



Meeker Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD) 2020 Accomplishments

State Cost-Share Program - Two cover crop projects, one grassed waterway, and one water and sediment control basin project utilizing over \$14,500 in State Cost-Share funds were completed in Meeker County during 2020. All required reports were submitted to the Board of Water and Soil Resources (BWSR) in a timely manner.



2020 Cover Crop Photographs

Meeker SWCD works cooperatively with the North Crow One Watershed One Plan, West Central Technical Service Area (TSA), and various lake associations and watersheds to identify critical erosion sites and assist landowners with funding and technical support for projects to control erosion at these sites.

Local Capacity & 1W1P Cost Sharing – Six projects utilizing over \$63,800 in Local Capacity funding were completed in 2020. These projects included one lined waterway, one wetland restoration, one grade stabilization, and three shoreline stabilization projects. One water and sediment control basin project was installed using over \$21,000 of One Watershed One Plan funding.



Wetland Conservation Act (WCA) – The District is the designated local government unit (LGU) for wetland regulation in Meeker County. Meeker SWCD made over 200 landowner contacts regarding wetland regulation, including both on and off site consultations. The LGU made formal decisions on twenty application types which included ten boundary type, seven no-loss, two exemption, and one replacement plan applications. Six Wetland

Banks are in the process of being established in the county. Over 15 potential wetland violations were also investigated by the LGU. All required reports were submitted to the Board of Water and Soil Resources (BWSR) in a timely manner.

Reinvest in Minnesota (RIM)/Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP) - Over 4,579 acres in Meeker County are enrolled in perpetual conservation easements with the State of Minnesota. Site inspections were completed on 41 of these easements during 2020.



CREP enrollment remained steady at five enrollments for 2020. The majority were CRP landowner re-enrollments who wanted to see their property protected forever. One landowner stated, "This is great conservation land, but it is horrible farmland." His quote summarizes the goal of the Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program and summarizes the applicants for 2020. The 150+ acres enrolled this year will make great wildlife habitat.

Pheasants Forever Collaboration – Meeker SWCD collaborates with Pheasants Forever through a Farm Bill Biologist (FBB) based full time at the Meeker USDA office.

This year there were 46 new Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) contracts for 1,003 acres and 98 contracts for 2,094 re-enrolled acres.

Due to COVID-19 restrictions, the Meeker County Fair was not held in 2020. We hope to provide an outreach booth at the 2021 fair.

Litchfield Fifth Grade Pollinator Planting Day - Due to COVID-19 restrictions the Pollinator Planting Day was cancelled for 2020. Plans are in process to resume this event in 2021.

Buffer Law - In June of 2015, Governor Dayton signed into law a new buffer initiative aimed at enhancing protection of Minnesota's waters. The buffer initiative will help protect the state's water resources from erosion and runoff pollution by establishing roughly 110,000 acres of buffer along waterways. The assessment determined that 99% of parcels affected by the law are in compliance with the buffer law requirements. Meeker SWCD has cost-share programs, seed, grass drill rental, and technical assistance available to Meeker County landowners who need to become compliant with the buffer law. During 2020, one landowner/operator signed up for cost share dollars to meet buffer law compliance. Additional funding is still available to landowners to become compliant.

Minnesota Agricultural Water Quality Certification Program (MAWQCP) - MAWQCP is a voluntary opportunity for farmers and agricultural landowners to take the lead in implementing conservation practices that protect our water. Those who implement and maintain approved farm management practices will be certified and in turn obtain regulatory certainty for a period of ten years, as well as financial aid for implementing approved conservation practices. In 2020, Meeker SWCD assisted in certifying one producer and 421 acres in the Minnesota Agricultural Water Quality Certification Program.

AgBMP (Best Management Practices) Loan Program – Meeker SWCD serves as the local government unit for the AgBMP Loan Program in Meeker County. Two new loan application was applied for under this program during 2020. Staff continues to stay abreast of requirements and opportunities in this program and promotes it to landowners who could benefit from the program.

Department of Natural Resources (DNR) Well Observation - Water levels are taken on 14 wells in Meeker County for the Department of Natural Resources. Thirteen test wells are measured quarterly during the year and one irrigation well is measured twice a year.

Feedlot Program – The Assistant County Feedlot Officer is on staff at Meeker SWCD.

There were a total of 286 feedlots registered in Meeker County at the end of 2020. During the year, 44 inspections revealed all 44 feedlots in compliance upon first inspection.

The Assistant County Feedlot Officer responded to two complaints during 2020 regarding feedlot issues. Two sites were issued a letter of reminder and one complaint was deemed invalid.

The Assistant County Feedlot Officer also received two Notices of Construction/Expansion and issued two Construction Short Form Feedlot Permits.

The District provides information to feedlot owners/producers seeking funding to help them improve their sites. The Assistant Feedlot Officer also helps plan and conduct informational meetings that pertain to topics relevant to our County.

State reporting has been completed, audited and found to be current.

Tree Program - Over 18,000 trees were sold in 2020 to landowners for planting. The District completed six plantings. In addition, over 22,000 feet of weed barrier fabric was installed on four tree planting sites.

Each spring Meeker SWCD offers a wide variety of shrubs, deciduous and evergreen trees for sale at reasonable prices. This year 28 different species of trees and shrubs were sold. Technical assistance is provided to landowners in selecting correct tree species and design of field windbreaks, shelter belts and wildlife plantings.

The tree program is promoted on the District's Website, Facebook, on a local radio news program, through press releases to local media and via fliers mailed to previous customers.



This year the Meeker SWCD continued a pollinator seed and plant sale with their annual spring tree sale. By adding the 20 native grass and flower seed mixes and 78 seedling plant kits, landowners could add a pollinator plot to nearly any area of their property. These orders will add valuable native flowers to the Meeker County landscape 1,000 square feet at a time.



Native Seed Drill Program – In 2016 the District purchased an eight foot native grass and flower seed drill for landowners of Meeker and surrounding counties to rent. With this drill landowners are able to install food plots, cover crops, and native grass and flower plantings. Twenty-three of the landowners seeded their CRP plantings. A total of 580 acres were seeded this year. The District delivers the drill to all renters, helps them set up the drill, and picks up the drill once they are finished. This program is very successful. It gives District staff one more opportunity to interact with the landowners to ensure they are seeding the correct seed mix, that the site is adequately prepared, and to give additional guidance on ongoing management.

Noxious Weeds – The District published the required weed notice in Meeker County newspapers and responded to citizen complaints regarding noxious weeds.

The County Ag Inspector responded to eight complaints during 2020 regarding noxious weed issues. Findings revealed noxious weeds at all of the sites, having an infestation of Wild Parsnip. The County Ag Inspector worked with the landowners to develop a plan for controlling the noxious weeds.

The District received funding for cost share from the Minnesota Department of Agriculture. Twelve projects totaling \$4,213.41 were completed using grant funds to control noxious weeds. We hope to also have funding available in 2021 to assist with noxious weed control.

Fifty Commercial Applicator License Exams were administered.

Required reports were submitted properly and in a timely manner.

Rain Gauge Program - Eight landowners in Meeker County measure precipitation daily and submitted reports on line or to the SWCD office during 2020. The District mails submitted reports to the State Climatology Office and gathers additional information from the rain gauge program participants as requested by the Climatology Office when special needs arise.

The District acts as liaison between the Climatology Office and program participants, sharing information with and providing materials to program participants.

Outstanding Conservationist – Due to COVID-19 restrictions the Outstanding Conservationist program was not held in 2020. We hope to be able to name an Outstanding Conservationist in 2021.

Poster Contest – All schools in Meeker County are invited to conduct a conservation poster contest with their sixth-grade students, sponsored by Meeker SWCD.

Due to COVID-19 restrictions schools were not able to participate in a poster contest in 2020. Plans are in process to resume this event in 2021.

Stewardship Week - Press releases were sent to local media and churches to publicize and recognize Stewardship Week in late April, 2020.

Envirothon – The District provided contact information for Meeker County schools to the organizers of the Area Envirothon, an outdoor learning event for school students, and provided financial support for the program.

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Meeker SWCD maintained active membership in the National Association of Conservation Districts (NACD), Minnesota Association of Soil and Water Conservation Districts (MASWCD), MASWCD Area 2, Minnesota Association of County Ag Inspectors (MACIA), and Minnesota Association of County Feedlot Officers (MACFO).

SWCD staff and supervisors attended in-person and remote meetings of watersheds, West Central Technical Service Area (WCTSA), MASWCD Area II, State and Regional Minnesota Pollution Control Agency (MPCA), County Ag Inspectors, One Watershed One Plan Technical Committees, One Watershed One Plan Policy Committees, Aquatic Invasive Species Task Force, District managers and various training workshops throughout the year.