



2010

ANNUAL REPORT

ROOT RIVER

SOIL & WATER

CONSERVATION DISTRICT

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INTRODUCTION

This annual plan of work is provided to assist in the implementation of the 2010 activities of the Root River Soil and Water Conservation District. This document is intended to provide guidance in planning and scheduling in a manner consistent with district policy, in order to achieve the long range goals of the district.

MISSION STATEMENT

The Root River Soil and Water Conservation District's purpose is to provide assistance to cooperators in managing the natural resources on their land. In addition the district will continue to educate people on local conservation issues and concerns, in order to fortify and perpetuate the conservation movement.

AUTHORITY

Minnesota Statutes Chapter 103C.201 authorized the formation of the Root River SWCD.

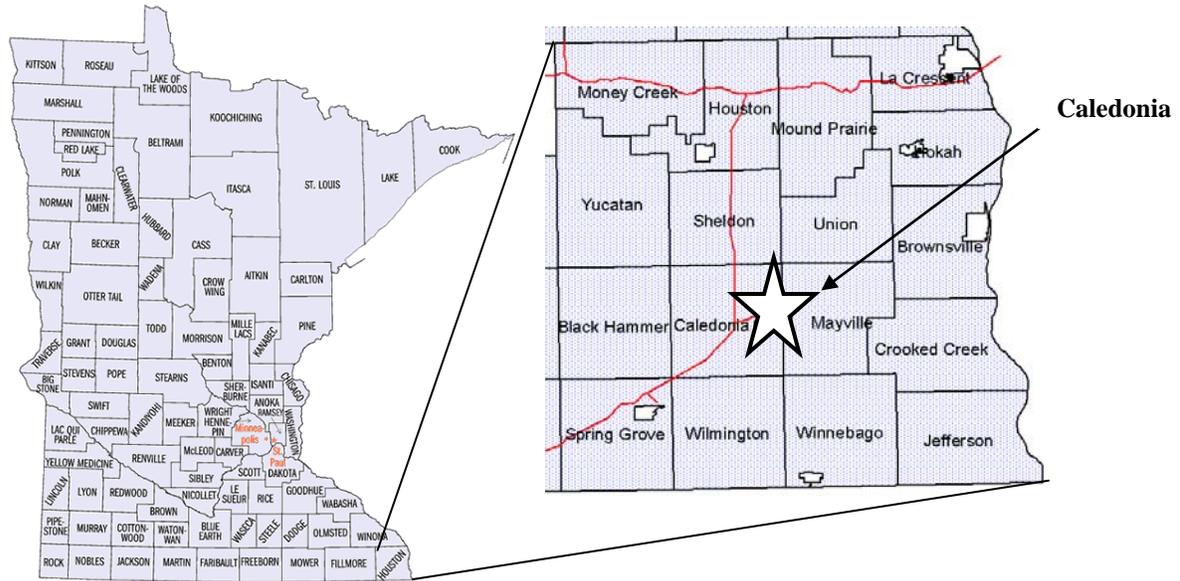
Minnesota Statues Chapter 103C.005, soil and water conservation policy states:

"to encourage land occupiers to conserve the soil and water resources through implementation of practices that effectively reduce or prevent erosion, sedimentation, siltation and agriculturally related pollution in order to preserve natural resources, ensure continued soil productivity, control floods, prevent impairment of dams and reservoirs, assist in maintaining the navigability of rivers and harbors, preserve wildlife, protect the tax base and protect public lands."

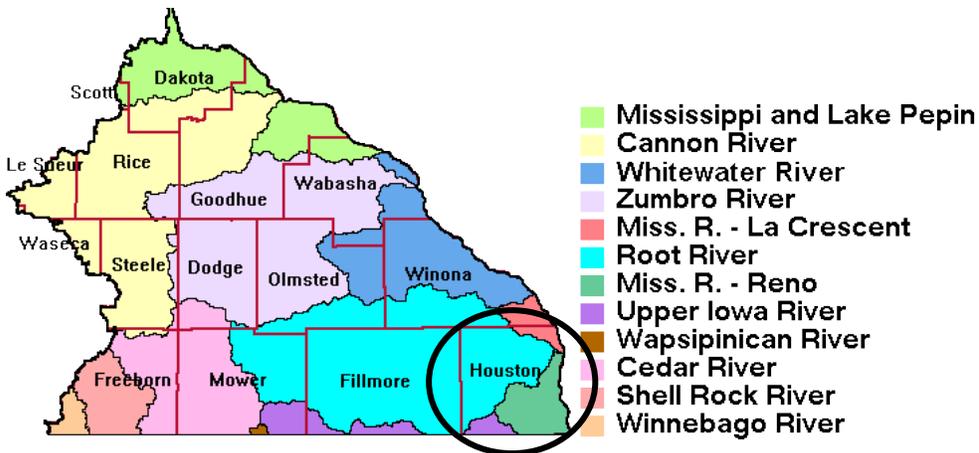
In order to assist land users the Root River SWCD will carry out all district programs in accordance with the powers and duties outlined in Minnesota Statutes Chapter 103C.331.

ORGANIZATIONAL BOUNDARIES

Houston County lies in the extreme southeastern corner of Minnesota bounded by the Mississippi River on the east, Iowa on the south, Fillmore County on the west and Winona County on the north. The County consists of seventeen townships.



The Root River flows through the northern half of the county. There are four smaller watersheds which flow directly into the Mississippi River and a portion along the south and southwest flows into the Upper Iowa Watershed. The topography of the district is very irregular with elevation extremes of over 600 feet. Many of the hilltops are over 400 feet above the flood plains and are within a fraction of a mile in distance.



ORGANIZATIONAL HISTORY

The Root River SWCD was organized in 1939, encompassing all of Houston County and the eastern portion of Fillmore County. In the 1960s the boundaries were revised, with the Fillmore County portion of the District merging with West Fillmore SWCD and leaving Root River SWCD with our own present boundary.

The district was formed because people in the valleys were concerned about flooding. Also upland users had their problems with erosion which was causing ditches and lower yields on cropland. These problems and concerns caused incomes to fall therefore survival of the family farm units were threatened.

In many instances land users accepted conservation practices on the land as an alternative to abandoning the farm. The results which these land operators obtained were recognized and adopted by their neighbors. Since the district was formed conservation practices have been installed on over 90% of the farms.

Some land users have only treated part of their land. Change of land users have seen many of the practices removed. At first, the new land users did not recognize the need for practices until they developed problems. This indicates that the district has a critical role in maintaining the practices installed and continues to strive to have all resources used according to their capabilities for continued production.

Root River SWCD Staff 2010

Ralph Tuck – District Manager
Ron Meiners – Soil Conservationist
Rich Stemper – Technician
Dave Walter – Technician
Janice Messner – Secretary
Tim Amberg – Forester

Jason Rochester – Feedlot Technician, JPB Staff

NRCS Staff 2010

Gary Larson – District Conservationist
Lance Klessig – Soil Conservation Technician
Mary Staggemeier – Assistant

ROOT RIVER SOIL AND WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICT
SUPERVISORS



**Back Row: Douglas W. Meyer, Tony Becker, & Glenn Kinneberg,
Front Row: Joe McManimon & Vernon Fruechte**

Supervisor District #1 -- Douglas W. Meyer
Term Expires December 31, 2013

Supervisor for:
La Crescent Township & Village--Hokah Township & Village
Mound Prairie Township--Union Township

Supervisor District #2 -- Tony Becker
Term Expires December 31, 2013

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Term Expires December 31, 2012

Supervisor for:
Black Hammer Township--Spring Grove Township & Village--Wilmington Township

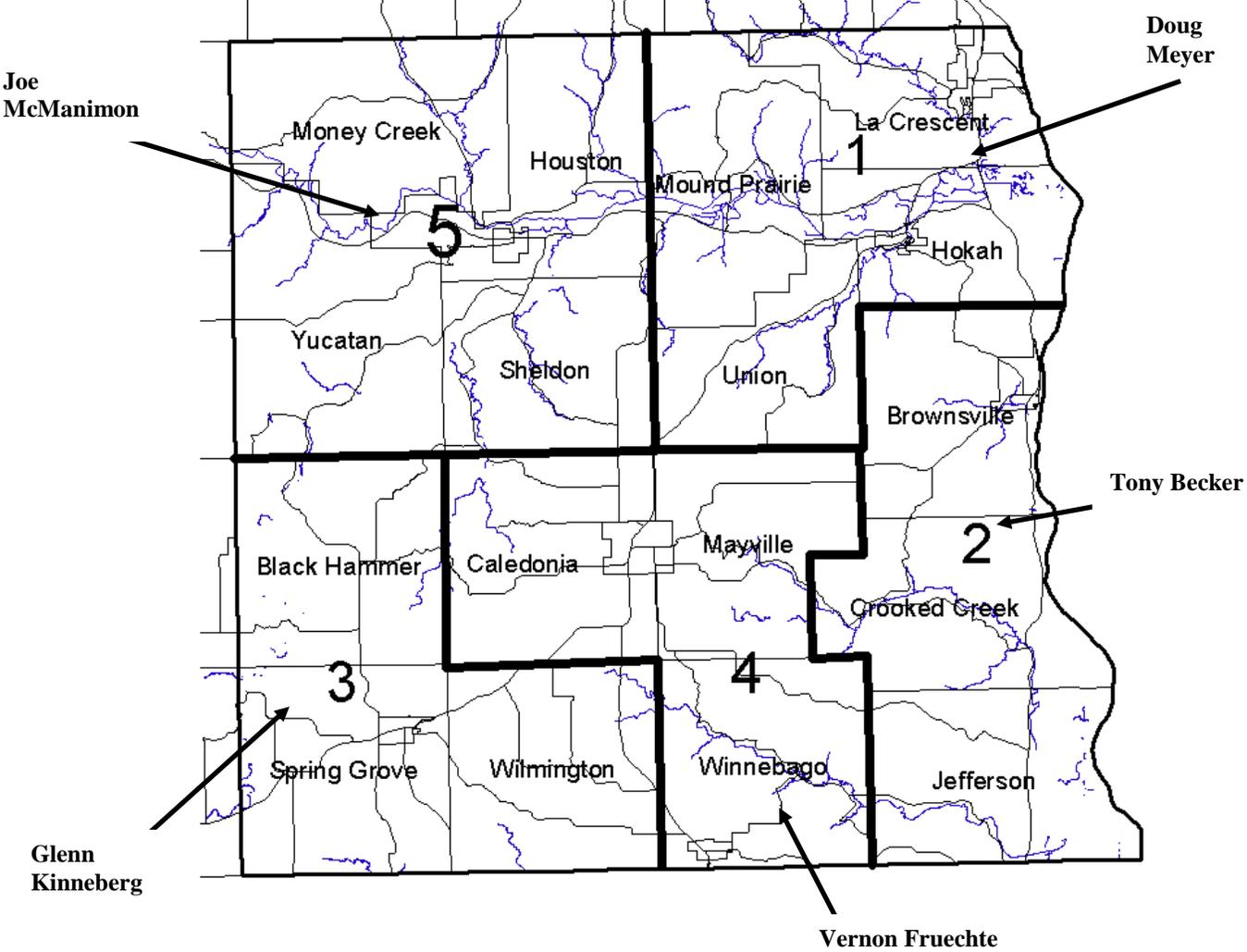
Supervisor District #4 -- Vernon Fruechte
Term Expires December 31, 2012

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Winnebago Township

Supervisor District #5 -- Joseph McManimon
Term Expires December 31, 2012

Supervisor for:
Houston Township & Village--Money Creek Township--Sheldon Township
Yucatan Township

SUPERVISORS NOMINATION DISTRICT



Houston County, Minnesota

2010 DISTRICT ACCOMPLISHMENTS

In 2010 the following practices were installed with state cost-share funds to control high priority erosion problems.

7	Critical Area Plantings - \$18,861.39
4	Diversions - \$2,153.19
1	Waste Facility Cover - \$45,500.00
7	Grade Stabilization Structures - \$38,121.11
13	Grassed Waterways - \$46,223.82
5	Streambank & Shoreline Protection - \$69,111.03
11	Terraces - \$13,481.51
3	Restoration & Management of Declining Habitats - \$5,668.07
5	Pond Maintenance - \$37,014.30
1	Water & Sediment Control Basin Maintenance - \$1,361.25

Total \$ 277,495.67

The enormous task of servicing requests for flood damage assistance to our area landowners after the 2007 and 2008 flood events is nearly complete and our landscape is slowly returning back to a more normal state.

Since those devastating floods of 2007 and 2008 the following projects have been either repaired or installed:

48	Grassed Waterways
52	Pond Clean Outs/Maintenance
66	Critical Area Plantings
12	Diversions
13	Terrace Systems
7	Streambank Restoration projects
35	Grade Stabilization Structures
4	Waste Storage Facilities

Along with several windbreaks, push-up ponds, water and sediment control basins and our annual workload of installing contour strips and other assistance.

However, even though we have installed and repaired numerous practices on many critical sites there is much work left to be done. Most of our county is still in a very fragile condition. The Root River SWCD is continuing to work with landowners to meet tomorrow's challenges. It is our goal that through planning and implementation of additional conservation practices and various watershed projects the impact of future flood events can be minimized.



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AUTHORITY

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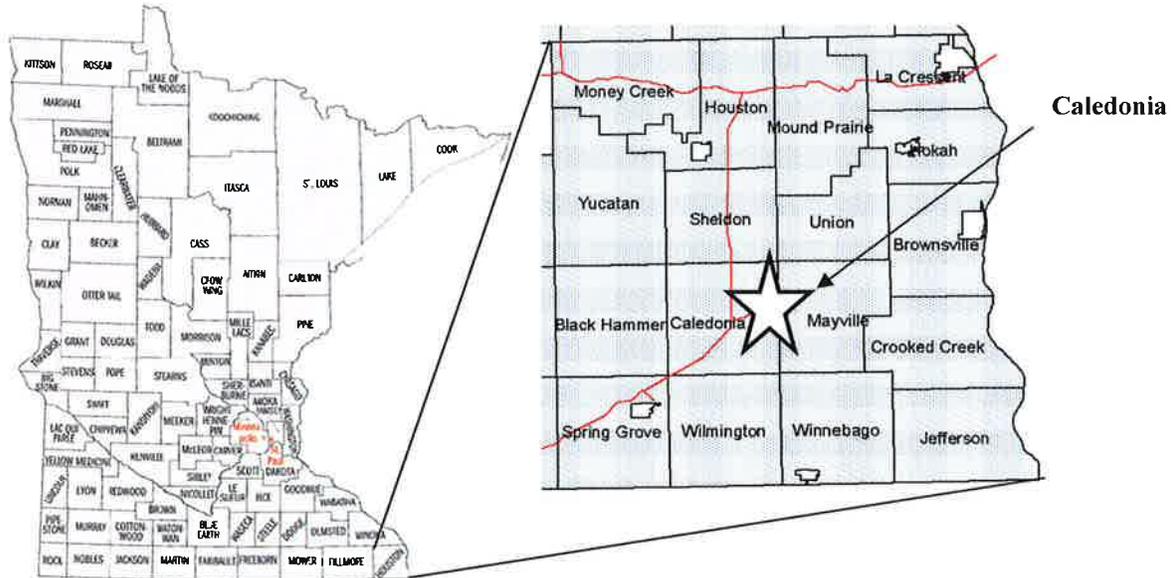
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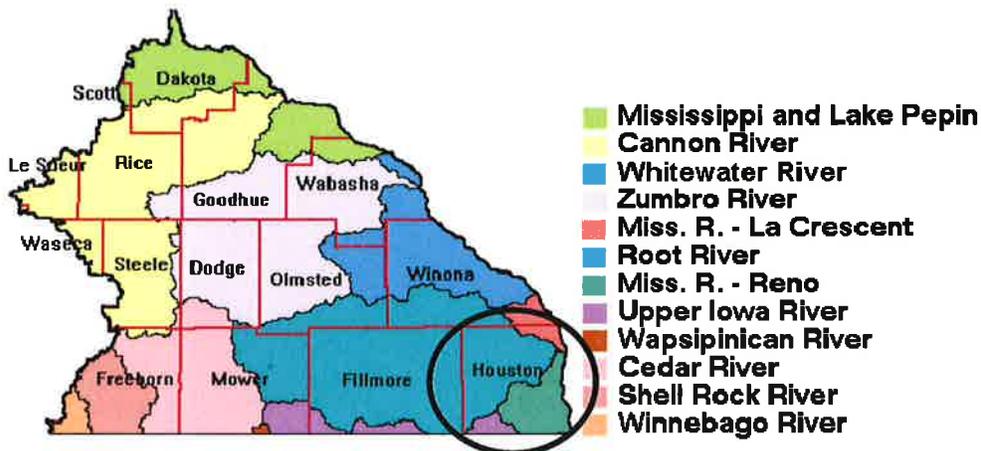
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Rich Stemper – Technician
Dave Walter – Technician
Janice Messner – Secretary**

Jason Rochester – Feedlot Technician, JPB Staff

NRCS Staff 2011

**Gary Larson – District Conservationist
Lance Klessig – Soil Conservation Technician
Mary Staggemeier – Assistant**

ROOT RIVER SOIL AND WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICT
SUPERVISORS



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Term Expires December 31, 2013

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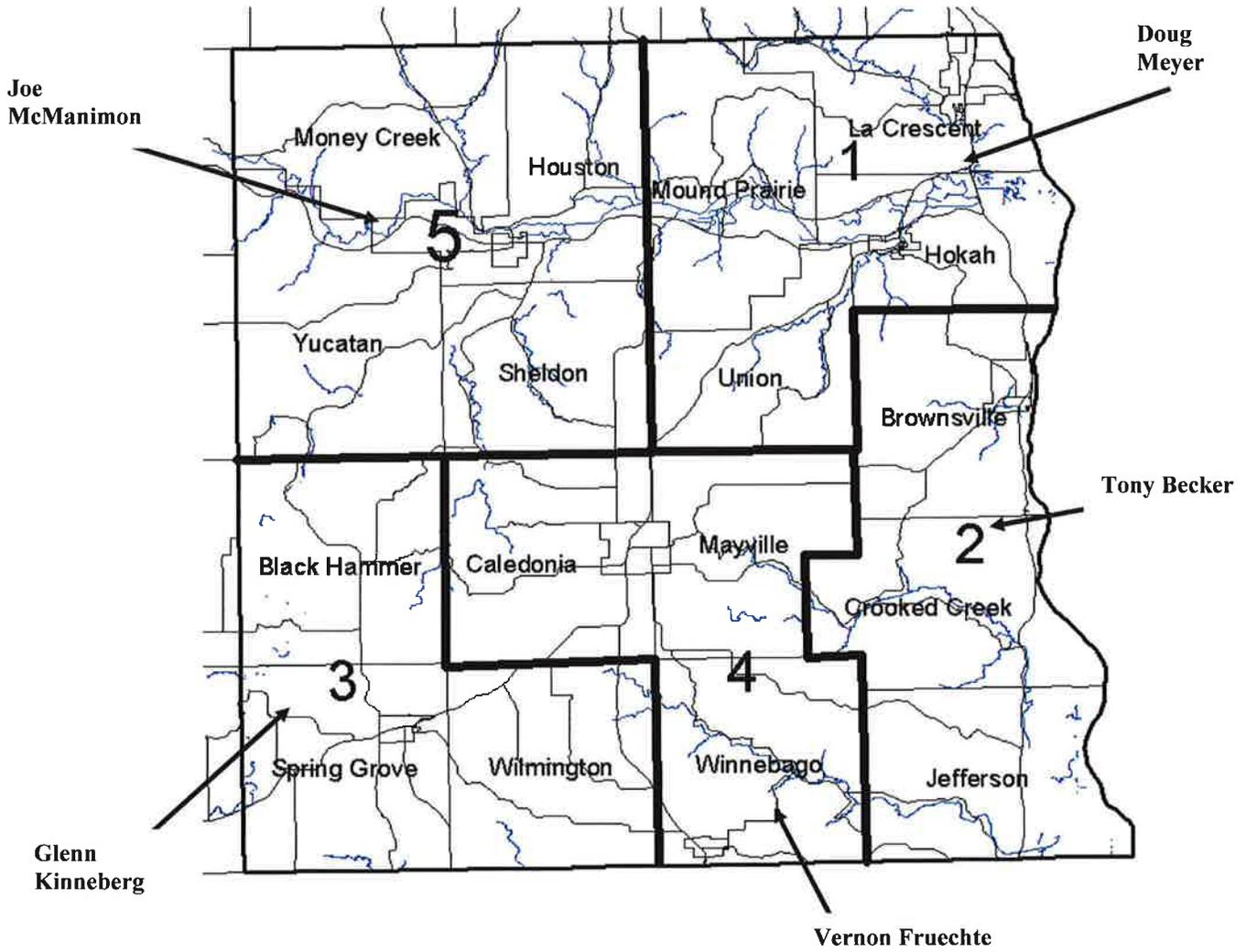
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Term Expires December 31, 2012

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Winnebago Township

Supervisor District #5 -- Joseph McManimon
Term Expires December 31, 2012

Supervisor for:
Houston Township & Village--Money Creek Township--Sheldon Township
Yucatan Township

SUPERVISORS NOMINATION DISTRICT



Houston County, Minnesota

2011 DISTRICT ACCOMPLISHMENTS

In 2011 the following practices were installed with State Cost-Share funds to control high priority erosion problems.

- 3 Critical Area Plantings - \$6,540.75**
- 3 Grade Stabilization Structures - \$17,831.37**
- 3 Grassed Waterways - \$32,508.80**
- 2 Streambank & Shoreline Protection - \$76,499.94**
- 2 Restoration & Management of Declining Habitats - \$4,308.59**
- 1 Pond Maintenance - \$3,726.56**
- 2 Flood Control Dam - \$107,383.52**

Total \$ 248,799.53

At the end of 2011, there are 10 remaining projects to install that were planned due to the results of the 2007 and 2008 flood events. Cost share assistance for these projects will be provided through both state and federal programs.

Survey, design, cost estimates and permit requests are being completed. Installation of the projects and currently planned for the 2012 construction season.

Other conservation practices that were installed in 2011 as a collaborative effort between NRSC and district staff include:

- 6 Grassed Waterways**
- 9 Critical Area Plantings**
- 3 Diversions**
- 6 Terrace Systems**
- 6 Grade Stabilization Structures**
- 20 Contour Strip Systems**
- 3 Water and Sediment Control Basins**
- 8 Push-Up Ponds**
- 6 Waste Storage Facilities**
- 1 Sinkhole Treatment**

District staff also reviewed 42 open lot agreements with landowners and assisted them with compliance issues. This workload involved both plan revisions and the installation of BMP's that addressed a wide variety of resource concerns.

District staff assisted in acquiring two perpetual RIM easements in Houston County. These two contracts will provide resource protection on 89 acres.

District staff proved assistance in implementing the MRBI WREP program to enroll 86.9 acres in the lower Root River watershed. The perpetual easements will significantly reduce sediment delivery to the Root River.

In 2011 the Root River SWCD staff entered into a contract agreement with The Nature

Conservancy to address resource concerns within the Root River watershed. Sensitive areas were identified using the Stream Power Index and contacts were made with approximately 31 landowners. This ongoing program will continue into 2012 and include additional mapping, contacts and installation of planned practices and final reports.

The Root River SWCD staff also entered into an agreement with the Crooked Creek watershed to provide staffing to identify needs and promote the installation of additional conservation practices within its watershed boundaries. Staff also assisted in watershed plan development and other issues related to the Crooked Creek watershed and its board.

In addition to our typical conservation delivery program to area landowners we continue to be involved with educational events such as our 6th Grade Environmental Day, Envirothon, news articles and the area FFA Field Day.

We continue to be involved with the nitrate monitoring efforts, Water Plan implementation goals, the Wetland Conservation Act compliance issues and our district's tree program.



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INTRODUCTION

This annual report is provided to assist in reviewing the 2012 activities of the Root River Soil and Water Conservation District. This document is intended to present an overview of the accomplishments of the District during the past year in a manner consistent with district policy, to achieve the long range goals of the District.

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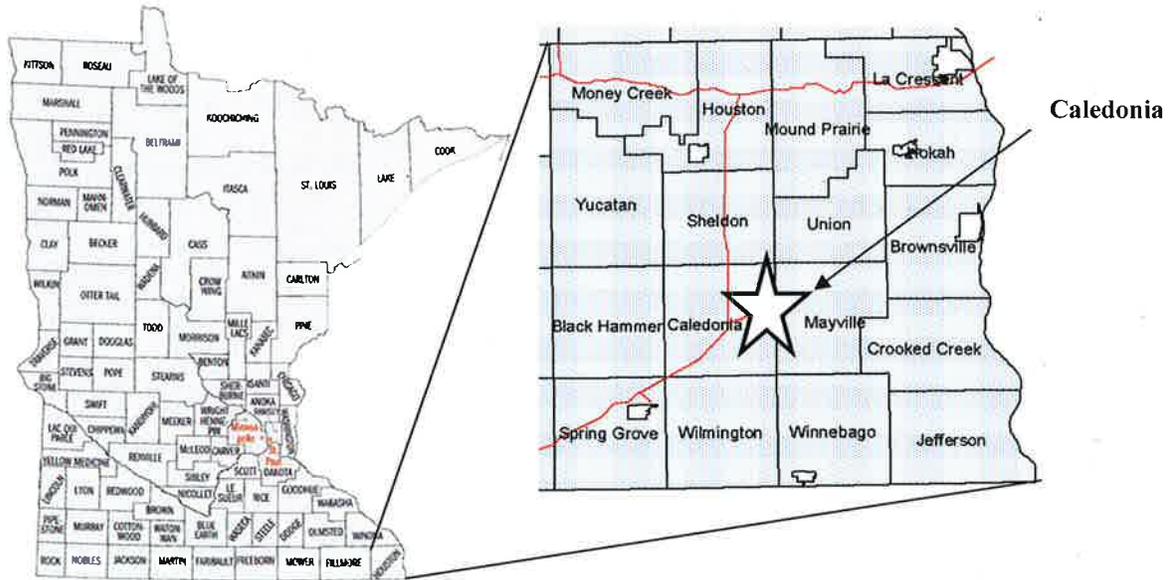
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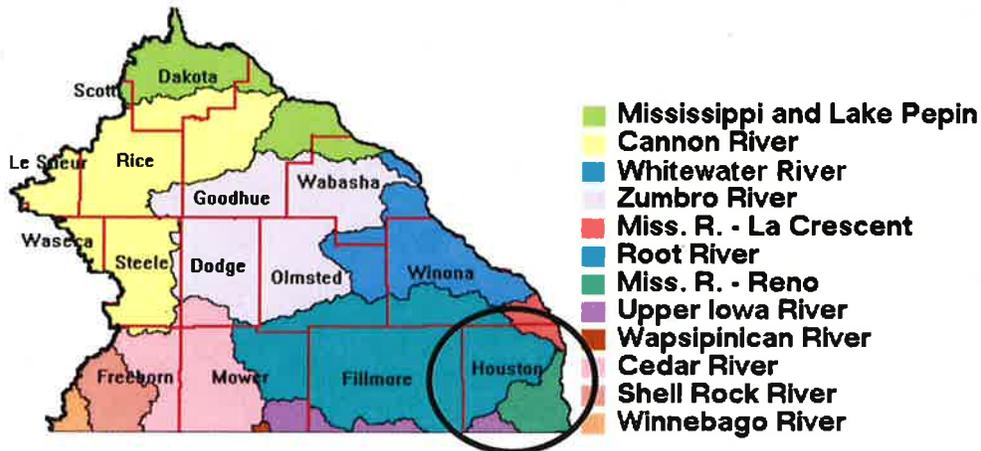
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Rich Stemper – Technician
Dave Walter – Technician
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Jason Rochester – Feedlot Technician, JPB Staff**

NRCS Staff 2012

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Lance Klessig – Soil Conservation Technician
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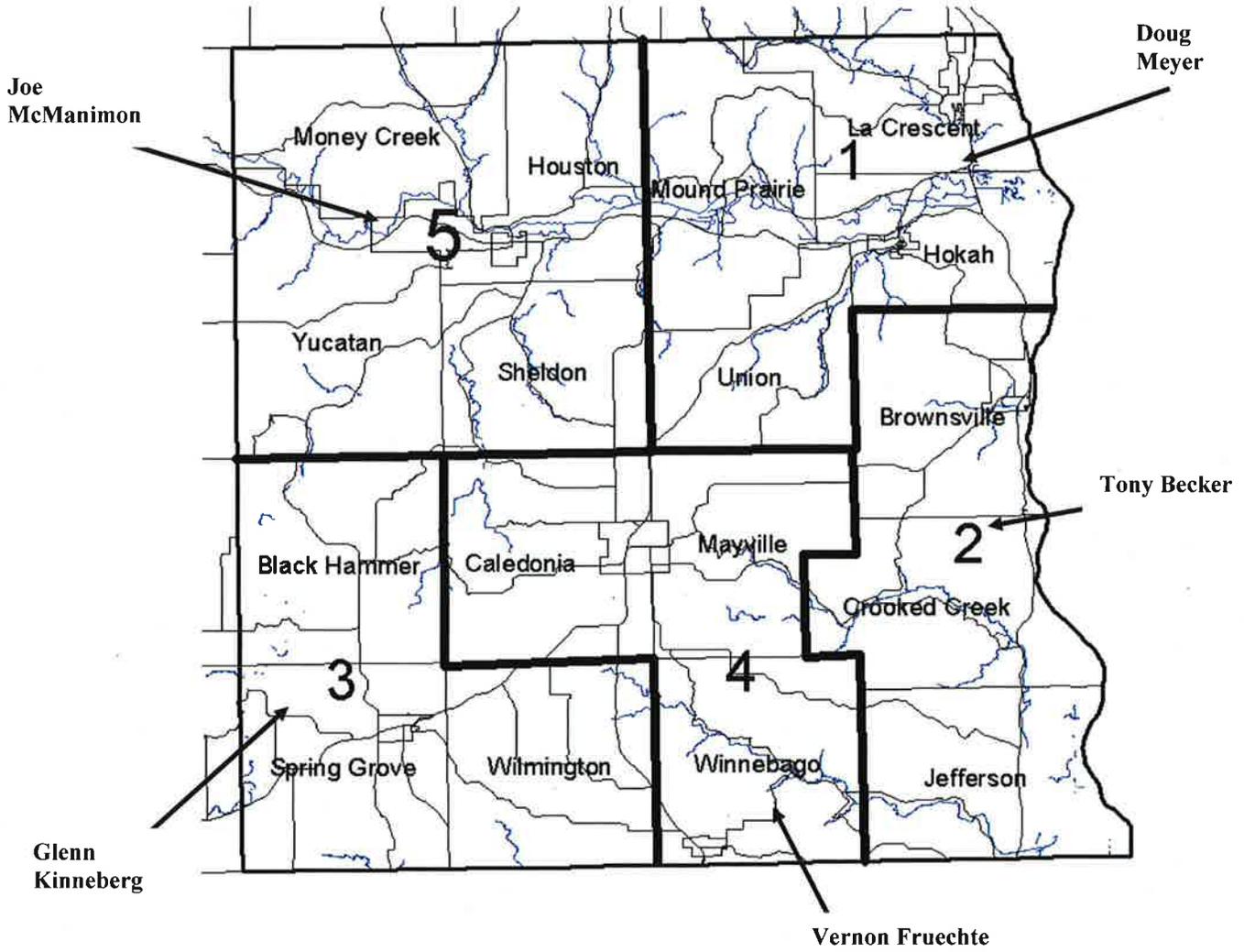
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Term Expires December 31, 2012

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Yucatan Township

SUPERVISORS NOMINATION DISTRICT



Houston County, Minnesota

2012 DISTRICT ACCOMPLISHMENTS

In 2012 the following practices were installed with State Cost-Share funds to control high priority erosion problems.

- 3 Critical Area Plantings - \$4,440.00
- 2 Grassed Waterways - \$3,044.96
- 5 Flood Control Dam - \$278,157.32

Total \$ 285,642.28

Of the five flood control dams that were installed, four of them are located in the Winnebago watershed. They include:

- DNR/Winnebago Township
- Pat Burke
- Bob Koch
- Mike Staggemeyer – *Site 1*

At the close of 2012, one project remains to be installed as a result of the 2007 and 2008 flood events. Cost share assistance for this project will be provided through State Cost-Share funds. Survey, design, cost estimates and permit requests are being completed. Installation of the project is currently planned for the 2013 construction season.

Other conservation practices that were installed in 2012 as a collaborative effort between NRSC and district staff include:

- 5 acres Grassed Waterways
- 130 acres Strips
- 1 Diversion
- 6,550 ft. Terraces
- 2 Grade Stabilization Structures
- 1 Water and Sediment Control Basin
- 7 Push-Up Ponds

District staff reviewed 51 open lot agreements with landowners and assisted them with compliance issues. This workload involved plan revisions, installation and inspections of BMP's that addressed a wide variety of resource concerns.

The district's staff also completed conservation practice installation on two RIM sites including one sensitive wetland restoration project on the Jerred Roth easement. Annual spot checks were also conducted on additional RIM sites.

In 2012 the Root River SWCD staff entered into a contract agreement with The Nature Conservancy to address resource concerns within the Root River watershed. Sensitive areas were identified using the Stream Power Index and contacts were made with approximately 135 landowners. This ongoing program will continue into 2013 and include additional mapping, contacting and installation of planned practices and final reports. Cover crop was also established on 175 acres in the Root River watershed.

The Root River SWCD staff also entered into an agreement with the Crooked Creek watershed to provide staffing to identify needs and promoted the installation of additional conservation practices within its watershed boundaries. Along with this workload, staff also assisted in watershed plan development and other issues related to the Crooked Creek watershed and its board.

The SWCD contracted with the Board of Water & Soil Resources (BWSR) to enhance resources on the Hokah Wetland Bank site. Projects included tree plantings, invasive plant removal, direct seeding, native grass seed collection and seeding and continued maintenance.

The district also completed their PRAP evaluation and was found to be doing an excellent job in implementing their local Comprehensive Water Plan.

They also contracted with a private consultant, Brian Watson, to assist the district during the transitional period of replacing the district manager. Issues that were addressed included staffing changes, employee position descriptions, data practice policy development, wage scales, employee evaluations, and development and training programs.

The Root River SWCD has been involved with drafting an ordinance to address the mining of frac sand in Houston County.

The district assisted concerned landowners in the Bee/Duck Creek Watershed. Project identification, cost-share alternatives and direction were provided.

The Root River SWCD completed their first BBR (Biennial Budget Request). This process takes the place of the district's Annual Plan of Work. In addition, the district submitted a CWL (Clean Water Legacy) grant application that targeted resource concerns and feedlot issues in several of our priority watersheds.

Along with the district's typical conservation delivery program to area landowners, we continue to be involved with educational events such as our 6th Grade Environmental Day, Envirothon, news articles and the area FFA Field Day.

The district honored The McCormick family. Kevin, Gail and family along with Jim and Anna McCormick as their 2012 Conservationist of the Year.

The SWCD's tree program had a successful year. Local landowners purchased and planted 9,660 trees to enhance conservation efforts.

The Root River SWCD continues to be involved with the nitrate monitoring efforts. This past year an additional nitrate testing opportunity was offered to the residents of Houston County. The district also continues to be involved with Water Plan implementation goals and the Wetland Conservation Act compliance issues.

2013 Annual Report



**Root River
Soil & Water
Conservation District**

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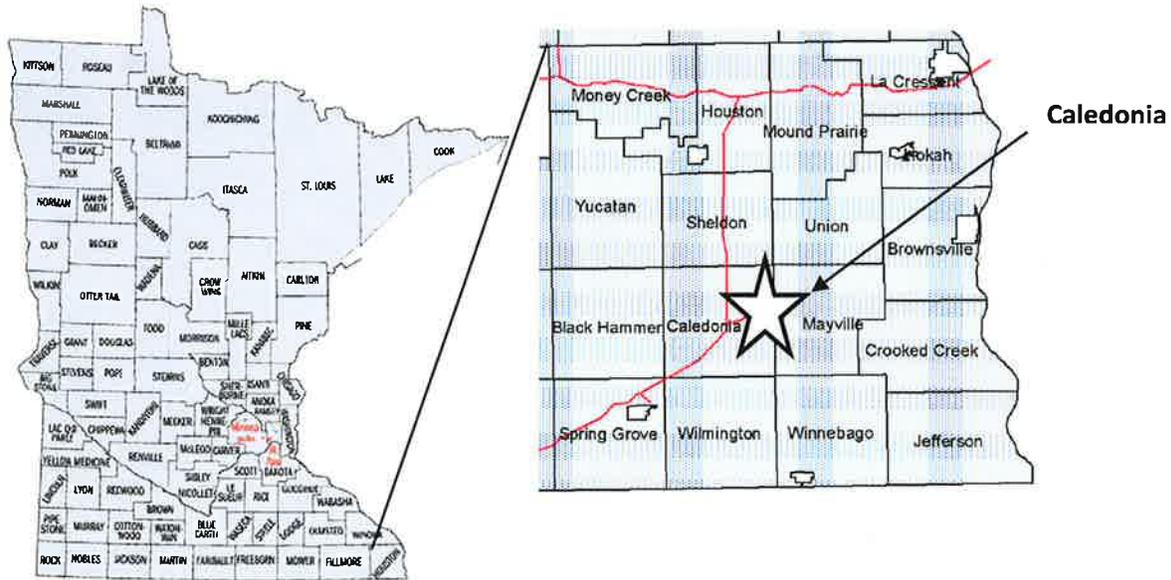
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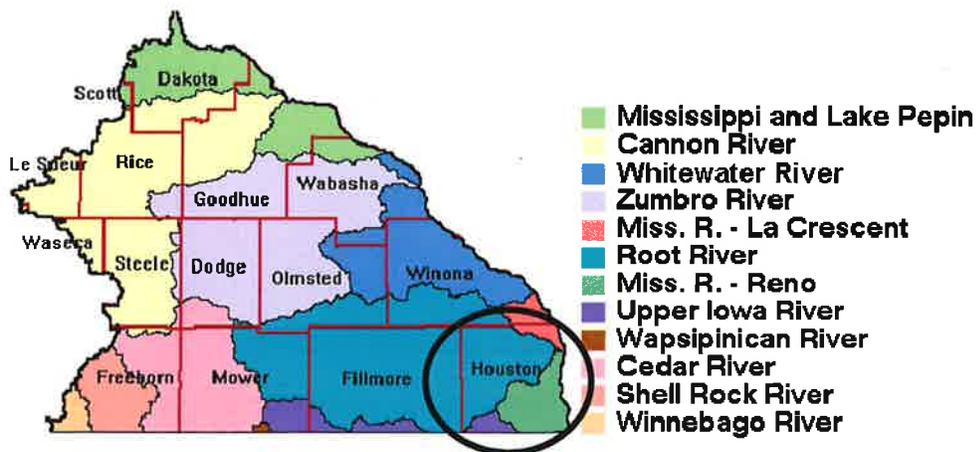
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Rich Stemper – Technician

Dave Walter – Technician

Janice Messner – Administrative Assistant

Jason Rochester – Feedlot Technician, JPB Staff



NRCS Staff 2013

Gary Larson – District Conservationist

Lance Klessig – Soil Conservation Technician

RIVER SOIL AND WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICT SUPERVISORS



Left to Right: Matt Feldmeier, Tony Becker, Loren Lapham, Douglas W. Meyer & Roger Stenhoff

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Term Expires December 31, 2014

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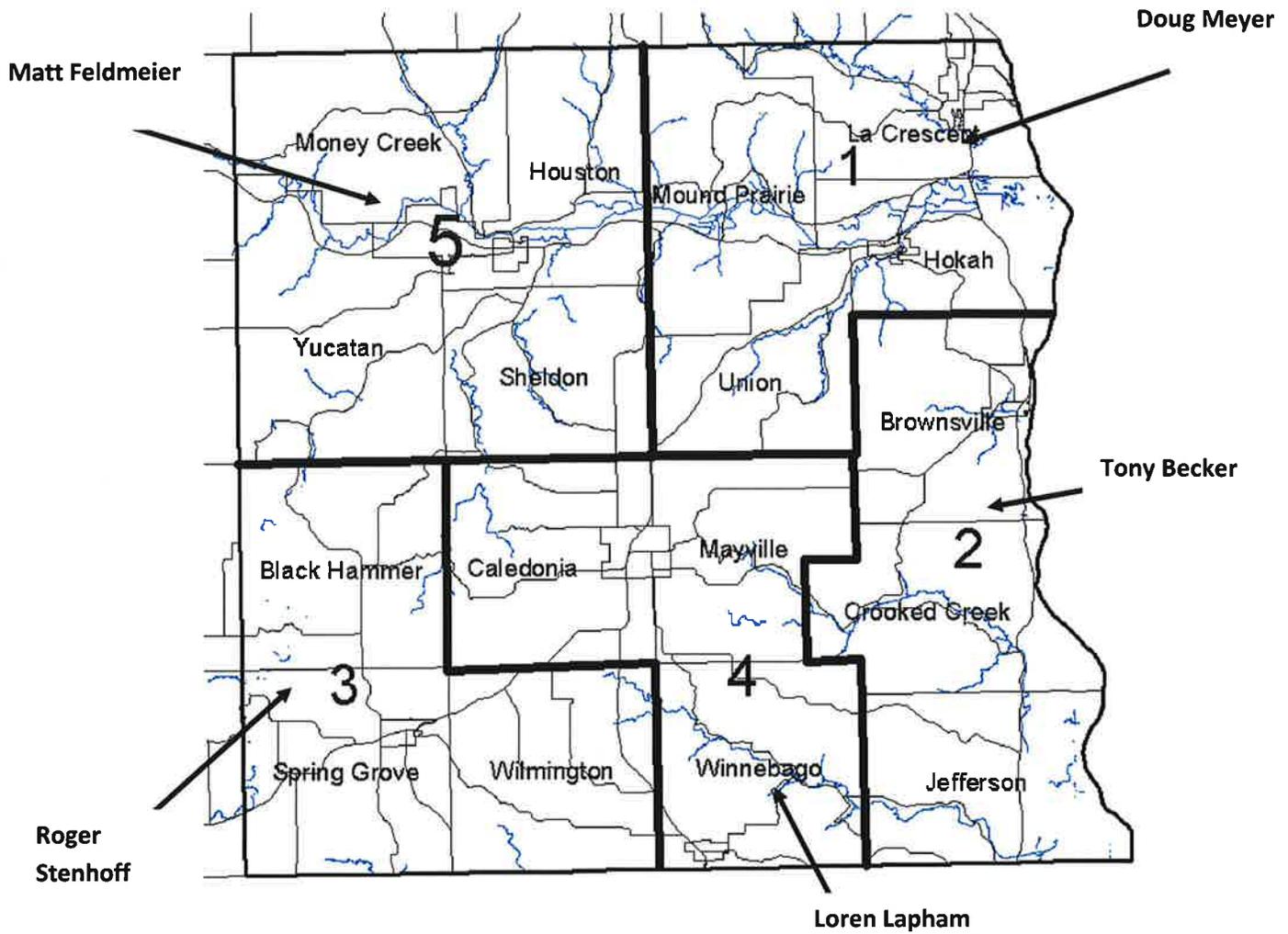
Supervisor District #5 – Matt Feldmeier

Term Expires December 31, 2017

Supervisor for:

Houston Township & Village--Money Creek Township--Sheldon Township--Yucatan Township

SUPERVISORS NOMINATION DISTRICT



2013 DISTRICT ACCOMPLISHMENTS

In 2013 the Root River SWCD staff assisted with the planning and installation of the follow conservation practices. Federal cost-share funds were leveraged through the EQIP program.

Contour Strips – 425 acres

Grade Stabilization Structures – 6

Sediment Control Basins – 2

Grassed Waterways – 4.2 acres

Terraces – 6,200 linear feet

Diversion – 900 linear feet

Critical Area – 6 acres

Sinkhole Repair – 1

Stream bank Revetment – 1,300 linear feet

Along with this list of conservation practices the District also assisted in repair work on the Bear Creek and Winnebago watershed structures.

The District was also involved in a complicated exigent site in the city of Brownsville. This project involved numerous agencies, landowners, contractors and other partners to complete the work. The project cost was \$115,000.

The award for the final Winnebago flood control structure was finalized and work is to begin in early 2014.

District staff reviewed 46 open lot agreements with landowners and assisted them with compliance. This workload continues to involve plan revisions, installation and inspections that address resource concerns.

The district staff forwarded four parcels for consideration under the Reinvest In Minnesota (RIM) program to the Board of Water & Soil Resource office. Annual site inspections were conducted on identified easements.

In 2013, the Root River SWCD contracted with the National Fish & Wildlife Foundation to address resource needs throughout several of our major watersheds including the Root River, Crooked Creek, Bee & Duck Creek. This project will include

targeted resource planning on sensitive sites identified through the Stream Power Index. Goals include installing an additional 200 practices and visiting with an additional 400 landowners. This project is ongoing through 2015.

The Root River SWCD wrapped up its contract agreement and workload with The Nature Conservancy. This project was very successful and resulted in significant reductions of both sediment and phosphorus. During the course of the grant 137 landowners were contacted resulting in 36 practices being installed where technical assistance was provided and an additional 44 projects are being planned or are in progress.

Contingent with The Nature Conservancy grant is the Native Buffer program and Cover Crop program. Thirty-six acres were enrolled into 10 year contracts and 381 acres were planted in cover crops in 2013.

The Root River SWCD continues its agreement with the Crooked Creek Watershed to provide technical and administrative assistance. Several meetings were held with both local and state agencies to develop a watershed plan.

The SWCD contracted with the BWSR to oversee enhancement of the Hokah Wetland Bank site. This project is in its second year. In 2013 approximately 15 acres of tree plantings were installed, extensive invasive species control through both chemical and mechanical methods.

The Root River SWCD along with the Houston County Water Plan Committee finalized the 5 Year Revision to its Comprehensive Water Plan. This plan was submitted to the Houston County commissioners for approval.

The Root River SWCD staff continues to partner with concerned landowners in the Bee & Duck Creek watersheds. Projects have been identified and installation is contingent upon cost-share opportunities.

The Root River SWCD applied for grants to address resource concerns to the Clean Water grant program and the MN Corn Growers Association. We feel confident that we will be successful and will begin this work in early 2014.

The SWCD's education program remains strong. Our 6th Grade Environmental Day was attended by more than 250 students. Caledonia High School participated in the Envirothon program in Faribault, MN and staff continues to submit news articles addressing conservation issues. District staff was also involved in the area FFA Field Day.

The District honored Eugene & Carol Laschenski as our 2013 Conservationist of the Year. Several board supervisors and staff gathered with the Laschenskis and other state conservation farmers in St. Paul for the state MASWCD convention, in which the SWCD was a co-host.

The SWCD continues to be involved with Domestic Well Monitoring Network and the Rain Monitoring Network.

The Root River SWCD has been actively involved in the coordination and implementation of the Wetland Conservation Act (WCA) program.

2014
Annual Report



Garland and Joann Moe Farm



**Root River Soil and Water
Conservation District**

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INTRODUCTION

This annual report is provided to assist in reviewing the 2014 activities of the Root River Soil and Water Conservation District. This document is intended to present an overview of the accomplishments of the District during the past year in a manner consistent with district policy, to achieve the long range goals of the District.

MISSION STATEMENT

The Root River Soil and Water Conservation District's mission is to provide assistance to cooperators in managing the natural resources on their land. In addition, the district will continue to educate people on local conservation issues and concerns, in order to fortify and perpetuate the conservation movement.

AUTHORITY

Minnesota Statutes Chapter 103C.201 authorized the formation of the Root River SWCD.

Minnesota Statutes Chapter 103C.005, soil and water conservation policy states:

“to encourage land occupiers to conserve the soil and water resources through implementation of practices that effectively reduce or prevent erosion, sedimentation, siltation and agriculturally related pollution in order to preserve natural resources, ensure continued soil productivity, control floods, prevent impairment of dams and reservoirs, assist in maintaining the navigability of rivers and harbors, preserve wildlife, protect the tax base and protect public lands.”

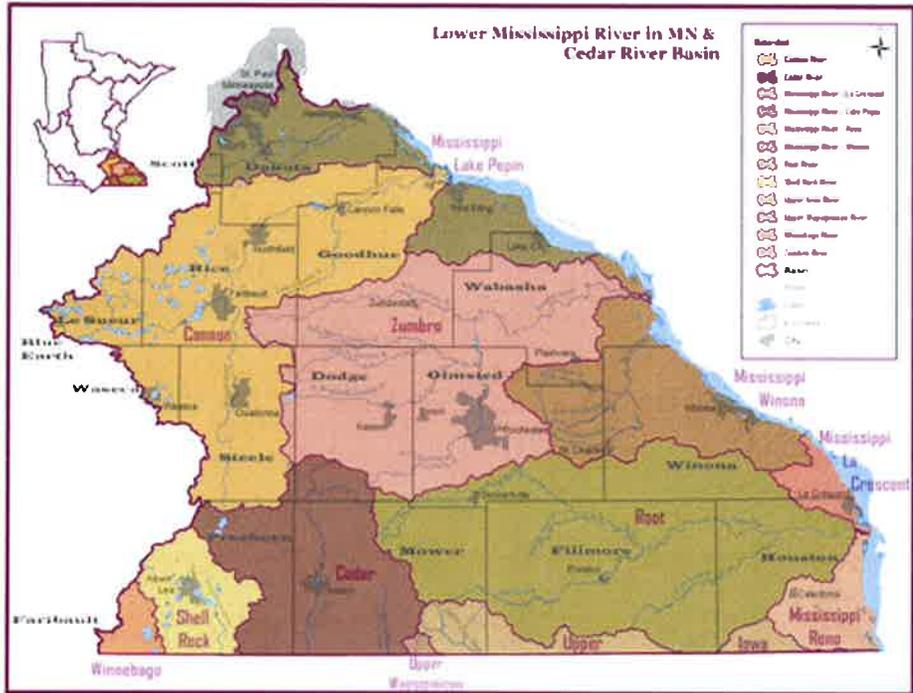
In order to assist land users the Root River SWCD will carry out all district programs in accordance with the powers and duties outline in Minnesota Statutes Chapter 103C.331.

ORGANIZATIONAL BOUNDARIES

Houston County lies in the extreme southeastern corner of Minnesota and consists of 17 townships. It is bounded by the Mississippi River on the east and six other counties:

- Winona County, Minnesota (north)
- La Crosse County, Wisconsin (northeast)
- Vernon County, Wisconsin (east)
- Allamakee County, Iowa (south)
- Winneshiek County, Iowa (southwest)
- Fillmore County, Minnesota (west)





COUNTY LAND DESCRIPTION

The Root River flows through the northern half of the county. There are four small watersheds which flow directly into the Mississippi River and a portion along the south and southwest flows into the Upper Iowa Watershed. The county is in the Driftless Zone, marked by the absence of glacial drift and presence of bedrock cut by streams into steep hills. The topography of the district is very irregular with elevation extremes of over 600 feet. Many of the

hilltops are more than 400 feet above the flood plain and are within a fraction of a mile in distance. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, the county has a total area of 569 square miles with 552 square miles of land and 17 square miles or 2.9% of water. The plateau that surrounds Caledonia, the county seat, includes flat, fertile farm land and hilly, verdant pasture land.

Blue, Hayshore, Lawrence and Target lakes are located within the Upper Mississippi River National Wildlife and Fish Refuge; a National protection area in the County.



Houston County also contains almost 20% or 200,000 acres of the Root River Watershed district and almost 200,000 acres of the Mississippi River Reno watershed. These areas are rich in habitat for game and nongame wildlife species and in aesthetic beauty. Long valleys rimmed with dry prairies and hardwood hills are bisected by cold water trout streams. Unlike any other part of the state, much of the watershed and the greater Mississippi River Blufflands have been largely untouched by glaciers for 500,000 years. As a result of this unique geology, the Blufflands are home to diverse habitats. No other region in the state demonstrates this diversity and uniqueness of habitats. While much of the region has been converted to cropland, pasture and rural development, many bluffs and valleys of the watershed are still home to high quality cliffs, forests, oak savannas, and prairies, including 40 different native plant community types mapped by the Minnesota Biological Survey (MBS) covering nearly 38,000 acres. The Root River watershed represents an extraordinary priority:

- There are 111 species of state-listed rare plants and animals in the watershed, many of them concentrated in the 353 sites of biodiversity significance mapped in the watershed by MBS. The U.S. Forest Service has also identified the Root River as having a high priority among Upper Mississippi River watersheds.

ORGANIZATIONAL HISTORY

The Root River SWCD was organized in 1939, encompassing all of Houston County and the eastern portion of Fillmore County. In the 1960s the boundaries were revised, with the Fillmore County portion of the District merging with West Fillmore SWCD and leaving Root River SWCD with our own present boundary.

The district was formed because people living in the valleys were concerned about flooding. Also, upland users had problems with erosion causing ditches to form which resulted in lower yields on cropland. These problems and concerns caused incomes to fall threatening survival of the family farm unit. In many instances land users accepted conservation practices on the land as an alternative to abandoning the farm. The results of these practices were recognized and adopted by their neighbors. Since the district was formed, conservation practices have been installed on over 90% of the farms although some land users have only treated part of their land.

In recent years, changes in land ownership have resulted in removal of important practices. New land users have not recognized the importance and need for these practices until they themselves developed problems. The district has a critical role in maintaining current practices, promoting education and utilizing available resources to put additional practices on the ground.



Root River SWCD Staff 2014

Anne Selness – District Manager

Ron Meiners (Retired District Manager)

Rich Stemper – Technician

Dave Walter – Technician

Machele Bollman – Assistant Technician

Janice Messner – Administrative Assistant

Jason Rochester – JPB Staff

NRCS Staff 2014

Gary Larson – District Conservationist

Lance Klessig – Soil Conservation Technician

ROOT RIVER SOIL AND WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICT SUPERVISORS



Left to Right: Matt Feldmeier, Tony Becker, Loren Lapham, Douglas W. Meyer & Roger Stenhoff
Supervisor District #1 -- Douglas W. Meyer
Term Expired December 31, 2014

Supervisor for:

La Crescent Township & Village--Hokah Township & Village--Mound Prairie Township--Union Township

Supervisor District #2 – Tony Becker

Term Expired December 31, 2014

Supervisor for:

Brownsville Township & Village--Crooked Creek Township--Jefferson Township

Supervisor District #3 – Roger Stenhoff

Term Expires December 31, 2017

Supervisor for:

Black Hammer Township--Spring Grove Township & Village--Wilmington Township

Supervisor District #4 – Loren Lapham

Term Expires December 31, 2017

Supervisor for:

Caledonia Township & Village--Eaten Village--Mayville Township--Winnebago Township

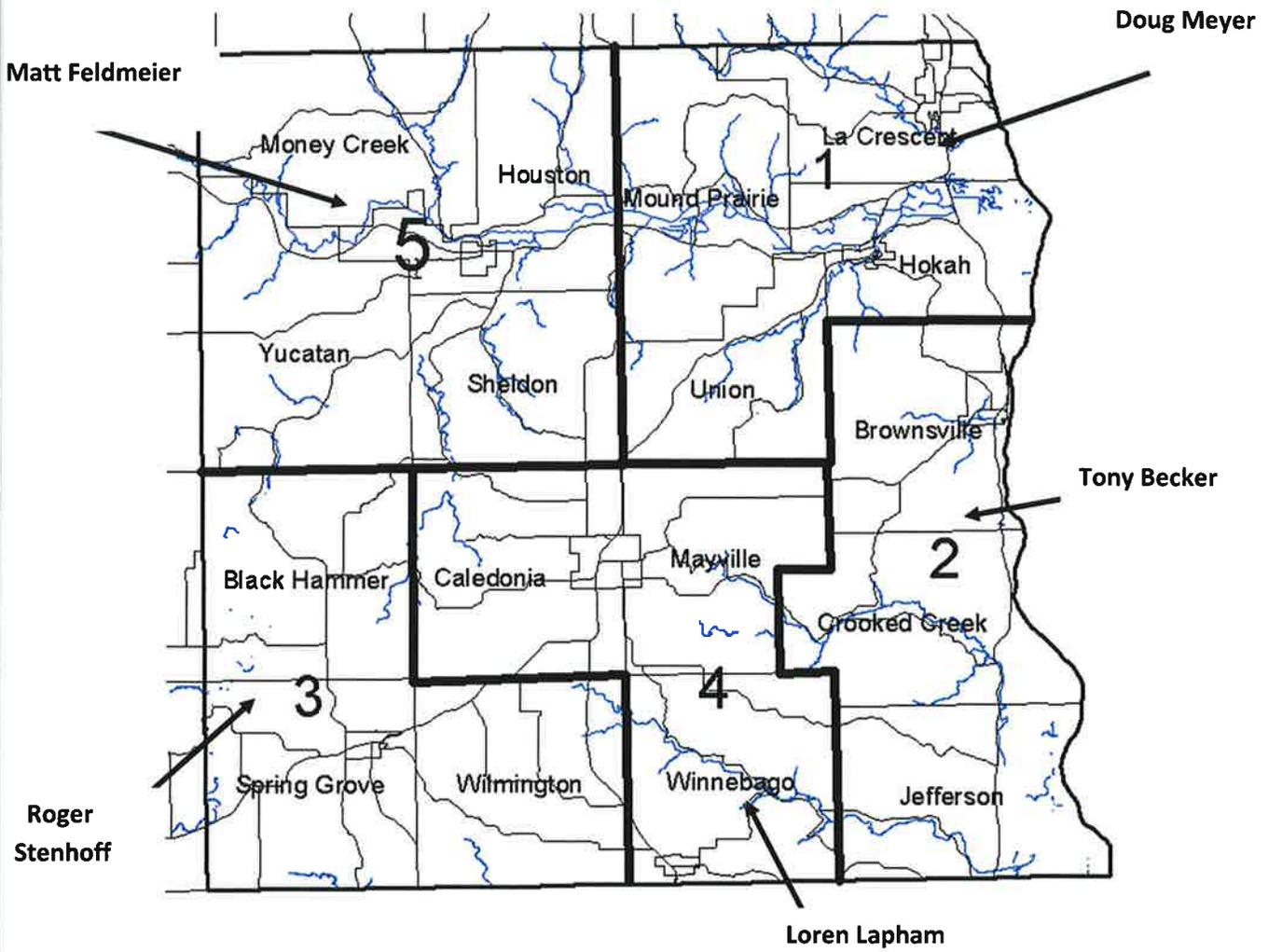
Supervisor District #5 – Matt Feldmeier

Term Expires December 31, 2017

Supervisor for:

Houston Township & Village--Money Creek Township--Sheldon Township--Yucatan Township

SUPERVISORS NOMINATION DISTRICT



District Accomplishments for 2014

Practice/Inspections	Number of farms	Amount
Buffer Strips	5	
Tree/Shrub	5	
Conservation Cover	1	
Cost Share Site Inspections	275	
Cover Crop	36	764.57 acres
Critical Area	113	57.15 acres
Diversion	1	200 feet
Filter Strip	12	
Forest Stand	7	
Grade Stabilization	8	
Grassed Waterway	95	43,222 feet
Incorporate native grasses	1	
Mulching	98	
No-Till	1	45 acres
Obstruction removal	2	
P & N reduction technology	1	
Wetland Planning	2	
Pond	12	
Push Up Ponds	6	
Restoration Declining Habitat	3	
RIM Site Inspections	25	922 acres
Riparian Forest Buffer	6	
Stream Shore Protection	1	200 feet
Strip Cropping	13	25 acres
Terraces	12	10,490 feet
Timber Stand Improvement	44	
Upland Wildlife Habitat Management	2	
Wildlife Benefit	1	
Windbreak	1	

- The SWCD district manager served on the Frac Sand Ordinance Committee and provided insight on the formulation of a frac sand ordinance from a conservation perspective. Twenty-one meetings were scheduled in 2014. The new ordinance was posted for public comment in December 2014.
- Staff joined and participated in the One Watershed, One Plan meetings which will combine conservation efforts for Houston, Dodge, Fillmore, Winona, Mower and Olmsted counties.

- Clean Water Legacy Amendment - funded Conservation Corp of Minnesota (CCM) to perform revetment work on 1,360 feet of stream bank in the continuation of the Riceford Creek project. The Root River SWCD matched funds in the amount of \$10,150.
- Domestic Well Grant is a continued partnership with the SE MN Water Resources Board. The SWCD assists the monitoring coordinator by sharing and updating the information database and maintaining county volunteer participation. Houston County has four participants. The grant study looks at ammonia nitrogen, bromide, chloride, inorganic nitrogen and sulfate in domestic well water.
- Nitrate Monitoring Grant is a continued partnership with the SE MN Water Resources Board. As the county well network coordinator we maintain an up-to-date database of well location and well owner contact information of the 35 volunteer participants in the study. The SWCD works with a certified lab by providing them volunteer participants' information, serves as a local contact for the volunteer participants, distributes newsletters to well owners semi-annually, provides written reports of activity to the SE Minnesota Water Resource Board and participates in organizing an annual volunteer appreciation event.
- Tree Program - 7,925 trees were sold in 2014. The trees in highest demand were White Spruce and White Pine with 800 orders each followed by Red Oak at 750. New tree offerings included Nannyberry and Balsam Fir. The 2014 tree sales totaled \$ 7,236.00.
- Rain Monitoring Program - This program coordinates with the Minnesota Climatological Network. Eleven volunteers throughout Houston County measure and record precipitation on a daily bases. The Root River SWCD welcomed three new replacement participants. The highest moisture area was in Yucatan Township reporting 34.02" from April - October. This averaged 4.8" per month. The low moisture area was Hokah and La Crescent townships with 3.7" per month from April - October. June had the highest average moisture level at 8.23".
- 6th Grade Environmental Day hosted 207 sixth grade students from seven area schools. The outdoor classroom setting covered the topics of electrical safety, wetlands, rattlesnakes, aquatic invasive species, soils, wildlife, forestry and electro stream shocking.
- Free nitrate testing clinics were offered. One of the clinics was in conjunction with the Houston County Public Health Open House on April 29th and a second clinic at the Houston County Fair on August 15th.
- Staff met with Senator Jeremy Miller and House Representative Greg Davids on January 25th raising our concerns about current SWCD funding and the possibility of county taxing authority for conservation purposes in the future.





- A successful county commissioner's tour of the Staggemeyer structures in the Winnebago watershed was hosted by the SWCD on July 31st.

- The last "flood event" project was completed and approved for payment at the August 13th board meeting. This flood control dam provides a soil savings of 3,300 tons/yr, phosphorus reduction of 2,805 lbs/yr and sediment (TSS) of 3,300 ton per

year.

- A continuing grant with the National Fish & Wildlife Foundation (NFWF) provided \$86,492.14 during 2014. The SWCD provided matching funds in the amount of \$ 153,187.52. Outcomes of this grant consist of identifying critical landscape features that are contributing high amounts of sediment and nutrients to tributaries of the Root and Mississippi rivers. Staff will reach out to landowners having critical areas to implement the right practices.

- 75th Anniversary Celebration was held August 21st at the Ag Service Center. Past managers, employees, board supervisors, staff and a wide array of partners and colleagues attended.

- \$9,000 went out to three landowners/participants in the Hayable Buffer Program. These participants were approved through The Nature Conservancy in 2013 and signed into contract for ten years. The Root River SWCD staff administers the funds, provides technical and compliance assistance.



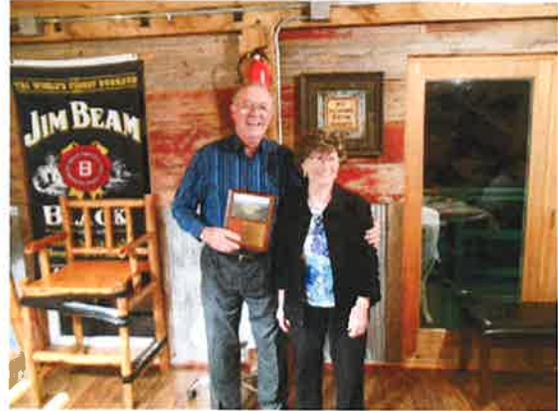
- Root River, Olmsted, Fillmore, Winona, Mower and Steel counties' SWCD's and the Crooked Creek watershed district were selected by BWSR for the One Watershed One Plan pilot program.

- The Root River SWCD provided staff assistance for the Phosphorus Load Reduction Field Day on September 25th offered through the Houston County Extension Service Agency.

- Houston County was appropriated \$12,676 in Aquatic Invasive Species funds to promote education of Aquatic Invasive Species in Houston County. Additional funds of \$28,058 have been allocated to the SWCD for AIS prevention in 2015.

- A representative from the Root River SWCD served on the Technical Evaluation Panel (TEP). Various wetland conservation applications and mitigation requirements were reviewed to comply with the Wetland Conservation Act (WCA).

- 2014 Conservationist of the Year was Garland and Joann Moe. The SWCD hosted a banquet in their honor on November 20th.
- The Root River SWCD technical staff assisted the Houston County Zoning Department in reviewing 17 building site applications. On-site visits and technical assistance was provided.
- Staff submitted thirteen news articles throughout the year that were published in the local newspapers in addition to putting out a fall newsletter.



- Partnered with the Crooked Creek Watershed by providing administrative and technical services. During 2014, the SWCD provided technical assistance on the installation of two push-up ponds that were partially funded through the Crooked Creek Watershed plus one additional push-up pond that was not funded. The SWCD also played a key role in the purchase of property surrounding the R3 Structure which provides needed access to the structure, as well as public access for recreational purposes.
- The SWCD actively promoted the Area 7 Envirothon and assisted with the event.
- NRBG Feedlot Program - a feedlot project was completed and technical assistance provided. In addition to this project, 31 other landowners were assisted.
- Houston County Water Plan Committee - The SWCD provided technical assistance on the installation of four push-up ponds that were partially funded through the Houston County Water Plan, plus one additional push-up pond that was not funded.
- We assisted with two wetland restoration order projects that were completed this past year, along with eight WCA/DNR permit requests for public water and/or wetland impact projects involving stream bank restoration and driveway construction & culvert placement.

Meetings and Partnerships - Staff and/or Supervisors in 2014

- Legislative Day at the Capitol
- One Watershed One Plan
- Field to Stream Partnership
- Frac Sand Ordinance Committee
- Joint Powers Board
- Hiawatha Valley RC&D
- Nature Conservancy
- Southeast Forest Landscape Committee
- Minnesota Association of Soil and Water Conservation Districts
- MR-La Crescent and MR-Reno watersheds

- Houston County Commissioner's Meetings
- Root River SWCD monthly meetings
- Crooked Creek Watershed monthly meetings
- Houston County Water Plan Committee monthly meetings
- Environmental Quality Board
- Area 7 Fall SWCD meeting at Nerstrand
- Dairy Nutrient Management Field Day
- Technical Evaluation Panel (TEP)
- Cedar Revetment Field Day
- SE MN Water Resources monthly meetings – Rochester
- BALMM – Basin Alliance for the Lower Mississippi in Minnesota - Rochester

Staff Development in 2014

- SWIFT financial training
- Excel training
- Board of Soil and Water Resources Academy
- Natural Heritage Database training
- Feedlot training
- Grazing training
- Federal computer security training



75 Years of Conservation: Root River SWCD Celebrates Milestone

November 2014 Snapshots



As one of state's first districts, the Root River Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD) has earned its place in Minnesota's conservation history. Organized in 1939 for 75 years the district has been a constant resource for local landowners. District staff and residents have worked in partnership to protect the fragile soils and steep slopes that are a hallmark of the region. While much has changed since the SWCD began, its commitment to land stewardship and the people of Houston County is as strong as ever.

Anne Selness, Root River SWCD District Manager, says the district's purpose has always been to provide assistance to cooperators in managing the natural resources on their land. As it was in 1939, partnerships are vital to the district's local conservation work in 2014.



"We work across the county and throughout our watersheds in an effort to reduce erosion and sedimentation, and improve water quality in our karst topography. That work is a result of a combined approach of information and education, technical and financial assistance from our federal, state, county and private agencies, with the continued support of the landowners we work with."

Pictured top: a stream bank stabilization on the Root River, 1939.

Pictured bottom, left to right: new District Manager Anne Selness, Supervisor Matt Feldmeier, BWSR Board Conservationist Steve Lawler, Supervisor Doug Meyer, Chair Loren Lapham, retiring District Manager Ron Meiners, and Supervisor Roger Stenhoff.

Root River SWCD has demonstrated a crucial ability to adapt to serve the needs of landowners. When disaster struck with the flooding of 2007, the SWCD's response became a blueprint for other agencies for how to provide effective leadership and aid to landowners during difficult times. In recent years, changes in agriculture and public policy have resulted in a shift away from small scale animal agriculture toward larger scale operations in the

county. The district has adapted, providing engineering, technical, and conservation assistance to help mitigate the effects of changing agricultural practices.

Those successes were celebrated in August of this year, as the community gathered to celebrate the SWCD's milestone anniversary. Stories were shared around the room, and it was clear that the district's conservation work impacted generations of Houston County residents. That's a powerful legacy, and a living one, as the work continues on behalf of generations to come.

2015
Annual Report



Jerry and Cindy Welke



Root River Soil and Water
Conservation District

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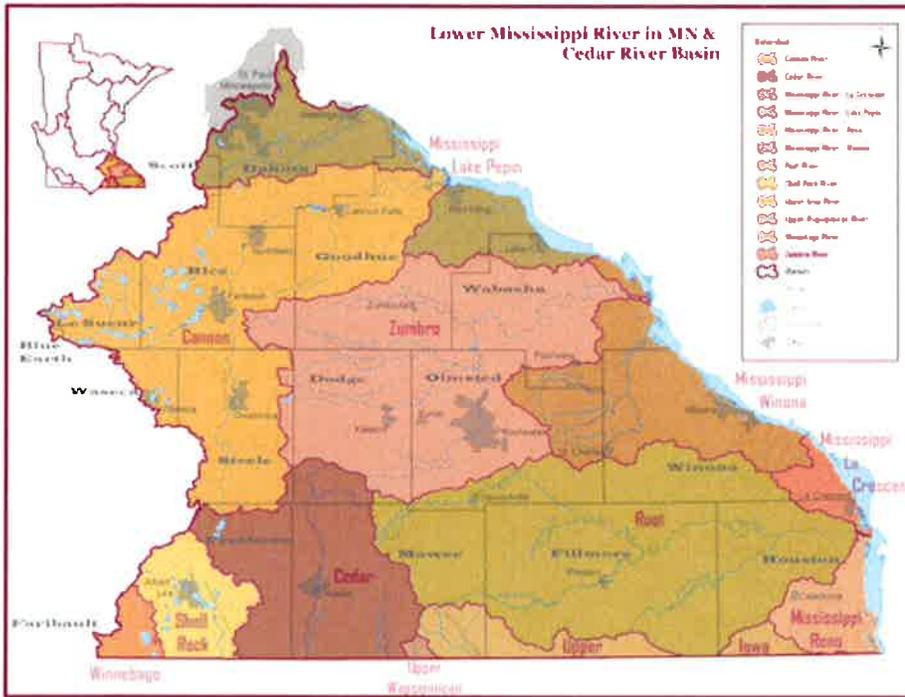
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COUNTY LAND DESCRIPTION

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Root River SWCD Staff 2015

Dave Walter – District Manager

Bob Scanlan – Technician

Janice Messner – Administrative Assistant

Jason Rochester – JPB Staff

NRCS Staff 2015

Gary Larson – District Conservationist

Lance Klessig – Soil Conservation Technician

ROOT RIVER SOIL AND WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICT SUPERVISORS



Left to Right: Jerry Welke, Cecil Graf, Loren Lapham, Roger Stenhoff & Matt Feldmeier

Supervisor District #1 – Jerry Welke

Appointed Replacement Supervisor for:

La Crescent Township & Village--Hokah Township & Village--Mound Prairie Township--Union Township

Supervisor District #2 – Cecil Graf

Term Expired December 31, 2018

Supervisor for:

Brownsville Township & Village--Crooked Creek Township--Jefferson Township

Supervisor District #3 – Roger Stenhoff

Term Expires December 31, 2016

Supervisor for:

Black Hammer Township--Spring Grove Township & Village--Wilmington Township

Supervisor District #4 – Loren Lapham

Term Expires December 31, 2016

Supervisor for:

Caledonia Township & Village--Eitzen Village--Mayville Township--Winnebago Township

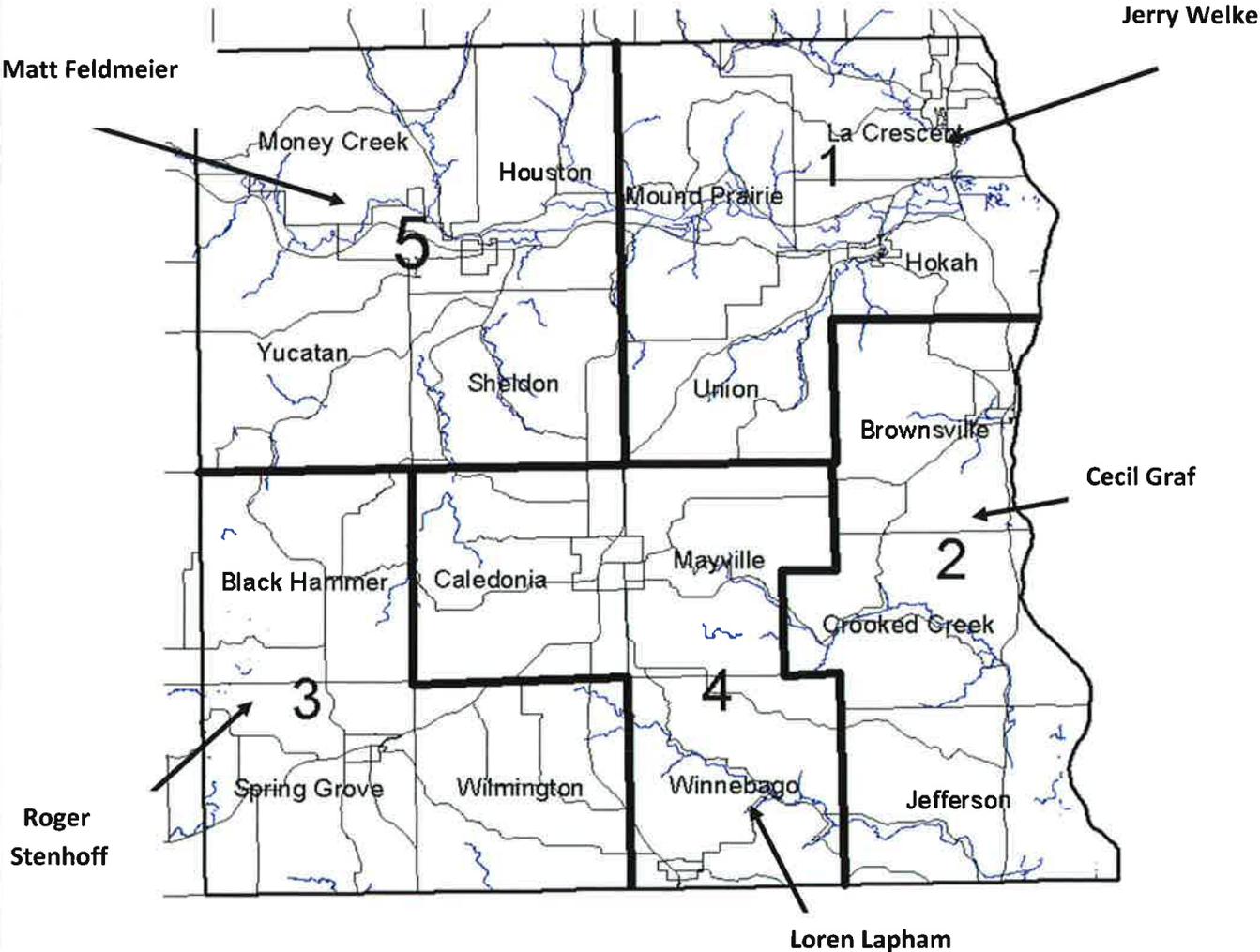
Supervisor District #5 – Matt Feldmeier

Term Expires December 31, 2016

Supervisor for:

Houston Township & Village--Money Creek Township--Sheldon Township--Yucatan Township

SUPERVISORS NOMINATION DISTRICT



District Accomplishments for 2015

Practice/Inspections	Number of Practices	Amount	Comprehensive Plan Implementation Schedule
Biological Suppression	1	444.1 acres	Goal 2 - B.2, B.3, B.9
Calving/Forage Availability	1	12.9 acres	Goal 2 – A.1, A.4, B.2, B.3, B.9,C.5
Conservation Cover	5	26.19 acres	Goal 2 – A.1, A.2, B.2, B.3, B.9
Contour Buffer Strip	2	304.08 acres	Goal 2 – A.2, B.2, B.3, B.9
Cost Share Site Inspections	38		
Cover Crop	10	1,244 acres	Goal 2 – B.1, B.2, B.3, B.9
Critical Area	52	30.96 acres	Goal 2 – A.1, A.2, B.2, B.3, B.9
Diversion	3	1,200 linear feet	Goal 2 – A.1, A.2, B.2, B.3, B.9
Fence	2	1,142 linear feet	Goal 2 - A.4, B.2, B.3, B.9, C.5
Filter Strip	3	5.8 acres	Goal 2 – A.1, A.2, A.5, B.2, B.3, B.5, B.9
Grade Stabilization	9		Goal 2 – A.1, A.2, B.2, B.3, B.9
Grassed Waterway	54	24,035 linear feet	Goal 2 – A.1, A.2, A.3, B.2, B.3, B.9
Incorporate Native Grasses	1		Goal 2 – A.1, A.2, A.3, B.2, B.3, B.9
Level III Manure Application Inspection	35		Goal 1 – A.1
Mulching	49	27.65 acres	Goal 2 - B.2, B.3, B.9,C.3
Nutrient Management	1		Goal 1 – A.1 Goal 2 – A.2, B.2, B.3, B.9
P & N Loss Reduction Application	1	997.1 acres	Goal 2 - B.2, B.3, B.9
Pasture Enhancement	1	20 acres	Goal 2 – A.1, A.3, A.4,B.2, B.3, B.9, C.5
Push Up Ponds	6		Goal 2 – A.1, A.2, B.3, B.9 Goal 3 – A.1
Reduce Spray Adjustment	6	4,209.3 acres	Goal 2 - B.2, B.3, B.9
RIM Site Inspections	24	1,035 acres	
Stream Bank Protection	1	200 linear feet	Goal 2 – A.1, A.2, A.5, B.2, B.3, B.5, B.9
Stream Crossings	2		Goal 2 – B.2, B.3, B.5, B.9
Strip Cropping	10	450 acres	Goal 2 – A.3, B.2, B.3, B.9
Subsurface Drain	2		Goal 2 - B.2, B.3, B.9
Terraces	6	7,170 linear feet	Goal 2 - B.2, B.3, B.9
Tree/Shrub Establishment	45		Goal 2 – A.1, A.2, B.11
Underground Outlet	2		Goal 2 - B.2, B.3, B.9
Waste Storage Facility	2		Goal 1 – A.1 Goal 2 – A.4, B.2, B.3, B.9, D.2
Waste Transfer	1		Goal 1 – A.1 Goal 2 – B.2, B.3, B.9, D.2
Well Decommissioning	2		Goal 1 – D.1 Goal 2 – B.2, B.3, B.9
Wetland Planning	3		Goal 3 – D.1

- The SWCD district manager served on the Frac Sand Ordinance Committee and provided insight on the formulation of a frac sand ordinance from a conservation perspective.
- Staff participated in the One Watershed, One Plan pilot program meetings which will combine conservation efforts for Houston, Dodge, Fillmore, Winona, Mower and Olmsted counties.
- Clean Water Legacy Amendment - funded Conservation Corp of Minnesota (CCM) to perform cedar tree revetment work on 2,238 linear feet of stream bank in the continuation of the Riceford Creek project. The Root River SWCD matched funds in the amount of \$10,150. A public field day was offered in addition to a viewing by the Farmers & Fishers organization.
- Nitrate Monitoring Grant is a continued partnership with the SE MN Water Resources Board. As the county well network coordinator we maintain an up-to-date database of well locations and well owner contact information of the 35 volunteers participating in the study. The SWCD works with a certified lab and provides them volunteer participants' information, serves as a local contact for the volunteer participants, distributes newsletters to well owners semi-annually, provides written reports of activity to the SE Minnesota Water Resource Board and participates in organizing an annual volunteer appreciation event.
- Tree Program - 7,400 trees were sold in 2015. The trees in highest demand were Black Walnut at 900 trees followed by White Spruce at 800 and Norway Pine and Red Oak at 700 of each species. A new tree offering was the Swamp White Oak. The 2015 tree sales totaled \$ 9,328.39.
- Rain Monitoring Program - This program coordinates with the Minnesota Climatological Network. Eleven volunteers throughout Houston County measure and record precipitation on a daily bases. The highest precipitation area was in Hokah Township reporting 31.29" from April - November. This averaged 3.9" per month. The low precipitation area was Black Hammer Township with 2.759" per month from April - November. June had the highest average precipitation level at 5.7".
- \$9,000 went out to three landowners/participants in the Hayable Buffer Program. These participants were approved through The Nature Conservancy in 2013 and signed into contract for ten years. The Root River SWCD staff administers the funds, provides technical and compliance assistance.
- Houston County appropriated \$28,058.00 in Aquatic Invasive Species funds to the Root River SWCD to promote education of aquatic invasive species in Houston County. Additional funds of \$28,058 have been allocated to the SWCD for AIS prevention in 2016.

- The Root River SWCD technical staff assisted the Houston County Zoning Department in reviewing 16 building site applications. On-site visits and technical assistance was provided.
- Partnered with the Crooked Creek Watershed by providing administrative and technical services. Additional administrative aid was provided with the purchase of adjoining land at the South Fork retention dam site. Assistance was given during dam assessments provided by NRCS on three retention structures in the Crooked Creek watershed.
- NRBG Feedlot Program - a feedlot project was completed and technical assistance provided. In addition to this project, 38 feedlot inspections were performed and landowner assistance provided.
- Houston County Water Plan Committee - The SWCD provided technical assistance with the installation of four push-up ponds that were partially funded through the Houston County Water Plan. The SWCD continues to provide administrative leadership for the Water Plan Committee.
- THE SWCD provided assistance to Houston County with the Wetland Conservation Act. During 2015 the SWCD assisted with wetland technical assistances on 14 requests. The requests consisted of boundary, no-loss, exemption and replacement plans. Of these requests three resulted in project specific replacements and construction site inspections. Assistance was also provided with one violation site that required enforcement action. The Root River SWCD also provided a representative to serve on the Technical Evaluation Panel (TEP). Various wetland conservation applications and mitigation requirements were reviewed to comply with the Wetland Conservation Act (WCA).
- Field To Stream Partnership Project – This project targets three sub-watersheds, Headwaters, Crystal Creek and Bridge Creek, within the Root River watershed.

Since 2010 monitoring data has been collected at strategic points within the watershed identifying nitrates, phosphorus and sediment losses.

Walkovers on each tract identifying conservation practices that would positively affect the sub-watersheds were done and discussion with individual landowners was the next phase of the project.

With a large area of the Bridge Creek watershed being within the Root River SWCD boundaries, technical staff then initiated the necessary survey, design, cost estimates and cost-share application development. Approximately 185 practices were identified in this area. In 2015 one large structure site, four grade stabilization structures and 25 grassed waterways were surveyed. Construction is planned for early 2016.

This project will continue through 2018 with a goal of treating all priority areas within this watershed.

Grant Awards Obtained by the SWCD

- A continuing grant with the National Fish & Wildlife Foundation (NFWF) provided \$24,996.16 during 2015. The SWCD provided matching funds in the amount of \$39,865.00. Outcomes of this grant consist of identifying critical landscape features that are contributing high amounts of sediment and nutrients to tributaries of the Root and Mississippi rivers. Staff continues to reach out to landowners with critical areas to implement best management practices.
- Surface Water Assessment Grant (SWAG) – Clean Water Funds, administered through MPCA, were awarded to monitor six streams in Houston and Fillmore counties for chemical, physical and bacteriological integrity. The monitoring will help identify that designated uses are being met and provide information on the condition of the waters. For a span of two years the SWCD is monitoring Pine Creek, Winnebago Creek, Crooked Creek and Bear Creek. A partnership with Fillmore County SWCD allows for assistance in monitoring the Upper Iowa and Pine Creek (State Line Rd). Grant funds in the amount of \$39,044.07 are being awarded over a two year span.
- The Root River SWCD was awarded the opportunity to train and mentor a future conservation professional (Conservation Corp member) through the CCM Apprenticeship Academy Program during the summer months of 2015. Funds for the program were appropriated by The Minnesota Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund as recommended by the Legislative-Citizen Commission on Minnesota Resources.
- Buffer Law Grant funding (\$20,000 for a two year period) was appropriated to the SWCD to support technical assistance efforts through informing and implementing the buffer law passed by Governor Mark Dayton. The law establishes new perennial vegetated buffers that have an average width of 50 feet with a minimum of 30 feet along rivers, streams and ditches that are classified as public waters.
- Minnesota Agricultural Water Quality Certification Program (MAWQCP) – A \$6,000 commitment, provided by the Minnesota Department of Agriculture (MDA), Minnesota Board of Water and Soil Resources (BWSR), Minnesota Department of Natural Resources (DNR), and the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency (MPCA), was awarded to the SWCD to implement a program offering 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 are certified and in turn obtain regulatory certainty for ten years. The program will help address concerns about changing regulatory requirements from multiple state and federal agencies.

Educational Outreach

- 6th Grade Environmental Day was held at Camp Winnebago near Caledonia, MN. The SWCD hosted 237 sixth grade students from seven area schools. The outdoor classroom setting covered the topics of electrical safety, wetlands, rattlesnakes, aquatic invasive species, soils, wildlife, forestry and electro stream shocking.
- The Root River SWCD provided staff assistance for the Phosphorus Load Reduction Field Day on March 26th offered through the Houston County Extension Service Agency and MDA.



- Staff met with Senator Jeremy Miller and House Representative Greg Davids on January 27th raising concerns about current SWCD funding.
- A successful county commissioner's tour was hosted by the SWCD.
- The SWCD actively promoted the Area 7 Envirothon and assisted with the event.
- Staff submitted eight news articles throughout the year that were published in the local newspapers. Additional articles were provided for publishing of the 2015 Conservation Edition in the Caledonia Argus.

- 2015 Conservationist of the Year was Jerry and Cindy Welke. The SWCD hosted a Recognition Night in their honor on September 17, 2015.



Meetings and Partnerships - Staff and/or Supervisors in 2015

- One Watershed One Plan
- Field to Stream Partnership
- Frac Sand Ordinance Committee
- Joint Powers Board
- Hiawatha Valley RC&D
- Southeast Forest Landscape Committee
- Minnesota Association of Soil and Water Conservation Districts
- MR-La Crescent and MR-Reno watersheds
- Environmental Quality Board
- MACFO Conference Planning Committee
- Technical Evaluation Panel (TEP)
- BALMM – Basin Alliance for the Lower Mississippi in Minnesota
- Houston County Commissioners meetings
- Root River SWCD monthly meetings
- Crooked Creek Watershed monthly meetings
- Houston County Water Plan Committee monthly meetings
- SE MN Water Resources monthly meetings
- Area 7 Spring & Fall SWCD meetings
- Local Buffer Law meetings
- US Fish & Wildlife Project meetings
- U of M Extension Pasture Walks
- MASWCD State Convention
- Legislative Day at the Capitol
- Cedar Tree Revetment Field Day
- One Watershed One Plan Open House

Staff Development in 2015

- Feedlot trainings
- Grazing trainings
- Soil Health trainings
- Federal computer security training
- Grant reporting training
- Technician training
- Wetland training