
BELTRAMI SWCD 2008 ANNUAL REPORT

3217 Bemidji Ave N, Room 3
Bemidji, MN 56601
218-751-4339

January 1, 2008 - December 31, 2008

- TABLE OF CONTENTS -

SUPERVISORS, STAFF, AND RESOURCE PERSONNEL	1
PURPOSE OF THE DISTRICT	3
DISTRICT POLICIES	3
SERVICES PROVIDED BY BELTRAMI SWCD	6
SUPERVISOR AREAS	7
STAFF AND ACTIVITY REPORT	
Introduction	8
Water Quality and Quantity Protection Program	8
Erosion Control	10
Forage Management	10
Forest Management	11
Wildlife Habitat Management	11
Information and Education	12
District Tree Program	15
Water Permit Review Program	15
District Board Meetings	15
Awards.....	15
Rain Gauge Reporting System	16
Summary	16

2008
SUPERVISORS, STAFF, AND PERSONNEL

BELTRAMI SWCD SUPERVISORS

Wes Frenzel, Chairman
Jerome Geerdes, Vice Chairman
John Persell II, Secretary
Ruth Ann Trask, Treasurer
Shane Bowe, Public Relations

BELTRAMI SWCD STAFF

Christopher Parthun, District Manager
Paula Lowe, Administrative Assistant
Jerry Stensing, Stewardship Forester
Dann Siems, Aquatic Biologist

NORTH CENTRAL MN SWCDs JOINT POWERS BOARD

Jon Hodgson, Conservation Engineer
Vacant - Conservation Technician

USDA NATURAL RESOURCES CONSERVATION SERVICE

Larry Voltz, District Conservationist
Krystal Story, Soil Conservation Technician
Patty Burns, Soil Conservationist / Tribal Liaison
Justin Lindner, Soil Conservationist Intern

OTHER ASSISTING AGENCIES

MN BOARD OF WATER & SOIL RESOURCES

John Jaschke, Executive Director
Chad Severts, Board Conservationist

MN ASSOCIATION OF SOIL & WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICTS

Ken Pederson, President
LeAnn Buck, Executive Director

USDA NATURAL RESOURCES CONSERVATION SERVICE

Glen Kajewski, Area Conservationist
William Hunt, State Conservationist

BELTRAMI COUNTY COMMISSIONERS

Quentin Fairbanks
Jack Frost
Jim Heltzer
Ron Otterstad
Joe Vene

- OTHER ASSISTING AGENCIES (cont'd) -

Beltrami County Governmental Offices: Administrator, Assessor, Auditor/Treasurer,
Environmental Services, GIS/Mapping, Highway, Natural Resources Management, Recorder

Beltrami County School Districts and
School Nature Area Project (SNAP)

Beltrami County Water Planning Advisory Committee

Bemidji State University, Depts. of: Aquatic Biology, Economics,
Environmental Studies, Geography, Geology

Cities of: Bemidji, Blackduck, Kelliher, Wilton

DNR Divisions of: Ecological Services, Fisheries, Forestry, Waters, Wildlife, Non-game Wildlife

Farm Service Agency (formerly ASCS)

Giziibii Resource Conservation & Development (RC&D)

Headwaters Regional Development Commission (HRDC)

Hubbard County Coalition of Lake Associations (COLA)

Beltrami County Lakes and Rivers Association, Turtle River Watershed Association, Individual Lake
Associations and Lake Improvement groups

Land Management Information Center

Leech Lake Indian Reservation

Minnesota Department of Agriculture

Minnesota Department of Health

Minnesota Pollution Control Agency, (MPCA) Regional & State

Mississippi Headwaters Board

Natural Resources Conservation Service (formerly SCS)

Newspapers: Bemidji Pioneer, Blackduck American, Buy-Line/News-Line,
Beltrami Electric "Northern Lights"

North Central MN Joint Powers Board

Northwest Minnesota Initiative Fund (NWMIF)

Radio & TV Stations: KAXE, KBUN-KBHP, KKBJ-B104, WBJI,
KLZ-Power Loon, KCRB-MN Public Radio, KAWA Public TV

Red Lake Band of Chippewa Indians

Rural Development Authority (formerly FmHA)

Soil & Water Conservation Districts-Area VIII (9 Districts in north-central MN.)

State Parks: Lake Bemidji, Itasca

U.S. Army Corps of Engineers

U.S. Geological Survey

University of Minnesota, Crookston & St. Paul

Upper Mississippi Watershed Foundation

PURPOSE OF THE DISTRICT

The purpose of the District is to promote the adoption of sound water quality, proper land use, and soil conservation practices on all lands in the District in order to secure permanent and prosperous agriculture, tourism, and community development for the general welfare and security of the people of the District. The SWCD will utilize available technical, financial, and educational resources, and focus and coordinate them so they meet the needs of the local land user.

The District objective is to develop and implement sound conservation practices as rapidly as the interest and resources of the cooperating landusers and District will permit.

The District will work with individual landusers and groups in preparing and applying conservation plans in accordance with the capabilities and needs of the land based upon resource inventories, the landuser's knowledge, and the best known technical recommendations.

Complete conservation plans will be prepared on an individual property basis. The complete conservation plan will include, but not be limited to the following:

1. Soil Survey and capability map
2. Land use and vegetative cover map
3. A plan for a soil conservation program with recommendations
4. A discussion of the watershed the land lies within.

The District will solicit the assistance of the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), MN Board of Water and Soil Resources (BWSR), and other agencies in developing technical recommendations for soil conservation practices and land use practices.

Priorities of work will be determined by the SWCD Board based upon the needs & available assistance.

DISTRICT POLICIES

A. DISTRICT PROCEDURES

The District is administered by five elected Supervisors. There are five officers: Chairman, Vice-Chairman, Secretary, Treasurer, and Public Relations officer. The Supervisors serve four-year terms. Monthly meetings are held on the last Thursday of each month, with the January meeting designated for organizational purposes. All meetings are open to the public.

B. REQUESTS FOR ASSISTANCE

Assistance is provided on a request basis. Anyone desiring cost-share technical assistance from the District is required to sign a Cooperator Agreement form. This constitutes the official assistance request to the District for sound land use and signifies the applicant's desire to be a conservationist and steward of their land. In return for this assistance, the Supervisors request the Cooperator to support and encourage the use of various conservation techniques and to plan, carry out, and maintain a sound conservation program on their land.

C. MEMORANDUMS OF UNDERSTANDING

Memorandums of Understanding will be used to secure the cooperation and assistance of its agencies, and of agencies of the State of Minnesota, in the work of the District.

Original Memorandums of Understanding occurred between the District and the following:

- Beltrami County Agricultural Stabilization and Conservation Committee (June 1984)
- Division of Forestry, Minnesota Department of Natural Resources (June 1985)
- State Planning Agency (June 1974)
- Red Lake Band of Chippewa Indians (Resolution #57 - May 1968)
- Soil Conservation Service, U.S. Department of Agriculture (April 1950)
- Division of Game and Fish, Minnesota Department of Conservation (February 1961)
- Minnkota Power Cooperative, Inc. (June 1985)
- Clearwater County, Cass County, Hubbard County, Beltrami County, Leech Lake Reservation for Bemidji-Bagley Groundwater Study (October 1985)
- Beltrami County Board of Commissioners (June 2005)
- Mn Department of Transportation (June 2008)

D. INFORMATION PROGRAM

The District will promote an information program through use of local TV, radio stations, newspapers (articles and columns), school classes, lake associations, civic organizations, etc.

E. TECHNICAL POLICIES

The District has adopted the NRCS Field Office Technical Guide for conservation land treatments.

F. CONSERVATION PLANNING

It is the District's policy to try to provide every cooperator with conservation planning to assist them with making sustainable decisions on their land. These plans will be reviewed by the Board of Supervisors at their monthly meeting. Landowners will be encouraged to implement their plans on the land as soon as possible.

G. DISTRICT BUDGETS

The District Board will annually submit a budget request to the State Board of Water and Soil Resources and the County Board of Commissioners.

H. SERVICE CHARGES

No charges will be made for assistance provided by the NRCS personnel. However, due to changes in the county appropriation to the District in 2003, a fee schedule has been adopted by the Board for time, materials and services provided by the District employees.

I. COMPREHENSIVE AND ANNUAL WORK PLAN

The comprehensive plan will be reviewed annually and changes made as new developments warrant. An annual work plan will be prepared which will: 1) outline the yearly goals, 2) give details of how to reach these goals, and 3) provide an expectation of yearly activities. This annual plan will be reviewed throughout the year to check progress and ensure that the plan is being implemented.

J. ANNUAL REPORT

The District will prepare an annual report showing the yearly accomplishments.

K. NONDISCRIMINATION

It is the policy of the Beltrami SWCD that all persons shall have equal opportunity and access to its programs and facilities without regard to race, creed, color, sex, national origin, religion, age, marital status, disability, handicap, or sexual orientation.

SERVICES PROVIDED BY BELTRAMI SWCD

- + Administer AgBMP low-interest Loan Program.
- + Administration of funds from the State Cost-Share Program.
- + Administration of Reinvest in Minnesota (RIM) and Permanent Wetland Preserves (PWP) Program.
- + Beltrami County plat books outlet.
- + Certification in Tree Inspection for forest insects, disease, and maintenance.
- + Conservation information and materials available to church, civic, and other groups upon request.
- + Continuing inventory of non-use wells.
- + Distribution of District Newsletter.
- + Education awareness through County Fair and Community Education.
- + Envirothon information for educators.
- + Groundwater well monitoring.
- + Implementation and administration of Beltrami County Comprehensive Local Water Plan.
- + Information on renovation and weed control in conservation plantings.
- + Lake Bemidji watershed resources improvement projects to improve and protect water quality.
- + Nitrate Testing Clinics for residential well water.
- + Poster Contest for 5th & 6th grade students.
- + Promote improved nitrogen management by area farmers.
- + Promotion and awareness of the blessings of our country through Soil and Water Stewardship Week.
- + Provide technical assistance for the Wetland Conservation Act and provide wetlands information and assistance to landowners and agencies.
- + Resource data and equipment available to plan and apply soil and water conservation measures.
- + Resource information and teaching guides available to aid students and teachers.
- + Resource assessment assistance available on request.
- + Serve as Host District for Non-Point Engineering Assistance Program.
- + Soils information and maps available.
- + Stewardship Forestry for non-industrial privately-owned forestland.
- + Technical assistance available to individuals, groups, and committees for the promotion of conservation and the wise use of natural resources.
- + Turn-Key services for conservation plantings,
- + Tree planting machine and equipment rental.
- + Trees available for field windbreaks, shelterbelts, erosion control, reforestation, and wildlife plantings.
- + Use of Geographic Information Systems to assist with resource decisions.
- + Volunteer Rainfall Monitoring Network.
- + Water quality monitoring to study water chemistry and quality of area lakes and rivers.
- + Well-water testing information to individual homeowners.
- + Wood-ash utilization information and assistance.

SUPERVISORS AREAS

The District is divided into five areas of responsibility with one supervisor elected from each area. Nominations for supervisors will only be accepted from persons residing in the area in which the term is expiring. The nominated person must also be a resident of that area. Election of supervisors is by district-wide ballot.

In 2008, District Supervisors and their areas were:

District Area 1

Supervisor: Wesley Frenzel

Townships: Battle, Birch Island, Cormant, Eland, Kelliher, Quiring, Red Lake, Shotley, Shooks, N. Waskish, S. Waskish, Woodrow, Unorganized Townships

Cities: Kelliher and Waskish

District Area 2

Supervisor: Jerome Geerdes

Townships: Birch, Brook Lake, Hines, Hornet, Langor, Moose Lake, Sugar Bush, Summit, Taylor, Ten Lake

Cities: Blackduck, Hines, Funkley

District Area 3

Supervisor: Ruth Trask

Townships: Alaska, Buzzle, Eckles, Grant Valley, Jones, Lammers, Liberty, Maple Ridge, Roosevelt

Cities: Pinewood, Solway, Wilton

District Area 4

Supervisor: Jay Backstrom

Townships: Bemidji, Durand, Frohn, Hagali, Nebish, Northern, O'Brien, Port Hope, Turtle Lake, Turtle River

Cities: Bemidji, Puposky, Tenstrike, Turtle River

District Area 5

Supervisor: Shane Bowe (appointed position by the Red Lake Council)

Townships: Red Lake Indian Reservation

Cities: Red Lake, Redby, Ponemah

Beltrami SWCD is one of 9 Soil and Water Conservation Districts (MASWCD Area VIII) in the north-central portion of Minnesota that meet 4 times a year to discuss common resource management issues. The other counties are Cass, Clearwater, Crow Wing, Hubbard, Itasca, Koochiching, Lake of the Woods, and Wadena.

STAFF and ACTIVITY REPORT



INTRODUCTION

The Beltrami SWCD is truly fortunate to have a team of qualified professionals working in its employ. This team has been presented with the tremendous task of providing the required day-to-day assistance that Beltrami County landowners request, and rely upon to maintain and improve the natural resources they control on their land.

2008 activity levels have confirmed that a top priority for local landowners has been water-related management and conservation issues. The SWCD's team of professionals has moved to meet this need through the implementation of the Beltrami County Comprehensive Local Water Plan, participation in the North Central Minnesota SWCDs Joint Powers Board which provides engineering assistance to landowners, administration of local cost-share funds for conservation practices, and through grant-writing for additional funds to address other important natural resource issues in Beltrami County.

These categorical efforts have been further detailed in the following pages, and comprise an extensive list of achievements in local soil and water conservation assistance. The staff of professionals and the Board of Supervisors at the Beltrami SWCD have worked hard to bring additional conservation assistance to Beltrami County landowners, and are pleased to present you with this activity report.

WATER QUALITY AND QUANTITY PROTECTION PROGRAM

Comprehensive Local Water Management

The Beltrami SWCD serves as the lead agency for implementing Beltrami County's Comprehensive Local Water Plan (CLWP). 2008 projects included completing the update for the 4th-generation CLWP, collecting water chemistry data for selected lakes in the county; serving as the Host District for the North Central Minnesota SWCDs Joint Powers Board which provides conservation engineering assistance to landowners; providing technical assistance for the Wetland Conservation Act and wetland management planning effort; assisting the City of Bemidji with stormwater treatment options; monitoring 19 groundwater observation wells; providing assistance to lakeshore owners groups; continued educational efforts dealing with nutrient management, lakeshore management, and non-point source pollution; administration of state cost-share program, administration of well-sealing cost-share funds for sealing high priority abandoned wells; and incorporating into each project an education component to inform the public about the importance of conserving our soil and water resources. Written materials, newsletters and news articles, television and radio interviews, and presentations to civic groups and students were used to deliver conservation and water quality protection messages.

During Beltrami County's water planning update process, citizens identified their priority water resource concerns which are, in no particular order of importance: **Surface Water** 1. Lack of data to assist with future management and decision-making. 2. Increasing development pressures will negatively affect water quality. 3. Introduction of aquatic invasive species may degrade water resources. 4. Agricultural practices may degrade water quality. **Groundwater** 1. Lack of data to assist with future management and decision-making. 2. Septic systems failure may degrade ground water quality.

Non-Point Engineering Assistance

In 1995, the Minnesota Board of Water and Soil Resources (BWSR) provided funding to the SWCD's in Minnesota to improve their technical capabilities by hiring registered engineers, and technicians to assist landowners with the design and construction of conservation practices. Eleven geographic areas were designated in Minnesota and the SWCDs in these areas were asked to form Joint Powers Boards to implement the technical assistance program. The North Central Minnesota SWCDs Joint Powers Board (NCMJPB) consists of the SWCDs in the counties of Beltrami, Cass, Clearwater, Crow Wing, Hubbard, Itasca, Koochiching, Lake of the Woods, and Wadena. The NCMJPB selected the Beltrami SWCD to serve as its Host District, where the technical staff would be headquartered, and where the program administration would be based. The NCMJPB's 2008 technical staff consisted of Mr. Jon Hodgson, P.E., Engineer, and Mr. Mark Dose, Engineering Technician intern, who worked to meet the conservation needs of the area's landowners. During 2008, they provided engineering design and construction assistance for over 45 conservation projects in the NCMJPB area. This program expedites Beltrami County landowner's requests for conservation practices engineering design and construction assistance.

The following is a condensed report of their work in Beltrami County during 2008 - Keep in mind that an equal amount of work is accomplished in the other eight counties within the Technical Service Area. ♦ Site visit to evaluate a potential public access to Swenson Lake. The property is owned by Frohn Township. Discussed some of the environmental concerns that would be associated with the development of this property. ♦ Site visit, topographic survey, design and construction plans for a proposed wetland banking project on private land near Saum. This is a large project involving the restoration of 165 acres of rice paddy. ♦ As-built survey and plan view development for the Waskish Airport wetland restoration project. ♦ A site visit and written recommendations for a proposed slope stabilization project on Bootleg Lake. ♦ Site visit and design survey for a proposed lakeshore protection project on private land on the east side of Silver Lake. ♦ Site visit and a discussion of options for lakeshore protection measures for three adjoining landowners on the east side of Lake Bemidji.

Wetland Conservation Act Assistance

SWCD staff provided Wetland Conservation Act (WCA) technical assistance to the Cities of Bemidji, Blackduck, and Wilton, serving as their local governing unit in administering the permanent WCA rules. Numerous landowners requested and received wetland assistance in 2008. Technical assists to landowners included the spectrum of simple land interpretation to project proposal reviews/comments to publicly-reviewed replacement for project impacts. SWCD staff also responded to wetland complaints and suspected violations as required under Minnesota State Statute.

Unused Groundwater Wells Sealing

Beltrami SWCD staff continued the ongoing unused well inventory effort. Landowners who contacted the District were provided with information about the importance of identifying and sealing unused wells, and their relationship with groundwater quality.

Livestock Drought Assistance

The Beltrami SWCD continued to administer a BWSR Challenge Grant to assist landowners with livestock watering options resulting from the severe droughts in 2007. Numerous landowners received technical and financial assistance under the program in an effort to maintain the economically important levels of livestock production in Beltrami County.

Surface Water Monitoring

Beltrami SWCD staff assisted private lakeshore owners with collecting lake water quality data on over 40 lakes within Beltrami County through a special grant received from the MPCA. The Citizen's Lake Monitoring Project continues to receive secchi disk readings on 22 lakes.

Groundwater Monitoring

Groundwater monitoring data compiled through the observation well program was utilized frequently this past year in providing valuable insight to city, county, and state agencies along with concerned county citizens in determining local groundwater levels and trends. In 2008, the SWCD continued to monthly monitor 19 observations wells for Beltrami County and the DNR Division of Waters.

Special Projects

Project grant applications were written and submitted for several projects in 2008. A \$60,000 YSI grant application would have provided high-end technical water sampling equipment to the county's water samplers, but was ultimately not selected for funding. Grants to provide for shoreline restoration were submitted and approved for the Bemidji City lakefront project (\$25,000), and for the Grace Lake water quality improvement project (\$36,000). The SWCD played a critical role in coordinating the project proposals and in securing the funding for these important local projects.

EROSION CONTROL

While the demand for field windbreaks to address wind erosion problems is low in Beltrami County, there continues to be numerous requests each year for shelterbelt, farmstead/feedlot windbreak and living snowfence plantings. In 2008 the SWCD provided technical assistance to landowners interested in completing these types of conservation practices.

In an effort to assist landowners with erosion concerns along lakeshore property, the District worked on numerous shoreline re-vegetation projects. Some were a result of a pending permitting decision, and others were simply landowners who desired to implement effective conservation measures on their property. Work is proceeding with landowners' projects on Lake Bemidji, Grace Lake, Long Lake, and Cass Lake. Additionally, the SWCD provides technical expertise to assist landowners in selecting the best erosion control methods for their construction projects.

Articles in the SWCD newsletter and local newspapers discussed the opportunities that landowners have in planting trees and protecting soil from erosion. SWCD staff provided technical assistance to landowners who came in with specific erosion concerns and provided Riparian Zone protection and enhancement plans. In addition, the Stewardship Forester recommended shelterbelt plantings to control or prevent soil erosion as components in Woodland Stewardship Plans.

FORAGE & PASTURE MANAGEMENT

Wood Ash Utilization

Forage production has been identified as the major cropping activity in Beltrami County. Many of the soils found in and around the County are such that they require high amounts of lime to raise the pH level for increased legume production. A substitute for lime is the wood ash found as a by-product at local panel board companies. Through cooperative efforts of the SWCD, MN Extension Service, Northwood Panelboard Company, Potlach Corporation, and MPCA, the Ash Utilization (approval process) program was formed. To expedite the approval process, MPCA has empowered the SWCD to analyze the landowner's site using MPCA guidelines, soils maps, and other information to make comments and or approvals for application of wood ash. In 2008, 17 landowners made the request for approval to receive wood ash for alfalfa fields.

Rotational Grazing

Numerous landowners have received assistance for converting their forage operations to rotational grazing, which provides growth and economic benefits to the landowner, and provides increased conservation as the cattle are rotated through the paddocks allowing the forage base to improve its growth rates. The cattle also demonstrate improved weight gains.

FOREST MANAGEMENT

In Beltrami County, private landowners hold title to over 300,000 acres of non-industrial private forestlands. In acknowledgment of the importance of woodland stewardship and the high demand for professional assistance by private landowners, the Beltrami SWCD continues to staff a full time Stewardship Forester. 2008 Forest Stewardship accomplishments reflect a change of direction that effectively addresses local resource needs by providing expanded services to the public sector, as well as continuing to provide assistance to private forest landowners. The expanded service is enabled by support and cooperation with the Bemidji/Beltrami Airport Commission, the City of Bemidji, Independent School District #31, and Beltrami County.

Approximately 475 landowners/individuals utilized the services provided through the District Tree and TurnKey Implementation Programs in 2008. Many participants were repeat customers who annually use these programs to achieve their specific conservation goals.

To provide landowner assistance with their insect and disease questions, the SWCD Stewardship Forester received continuing education training to renew his Tree Inspector certification. Over 25 landowners requested information or field assistance for insect or disease issues in 2008.

The District annually renews its Minnesota Tree Certification to assure that tree and shrub stock are of highest quality.

The SWCD's County Fair Booth highlighted private forest management for wildlife, and the SWCD's Annual Tree Planting Workshop which included a "hands on" session with a White Pine underplanting project on Bemidji/Beltrami Municipal Airport property.

Additional information is available on the SWCD website www.beltramiswcd.org.

WILDLIFE HABITAT MANAGEMENT

Beltrami County landowners are increasingly acknowledging the abundance of wildlife that inhabits the area. As a result of increasing public awareness and demand, more than 75% of all Stewardship Plans and project plans are oriented to wildlife habitat improvement. Common practices included: forest composition manipulation, fruit-bearing tree and shrub plantings, multiple species reforestation projects, food plots, and incorporation of specialized practices to maintain or enhance wildlife habitat. Woodland Stewardship Plans included specific wildlife habitat maintenance and improvement recommendations at the request of the landowner.

The Beltrami SWCD sold nearly 27,000 trees and shrubs that were specifically planted to establish and enhance wildlife habitat. Several landowners enhanced wildlife trails and openings using grass/legume seed recommendations from the SWCD and NRCS office.

While landowner participation in the RIM/PWP programs has declined in recent years due to perpetual contracts, lower payment rates, and proposed easements receiving a low priority statewide, the District continues to remain quite active in these programs through promoting and providing management and maintenance recommendations for existing RIM easements. This past year, four people inquired about enrollment in the RIM program. Unfortunately, these sites either did not meet RIM eligibility requirements or the landowner decided not to participate in the program.

SWCD staff assisted over 30 landowners with wetland restoration questions this past year. A few landowners requested detailed information to verify that restoration work would be feasible.

Fact sheets regarding developing and enhancing habitat for deer, grouse and other wildlife were made available to landowners in their farm plans, woodland plans, the fair booth, and upon request.

SWCD and NRCS efforts enhanced wetland wildlife habitat through pond restorations, wetland habitat enhancement, and wetland re-vegetation, and upland wildlife habitat was enhanced through grass/legume plantings and tree plantings recommended on Forest Stewardship plans, project plans, and other recommendations to landowners.

INFORMATION AND EDUCATION

SWCD/NRCS education efforts in 2008 included presentations by staff and supervisors to groups including elementary and university students, lake associations, legislative conferences, woodland committees, township meetings, city government meetings, County Board meetings, and others. The District staff also made presentations on local radio and television stations.

Schools

"TREES – ROOTED IN OUR FUTURE" was the theme for this year's county-wide poster contest sponsored by the Beltrami SWCD. There were a large number of entries from the County's 5th and 6th grade students. Entries were judged by SWCD and other agency staff and supervisors. This year's winners are as follows: 1st Place - Jaffrie Edens Northern School 2nd Place- Amy Daggs Northern School 1st Place - Ariel Jorgensen Kelliher School 2nd Place- Kelly Heck Kelliher School. ***We thank the teachers and students who took time out of their busy schedules to participate in this contest.*** The posters were displayed at the Beltrami SWCD office and at the SWCD booth at the Beltrami County Fair.

Envirothon

Each spring the Area VIII SWCD's (Beltrami, Cass, Clearwater, Crow Wing, Hubbard, Itasca, Koochiching, Lake of the Woods and Wadena) host an Envirothon. An Envirothon is a nationwide event that started in Pennsylvania in 1979 and began in Minnesota in 1993. It is a unique, hands-on outdoor competition for 9-12th grade students. The students are challenged on their environmental knowledge and problem solving skills. A team consisting of 5 students visits five 20 minute learning stations based on key areas of the environment. These stations are presented by natural resource professionals in the fields of wetlands, wildlife, forestry, soils and a current event issue. Each team is expected to make an 8-10 minute oral presentation. The top three teams from Area VIII advance to the state competition and the winner of the Minnesota competition advances to the National Canon Envirothon. The 2008 Envirothon was held at Lake Bemidji State Park April 23rd. There were 31 teams that participated in the competition with the Team #1 from Park Rapids taking 1st place, Team #4 from Park Rapids 2nd place and Team #9 from Lake of the Woods received 3rd place. The Park Rapids Team #1 placed 4th at the State competition, Park Rapids Team #4 placed 18th and Lake of The Woods Team # 9 placed 9th out of 32 teams. The 2008 Minnesota Envirothon Oral Presentation Problem was "Recreational Impacts on Natural Resources". The students were given a hypothetical, fictitious scenario that they were to present and defend to a panel of 3 judges. Our congratulations to these students and their advisors!

The 8'x 8' topographic model of the Lake Bemidji Watershed remains on display at the Headwaters Science Center in downtown Bemidji. Response from teachers and students has been outstanding. Many tourists visit the Science Center and may have their initial introduction to the area with this model.

Students and their instructors, from elementary to college age, received information on our soil and water resources by visiting the office throughout the year. Material is available from Ag-Stravaganza, Project Learning Tree, Project Stewardship Minnesota, special project data and other resources that are kept on file.

Minnesota Biomes Project for ISD #31

Planning for the Minnesota Biomes project on ISD #31 JW Smith school grounds was successfully completed, and the first phase was implemented in late fall. Initiated by a grant from the Minnesota Department of Education, bolstered by public, corporate, and private donations and support by the City of Bemidji, the Minnesota Biomes Project is currently under construction at the J.W. Smith Elementary School located in the heart of Bemidji. The goal of the project is to enhance environmental education by creating a geographically accurate, vegetated representation of Minnesota's forests and prairie lands. The restoration plan also includes vegetative representation of Ontario, Manitoba, Wisconsin, Iowa, North Dakota and South Dakota. The proposed ADA-accessible trails system will follow the major river courses and will provide access to each biome. The site covers almost 61,000 square feet, with selected tree cover installed during late fall of 2008. It is a coming together place, where "tree orphans" from new development sites have been collected and re-established along with the diversity in shrubs and ground cover. Designed in the shape of Minnesota with surrounding states and provinces, it is a living classroom that is in essence a living geography lesson, a history lesson, a biology lesson, and a community/civic engagement lesson. Please visit the SWCD website to view a PowerPoint presentation on this very unique and valuable local project.

The SWCD participated in two very important statewide initiatives in an effort to ensure that Beltrami County's water resources were being considered in state planning strategies. The projects were the State Docks Committee, set up to review existing dock rules and make recommendations to the State for subsequent rule change; and the Mn Star Lakes Board, set up to provide front end input for recognizing lakes across MN whose lakeshore owners have taken aggressive action to maintain and improve water quality on those lakes. The Star Lake Board is currently developing application and certification procedures and expects to consider initial applicants by late spring of 2009. If you are interested in finding out more about the Star Lakes program visit their website at <http://www.starlakes.org/>.

Information and education activities included presentations to several classes at area elementary and middle schools as well as Bemidji State University. SWCD staff continued to assist the Bemidji Middle School in implementing activities that utilize the Middle School Campus for environmental education activities. Students and teachers installed boardwalk sections that will be used by students to explore the wetland on site. Beltrami SWCD actively participated in the area ENVIROTHON contest with staff support.

Lakeshore Owners

SWCD and NRCS staff worked with numerous individual lakeshore owners in 2008. Increasing requests for technical assistance were from area lake associations and groups in 2008. Technical support was provided to members of the Friends of Lake Bemidji, South Lake Irving Association, Grace Lake Watershed Association, Turtle River Association, Beltrami County Lakes and Rivers Association, Black Lake Association, Lake Julia Association, Balm Lake Association, North/South Twin Lakes Association, Stump Lake Association, Wolf Lake Association, Plantagenette Lake Association, Swenson Lake Association, and the Lake Andrusia Association.

Government Officials

District staff and supervisors are actively involved in many local projects including the Comprehensive Local Water Plan, Local Planning/Zoning initiatives, and Headwaters Regional Development Commission, and Giziibii Resource Conservation & Development projects. Educational goals are being met by incorporating an educational component into each project. In 2008, presentations to local governmental agencies, newsletters, newspaper inserts, and radio discussions concerning a variety of topics from forestry-related initiatives to stormwater management were used to inform both the public and government officials.

The District served as the Local Government Unit on behalf of the Cities of Bemidji, Blackduck, and Wilton in implementing the Wetland Conservation Act of 1991. In 2008, the SWCD continued to provide technical assistance to landowners for the WCA under the Mn Statutory requirements. District staff made presentations to the Beltrami County Board of Commissioners, Beltrami Association of Township Officers and other local agencies and citizen groups, in an effort to clarify the law and discuss opportunities for local wetland management programs. SWCD staff also responded to wetland complaints and suspected violations as required under Minnesota State Statute.

General Public

Good relationships continued with local newspapers and radio stations. The general public has been informed of the District's activities with articles submitted and published about the District's programs (several front-page!) covered by area newspapers, PSAs, radio interviews, and local public TV coverage. Several of these were extensive feature articles on SWCD projects.

The District Newsletter was published once in 2008 (on recycled paper). Progress of District programs and special projects plus informational and educational articles were written by SWCD/NRCS staff. The newsletter and tree order form were sent to 3800 addresses in Beltrami County and out-of-county locations. Readership includes landowners, agency personnel, legislators, churches, and other districts. Issues were also handed out at the office and at events such as the fair booth and annual meeting. Mailing lists have been developed for target audiences such as those in sub-watersheds.

Civic Groups

SWCD staff assisted with technical and administrative needs of a variety of civic groups such as Friends of Lake Bemidji, League of Women Voters, Chamber of Commerce, and others concerning conservation, stream monitoring, and groundwater protection.

Agricultural Producers

Several meetings were held this past year to transfer USDA program information to the landowners in Beltrami Co. Program information regarding eligibility on CRP, EQIP and WHIP, and compliance with the Farm Bill, were presented.

Literature concerning nutrient management, agriculture and water quality, feedlot management, and windbreaks were available to the public at the District office. The Lake Protection Video, and the Beltrami BMP Video and booklet continue to be requested by agencies and the general public. The District newsletter also included articles of practical interest for agricultural producers.

Resource Management Professionals

The District has developed a coalition approach to resolving complex problems, relying on combined skills of experience and expertise from many resource agencies. This has resulted in the successful exchange of information

and many very good working relationships with other resource management agencies. This has been especially important when increasing response times are being required for project reviews.

TREE PROGRAM

The ability to establish initial on-going relationships with landowners is one of the greatest attributes of the various District tree programs in addition to the environmental significance of a specific reforestation or tree/shrub planting practice. Often this relationship serves as an important foundation for future conservation practices or SWCD programs.

The 2008 District and Stewardship Forestry programs distributed approximately 60,000 trees and shrubs for use in reforestation plantings, farmstead windbreaks, erosion control, wildlife plantings, and field windbreaks. Planting design assistance was provided for all cost-shared plantings and many additional non-cost-shared plantings. Examples of technical assistance include site selection, soils information, technical design of plantings, tree species selection, site preparation, weed control, windbreak renovations, and planting techniques for conservation purposes.

Approximately 475 landowners/individuals utilized the services provided through the District Tree and TurnKey Implementation Programs in 2008. Many participants were repeat customers who annually use these programs to achieve their specific conservation goals. The SWCD's TurnKey Implementation Program realized an increase in 2008, where the District serves as the landowner's agent, and completes the entire project from start to finish per specifications as outlined in the landowner's project plan.

WATER PERMIT REVIEW PROGRAM

The Beltrami SWCD Board reviews all permit applications submitted to the Department of Natural Resources to work in or use public waters in Beltrami County. The responsibilities that the Beltrami SWCD has in regard to permit applications includes: reviewing all permits for water appropriations or work in the beds of public waters; making recommendations to the DNR on the adequacy of soil and water conservation measures associated with permit applications; assisting other units of government in an effort to insure proper management of the soil and water resources; and monitoring groundwater levels if necessary.

Red Lake Watershed District also sends their Beltrami County permit applications to the District for comment.

DISTRICT BOARD MEETINGS

Beltrami SWCD Board Meetings are held on the last Thursday of each month. Agendas and minutes are sent to supervisors, county commissioners, local legislators, and other agencies. Local newspapers and radio stations announce the meeting dates.

AWARDS

The District received recognition for Distinguished Service from the MN Association of Soil & Water Conservation District in collaboration with The Farmer magazine.

RAIN GAUGE REPORTING SYSTEM

Special gauges and forms are provided to 12 Beltrami County residents participating in the statewide recording of precipitation amounts on a daily basis. These readings are sent to the SWCD office each month and after being recorded for District use, they are forwarded to the state climatologist. Rainfall and temperature information was used by several agencies to determine crop loss, disaster aid, stream flow predictions, etc. University, high school and elementary students often request information for research projects. Many of the monitors supply additional information:

The Beltrami SWCD Board of Supervisors and staff would like to thank the participating monitors. Without these people assisting, the program would not have the success that it currently has. Please check the SWCD website at www.beltramiswcd.org for additional monitoring information.

SUMMARY

There continues to be a growing awareness of this area's abundant natural resources that is drawing increasing numbers of visitors and new residents to Beltrami County. In addition, a stable, improving economic outlook has prompted many visitors to the area to become local landowners as they purchase recreational or retirement property. This increased investment in the area needs to be accompanied by a similar acknowledgement of stewardship responsibilities. Current landowners must strive to exhibit the stewardship principles they have practiced for so many years, and convey their love for this land to our newest landowners. By working together in recognition of the many abundant, yet fragile Beltrami County resources, this legacy will exist for our subsequent generations.

Beltrami County landowners are fortunate to have a very able and active SWCD Board of Supervisors and staff who are dedicated to protecting those Beltrami County resources so important to this area. The Beltrami SWCD Supervisors and staff are committed to working with all Beltrami County landowners and local units of government to identify environmentally sound solutions to all local resource issues, and assist with promoting the stewardship concept. We invite you to visit our office and speak with our staff about the many resource conservation programs available to help protect Beltrami County's resources through the application of individual stewardship principles.