



Conservation News

Spring 2011

Freeborn County Soil & Water Conservation District (SWCD)

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Brian Jensen, NRCS
Soil Conservation Tech.

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WRP Contract Biologist

Bruce & Beth Andersland Recognized for their Conservation Efforts.

As part of an annual recognition program, our Board of Supervisors chose Bruce & Beth Andersland to receive the **2010 "Outstanding Conservation Farmer Award"**. They were present at and received special recognition during the Minnesota Association of Soil & Water Conservation District's (MASWCD) Annual Convention. It was held in early December at the Crown Plaza Hotel located in downtown St. Paul. Winners from each county across the state were honored at a

noon luncheon sponsored by the "Farmer" Magazine and MASWCD.

The Anderslands operate a cash/grain farm in the Emmons Area growing primarily corn & soybeans plus some Alfalfa. They also have a Purebred Simmental Beef Cow/Calf Herd. They were selected for the award based on their application of a number of Best Management Practices (BMPs) on farms they operate. Most recently, they installed seven (7) Water & Sediment Control Basins to control gully erosion in one field on one of their farms. In addition to basins, Bruce has installed grass waterways, side inlet pipes into open ditches, constructed a wildlife pond and planted trees. He also no-tills most of his soybean acreage, planting into standing corn stalks from the



Bruce and Beth pictured here with Paula Mohr, Editor of The Farmer Magazine .

previous crop year. He's been installing many of these practices with help from the Environmental Quality Incentive Program (EQIP). This is a USDA-NRCS Cost Share Program that provides financial assistance as an incentive to encourage landowners to install Best Management Practices.

We congratulate Bruce & Beth on their successful farming operation that includes many soil & water conservation practice applications.



Beth is admiring the growth & vigor of some of their no-till soybeans. Seven Water & Sediment Basins were installed in this field.

SWCD Board of Supervisors:

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Chris Dahl,
Vice-Chair

Dave Ausen,
Treasurer

Paul Heers, Jr.,
Board Secretary

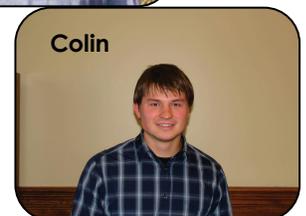
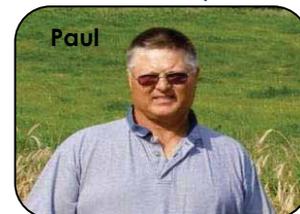
Colin Wittmer,
Supervisor

2011 Brings two new supervisors, Paul Heers, Jr. and Colin Wittmer.

Two new board members were sworn into office on January 3rd at the Freeborn County Courthouse. Paul Heers, Jr. whose district (#3) includes everything south of I-90 and east of I-35, except Albert Lea Township.

Colin Wittmer is the other new representative whose district (#4) covers everything south of I-90 and west of I-35, except Albert Lea Township. Their terms are 4 years in length.

We welcome Paul & Colin to serve on our board to address local conservations issues.



Visit us on the web at www.freebornswcd.org



Watch for Rain Barrel Sale & Distribution

Mower & Freeborn Co. Soil and Water Conservation Districts, Freeborn Co., Austin Utilities, Shell Rock River Watershed District, and Super Fresh Market are working with Enviro World to host a Truck Load Sale- Rain Barrel Distribution Day.

The primary objective of a truck load sale distribution event is to supply the maximum number of FreeGarden™ RAIN rain barrels to customers in a specified area. One-day-only sales events provide an efficient and effective means of distributing products to a large number of residents. Barrels are purchased on a "first come, first served, while supplies lasts" basis. The cost of a barrel will be \$60.

The event will be held on a Saturday, from 9:00 AM to 3:00 PM. The exact date of the distribution has not been set; there will be a location in Albert Lea and one in Austin for you to pick up your rain barrel.

Watch for more details this spring or for more information you can phone:

Shell Rock River WD - 507.383.1883
Mower Co. SWCD - 507.434.2603
Freeborn Co. SWCD-507.373.5607

Funding Available for Conservation & Land Improvement Projects. . .

The Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) in Freeborn County has \$300,000 available for conservation and land improvement projects. The funding is through the Environmental Quality Incentive Program, called EQIP. EQIP is a competitive program to help agriculture producers apply needed conservation practices on their land and farmstead. Producers will receive 75 to 90 % payment rate based on

average cost of each individual practice. Other practices receive 100% of a payment cap for establishing conservation practices such as no-till, nutrient management, pest management, prescribed grazing and others.

The EQIP signup period is **NOW through March 4, 2011**. Applications will be scored and ranked based on a statewide and locally prioritized environmental

ranking process. EQIP will fund the most cost-effective and environmentally beneficial projects. To apply for funding landowners should visit the NRCS office at the USDA Service Center or call **507-373-5607 Ext. 3**.

The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) prohibits discrimination in all its programs and activities on the basis of race, color, national origin, gender, religion, age, disability, political beliefs, sexual orientation and marital or family status.

Conservation Practices Damaged by Sept. 23rd Flood Event Repaired at No Cost to the Landowner . . .

Anyone having a conservation practice that needs repair or replacement as a result of damage caused by heavy rainfall last September is encouraged to contact our SWCD/NRCS Office. We can offer 100% cost share assistance to restore the practice enabling it to again function as designed.

As part of the State's "Flood Relief Legislation"

passed in October 18th, 2010, our SWCD was allocated \$25,000 to offset flood damages. It encourages us to leverage federal funds (if available), therefore we ask that landowners sign an EQIP Application and if approved, we would use Flood Relief Funds only to cover the balance not paid by EQIP for that individual. If EQIP Funds are not available for a particular project, we can

then use Flood Relief dollars to fund the entire practice restoration cost.

We've been made aware of several conservation practices that sustained damage and are working with these landowners. We ask that anyone else having an existing practice that was damaged to call us as soon as possible. We can check out the problem and get the landowner signed up for assistance.

Floodplain Easements with the 2011 Southern Minnesota Reinvest in Minnesota/Wetlands Reserve Program (RIM/WRP) Floodplain Relief. . .

If you have land that lies within a 100 year floodplain, land that has been damaged by the September 2010 floods or land that lies adjacent to a DNR Protected Water you may be eligible for the RIM/WRP Floodplain Relief program. RIM/WRP is a voluntary conservation easement program administered by the Natural Resources Conservation Service

(NRCS) and the Minnesota Board of Water and Soil Resources (BWSR). It pays participants to set aside environmentally sensitive land and convert the land to restored wetlands and native vegetation.

Easement payment rates for this program are at an all time high with rates ranging from approximately \$4600.00 to \$5500.00 per acre for cropland and

\$2600.00 to \$3000.00 per acre for non-cropland. These rates are based on each township's Average Assessed Tillable Value. Once the easement has closed it is anticipated that restoration activities will be reimbursed up to 100%.

The official signup period for this program started January 5th and runs through March 4th 2011.



The Sept. rainstorm caused this damage to a Side Inlet Pipe along an open ditch. Flood Relief Funds can be used to repair these sites.

Opportunities available for replanting trees. . .

Many farm shelterbelts took quite a beating from the storms of last summer. Some were completely decimated, while others only lost a few trees. With the nasty winter we've been having many of you may be starting to think about replanting your shelterbelt or planting a new one. Landowners with non-damaged shelterbelts may be thinking of renovating groves that have been neglected for too long or are otherwise not serving their intended purpose.

While planting trees is almost always a good

investment in your property, there are several sources of cost share for planting trees. We have state cost share, the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP), Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP), and Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program (WHIP) available in this county. Some of these programs even include an allowance for tree debris cleanup if it has not been done yet. Come in and see us to determine if your project is eligible and which program may be the best fit for your goals.

Freeborn SWCD will once again have good quality and relatively inexpensive trees and shrubs available through our annual tree sale. We can assess your current damaged or neglected windbreak to recommend salvage or replacement. We will also be happy to meet with you and create a custom planting plan tailored to your needs and your site if you desire.

Watch for our Forestry Workshop to be held this March!



Damaged windbreak due to June 17 tornado. Many of these trees are damaged so extensively that they will need to be replaced.

Arbor Day is April 29

Clean Water Fund Grant Dollars Available to Cost Share Conservation Practice Installations . . .

Agricultural Best Management Practices (AgBMPs) aimed at reducing erosion and increasing infiltration in riparian areas can be installed and cost shared by grant funds made available from the Clean Water Fund. This grant was applied for and received by the Greater Blue Earth River Basin Alliance (GBERBA) and distributed to its member Soil & Water Conservation Districts for practice application.

GBERBA is a 9- county, Joint Powers Organization made up of Soil and Water Conservation Districts

and County Government. All of these counties are located either partially or entirely in the Minnesota River Basin Watershed. To be eligible for funding in Freeborn County, your land must be located in the Minnesota River Watershed which includes about 100,000 acres in the west and northwest areas of our county.

Water & Sediment Control Basins fit well with the grant's intent and purpose. They help reduce sedimentation and increase infiltration by temporarily storing water from a rainfall event until it can be

safely removed underground by tile. If you have one or more gullies in a field that are troublesome for farming, basins are a popular practice to install. In many cases they can be oriented parallel with the row pattern and spaced so planter passes fit the basin location. Most farmers prefer them to grass waterways because they don't have to be crossed and you don't have to be concerned with herbicide applications around a grass waterway. Give us a call if you think you may have a site where a basin would work.



Recent Changes in CRP Field Windbreaks

The Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) recently announced that the eligibility requirements to enroll into a Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) contract for Field Windbreaks have changed. Namely, the requirement to have high wind induced soil erosion has been changed. Prior to this change there were very few areas in Freeborn County that would have met the eligibility requirements. This change will make the majority of crop fields eligible to receive cost share and annual payments for one to three row field windbreak plantings.



Basin Ridge Under Construction

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