



Biennial Plan of Work

2017 - 2019

Introduction

Meeker County Soil and Water Conservation District's biennial work plan has been developed from the Meeker County Comprehensive Local Water Plan. The District Board of Supervisors passed a resolution on July 1, 2013, adopting this plan as the SWCD Comprehensive Plan for 2013 – 2018. This plan will direct the Supervisors, district staff and the Natural Resources Conservation Service in effective planning and accomplishment of its goals. The District's mission is to assist land occupiers in applying proper practices for the conservation of the soil and water resources. We have outlined our actions needed to accomplish each objective.

The Meeker County Soil and Water Conservation District Board of Supervisors will review the biennial work plan quarterly and make any revisions necessary to implement the plan. The work plan was developed and approved at the District Board meeting on June 6, 2017.

Meeker County Soil & Water Conservation District

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Board of Supervisors:		District
Chair	Robert Schiefelbein 35359 - 732 Avenue Kimball, MN 55355	2
Vice Chair	Douglas Carlson 70228 - 218 Street Dassel, MN 55325	3
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Member	Greg Jans 51036 – 310 Street Grove City, MN 55243	1

The Board of Supervisors meets the first Tuesday of each month at 8:00 a.m. at the USDA Building in Litchfield, MN 55355

District Staff

Deb Holtz
District Administrative Secretary

Joe Norman
District Technician

Cory Salzl
Assistant County Feedlot Officer/Ag Inspector

Matt Anderson
Conservation Technician

Josh Pommier – Pheasants Forever Farm Bill Biologist

Natural Resources Conservation Service

Jacob Stich
District Conservationist

Melissa Rothwell
Soil Conservationist

I. Meeker County Water Plan Goal #1 – Protect and Improve Surface Water Quality

A. Proactively work to delist all of Meeker County’s water bodies off the MPCA’s 303d List of Impaired Waters (TMDLs).

Actions:

1. Cooperatively work with partners to coordinate the preparation and implementation of TMDL studies and plans for impaired waters.
2. Target impaired waters with BMP program implementation.

B. Work with the farming community on manure and nutrient management Best Management Practices.

Actions:

1. Continue to employ the County’s Assistant Feedlot Officer to assist feedlot operators in obtaining and maintaining compliance with State regulations. Assist with Feedlot site evaluations, planning, design, and overall general technical assistance. Annually inspect a minimum of 7% of feedlots.
2. Work closely and cooperatively with federal, state and county agencies to develop and disseminate informational and educational materials related to feedlot issues.
3. Work closely with federal, state, county agencies and agricultural producers to utilize feedlot inventory results to prioritize feedlots for permitting and upgrading.
4. Administer the feedlot program, including assisting in registration and updating of feedlot inventory, ordinance development, prioritizing, permitting, inspecting, enforcing and monitoring feedlots and complete required reports for SWCD Board and/or the Planning and Zoning Commission.
5. Work closely and cooperatively with the farm community and other affected parties to ensure that the feedlot program is administered fairly and efficiently.
6. Attend and hold public information meetings as needed with farm groups, cities, citizens, townships and individual producers to provide information about the feedlot program and manure management issues.

7. Work cooperatively with agencies to resolve feedlot issues of a complex and controversial nature.
8. Review and inspect existing conditional use permits.
9. Coordinate activities with staff from other agencies to ensure proper program management.
10. Maintain feedlot files and enter information into the TEMPO Program.

C. Work with landowners on properly implementing the County's Subsurface Sewage Treatment System Ordinance and other wastewater initiatives.

Actions:

1. Apply for and administer the MDA State Revolving Fund program and other related programs for upgrading SSTs.
2. Work with the County to target 11 systems annually.

D. Enhance shoreland and lake management efforts.

Actions:

1. Provide technical and financial assistance, as available, to landowners for the implementation of shoreland BMPs, including lakescaping and the proper usage of pesticides and other chemicals. Work with the County to implement two projects annually.
2. Work with the partners to provide a one-time incentive of 20% of the total cost (up to \$750) for buffering CRWD shorelines. Implement one project annually.

E. Properly manage land/wastewater activities.

Actions:

1. Support efforts to conserve, enhance and restore wildlife habitat.

2. Work with partners to implement two projects annually.
3. Continue to work with partners to implement the County's adopted land use controls, including the floodplain, SSTS, shoreland, solid waste and zoning ordinances.

II. Meeker County Water Plan Goal #2 – Promote Erosion and Sediment Control Activities

F. Implement BMPs to reduce erosion and sediment loading of surface waters.

Actions:

1. Work with partners to target 75 acres of highly erodible land annually for enrollment in conservation easement programs, such as CRP, and easements as part of upland buffers under RIM and USFWS programs.
2. Work with partners to provide educational, technical and financial assistance, as available, to landowners for the implementation of water quality-related BMPs. Target impaired subwatersheds and implement five projects annually.
3. Work with partners to seek funding in the form of State cost-share, Federal EQIP and Clean Water Funds for the installation of BMPs. Prioritize impaired subwatersheds.
4. Conduct BMP site inspections and provide technical assistance to interested landowners. Work with partners to target 25 evaluations annually.
5. Work with partners to provide a one-time incentive of \$200/acres on new CRP enrollments in Clearwater River Watershed District (CRWD) with a goal to implement 80 acres annually.
6. Work with partners to provide a one-time payment of \$350/acre for the establishment of a CRWD seeded buffer that can be harvested for hay along rivers, streams and county ditches with a goal to implement 40 acres annually.
7. Work with partners to provide an incentive to establish a grass buffer around CRWD tile intakes or replace open intakes with underground rock inlets. Assist with identifying two projects annually.

8. Work with partners to promote the use of BMPs through SRWD's incentive program, implementing one project annually.
9. Cooperatively work with CROW to implement BMP implantation and education initiatives to reduce fecal coliform, E. coli, turbidity, dissolved oxygen and chloride.

III. Meeker County Water Plan Goal #3 – Enhance Surface Water Management

G. Ensure long-term agricultural production by maintaining and improving the public drainage system.

Actions:

1. Work with partners to ensure that public drainage systems are operated and maintained in accordance with the State Drainage Law (M.S. Chapter 103E) and other applicable regulations, such as WCA.
2. Provide educational, technical and financial assistance, as available, to landowners for the demonstration of conservation drainage practices. Work with partners to establish two demonstration sites.
3. Work with partners to host a workshop to proactively educate stakeholders on drainage management issues and regulations (201.5).

H. Manage surface waters to minimize stormwater pollution and runoff.

Actions:

1. Work with partners to provide technical assistance to citizens on stormwater BMPs (i.e. rain gardens, bio-retention, etc.) and assist with proper implementation, implementing five projects annually.
2. Work with municipalities and partners to utilize storage basins and holding ponds for runoff retention and water quality treatment, implementing two projects annually.

I. Preserve and restore wetlands and other water retention opportunities

Actions:

1. Locally administer the Minnesota Wetland Conservation Act, serving as main contact in the County.
2. Make initial determination, decision, monitoring and enforcement for an applicant involving wetlands under the Wetland Conservation Act.
3. Complete determinations within 60 days of the date a completed application is received.
4. Hold Technical Evaluation Panel meetings as necessary with zoning, BWSR, DNR, Army Corps and other county agencies to assist in determinations on applications or reconsideration.
5. Maintain files and enter information into eLINK Program.
6. In conjunction with wetland restorations, examine opportunities to abandon or relocate public drainage systems.
7. Work with partners to provide educational, financial, and technical assistance to landowners regarding State and Federal programs to preserve and restore wetlands, including drained lakebeds. The entire County is identified as a highly priority area for wetland restorations. With partners, pursue funding to implement one wetland restoration annually.
8. Provide information to landowners who inquire about the State wetland-banking program.
9. Review DNR water permits and comment on proposed activities.

IV. Meeker County Water Plan Goal #4 - Protect Groundwater Supplies

J. Protect groundwater from contamination by implementing Best Management Practices.

Actions:

1. Work with partners to provide educational, technical and financial assistance, as available, to landowners for the implementation of groundwater protection BMPs, including the proper decommissioning of wells and storage tanks and correct application of pesticides and other chemicals. With partners, prioritize sensitive recharge areas and pursue funds to implement two projects annually.
2. Provide educational, technical and financial assistance, as available, to landowners on the importance of properly sealing abandoned wells. Assist with sealing three abandoned wells annually.

3. Read wells monthly for DNR well monitoring program.

K. Ensure adequate groundwater supplies for multiple uses.

Actions:

1. Cooperatively work with partners on groundwater permitting, monitoring and testing efforts. Annually review data and prioritize BMPs accordingly.
2. Consider, with partners, creating a Water Conservation Program, with low-flow conservation kits and a Drought Contingency Plan. Pursue funding to establish the program (2016).
3. Promote the use of conservation irrigation practices and provide cost-share incentives, when feasible. Convert one conventional system annually.

L. Expand our knowledge and partnerships on identifying and addressing key water planning issues.

Actions:

1. Work with partners to conduct and/or provide technical and financial assistance, as available, for the completion of water quality studies, annually reviewing data and prioritizing subwatersheds and BMPs accordingly.

M. Provide and participate in outreach and educational efforts on key water planning issues.

Actions:

1. Sponsor and promote the poster contest in Meeker County schools.
2. Chair EQIP Local Work Group to bring agencies together and collect local input to identify and address resource concerns in the County.
3. Board will keep legislators informed on issues concerning districts and conservation issues by attending MASWCD Legislative Day.
4. Sponsor and select Outstanding Conservationist.
5. Use available outreach tools, including the Internet, to disseminate information to the public regarding water resource management activities

and issues. Publish information in local newspapers on conservation projects, Outstanding Conservationist and school poster winners.

6. Implement educational efforts to control or reduce the effects of accelerated runoff from urban, industrial and agricultural areas. Work with partners to establish two demonstration sites.
7. Provide information to landowners on available funding sources for water resource management activities and projects. Annually review funding sources and educational materials.
8. Provide Stewardship Week information to area churches to encourage the stewardship of our resources.
9. Utilize bi-weekly radio programs to promote conservation programs.

N. Properly administer the water plan to help ensure it achieves success.

Actions:

1. Continue working with partners to administer the County's Water Plan initiatives.
2. Pursue additional funding sources, such as the Clean Water Legacy Fund, in order to fund the implementation of initiatives. Seek partnerships and cooperative agreements to finance initiatives, when appropriate. Prioritize projects and apply for available funds.

V. Reduce wind and water erosion in critical areas in Meeker County.

Meeker County has varied soils, resources and topography. Soils were formed from glacial tills, lacustrine sediments and glacial outwash. The topography ranges from nearly level to very steep. Areas of wind erosion include the southwestern portion of the county and glacial outwash soils in the central and northwestern parts of Meeker County. Water erosion is common in all parts of the county where slopes are over 4%. Ephemeral and gully erosion occur on all soils and slopes where water concentrates. Conservation practices installed to control erosion generally improve areas for wildlife.

Actions:

1. Allocate state cost-share funds for high priority erosion control practices, including terraces, grassed waterways, water and sediment control basins, structures and field windbreaks.

2. Promote CRP to control erosion and reduce sediment on highly erodible fields. Develop plans and assist with planting cover on approved contract acres.
3. Promote use of residue management when developing conservation plans.
4. Apply for State Revolving Funds (SRF) that will be used for conservation tillage equipment and conservation practices.
5. Complete the tillage transect as necessary when time and staff are available to determine tillage trends in Meeker County.
6. Work with the county highway department, townships and lake associations on identifying critical erosion sites and install conservation practices to control erosion at these sites.
7. Utilize West Central technical Service Area engineers for needed erosion control projects.
8. Assist landowners with HEL plans as requested, but encourage all planning to RMS levels.

VI. State Cost-Share Program Requirements

The state cost-share grant will be used to control erosion, sedimentation and animal waste in areas that have been designated high priority. To help determine which areas and/or landowners of the county receive cost-share assistance, the following high-priority definitions have been developed by the state:

A. High Priority Erosion Problems

“High priority erosion problems” are areas where erosion from wind or water is occurring equal to, or in excess of, 2xT tons per acre per year or is occurring on any area that exhibits active gully erosion or is identified as high priority in the Meeker County Comprehensive Local Water Plan, which the district has adopted.

B. High Priority Water Quality Problems

“High priority water quality problems” are areas where sediment, nutrients, chemicals, or other pollutants discharge to Department of Natural Resources designated protected waters or to any high priority waters as identified in the

Meeker County Comprehensive Local Water Plan, or discharge to a sinkhole or groundwater. The pollutant delivery rate to the water source is in amounts that will impair the quality or usefulness of the water resource.

Meeker County has extremely varied topography. The soils are complex and vary from sandy to medium textured to coarse textured glacial drift. We estimate that about 40,000 acres of cropland are losing soil at the rate of T to 2T and 60,000 acres of cropland are losing soil at the rate of 2T or greater. The entire county has many lakes and protected wetlands.

In the rolling portion of the county, water erosion is very active. Many fields have severe sheet and rill erosion, along with large gullies forming. Conservation practices needed in this area are terraces, waterways and gully control structures.

A large portion of the county contains lakes, streams and protected wetlands. The soils in this area are medium textured and the slopes are very irregular, which causes concern for erosion carrying sediment into the lakes and streams. Conservation practices needed in this area are terraces, waterways, contour strips and ag waste control systems.

Another large portion of the county contains flat, sandy out wash areas, which makes wind erosion a major problem. There is great potential for groundwater contamination for shallow aquifers, as rivers and main streams in the county flow through these areas. Stream bank erosion is also common. The practices needed are terraces, waterways, contour strips, field windbreaks and ag waste control systems.

Currently, there are 274 registered active feedlots within the county. Of these, five should be implementing some type of additional conservation practice within their ag waste system. These conservation practices include buffer strips, filter strips, or relocation of ag waste pit.

Meeker SWCD received \$14,977.00 for FY2017 to utilize for State Cost-Share Program conservation practices. Because of the conservation needs mentioned above, the district will only consider high priority projects for cost-share. The district provides cost-share funding up to 75% of the approved, total cost of an eligible project.

VII. Administer Tree Program.

The District will provide assistance for proper design of windbreaks and species selection to landowners in Meeker County. To encourage the planting of trees, the district will sell trees for conservation purposes and provide tree planting and matting services for a fee.

Actions:

1. Promote the benefits of planting trees by submitting articles to newspapers and with radio programs.
2. Provide technical assistance to landowners in selecting correct tree species and design of field windbreaks, shelterbelts and wildlife plantings.
3. Provide tree planting and matting services to landowners within county.
4. Select and order trees for the tree program.

VIII. Administer and perform the duties of the Minnesota Noxious Weed Law, Minnesota Screenings Act and the Minnesota Seed Law.

Actions:

1. Respond to citizen complaints regarding noxious weeds.
2. Sample seed from area businesses to determine compliance with Minnesota State Statute.
3. Administer tests for Commercial and Non-commercial Applicator Licenses.
4. Submit reports as required to appropriate agencies.
5. Publish general weed notice in county newspapers informing landowners of the legal duty to control noxious weeds.

IX. Pheasants Forever Farm Bill Biologist Partnership.

Actions:

1. Market conservation programs through internet postings, press releases, radio ads, speaking engagements, and various other trade shows or conferences.
2. Educate landowners on the importance of quality grassland ecosystems, and all the steps involved with maintaining their grassland habitat.
3. Maintain a strong point of contact for the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) for the office.

- i. Write the conservations plans for the new and re-enrolled contracts as approved by FSA and NRCS.
 - ii. Make contract modifications to the contracts as directed by FSA and NRCS.
 - iii. Aid in the annual inspections and eligibility of new and re-enrolling landowners.
- 4. Assist with the Reinvest in Minnesota (RIM) program through marketing new sign-ups, annual inspections, and contract development
- 5. Guide landowners on Non-Farm Bill activities to appropriate staff/programs
- 6. Work with the local Pheasants Forever Chapters to promote conservation, fundraising, and youth education.
- 7. Assist the office on general needs as part of the local workload.

X. Manage District Personnel, Funds and Equipment to Carry Out the District's Programs, Objectives and Meet Program Requirements.

Actions:

- 1. Prepare and distribute monthly board minutes and agendas.
- 2. Prepare reports, documents and financial statements according to policy and procedures.
- 3. Provide training for staff to ensure knowledgeable implementation of available SWCD programs.
- 4. Conduct employee reviews and update job descriptions.
- 5. Develop an annual financial request for the county commissioners in May.
- 6. Develop the District's biennial work plan and annual budget by June 15 of appropriate years.
- 7. Enter information on SWCD website in a timely manner.
- 8. Enter all required data into the eLINK program by February 1 each year.
- 9. Attend and participate in other agencies and organization's meetings to keep abreast of new grant and funding opportunities for projects.

10. Maintain active membership in NACD, MASWCD, MASWCD Area II, MACFO, and MACAI.
11. Provide service to all individuals and groups on a non-discriminatory basis.
12. Provide an office setting free from harassment and discrimination.
13. Maintain a good working relationship with cooperating agencies, offices and organizations, such as FSA, NRCS, USFWS, DNR, BWSR, County Planning and Zoning, County Administrator, Minnesota Extension Service, Pheasants Forever and other conservation groups.