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# BELTRAMI SWCD 2009 ANNUAL REPORT

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January 1, 2009- December 31, 2009

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**2009**  
**SUPERVISORS, STAFF, AND PERSONNEL**

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**BELTRAMI SWCD SUPERVISORS**

Jay Backstrom, Chairman  
Jerome Geerdes., Vice Chairman  
Jay Frenzel, Secretary  
Ruth Ann Trask, Treasurer  
Shane Bowe, Public Relations

**BELTRAMI SWCD STAFF**

Christopher Parthun, District Manager  
Paula L Lowe, Administrative Assistant  
Dann Siems, Aquatic Biologist (thru Jun)  
Jerry Stensing, Stewardship Forester

**NORTH CENTRAL MN SWCDS JOINT POWERS BOARD**

Jon Hodgson, Conservation Engineer  
Brad Kennedy, Conservation Technician

**USDA NATURAL RESOURCES CONSERVATION SERVICE**

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

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**OTHER ASSISTING AGENCIES**

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**MN BOARD OF WATER & SOIL RESOURCES**

John Jaschke, Executive Director  
Chad Severts, Board Conservationist (SWCD)

**MN ASSOCIATION OF SOIL & WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICTS**

Steve Sunderland, President  
LeAnn Buck, Executive Director

**USDA NATURAL RESOURCES CONSERVATION SERVICE**

Glen Kajewski, Area Conservationist  
William Hunt, State Conservationist

**BELTRAMI COUNTY COMMISSIONERS**

Quentin Fairbanks  
Jim Heltzer  
Jack Frost  
Jim Lucachick  
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

Clearwater Private Woodland Committee

DNR Divisions of: Ecological Services, Fisheries  
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)

Lake Associations, 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, KAWE Public TV, 92.1 The River

Red Lake Band of Chippewa Indians

Rural Development Authority (formerly FmHA)

Soil & Water Conservation Districts-Area VIII I (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

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## PURPOSE OF THE DISTRICT

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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 a 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 will be 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 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 the 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 and available assistance.

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## DISTRICT POLICIES

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### **A. DISTRICT PROCEDURES**

The District is administered by five 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 will be 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 assistance on 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, civic organizations, etc.

**E. TECHNICAL POLICIES**

The District has adopted the NRCS Technical Guide as its own guide for conservation land treatments.

**F. CONSERVATION PLANNING**

It is the District's policy to try to provide every cooperator with a conservation planning to assist them with making sustainable decisions on their land. These plans will be reviewed and approved 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, 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 is to be reviewed annually and changes will be 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 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.

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## SERVICES PROVIDED BY BELTRAMI SWCD

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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.

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 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.

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 o request.

Serve as Host District for Non-Point Engineering Assistance Program.

Soil information and maps available.

Stewardship Forestry for public and 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 planting.

Tree planting service, machine and equipment rental.

Trees available for field windbreaks, farmstead shelterbelts, erosion control, reforestation, and wildlife plantings.

Use of Geographic Information Systems to assist with resource decisions.

Volunteer Rainfall Monitoring Network.

Water quality monitoring under contract with Hubbard and Clearwater Counties to study water chemistry and quality of area lakes.

Well-water testing information to individual homeowners.

Wood-ash utilization information and assistance.

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## SUPERVISORS AREAS

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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 2009, District Supervisors and their areas were:

### **District Area 1**

*Supervisor: Jay 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 Ann 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 the state that meet 4 times a year to discuss common resource management issues. The other counties are Clearwater, Cass, Crow Wing, Hubbard, Itasca, Koochiching, Lake of the Woods, and Wadena.

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# STAFF and ACTIVITY REPORT

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## INTRODUCTION

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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.

2009 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 has worked hard to bring additional conservation assistance to Beltrami County landowners, and are pleased to present you with this activity report.

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## I. WATER QUALITY AND QUANTITY PROTECTION PROGRAM

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### **Comprehensive Local Water Management**

The Beltrami SWCD serves as the lead agency for implementing Beltrami County's Comprehensive Local Water Plan (CLWP). 2009 projects included; 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 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.

**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. There eight geographic areas 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 2009 technical staff consisted of Mr. Jon Hodgson, P.E., Engineer, and Mr. Brad Kennedy, Engineering Technician, who worked to meet the conservation needs of the area's landowners. During 2009, they provided engineering design and construction assistance for over 62 conservation practices in the NCMJPB area..

**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. Technical assists to landowners included the spectrum of simple land interpretation to project proposal reviews/comments to publicly-reviewed replacement for projects 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 ground water quality.

**Surface Water Monitoring**

Beltrami SWCD staff assisted private lakeshore owners with collecting water quality data on area lakes through June of 2009 in Beltrami County finishing up a special grant received from the MPCA.

**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 2009, the SWCD continued to monthly monitor 19 observation wells for Beltrami County and the DNR Division of Waters.

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EROSION CONTROL

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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 snow fence plantings. In 2009 the SWCD provided technical assistance to land owners 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 other were simply landowners who desired to implement effective conservation measures on their property. 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 Stewardship Forester recommended shelterbelt plantings to control or prevent soil erosion as components in Woodland Stewardship Plans,

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## FORAGE/PASTURE MANAGEMENT

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### **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, Potlatch Corporation, and MPCA, the Ash Utilization (approval process) program was formed. To expedite the approval process, MPCA has given the District permission 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 2009, 14 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.

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## FOREST MANAGEMENT

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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. 2009 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 2009. 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 50 landowners requested information and field assistance for insect or disease issues in 2009.

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 Agriculture and Wildlife. There was also many brochures and handouts covering forest management.

In a cooperative partnership with MNDNR Forestry and local Radio, the SWCD presented six tree doctor radio interviews where insect and disease questions were answered and general tree/forest health issues were discussed.

Additional information is available on the SWCD website [www.beltramiswcd.org](http://www.beltramiswcd.org).

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## WILDLIFE HABITAT MANAGEMENT

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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 include: 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 maintenance and improvement recommendations at the request of the landowner.

The Beltrami SWCD sold over 40,000 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.

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## INFORMATION AND EDUCATION

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SWCD/NRCS education efforts in 2009 included presentations by staff and supervisors to groups including elementary and university students, lake association conferences, woodland committees, township meetings, city government meetings, County Board meetings, and others. The District staff also made presentation on local radio station and the local Public TV station.

### **SCHOOLS**

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 9-12<sup>th</sup> 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 2009 Envirothon was held at Lake Bemidji State Park April 22. There were 30 teams that participated in the competition with the Team #6 from Lake of the Woods took 1<sup>st</sup> place, Team #18 from Park Rapids took 2<sup>nd</sup> place, and Team #25 from Walker Hackensack Akeley received 3<sup>rd</sup> place. The 2009 Minnesota Envirothon Oral presentation problem was "Biodiversity in a Changing World". The students were given a hypothetical, fictitious scenario that they were to present and defend to a panel of 3 judges. Out congratulations to these students and their advisors!

The 8'x8' 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 very positive. Many tourists visit the Science Center and may have their initial introduction to the area with this model.

Student and their instructors, from the elementary to college age, received information on our soil and water resources by visiting the office and the SWCD website throughout the year.

### **LAKESHORE OWNERS**

SWCD and NRCS staff worked with several area lake associations and groups in 2009. There were numerous requests for assistance from area lake associations and groups in 2009. Technical support was provided to member of the Grace Lake Watershed Association, Turtle River Association, Beltrami County lakes and Rivers Association, Lake Julia Association and Lake Plantagenet.

### **GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS**

District staff and supervisors are actively involved in many local projects including the Comprehensive Local Water Plan, Local Wetland Planning, 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 2009, 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 2009, 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 well informed of the District's activities with articles submitted and published and additional articles about the District's programs (several front-page!) were covered by area newspapers, PSAs, radio interview, local public TV coverage. Several of these were extensive feature articles on SWCD projects.

The District Newsletter was published once in 2009 (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 concerning the Wetland Conservation Act, 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.

Four quarterly Feedlot Newsletters for livestock producers were mailed to 85 landowners in Beltrami County.

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.

### **DISTRICT 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 2009 District and Stewardship Forestry programs distributed approximately 54,000 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 455 landowners/individuals utilized the services provided through the District Tree and Turnkey Implementation Programs in 2009. Many participants were repeat customers who annually use these programs to achieve their specific conservation goals. During 2009, the SWCD Turnkey tree planting service implemented 11 projects on 85 acres. The seedlings planted through Turnkey service contributed over 26,000 seedlings sold and planted through the District program, and provided seasonal employment for 4 independent contractors. Turnkey Implementation Program is when the District serves as the landowners agent, and completes the entire project from start to finish per specifications as outlined in the project plan.

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### **WATER PERMIT REVIEW PROGRAM**

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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 permit applications to the District for comment.

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### **DISTRICT BOARD MEETINGS**

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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.

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### **CHANGES**

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Beltrami County landowners are well aware of the local impacts of the changing economic environment, and the SWCDs serving Beltrami County have also felt the impacts. Competition for county funds has become increasing more aggressive for several years, causing the SWCD to seek to secure more of its operating funds from non-county sources. Since 2003, the Beltrami SWCD's operations have been supported by more than 92% non-county revenues, much of this being self-generated through contracts and service fees for technical assistance. Grant applications and approved projects implementation have also sustained the capacity of the SWCD to deliver the technical assistance necessary to address most local, high-priority resource issues. Despite the SWCD's record of reducing its dependence on county support, this support has become even more critical in 2009. Due to an overall reduction in grant funds to support staffing capacity, the SWCD Board voted to eliminate the SWCD's Aquatic Biologist position effective June 30, 2009. Many of you met and worked with Dann Siems during his 2-year employment with the SWCD. Dann's dedication to water quality improvement and working with lakeshore associations resulted in significant progress in citizen-based, lake improvement initiatives.

2009 also saw the retirement of long-time Board member Wes Frenzel, who served over 17 years on the SWCD Board, helping guide it to become a successful local resource management entity assisting local landowners with their stewardship goals.

2010 will present numerous challenges, as the SWCD continues to assess its delivery of technical services and explores new partnerships to become more efficient. Discussions have been recently initiated with Beltrami County to evaluate a more efficient delivery of resource management services by implementing a more collaborative partnership. One possibility will see the SWCD partner with the County's Environmental Services Office to provide more of a "one-stop shopping" model. 2010 will also likely include the termination of SWCD services through the Marshall-Beltrami SWCD, located in Grygla. Discussions are currently underway to determine how landowners in this SWCD area will continue to receive technical services, with one possibility that the Beltrami SWCD will accept the challenge - providing there is sufficient commitment of State financial support. At a time when changes are frequently occurring, the Beltrami SWCD wants to assure the county's landowners that we will continue to provide the technical assistance you have come to expect while seeking new ways to be more efficient. Thanks to those of you who have voiced your continued support for us. This newsletter is a bit smaller than usual, but we hope you will find it informative and encouraging!

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## RAIN GAUGE REPORTING SYSTEM

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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 the 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](http://www.beltramiswcd.org) for additional monitoring information.

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## SUMMARY

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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.

*The Beltrami SWCD and NRCS staff make the commitment to continue to provide assistance to all landowners, individuals, and agencies within the guidelines of present policy and on a nondiscriminatory basis, without regard to race, creed, color, sex, national origin, religion, gender, age, disability, marital status, political beliefs, sexual orientation or handicap.*



