

A dark blue vertical bar runs down the left side of the page. A blue arrow-shaped banner points to the right, containing the year '2018'. In the bottom left corner, there are several thin, curved lines in dark blue and light gray, resembling stylized grass or reeds.

2018

Annual Report

Steel County Soil and Water
Conservation District

Steele County Soil and Water Conservation District

2018 Annual Report

235 Cedardale Drive SE

Owatonna, MN 55060

Phone: 507-451-6730 Ext. 3

Website: www.steeleswcd.com

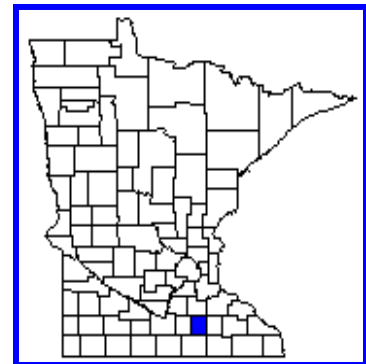
Mission Statement

MISSION STATEMENT:

The Prime Responsibility of the District is to coordinate assistance on private lands to control erosion, prevent flooding, enhance wildlife, develop recreation, build the economic base, and to manage our soil and water resources.

Introduction:

The Steele County Soil and Water Conservation District is a legal subdivision of State Government operating under provisions of the Minnesota State Statutes Chapter 40 and Chapter 110B. The District is located entirely within Steele County and includes all land, public and private, towns and villages. It is governed by a five-member board of elected supervisors, who are responsible for directing all District activities. The Board meets on the second Tuesday of each month.



Soil and Water Conservation is essential to the preservation of our environment. Our goal is to implement a soil and water conservation plan on each acre in Steele County. The District's success is a result of the efforts of the Natural Resource Conservation Service, the Farm Service Agency, the Extension Service, the Department of Natural Resources, the Board of Water and Soil Resources, the Steele County Commissioners, and the landowners of Steele County.

We submit to you, this 2018 Annual Report, 2018 Financial Report, and Annual Plan of Work for 2019.

Board of Supervisors

The Board meets the second Tuesday of each month at 5:00 or 7:00 p.m. at the Ag Service Center, 235 Cedardale Drive SE Owatonna, MN.

DISTRICT GOVERNING BOARD

Kyle Wolfe, Treasurer

James Klecker, Secretary

Mark Ihlenfeld, Chairman

David Melby, Reporter

Dan Hansen, Vice-Chair

AREA OF REPRESENTATION

City of Owatonna

Berlin, Blooming Prairie
and Summit Townships

Medford, Merton and
Clinton Falls Townships

Havana, Meriden and
Owatonna Townships

Aurora, Lemon and Somerset
Townships

District Staff

Eric Gulbransen

Adrienne Gransee

Adam Arndt

District Manager

District Administrative Assistant

District Technician

NRCS Staff

NATURAL RESOURCES CONSERVATION SERVICE PERSONNEL

Gary Kurer

James Smith

Acting District Conservationist

Soil Conservation Technician

AREA NATURAL RESOURCES CONSERVATION SERVICE PERSONNEL

(Vacant)

Elizabeth Oohlman

Area Engineer

Engineer

Partners Staff

BOARD OF WATER AND SOIL RESOURCES:

Dave Copeland Board Conservationist, Rochester

Ducks Unlimited

Chad Billat CREP/ACEP Specialist

Others Assisting the Steele SWCD

Steele County Farm Service Agency (FSA) Committee

FARM SERVICES AGENCY COMMITTEE:

'Vacant'	County Executive Director
Brady Adams	Chairman
Scott Hildebrandt	Vice-Chairman
Gretchen Supala	Committee Member
Kevin Klemmensen	Committee Member
Scott Kasper	Committee Member

Steele County Board of Commissioners

District 1 - Commissioner James Brady

District 2 - Commissioner John Glynn

District 3 - Commissioner Rick Gnemi

District 4 - Commissioner Jim Abbe

District 5 - Commissioner Greg Krueger

Steele County Planning & Zoning/ Environmental Services Staff

Dale Oolman

University of Minnesota Extension Service

Claire LaCanne Extension Director

Minnesota Department of Natural Resources

Jake Froyum	District Forester
(Vacant)	District Wildlife Manager

SERVICES PROVIDED BY THE SOIL and WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICT

- **Conservation Planning**
- **Planning and Design of Conservation Practices**
Including:
 - Erosion Control Practices
 - Residue Management Systems
 - Windbreak and Wildlife Tree Plantings
 - Animal Waste Control Systems
 - Manure Application Plans
 - Drainage Systems
 - Wetland Restorations
- **Cost-Sharing for Erosion Control Practices**
- **Assist with implementation of the Food Ag. Conservation Trade Act:**
 - Conservation Compliance Plans
 - Swampbuster and Sodbuster
 - Conservation Reserve Program (CRP)
 - Agricultural Conservation Easement Program (ACEP)
 - Environmental Quality Incentive Program (EQIP)
- **Administer Minnesota Conservation Easement Programs:**
 - Reinvest in Minnesota
 - Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program
 - Permanent Wetland Preserve Program
- **Implementation of the Steele County Comprehensive Water Plan**
- **Implementation of the Wetland Conservation Act**
- **No-Till and Brillion Drill Rentals**
- **Tree Planter**
- **Electric ATV broadcast seeder**

PRODUCTS AVAILABLE FROM THE SOIL AND WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICT

- Colored Marking Flags
- Educational Materials
- Plantskydd Animal Repellant
- Steele County Plat books
- Tile Probes
- Tree Fertilizer Tablets
- Tree Weed Barrier Matting
- Quality Tree Nursery Stock
- Quality Wood Stakes
- Native Prairie Plants

2018 Project Accomplishments

Conservation Reserve Program (CRP & CCRP)

<u>Practice</u>	<u>Number of Farms</u>
Diverse Native Prairie	14
Grassed Waterways	9
Shelterbelt	3
Wildlife Tree Planting	-
Filter Strips	51
Wetland Restorations	28
Riparian Buffer	1
Total Contracts	128

Outstanding Conservationists

2018 OUTSTANDING CONSERVATION

FARMER

Aaron Schroht Family

The Steele County Soil and Water Conservation District's Outstanding Conservation Farmer for 2018 is Aaron Schroht and his children Adeline, Weston, and August. Schrohven Dairy is a 4th generation dairy and crop farm which Aaron has converted to an organic.

The 75-cow dairy herd is rotationally grazed on 135 acres of pasture during the growing season. Aaron also utilizes seasonal calving to maximize the forage use of the pastures. The farm is in a corn and alfalfa rotation with some acres planted to an oat/clover mix that is plowed under in the fall to add nutrients to the soil. Aaron practices reduced tillage and has renovated the farmstead windbreak.



Congratulations and thank you for your dedication!

2018 OUTSTANDING WINDBREAK AWARD

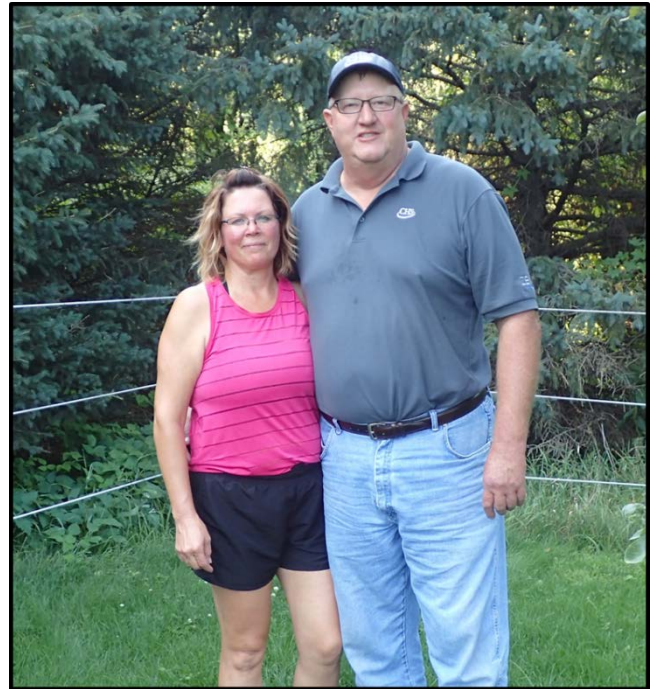
Dave and Lori Joachim

In the fall of 1989 David Joachim started planning a windbreak to provide much needed wind and snow protection to his farmstead.

The following spring, he planted a 6-row windbreak on the north and west side of his homestead that covered 2.5 acres. Maintenance has been ongoing for Joachim from mowing around and watering the seedlings to pruning the mature trees in recent years but has proved to be well worth the effort.

Today he has a fully functioning windbreak that provides, wildlife habitat, wind blockage, snow storage, increased property value, and is aesthetically pleasing.

Congratulations and thank you for your dedication!



2018 OUTSTANDING WILDLIFE CONSERVATIONIST

Tom and Janelle Sexter



Tom and Janelle have two sites in the county they manage for wildlife. The Conservation Reserve Program and permanent state and federal easements have been utilized to complete the habitat restorations. Both sites have wetland restorations, tree plantings for winter cover, food plots, and diverse native prairie stands.

The Sexter's have been proactive in noxious weed control and unwanted tree control that invades the native prairies. Their next project is to install wood duck boxes and blue bird houses on both sites.

Congratulations and thank you for your dedication!

State Cost-Share

In 2018, the District used the State Cost Share Program Allocation for technical support on federally funded projects and to assist local land owners with completing conservation practices. There were 2 waterways and a side-inlet constructed using these funds. These funds were also used to leverage staff expenses on projects that receive cost sharing through USDA programs. A summary of projects completed is under the CRP, CCRP, and EQIP (NRCS Report) section

Local Capacity Building Grant

This grant came through the Clean Water Land and Legacy Fund. The District continued the Crop cost share program that began in 2016. There were 5 producers that participated and applied cover crops to a total of 400 acres.

No-Till Drill and Brillion Seeder Program

The District again offered a no-till drill and a Brillion for rent to landowners for seeding native prairie, or inter seeding pasture land. In 2018, thirty landowners took advantage of this service to seed over 447 acres. Most of these sites were seeded to a diverse mixture of native grasses, forbs, and wildflowers. These acres will provide much needed habitat for wildlife and pollinator insects.



District Tree Program

The District had another successful tree and shrub sale in 2018. We distributed approximately 10,940 plants to over 195 area landowners. The trees and shrubs will be used for snow control, energy conservation (windbreaks), and wildlife habitat/cover plantings. We again offered a native pollinator plant pack this year. Twelve species of native flowers were available in 48 plant packs. Seven landowners took advantage of these.

Wetland Conservation Act

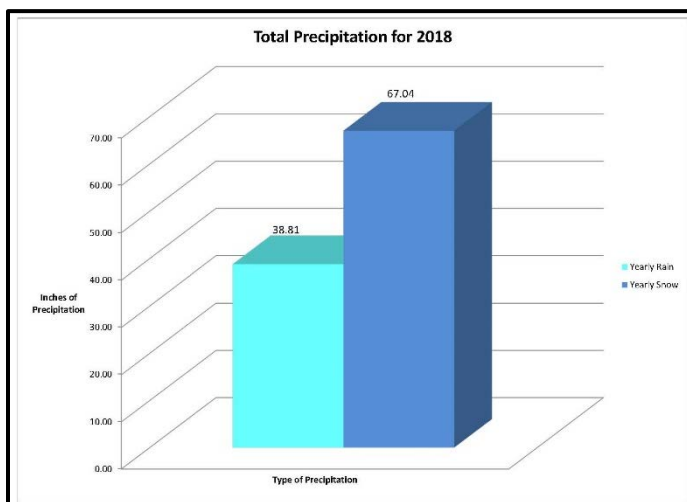
The District in Cooperation with Steele County administers the Minnesota Wetland Conservation Act for the County and all of the cities within the County. The 2018 WCA report reflects that 43 separate landowners were assisted with wetland related issues. Four boundary or type, five no-loss, and one exemption.



Conservation Easements

The District in cooperation with the Natural Resources Conservation Service, and the Board of Water and Soil Resources has assisted many Steele County landowners with the establishing permanent conservation easements on marginal cropland areas. The easements not only benefit the landowner they benefit the community by controlling erosion, storing and filtering water, reducing flooding, and providing much needed wildlife habitat. Maintaining these easements in high quality native prairie, and wetland restorations is a priority of the District. Controlling invasive trees and weeds on these easements is an ongoing challenge. The District continues to assist easement owners with cutting and spot spraying invasive trees, shrubs, and weeds. Controlled burns are completed on the easements by certified vendors every four or five years.

Precipitation Monitoring



The SWCD, in conjunction with the State Climatology Office, monitors site specific precipitation throughout Steele County. The data collected provides citizens and the State of Minnesota with important precipitation information and weather history. We currently have 9 volunteer precipitation monitors throughout the county that read the rain gauge daily, year around, and send the District the monthly reports.

Education and Promotion

Soil and Water Conservation promotion and education is a high priority of the District. The primary effort in this arena each year is publishing the Conservation Calendar. In 2018, thirty five hundred copies were distributed to rural landowners, cooperating agencies, and businesses.

The Southeast Minnesota Envirothon was held on Wednesday, May 2nd at Byron Sportsman and Conservation Club near Byron, MN. This year we had 19 teams compete at the SE MN area level, 12 in the Senior category (grades 9-12) and 7 in the Junior category (grades 6-8). The 1st and 2nd place went to Goodhue High School teams. The 3rd place team was from Zumbrota/Mazeppa. These three teams advanced to the state competition held May 21st at Shetek Lutheran Ministries in Slayton, MN. Our area teams placed 12, 14, and 19 out of 25 total teams. The first place MN winning team was from Hopkins High School.



USDA-NRCS 2018 REPORT FOR STEELE COUNTY

By Gary D. Kurer, District Conservationist, USDA-NRCS Albert Lea FO Acting DC, Austin and Owatonna FO's



AERIAL APPLIED COVER CROPS IN SOYBEANS

- Environmental Quality Incentive Program: Six (6) EQIP contracts for 2018 with EQIP totaling \$53,980.44. This included 190 acres of cover crops and 11 water and sediment control basins. There was one EQIP-RCPP contract paid in 2018 for strip till and cover crops on 666 acres for \$14,463.
- Approved EQIP funding and inspected certified practices included; cover crops, water & sediment control basins, underground outlets, and critical area planting.
- Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP): One CSP applications were funded for a total of \$12,470 obligated for a 5 year period on 600 cropland acres and no pastureland acres.
- Conservation Reserve Program (CRP): Prepared 52 CRP plans for 2018 re-enrollments. Conducted on-site eligibility investigations for continuous CRP practices such as grassed waterways, filter strips, and wetland restoration. Conducted 10% or 14 spot checks for CRP status reviews and practice certifications. All CRP participants were in compliance. According to Chad Billat, DU Biologist, there were two (2) CRP/CREP plans completed for a total of 250 acres of CP-23A wetland restoration and seeding.
- Wetland Reserve Easements (WRE): There are 40 existing WRE easement sites in Steele County that are monitored annually. There were two new WRE easements in 2018, approximately 860 acres total, that conducted wetland restoration. According to Chad Billat, DU Biologist, Armstrong easement (800 acres) conducted phase 7 including outlets and culverts. Moore easement (60 acres), completed tile breaks, shallow water scrapes, and seeding for conservation cover.
- Outreach: NRCS staff gave a presentation on NRCS programs for the Corn -Soybean Growers Association. NRCS and other local staff attended and presented information at several soil health workshops and provided information for the Steele County Fair booth.

Estimated Level of Conservation Assistance for Calendar Year 2018

STEELE COUNTY

reported by Gary Kurer, Acting NRCS District Conservationist, Owatonna FO

EQIP/EQIP-RCPP	PLANNED ACRES IN 2018	APPLIED ACRES IN 2018	EXPENDED EQIP FUNDS 2018
Cover Crops-EQIP General	190 ac	190 ac.	\$8,000
Grassed Waterways	3 ea.	3 ea.	\$5,000
Subsurface Drain	0 ft.	0 ft.	\$0
High Tunnel System	0 ea.	0 ea.	\$0
Residue Mgt-Strip Till and	666 ac.	666 ac.	\$14,463
Grade Stabilization	0 ea.	0 ea.	\$0
Prescribed Grazing	0 ac.	0 ac.	\$0
Heavy Use Area	0 ea.	0 ea.	\$0
Livestock Pipeline	0 ft.	0 ft.	\$0
Fence (perimeter and/or	0 ft.	0 ft.	\$0
Watering Facilities	0 ea.	0 ea.	\$0
CNMP-CAP's	0 ea.	0 ea.	\$0
Water & Sediment Control	11 ea.	11 ea.	\$30,980
Underground Outlets	11 ea.	11 ea.	\$10,000
Diversions	0 ea.	0 ea.	\$0
Critical Area Planting	3 ac.	3 ac.	\$300
Animal Mortality Facilities	0 ea.	0 ea.	\$0
Water Wells	0 ea.	0 ea.	\$0
Pumping Plants	0 ea.	0 ea.	\$0
Obstruction Removal	0 ea.	0 ea.	\$0
CRP AND WRP			
Grassed Waterways CP-8	3 ea.	3 ea.	----
Wetland Restoration CP-	250 ac.	250 ac	----
Farmed Wetland and Buffer	0 ea.	0 ac.	----
Filter Strips CP-21 for re-	49 ea.	49 ea.	----
Farmstead	0 ea.	0 ac.	----
Cover Crops-WRP	6 ac.	6 ac.	----
Wetland Restoration-WRP	740 ac.	740 ac.	----
Water Control Structures-	2 ea.	2 ea.	----
Pest Management	260 ac.	260 ac.	----
Prescribed Burn-WRP	33 ac.	33 ac.	----
Brush Management-WRP	790 ac	790 ac	----
Seeding for Conservation	51 ac	51 ac	----
TOTALS FOR 2018 EQIP	See Above	See Above	\$53,980
TOTALS FOR 2018 CSP:	600 ac.	600 ac.	\$12,470