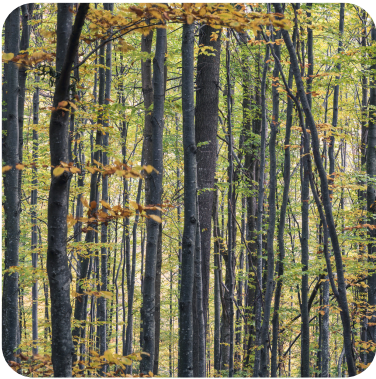


# NEWSLETTER

WINTER/SPRING 2025



## RESILIENT HARDWOOD BUNDLE

Meet the newest addition to our annual tree sale the: Resilient Hardwoods Bundle. This bundle includes Black Cherry, Hackberry, American Linden, Bur Oak, and Swamp White Oak. Each bundle includes five of each species, totaling 25 trees per bundle.

Why Resilient Hardwoods? Well, USDA Plant Hardiness zones have been shifting north, changing their growing zone designations. These trees are native, drought tolerant, and up to the challenge of shifts in our growing zone.

See the 2025 tree order form inside this newsletter to order yours!

## RETIRING AFTER 27 YEARS OF SERVICE

Brenda Lageson began her career with the Freeborn County Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD) in November 1997 as an Administrative Assistant. She held this position until 2012, when she was promoted to Office Manager, taking on additional financial responsibilities for the district. In 2017, Brenda advanced to the role of District Manager, where her primary focus was to ensure the district operated at its highest capacity.

Although Brenda makes her job seem effortless, her extensive knowledge of Freeborn SWCD procedures, grants, and the various new programs implemented during her tenure will be challenging to replace.

Brenda looks forward to spending more time with her grandchildren and enjoying life by the lake with her husband Ron. We wish her the best and happiest of retirements!



## UPCOMING EVENTS

FEBRUARY 10TH, 2025  
9AM-3PM

### TREE OPEN HOUSE

Stop in to visit with Freeborn County SWCD staff at our office in Albert Lea to learn about our programs and cost-share opportunities. Let us help you with tree species selection and drop off your trees orders!

## DECODE THE MESSAGE

A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L	M	N	O	P	Q	R	S	T	U	V	W	X	Z
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SWCD SUPERVISORS:  
 CURT HELLAND | **CHAIRMAN**  
 SCOTT LIGHTLY | **VICE CHAIRMAN**  
 VICKIE HEERS | **TREASURER**  
 BRAD KRAMER | **SECRETARY**  
 CASEY MADSON | **SUPERVISOR**



SWCD STAFF:  
 BRENDA LAGESON | **DISTRICT MANAGER**  
 LINDSEY CORNELL | **DISTRICT MANAGER**  
 CHAD BILLAT | **PROJECT MANAGER**  
 MARK TRNKA | **CONSERVATION TECHNICIAN**  
 SENJA VIKTORA | **DISTRICT TECHNICIAN**  
 WENDY AARSVOLD | **ADMINISTRATIVE ASSISTANT**

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## 2025 CONSERVATIONIST OF THE YEAR BANGERT FAMILY FARMS

The Freeborn County Soil & Water Conservation District is proud to recognize Bangert Family Farms LP, operated by Norman and Pat Bangert with their sons: Ben, Adam, Erik and their families as our 2024 Outstanding Conservationists .

In 1939, Norman's father purchased the farm in Nunda Township where Norman would grow up helping on the family farm to raise corn, soybeans, and hay. When Norman married Pat, they purchased a farm of their own just one section south of his home farm and started straight away with improvements by planting a wind break and other projects. As time went on, the farm transitioned to Norman in the '90s, Pat and their oldest son went to 'off farm' jobs and the younger two sons were still in school, Norman needed to find ways to save time on the farm. That's when Norman incorporated no-till into his farm management. They found this saved time by reducing the number of passes made on each field, improved their soils, and produced fewer rocks to pick.

Norman and his family didn't stop at no-till, they continued to incorporate progressive practices into their operation. In the early 2000's the Bangert's started to experiment with cover crops, first by hand spreading cover crops on a small area then moving onto full field implementation. At first, there were failures. Luckily the Bangerts weren't deterred from cover crops, they simply adjusted and tried again.

Currently, the fourth generation of Bangerts are learning about the hard work and resiliency it takes to farm. The grandchildren can be found at the farm helping bale hay, plant and harvest the crops, and the myriad of other tasks that comes with farming. It is clear that the Bangerts are happiest when working together on the farm.



**Above:** Norman and Pat Bangert with their three sons & two grandsons.



**Left:** Hayed filter strip provides improved water quality & food for livestock

**Below:** Even the youngest Bangert enjoys helping on the farm.



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### VOLUNTEER RAIN GAUGE READER NETWORK

After each rainfall, our dedicated volunteers take the time to read their rain gauges and accurately record precipitation amounts on data sheets. At the end of the month, they submit these readings to our office, where we compile the data into statewide archives for the Minnesota State Climatology Office.

This valuable data supports studies and enhances weather prediction models. Currently, Freeborn County has 15 committed rain gauge monitors, but we are actively seeking more volunteers to join the effort. We provide rain gauges and data sheets at no cost, making it easy for you to contribute. If you're eager to volunteer and help shape our understanding of weather patterns, please contact the Freeborn Soil and Water Conservation District today!





## FARWELL TO DEDICATED BOARD MEMBERS

The Freeborn County SWCD is governed by a five-member board of supervisors elected by the citizens of Freeborn County. At the end of 2024, our board of supervisors, collectively, lost over 76 years of knowledge and experience after three board members retired. We are thankful for their dedication and service to the Freeborn County SWCD!



Retiring staff and supervisors at their retirement party.



### DON KROPP-DISTRICT 5

Don Kropp has retired from his position as a board supervisor after 39 years of dedicated service. He joined the board of supervisors in 1986, representing District 5.

Don spent over 50 years as a teacher and coach at Albert Lea High School. He brought his passion for education to the board, actively advocating for educational activities. During his tenure, Don also served on multiple boards to represent the Freeborn County SWCD.

### DAVE AUSEN-DISTRICT 1

Dave Ausen has retired from his position as a board supervisor after 19 years of dedicated service. He joined the board of supervisors in 2005, representing District 1.

Dave is a supervisor that led by example, implementing many of the conservation practices we advocate for in our office, from shelterbelt tree plantings to strip-till on his own farm. His experience in farming and using conservation practices helped get conservation on the ground in Freeborn County.



### CHRISTOPHER DAHL-DISTRICT 2

Christopher Dahl has retired from his position as a board supervisor after 17 years of dedicated service. He joined the board of supervisors in 2007, representing District 2.

Chris farms near the Clarks Grove, MN area and operates his own business. Chris took a no nonsense approach to his work as a supervisor, ensuring staff had what was needed to accomplish conservation work and ensured the Freeborn County SWCD operated efficiently.

## LAWNS TO LEGUMES

The Lawns to Legumes program aims to empower Minnesota residents to help pollinators in their own yards. The program offers workshops, coaching, planting guides and cost-share funding for installing pollinator-friendly native plantings. The goal is to help create habitats for at-risk species like the rusty patched bumble bee and the monarch butterfly.

Any Minnesotan can apply to receive reimbursement for costs associated with native planting projects. Applications for Fall 2025 will be available in February of 2025 at; [bluethumb.org/lawns-to-legumes/apply/](https://bluethumb.org/lawns-to-legumes/apply/)



## MEET OUR NEWEST BOARD MEMBERS AND STAFF

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### CASEY MADSON-DISTRICT 1

Casey Madson has been elected as the new supervisor for District 1, which encompasses the townships of Freeborn, Carlston, and parts of Hartland and Manchester.

In 2018, Casey and his wife, Stacie, were honored with the Conservationist of the Year award by the Freeborn County SWCD. Casey brings to the board experience with organic farming and implementing conservation practices on his own farm. Casey was sworn into office in January 2025 and will serve a four-year term.

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### SCOTT LIGHTLY- DISTRICT 2

Scott Lightly has been elected as the new supervisor for District 2. This district encompasses all of Newry, Geneva, Moscow, Riceland, and Bath townships, as well as parts of Hartland, Manchester, Bancroft, Hayward, and Oakland.

In 2022, Scott Lightly and his family were honored with the Freeborn County SWCD's Conservationist of the Year award. He has a passion for educating other farmers on the benefits of soil health. Scott was sworn into office in January 2025 and will serve a four-year term.



### BRAD KRAMER-DISTRICT 5

Brad Kramer is the newly elected supervisor for District 5. District 5 covers Albert Lea township.

Brad currently sits on the board of managers for the Shell Rock River Watershed District and the Minnesota Watershed board of directors. He owns and runs a company that helps businesses with worker safety and health consulting and training. Brad was sworn in to duty in January of 2025 and will serve a term of 4 years.

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### WENDY AARSVOLD | ADMINISTRATIVE PROFESSIONAL

Meet Wendy Aarsvold, the new Administrative Assistant for the Freeborn County SWCD. Wendy will take on the role of maintaining the districts financial records along with a variety of duties to support staff, the board of supervisors, and the Freeborn County SWCD as a whole. She started with the Freeborn County SWCD on January 13th, 2025.

Wendy has a diverse work history, but spent many years in Payables/Receivables with a trucking company. Wendy grew up south of Austin, MN and her previous jobs based in agriculture prompted her to join the Freeborn County SWCD. She is excited to work with everyone and be part of a great team.

In her free time, Wendy enjoys being involved with her children and their activities, reading, and counted cross-stitch. She is already looking forward to warmer temperatures and hopes of a new garden.







# FREEBORN COUNTY SWCD SPRING 2025 TREE ORDER FORM

1400 W Main Street, Albert Lea, MN 56007  
507-373-5607 Ext. 3  
freebornswcd@gmail.com  
freebornswcd.org

STOCK IS LIMITED. ORDER BY FEBRUARY 21 FOR BEST SELECTION  
NO CANCELLATIONS AFTER THIS DATE

EVERGREEN BARE ROOT SOLD IN BUNDLES OF 25	SIZE	PRICE/ BUNDLE	# OF BUNDLES	TOTAL
Cedar, Eastern Red	9-15"	\$51.00		
Pine, Red	7-15"	\$51.00		
Pine, White	7-15"	\$51.00		
Spruce, Black Hills	7-15"	\$51.00		
Spruce, Norway	7-15"	\$51.00		

EVERGREEN POTTED SOLD PER TREE	SIZE		PRICE/ POT	# OF POTS	TOTAL
	POT	HEIGHT			
Arborvitae, Am.	1 gal	15-18"	\$15.00		
Arborvitae, Am.	2 gal	18-24"	\$20.00		
Pine, Red	1 gal	15-18"	\$15.00		
Pine, White	1 gal	15-18"	\$15.00		
Pine, White	2 gal	18-24"	\$20.00		
Spruce, Black Hills	1 gal	15-18"	\$15.00		
Spruce, Black Hills	2 gal	24-30"	\$20.00		
Spruce, Meyer	1 gal	15-18"	\$15.00		
<del>Spruce, Meyer</del>	2 gal	18-24"	\$20.00		<b>SOLD OUT</b>
Spruce, Norway	1 gal	15-18"	\$15.00		
Tamarack	1 gal	18-24"	\$15.00		

DECIDUOUS TREES BARE ROOT SOLD IN BUNDLES OF 25	SIZE	PRICE/ BUNDLE	# OF BUNDLES	TOTAL
Birch, Paper	2-3'	\$53.00		
Crabapple, Red Splendor	2-3'	\$53.00		
Maple, Red	2-3'	\$53.00		
Maple, Sugar	2-3'	\$53.00		
Oak, Bur	18-24"	\$51.00		
Oak, Red	2-3'	\$53.00		
Plum, American	18-24"	\$51.00		
Walnut, Black	2-3'	\$53.00		
Willow, Hybrid	2-3'	\$53.00		
<b>NEW ITEM</b> Resilient Hardwoods' Bundle*	18-24"	\$51.00		

\*Each 'Resilient Hardwoods' Bundle includes five (5) each of: Black Cherry, Hackberry, American Linden, Bur Oak, Swamp White Oak. Total of 25 bare root trees.

DECIDUOUS SHRUBS BARE ROOT SOLD IN BUNDLES OF 25	SIZE	PRICE/ BUNDLE	# OF BUNDLES	TOTAL
Arrowwood	18-24"	\$51.00		
Cranberrybush	18-24"	\$51.00		
Dogwood, Redosier	18-24"	\$51.00		
Hazelnut, American	18-24"	\$51.00		
Lilac, Common Purple	18-24"	\$51.00		
Nannyberry	18-24"	\$51.00		

## CUSTOMER INFORMATION

NAME: \_\_\_\_\_

PHONE: \_\_\_\_\_

ADDRESS: \_\_\_\_\_

CITY, STATE, ZIP: \_\_\_\_\_

EMAIL: \_\_\_\_\_

ORDER DATE: \_\_\_\_\_

PAYMENT METHOD: \_\_\_\_\_

PLANT PACKS 36 PLANTS PER PACK	PRICE/ PACK	# OF PACKS	TOTAL
The <b>Monarch Plant Pack</b> is a mix of native species to benefit Monarch caterpillars and butterflies. Includes six (6) each of: Showy Milkweed, Meadow Blazing Star, Showy Goldenrod, Sky Blue Aster, Purple Prairie Clover & Side Oats Grama for a total of 36 plants.			
Monarch Plant Pack	\$70.00		
The <b>Pollinator Plant Pack</b> is a mix of spring, summer & fall blooming species in a variety of colors to provide food for a range of pollinators year round. Includes six (6) each of: Yarrow, Prairie Coreopsis, Pale Purple Coneflower, Sky Blue Aster, Hoary Vervain, and Little Bluestem for a total of 36 plants.			
Pollinator Plant Pack	\$70.00		

OTHER SOLD PER ITEM	PRICE/ PACK	# OF ITEMS	TOTAL
Tree Mat	\$1.50		
Fertilizer Pack	\$0.40		
Tree Tube	\$3.50		






SPECIAL ORDERS	PRICE	#	TOTAL

SUBTOTAL	
SALES TAX 7.875%	
<b>BALANCE DUE</b>	
















MAKE CHECKS PAYABLE TO: FREEBORN COUNTY SWCD

- 🌳 Bare root trees are sold in bundles only. If you want fewer trees we recommend purchasing potted.
- 🌳 Contact the SWCD for pricing and availability of special orders.
- 🌳 Orders can be made online at [freebornswcd.org](http://freebornswcd.org) or mailed in with payment to our office.
- 🌳 The Freeborn SWCD sells good quality trees, but offers no guarantee of survival or availability of items ordered.
- 🌳 Trees will be available for pick-up in the spring at the Freeborn Co. Fairgrounds in Albert Lea, MN. We will send postcards and an email with tree pick-up date and instructions.
- 🌳 Plant packs will be available for pick up mid-May





EVERGREEN TREES

<p>ARBORVITAE, AMERICAN <i>Thuja occidentalis</i> </p>	<p>CEDAR, EASTERN RED <i>Juniperus virginiana</i> </p>	<p>PINE, RED <i>Pinus resinosa</i> </p>	<p>PINE, WHITE <i>Pinus strobus</i> </p>
<p>Also known as Northern White Cedar. Grows to a height of 40-50' with a spread of 10-15'. Moderately fast growing, long-lived tree. Prefers full sun to partial shade. Adaptable. Pyramidal shaped tree with flat, soft green scale like needles. Makes an excellent windbreak tree.</p>	<p>Grows to a height of 40-50' with a spread of 8-25'. Moderately fast growing. Prefers full sun. Adaptable to a range of soils and site conditions. Grows sharp green scale-like needles. This tree is very hardy; tolerant of deer, heat, drought and poor soils. Excellent for wildlife.</p>	<p>Also known as Norway Pine. Minnesota's State Tree. Grows to a height of 50-80' with a spread of 20-25'. Moderately fast growing, long-lived tree. Prefers well-drained, sandy soils and full sun. Has distinct reddish-brown bark that becomes thick scaly plates as it grows older.</p>	<p>Grows to a height of 80-100' with a spread of 50-80'. Fast growing, long-lived, tallest conifer species in MN. Prefers full sun and rich, moist soils. Tolerates partial shade &amp; a wide range of soils. Buds are a favorite snack for deer and should be protected to discourage browsing.</p>
<p>SPRUCE, BLACK HILLS <i>Picea glauca var. densata</i></p>	<p>SPRUCE, MEYER <i>Picea meyeri</i></p>	<p>SPRUCE, NORWAY <i>Picea abies</i></p>	<p>TAMARACK <i>Larix laricina</i> </p>
<p>Grows to a height of 40-50' with a spread of 20-35'. Naturally occurring variety of the native white spruce from the Black Hills region of SD. Slow growing, long lived conifer. Prefers full sun and moist to well drained soils. Tolerates dry sites.</p>	<p>Grows to a height of 40-100' with a spread of 15-20'. Good alternative to replace Colorado Spruce. Slow growing, long-lived conifer. Prefers full sun and moist to well drained soils. Drought tolerant. Intolerant of standing water.</p>	<p>Grows to a height of 80 - 100+' with a spread of 40-50'. Native to Europe. Fast growing, long-lived tree. Prefers moist to well drained soil and full sun. Adaptable. Grows in a pyramidal shape with drooping branches.</p>	<p>Grows to a height of 50-75' tall with a spread of 15-30'. This deciduous conifer's needles turn yellow and drop every year in the fall. Fast growing. Tolerates wide range of soil conditions but grows most commonly on wet to moist organic soils in full sun.</p>



DECIDUOUS TREES

<p>BIRCH, PAPER <i>Betula papyrifera</i> </p>	<p> CHERRY, BLACK <i>Prunus serotina</i> </p>	<p>CRABAPPLE, RED SPLENDOR <i>Malus "red splendor"</i></p>	<p> HACKBERRY <i>Celtis occidentalis</i> </p>	<p> LINDEN, AMERICAN <i>Tilia americana</i> </p>
<p>Grows to a height of 50-70' with a spread of 25-70'. Moderately fast growing. Prefers moist to well drained soils and full sun; will tolerate wide range of soils. Hardy native that's intolerant of pollution.</p>	<p>Grows to a height of 50-80' with a spread of 30-60'. Fast growing. Prefers partial shade to full sun and well drained soils. Adaptable, drought tolerant. Produces small, white, fragrant blossoms and bitter, small, purple-black cherries. Good wildlife food source.</p>	<p>Small tree. Grows to a height of 15-25' with a spread of 10-30'. Moderately fast growing. Prefers moist to well drained soils and full sun. Leaves are green or reddish, with white or pink flowers. Produces fruits up to 1" in diameter. Good wildlife food source.</p>	<p>Grows to a height of 40-60' with a spread of 40-60'. Fast growing. Prefers full sun and moist to well drained soil. Adaptable, drought, heat, strong wind, and salt tolerant. Produces small purple fruit, that stay on during most of the winter for wildlife.</p>	<p>Grows to a height of 60-100' with a spread of 30-50'. Fast growing, long-lived tree. Prefers partial shade to full sun and moist, well drained soils. Drought tolerant. Produces showy, light yellow flowers that are attractive to honeybees; its nectar makes excellent honey.</p>
<p>MAPLE, RED <i>Acer rubrum</i> </p>	<p>MAPLE, SUGAR <i>Acer saccharum</i> </p>	<p>OAK, BUR <i>Quercus macrocarpa</i> </p>	<p>OAK, RED <i>Quercus rubra</i> </p>	
<p>Grows to a height of 40-70' with a spread of 30-50'. Moderately fast growing. Prefers moist to well drained soil and full to partial shade. Will tolerate occasional flooding and shade. Leaves can turn red, yellow or orange in fall.</p>	<p>Grows to a height of 60-80' with a spread of 30-60'. Slow growing, long-lived tree. Prefers moist well drained soils. Will grow in shade to full sun. Not tolerant of drought. Produces a dense, oval crown and displays yellow to orangish red leaves in the fall.</p>	<p>Grows to a height of 70-80+' with a spread of 60-80'. Slow growing, long-lived tree. Prefers full sun and a variety of soils. Drought tolerant. Has simple lobed leaves and produces acorns. Good for wildlife.</p>	<p>Grows to a height of 60-80+' with a spread of 40-65'. Fast growing, long-lived tree. Prefers moist to well-drained soils and partial shade to full sun. Tolerates drought, dry sites, and clay soil. Displays red or brown leaves in the fall that remain through winter. Good for wildlife.</p>	
<p> OAK, SWAMP WHITE <i>Quercus bicolor</i> </p>	<p>PLUM, AMERICAN <i>Prunus americana</i> </p>	<p>WALNUT, BLACK <i>Juglans nigra</i> </p>	<p>WILLOW, HYBRID <i>Salix matsudana/alba</i></p>	
<p>Grows to a height of 50-60' with a spread of 50-60'. Moderately fast growing, long-lived tree. Prefers full sun and wet to well-drained soils. Drought tolerant. Displays red or brown leaves in the fall that remain through winter. Good for wildlife.</p>	<p>Small tree. Grows to a height of 15-25' with a spread of 15-25'. Fast growing, short-lived tree. Prefers moist to well-drained soil and partial shade to full sun. Tolerates drought, dry sites, and clay soil. Fragrant white flowers are followed by edible fruits suitable for jellies. Thicket forming.</p>	<p>Grows to a height of 50-60+' with a spread of 75-100'. Moderate to fast growing, long-lived tree. Prefers moist to well drained soils and partial shade to full sun. Produces the chemical juglone that can affect sensitive plants nearby. Produces a hard-shelled nut. Good for wildlife.</p>	<p>Grows to a height of 50-70'+ with a spread of 5-10'. Fast growing, short-lived tree. Prefers wet to well drained soils and partial shade to full sun. Single stemmed tree good for windbreaks. Avoid planting near other willows and in areas where uncontrolled spread is possible.</p>	

DECIDUOUS SHRUBS

<p>ARROWWOOD <i>Viburnum dentatum</i></p>	<p>CRANBERRYBUSH <i>Viburnum trilobum</i> </p>	<p>DOGWOOD, REDOSIER <i>Cornus sericea</i> </p>
<p>Grows to a height of 6-10' with a spread of 6-10'. Moderately fast growing, short-lived shrub. Prefers dry to wet soils and shade to full sun. Will tolerate clay soils and black walnuts. Produces cream colored flowers followed by small blue or purple fruits. Good food source for wildlife.</p>	<p>Grows to a height of 10-16' with a spread of 8-12'. Moderately fast growing, short-lived shrub. Prefers partial shade to full sun and moist to well drained soils. Will tolerate wet sites and occasional flooding. Produces white flowers &amp; red edible fruit. Creates a good snow fence. Good for wildlife.</p>	<p>Grows to a height of 8-10' with a spread of 2-10'. Fast growing, short-lived shrub. Prefers partial shade to full sun and wet to well drained soils. Tolerates occasional drought. Grows bright red stems and produces clusters of white fruit. Good for wildlife.</p>
<p>HAZELNUT, AMERICAN <i>Corylus americana</i> </p>	<p>LILAC, COMMON PURPLE <i>Syringa vulgaris</i></p>	<p>NANNYBERRY <i>Viburnum lentago</i> </p>
<p>Grows to a height of 3-10' with a spread of 8-15'. Moderately fast growing, short-lived shrub. Prefers partial shade to full sun and well-drained soils. Tolerates clay soils and black walnuts. Produces edible nuts eaten by birds and mammals. Variable fall color. Can reproduce by suckering.</p>	<p>Grows to a height of 10-15' with a spread of 6-12'. Moderately fast growing, long-lived shrub. Prefers full sun and well drained soil. Very adaptable. Large, round-headed shrub. Profuse bloomer, with purple flowers in the spring.</p>	<p>Grows to a height of 10-20' with a spread of 10-15'. Moderately fast growing, short-lived shrub. Prefers partial shade to full sun and moist to well drained soil. Will tolerate dry soils and shade. Glossy leaves with cream flowers followed by blue-black berries. Attractive for shiny foliage and red fall color.</p>

<p>TREE MAT</p>	<p>FERTILIZER PACKET</p>	<p>TREE TUBE</p>
<p>A three foot square permeable woven plastic sheet that reduces weed competition and maintenance time, and protects soil moisture. Each tree mat comes with 5 staples.</p>	<p>A small packet filled with a pre-measured amount of fertilizer that is placed alongside the seedling at time of planting. The slow release of nutrients gives seedlings an extra boost.</p>	<p>A five foot plastic, vented tube which protects hardwood trees seedlings from animals, mower, and spray damage. Stakes are not provided; use any 5' stake with zip ties.</p>

 = these trees are available in our 'Resilient Hardwoods' Bundle; speak with a staff member to special order these species in individual bundles of 25.  = native to Minnesota



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# CREP RESTORATION SUCCESS & NEW SIGN-UP OPPORTUNITIES

Chad Billat- Project Manager/Private Lands Biologist

Four siblings in Freeborn County recently completed a wetland restoration project as part of the Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP). This project covered a total of 160 acres and included the restoration of 10 wetlands, over 3,000 linear feet of tile blocked, and the placement of 8 different water control structures (see attached pictures). For two of the siblings, this is their third property enrolled in a wetland restoration easement. The landowners believe in the importance of conservation and feel that every farmer should actively conserve the land they manage. The CREP program was the most financially feasible option for them, as it leverages both federal and state funding.

Freeborn County is one of the top counties in the state implementing wetland restoration easements. Often, our most effective outreach to the public comes from successful projects. We receive calls from landowners monthly, if not weekly, who have been referred to us by neighbors who recently completed a rewarding restoration project and are eager to suggest some of our program opportunities.

While some programs are on hold until a new Farm Bill is passed, others remain open for enrollment. Many of these signups are competitive and are ranked alongside applications from across the state. Each program has distinct criteria and ranking systems. If we can't find a suitable program for your property right away, it's beneficial to get on our interest list. That way, if a program opens up that fits your needs, we can expedite the process, as some of these signups have short notice and attract a lot of interest.



CREP easement before restoration



CREP easement after restoration



*Chad Billat is the Project Manager/Private Lands Biologist for the Freeborn County SWCD and the main contact for the CREP program. To express interest in this program you can contact him at 507-320-3741, by email at [chad.billat@usda.gov](mailto:chad.billat@usda.gov), or by stopping into the Freeborn County Soil & Water Conservation District.*

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## MINNESOTA AGRICULTURAL WATER QUALITY CERTIFICATION PROGRAM

The Minnesota Agricultural Water Quality Certification Program (MAWQCP) is a voluntary opportunity for farmers and agricultural landowners to take the lead in implementing conservation practices that protect our water. Those who implement and maintain approved farm management practices will be certified and in turn obtain regulatory certainty for a period of ten years.

Contact the SWCD office to start a MAWQCP application.



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## PARTNER FOR SUCCESS: COST-SHARE OPPORTUNITIES

Mark Trnka | Conservation Technician

Over the past year, the staff of the Freeborn Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD), in collaboration with the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), conducted surveys, designed, and constructed six Water and Sediment Control Basins (WASCOBs) and one Grassed Waterway in Freeborn County. These structural practices were implemented with the support of cost-sharing contracts.

Structural practices, such as grassed waterways and WASCOBs, involve percent-based cost-share contracts that cover 75% or more of project costs. The process starts with assessing resource concerns on your land, such as erosion. Once the landowner agrees on an appropriate practice, a design and cost estimate are created. A cost-sharing contract is then prepared for the landowner to sign. After the project is completed, contractors must submit invoices, seed tags, and other bills to the Freeborn County SWCD to receive final reimbursement for the project.

If you are facing erosion problems on your land, please reach out to us. We can collaborate to discover the best solution, whether that involves constructing a waterway or offering cost-share funds to reduce tillage and implement cover crops.



Gully erosion in farm field



*Mark Trnka is a Conservation Technician for the Freeborn County SWCD and responsible for the survey, design, and construction oversight of structural practices. For help with erosion issues, contact him at 507-320-3739, by email at [mark.trnka@mn.nacdnet.net](mailto:mark.trnka@mn.nacdnet.net), or by stopping into our office.*

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## USDA-NATURAL RESOURCES CONSERVATION SERVICE UPDATE

The NRCS CST Team 19, consisting of Freeborn, Mower, Steele, and Dodge Counties, received 184 applications for the Environmental Quality Incentive Program (EQIP) for 2024. EQIP addresses resource concerns and offers financial assistance based on eligibility and ranking, with applications accepted year-round until the November cutoff.

In 2024, Freeborn County has 17 active EQIP contracts and 4 new obligations; Mower County has 44; Steele County has 15; and Dodge County has 22, resulting in a total of 99 active contracts. These include practices such as cover crops, no-till/strip till, grassed waterways, WASCOBs, high tunnel systems, energy-efficient operations, brush management, and prescribed grazing.

Team 19 is managing 52 active Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP) contracts for 2024 (Freeborn: 23, Mower: 12, Steele: 11, and Dodge: 6), focusing on practices like cover crops, nutrient management, integrated pest management, and pollinator habitat. Unlike EQIP, CSP is more intensive, requiring participants to meet various thresholds related to priority resource concerns and implementing at least one enhancement across the operation. Team 19 has 24 new CSP contracts for 2024 (Freeborn: 7, Mower: 6, Steele: 9, and Dodge: 2).

For assistance, please contact our NRCS staff at 507-373-7960, ext. 3.



*Gary Kurer, Area 19 Team lead retired from the USDA-NRCS on January 11th, 2025 after serving for 12 years in the Albert Lea Field Office. We wish him a happy retirement filled with many new adventures!*

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Great Plains 1006NT No-till drill

## NO-TILL DRILL RENTAL

Our Great Plains 1006NT No-Till Drill is available for rental on a first-come, first-served basis. However, we aim to group sites in the same region to optimize staff time and minimize the number of times the drill needs to be transported across the county.

If you are interested in renting the drill or have any questions, please call Mark Trnka at 507-320-3739 or visit [freebornswcd.org/services-equipment-rental](http://freebornswcd.org/services-equipment-rental).

### Drill Information:

- 3 seed boxes
- 10' planting width (12.7' wheel to wheel)
- 7.5" row spacings
- Hydraulic hookups
- 75+ horsepower tractor needed

### Capable of Planting:

- Soybeans
- Cover crops
- Native seed mixes
- CRP and CREP plantings
- Alfalfa
- Buffers

### Rental Fee:

- \$100 delivery fee
- \$12 per acre seeded
- Rental fees increase if used outside of Freeborn County
- Fees are subject to change

## FUNDING AVAILABLE FOR COVER CROPS, NO-TILL, & STRIP-TILL

Lindsey Cornell | District Manager

Are you looking to implement cover crops, no-till, or strip-till into your farming operation? There is funding available for these practices in Freeborn County through the Freeborn SWCD! Eligibility will depend on what watershed you are in, if you are in One Watershed One Plan priority areas, how long you have already been implementing the practices, and if you have been in programs with the SWCD before.

To find out your eligibility visit the Freeborn SWCD and talk with technical staff available. If money is still available, chances are we would be able to help find a program that works for you. The SWCD has many programs that are or will be available soon. They include the State Cost Share program, Minnesota Ag Water Quality Certification Program, Conservation Contracts Program, Watershed Based Implementation Funds (One Watershed One Plan) and the Regional Conservation Partnership Program. For most of the SWCD programs, applications are considered on a month-month basis. In 2024 the SWCD funded 3,000+ acres of cover crops in Freeborn County!



Cover crops growth in the spring before planting

In addition to the SWCD options. NRCS (Natural Resources Conservation Service) also has options available. They have the EQIP (Environmental Quality Incentive Program) and CSP (Conservation Stewardship Program). Typically, applications for these are reviewed 1 time per year, so get in as soon as possible to talk about programs and submit applications for the NRCS programs.

Visit the SWCD and NRCS offices to learn about programs that are available!



*Lindsey Cornell is the District Manager for the Freeborn County SWCD and handles conservation practice design and cost-share contracting for several programs. For guidance on which program fits your needs, contact her at 507-320-3728, by email at [lindsey.cornell@mn.nacdnet.net](mailto:lindsey.cornell@mn.nacdnet.net), or by stopping into our office.*

FREEBORN COUNTY SWCD  
1400 WEST MAIN STREET  
ALBERT LEA, MN 56007  
507-373-5607 EXT. 3  
EQUAL OPPORTUNITY EMPLOYER

VISIT US ON THE WEB:  
WWW.FREEBORNSWCD.ORG

Order trees by  
**February 21** for  
best selection!

HWY-14 TOUR STOP

# Soil Health Winter Workshop

OWATONNA, MN

FEBRUARY 18, 2025 @ 8:30 AM

Torey's Restaurant  
208 N Cedar Ave.  
Owatonna, MN 55060

## AGENDA

8:30-9:00 Registration  
9:00-9:10 Welcome  
9:10-10:25 Andy Linder  
*-Economics & making it work  
financially*  
10:40-12:00 Ryan Gibbs  
*-Cover Crops, no-till, &  
composting*  
12:00-1:00 Lunch  
1:00-2:20 Sam Ireland  
*-Research at the Dakota Lakes  
Research Farm*

## 4 CEU CREDITS AVAILABLE!

3 SOIL & WATER MANAGEMENT CREDITS  
1 SUSTAINABILITY CREDIT

RSVP by scanning the QR code,  
calling 507-320-3728 or emailing  
Lindsey.Cornell@mn.nacdnet.net  
\*RSVP's due by Feb. 11th, 2025



USDA is an equal opportunity provider and employer. To file a complaint of discrimination, write: USDA, Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights, Office of Adjudication, 1400 Independence Ave., SW, Washington, DC 20250-9410 or call (866) 632-9992.