's drinking water for nitrates and coliform bacteria.

Staffing needs: Technical - 3 Staff Days
 Administrative - 1 Staff Day

10) Complete the second grant year of the **Clean Water Legacy Surface Water Assessment** project to collect water quality samples on 36 selected lakes as a component of the State's Impaired Waters assessment.

Staffing needs: Technical - 32 Staff Days
 Administrative - 3 Staff Days

11) Work to return a **Healthy Lakes and Rivers Partnership program** to Beltrami County, working with up to eight lake associations to develop and implement individual lake management plans.

Staffing needs: Technical - 2 Staff Days
 Administrative - 1 Staff Day

12) Provide necessary staff support to organizations interested in promoting **water quality through local water management** efforts. Groups include, but are not limited to, the Beltrami County Lakes and Rivers Association (BCLARA), the Turtle River Watershed Association, Beltrami County lakeshore owners associations, and the Upper Mississippi Watershed Foundation.

Staffing needs: Technical - 15 Staff Days
 Administrative - 2 Staff Days

13) Utilize **EQIP program** to assist 5 landowners to apply for EQIP resource management funding targeting riparian protection.

Staffing needs: Technical – 10 Staff Days
 Administrative - 5 Staff Days

14) Provide technical assistance to private landowners and Beltrami County to **bring violation activities into compliance** with existing rules and Ordinances.

Staffing needs: Technical – 15 Staff Days
 Administrative - 5 Staff Days

15) Improve accountability and transparency of SWCD financial and technical support through publicizing additional **website information** and maintaining a **WaterBlog** for the benefit of landowners.

Staffing needs: Technical – 10 Staff Days
 Administrative - 2 Staff Days

16) Promote public education about the nature and geography of **watersheds** and their importance in water management.

Staffing needs: Technical – 5 Staff Days
 Administrative - 2 Staff Days

17) Pursue understanding of the **Impaired Waters** designation for the Upper Mississippi River and its implications to the water quality of downstream waters – particularly Lake Irving and Lake Bemidji.

Staffing needs: Technical – 10 Staff Days
 Administrative - 2 Staff Days

18) Pursue taking a leadership role in the **Bemidji Leads!** effort to make Lake Bemidji the cleanest urban lake in the State of Minnesota.

Staffing needs: Technical – 8 Staff Days
 Administrative - 2 Staff Days

OBJECTIVE 2 - EROSION CONTROL

The following goals or actions are intended to reduce wind and water erosion.

- 1) Convert 350 acres of soil eroding at greater than tolerable limits to **permanent vegetative cover** through available conservation programs.

Staffing needs: Technical - 15 Staff Days
 Administrative - 8 Staff Days

- 2) Install 5,000 feet of **field windbreak and living snow fence**.

Staffing needs: Technical - 5 Staff Days
 Administrative - 2 Staff Days

- 3) Utilize the **Local Work Group** (SWCD Supervisors, staff, and NRCS) process to prioritize resource concerns for program administration.

Staffing needs: Technical - 5 Staff Days
 Administrative - 2 Staff Days

- 4) Install 15 acres of **shelterbelts**.

Staffing needs: Technical - 10 Staff Days
 Administrative - 3 Staff Days

- 5) Provide **general assistance** to at least 20 landowners regarding their concerns about **erosion**.

Staffing needs: Technical - 8 Staff Days
 Administrative - 1 Staff Days

OBJECTIVE 3 - FORAGE MANAGEMENT

Forage production is the number one crop in Beltrami County when considering pasture and hayland for grazing livestock

ACTIONS:

- 1) Continue assistance as requested to Northwoods, and Potlatch Panelboard Companies, and MPCA for **Ash Utilization Project** to help 20 landowners on acidic soils improve legume forage production.

Staffing needs: Technical - 15 Staff Days
 Administrative - 3 Staff Days

- 2) Provide general assistance to at least 10 landowners regarding **forage production**-related activities.

Staffing needs: Technical - 5 Staff Days
 Administrative - 2 Staff Days

- 3) Utilize **EQIP program** to assist 5 landowners to apply for EQIP resource management funding.

Staffing needs: Technical – 45 Staff Days
 Administrative - 20 Staff Days

OBJECTIVE 4 - FOREST MANAGEMENT

Beltrami County's non-industrial private forest (NIPF) resources are an important economic and natural resource. Beltrami SWCD's objective is to increase technical assistance to NIPF landowners through the continued staffing of a Stewardship Forester.

ACTIONS:

- 1) Refer interested landowners to appropriate technical resources to help them manage up to 1000 acres through Comprehensive **Forest Stewardship plans**.
- 2) Implement 50 acres of **wildlife plantings, timber stand improvement, and reforestation**.
- 3) Encourage 50 acres of **old-growth habitat**.
- 4) Provide technical and administrative **forestry assistance** to local units of government, as requested.

Total staffing needs (1-4): Technical - 200 Staff Days
 Administrative - 20 Staff Days

OTHER ACTIONS:

- 1) Provide assistance to at least 450 landowners with the **SWCD tree program**, and to at least 75 landowners regarding specific planning/implementation of **conservation plantings**.

Staffing needs: Technical - 100 Staff Days
 Administrative – 14 Staff Days

- 2) Participate in training for 1 staff to maintain certification as a **Tree Inspector**, knowledgeable in insects and disease.

Staffing needs: Technical - 2 Staff Days
 Administrative - 1 Staff Day

- 3) Participate in the **MN Tree Certification program** to benefit the quality of the District tree program.

Staffing needs: Technical - 1 Staff Day
 Administrative - 1 Staff Day

- 4) Provide 25 landowners with **general forest management assistance**, including field windbreaks and shelterbelts. Coordinate with the District tree program for other assistance.

Staffing needs: Technical - 10 Staff Days
 Administrative - 2 Staff Days

- 5) Complete a **Community Wildfire Protection Plan** in partnership with the MnDNR Firewise Program.

Staffing needs: Technical - 10 Staff Days
 Administrative - 2 Staff Days

- 6) Conduct a **Forest Management for Wildlife Workshop** in partnership with the Giziibii RC&D and MnDNR.

Staffing needs: Technical - 1 Staff Day
 Administrative - 1 Staff Day

OBJECTIVE 5 - WILDLIFE HABITAT MANAGEMENT

Wildlife habitat management requests have been high in recent years. Many absentee landowners place wildlife management as their number one management goal. In addition, many agricultural producers are willing to reserve part of their land for wildlife. Several State and Federal programs could help to develop critical wildlife habitat in Beltrami County.

ACTIONS:

- 1) Provide assistance to 20 landowners for **wildlife management** technical assistance as requested.

Staffing needs: Technical - 10 Staff Days
 Administrative - 1 Staff Day

- 2) Promote 75 acres woodland **wildlife habitat improvement**, and other staff assistance to landowners.

Staffing needs: Technical - 7 Staff Days
 Administrative - 2 Staff Days

- 3) Promote and utilize **State and Federal programs** to target critical Wildlife habitat needs, provide requested technical assistance, and write contracts with qualifying landowners.

Staffing needs: Technical - 20 Staff Days
 Administrative - 9 Staff Days

- 4) Distribute sharp-tailed grouse, white tailed deer, ruffed grouse and other **wildlife fact sheets** for use in habitat management efforts with 100 landowners.

Staffing needs: Technical - 2 Staff Days
 Administrative - 1 Staff Day

- 5) Include 5 acres of wetland wildlife habitat and 200 acres of upland wildlife habitat management in **Resource Management System (RMS)** planning efforts.

Staffing needs: Technical - 7 Staff Days
 Administrative - 3 Staff Days

III. INFORMATION AND EDUCATION

Improving the public's awareness of soil and water resource problems through educational activities is essential to accomplish the goals of this plan. As people become more aware of both short-term and long-term effects of soil erosion and water degradation, support for implementation of conservation measures will increase. Funding for educational initiatives is extremely limited, as Beltrami County will not financially support SWCD educational efforts.

Listed below are the targeted groups and methods of education for Beltrami SWCD's public information and education efforts in 2009.

Schools:

- Envirothon
- Freshwater Festival
- Science Fair Judging
- Lake Bemidji Watershed Management Project
- Demonstration Sites/School Forests
- SWCD Newsletter
- Demonstration Sites
- Special Presentations

Civic Groups:

- Firewise
- Lake Protection Video
- Presentations (HL&RP, CLWM, Shoreland Summit)
- Distribution of Project Fact Sheets
- Lake Bemidji Watershed Management Project
- Beltrami BMP Video

Agricultural Producers:

- Beltrami BMP Video and Booklet
- Newsletter
- Nitrate Testing Clinics
- AgBMP Low Interest Loans

Resource Management Professionals:

- Encourage exchange of technical expertise
- Coalition approach to Projects
- Watershed Districts
- Grant Writing Assistance

Staffing needs: Technical - 15 Staff Days
 Administrative - 10 Staff Days

Communication with local, state and Federal representatives is essential to continued progress in soil and water resource protection. The SWCD supervisors and staff need to be aware of current legislation and programs relating to natural resources to maximize the strength of the local programs. Our elected public officials also need to be informed of local resource management needs if they are to enact effective legislation.

Beltrami SWCD will accomplish this information and education effort with the leadership of a Public Relations and Information (PR&I) position to be filled by an SWCD supervisor. SWCD staff will provide the support services necessary to accomplish this goal, while maintaining a working knowledge of related natural resource legislation. Additionally, the SWCD will utilize its **website** to increase education and reporting, providing a comprehensive platform of opportunity, transparency, and accountability.

IV. COST-SHARE PROGRAM REQUIREMENTS

There is a continuing need for cost-share funds in Beltrami County, although the demand sees significant year-to-year swings depending upon local issues. The cost-share allocation of approximately \$10,000 for FY 2009 will be used in the wisest manner possible to bring assistance to landowners requiring conservation measures. Stream bank and lakeshore erosion projects and water quality concerns on a watershed basis are traditional targets for the cost-share funds.

Requests for technical and financial assistance for water quality projects and erosion control continue to come to our attention, and are addressed as completely as possible with current funding. Continuing efforts will be made in 2009 to publicize the opportunities for landowners to receive cost-share project assistance.

V. SPECIAL PROJECTS

During 2009, there is also a need for approximately \$320,000 in special project funds to finance projects to help correct water impairment issues like sedimentation, non-point source pollutants, and lakeshore erosion. These projects include:

- 1) conduct viable research to gain a better scientific understanding of the Upper Mississippi River dissolved oxygen impairment and its effect on downstream waters – particularly Lakes Irving and Bemidji (\$50,000)
- 2) general shoreline stabilization (\$30,000)
- 3) restoration of two actively eroding sand banks on the Mississippi River (\$50,000)
- 4) constructing a prioritized 100-lakes environmental database to help direct local permitting actions (\$30,000)
- 5) conducting engineering design for water quality improvement practices for the Grace Lake impairment in partnership with the Grace Lake Association (\$20,000)
- 6) forest management for water quality (\$60,000)
- 7) urban stormwater treatment (\$80,000).

The passage of the Clean Water Amendment in late 2008 provides some very real potential to procure funding for high priority water quality protection and improvement projects. The SWCD Board and staff will promote local projects that are deemed to have a high value to the County's residents, and to the State of Minnesota, particularly those identified in the recently updated 4th-generation Local Water Management Plan.

Proposed projects will be a multi-agency effort and will result in erosion control and water quality improvement and protection which will support the priorities and initiatives in the County's Comprehensive Local Water Management Plan. SWCD staff will investigate funding sources, and execute funding requests whenever possible. However, SWCD staff participation is entirely dependent upon necessary levels of funding.

VI. SUMMARY

Water and soil resource management continues to grow in importance as local political and civic leaders increase their recognition of the relationship between good water quality and strong economic influences. The SWCD staff and Supervisors will continue to provide local leadership in addressing natural resource concerns as funds allow. A coordinated, cooperative effort with other agencies is essential to accomplishing this. Partnerships with Beltrami County landowners and other units of government will be pursued and utilized whenever possible.

While the economic concerns of late 2008 will likely continue into 2009, the regional growth will likely realize an upturn, creating historical levels of pressure on our soil and water resources. Sound management is essential to protecting them for future generations. The Beltrami SWCD "team of professionals" will dedicate its efforts in the coming year to help conserve the soil and water resources of Beltrami County, with a commitment to working in a partnership whenever possible for an efficient outcome. The District provides assistance to all persons without regard to race, color, national origin, sex, religion, age, disability, political beliefs, and marital or family status.

VII. STAFF SUMMARY

2009 will be a year of stabilizing the staffing transition that occurred in 2007, with the re-addition of an Aquatic Biologist position and the replacement of the Administrative Assistant. This presents a unique opportunity for the SWCD to re-assess its ability to address anticipated future challenges, and build capacity through its staff. Four full-time District staff and one full-time conservation engineer shared within MASWCD Area VIII, with support from the NRCS District Conservationist and Soil Conservation Technician, comprises the team which will work to accomplish the objectives outlined in this annual plan. Their available time will be reasonably allocated according the staffing needs listed for each action item, but direct requests for technical and financial assistance will drive the commitment to each endeavor.