

Conservation News



January 2010, Issue 1

www.popeswcd.org

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2010 POSTER CONTEST AND STEWARDSHIP WEEK

In March and April the Pope SWCD with assistance from NRCS will be making the rounds at local schools promoting the 2010 poster contest. The theme for this year's poster contest is "Conservation Habits = Healthy Habitats." The poster contest reminds us to think about how good habits can also help the environment. We rely on the environment around us and should promote stewardship through individual actions throughout the year.

The Pope SWCD also encourages you to think about your personal responsibility to be a good steward of natural resources during its annual Stewardship Week celebration. The National Association of Conservation Districts (NACD) has proclaimed April 25 – May 2, 2010 as Stewardship Week, marking the 55th year of the national event. The 2010 Stewardship Week is themed "Conservation Habits = Healthy Habitats," encouraging citizens, schools and communities to develop and maintain habitat areas using good conservation practices.

"Being good stewards of our natural resources at home and in our communities is an important task for each citizen. When we think about protecting and managing our natural resources, we can provide healthy habitats for the ecosystems on our planet," says NACD President Steve Robinson. "Each of us can make a difference by developing habitat areas in our own backyards, our schools or in our communities".

Pope SWCD is a member of the National Association of Conservation Districts (www.nacdnet.org) which oversees the Stewardship Week program. Stewardship Week is one of the largest national annual programs to promote conservation. NACD represents the nation's 3,000 conservation districts, which were established to encourage resource conservation across the country.

Local fifth and sixth grade students are encouraged to participate by creating a poster or mural related to the theme. Posters must be submitted to the conservation office by May 13th. For more information about the poster contest or stewardship week please contact the Pope SWCD at 320-634-5327.

EQIP SIGN UP PLANNED FOR FEBRUARY

EQIP sign up is under way and the last day to sign up is February 26, 2010. Some of the conservation practices NRCS helps implement are as follows:

Conservation tillage: NRCS pays incentive payments for no till or strip till systems for three years.

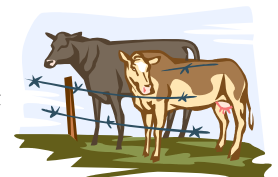
Managed grazing: NRCS can help you plan and cost share implementation of a new managed grazing system.

Irrigation conversion: NRCS can cost share conversion with three years of irrigation water management. **Please note if you are interested in this practice you will have to keep track of irrigation amounts and records for three years.**

Nutrient management plans: NRCS can help you develop a nutrient management plan for commercial fertilizer with manure or without, and you can receive three years incentive payments to help you get your plan working for you. We base our recommendations off the university of MN recommendations.

Some of our other practices include, feed lot management systems, composting structures for dead animals, pest management, and other conservation practices.

If you are interested in cost share for new practices please contact the NRCS office at: 320-634-5143.





POPE SWCD 2009 ANNUAL REPORT

Pope County Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD) will complete an annual report and summary of the District's 2009 conservation accomplishments. The report covers the beginning of the district and continues with specific details about programs and events that occurred in 2009.

The report will be available in its entirety on the SWCD website, www.popeswcd.org, on or before March 15, 2010.

If you have questions about this report or any of the SWCD programs and partnerships please contact the SWCD office a 320-634-5327.

SWCD OFFERS TREE PLANNING & PLANTING

Are you thinking about installing a shelterbelt or a windbreak? Maybe you are thinking about replacing some trees. The Soil and Water Conservation District is taking orders for conservation trees available for spring planting. Come in and we can assist you in all your tree planting needs, from planning to planting.



RIM RESERVE CLEAN WATER FUND RIPARIAN BUFFERS SIGN UP

The application sign-up for this Reinvest In Minnesota (RIM) reserve conservation easement program is for FY's 2010 and 11. \$3.25 million dollars has been set aside to acquire permanent easements for each year on a first come first serve basis.

To qualify you must have an eligible buffer that is a min. of 50 feet to a max. of 100 feet wide. Buffers must be along public waters. The buffers must be eligible or currently enrolled in the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP). When possible both sides of a ditch or stream should be enrolled. A Minimum of 3 acres should be enrolled. Existing vegetation between eligible cropland and riparian source must be included in the easement acreage. This existing non-crop area shall not exceed 50% of the entire offered acreage. Non-crop acres over 50% must be donated.

Easement payment rates are figured at 100% of Assessors Average Township Values (AATV) for cropland, 60% of AATV for non-cropland. Cropland is defined as cropped to an annually planted crop 2 of the last 5 years. CRP is considered cropland for this sign-up. Payment rates will be provided to SWCD's. For more information on this program contact the Pope SWCD.



PLANT CORNER: QUEEN ANNE'S LACE



Queen Anne's Lace is a 3-4' tall plant with a creamy white umbel flower. It looks different from other similar looking species because of the long flowering stalks.

This plant is a closely related to garden carrots. The smell of the plant, especially the root will remind you of a carrot. This plant is sometimes called wild carrot. However, the leaves of the plant can cause skin irritations for some people. So be cautious when handling this plant.

Queen Anne's Lace is a biennial plant. Which means it takes two years for the plant to fully develop. It forms a rosette the first year of growth and blooms and seeds in the second year of growth. This plant can be invasive and is on the secondary noxious weeds list in Minnesota.

The plant blooms in mid summer. Its seeds are easily spread by wind and animals. The

seed can also stay viable in the soil for up to two or more years. This plant prefers dryer soils and therefore is not found in wetlands.

Control methods include pulling up the plant or mowing close to the ground in mid to late summer before the seeds are set. Please note this plant looks very similar to the very poisonous Water Hemlock. Please be sure you know what you have before you try to control these plants.

Chemically Queen Anne's Lace can be controlled with 2-4d. Fire is not a good control method as it does not seem to set the plant back.



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NOTES FROM THE FEEDLOT OFFICE

Currently the feedlot office is working to complete re-registration of Pope County's feedlots. In September 2009, producers were sent registration update forms along with a letter from the feedlot office explaining the re-registration process. In some cases the feedlot office has been contacting producers by phone or making visits to re-register. If a producer did not receive a form, or may have overlooked it, we will make contact, before March 1st to re-register, by phone or mail a new one out.

Feedlots can be increased to 299 animal units without a permit or county conditional use permit in an A-2 zone, provided the feedlot is in compliance, has adequate capacity, and enough acres available for manure application. In an A-1 zone 200 animal units is the limit. A

conditional use is required for any increase up to 200 animal units. Any producer with questions on feedlot registration, zoning, or possible changes to an operation, can call the office for assistance. We can re-register on site with an inspection and go over capacity or expansion plans.

The feedlot office is working on planning a meeting for Ag producers. The plan is to cover local, state and federal rules that apply to the operation of feedlots. Producers will have a chance to ask questions and discuss land use issues. At this time a date for the meeting has not been set. Late March or early April will be a likely time for this meeting. Producers are encouraged to contact the feedlot office with a few topics that they are interested in. A likely agenda would be, to start at 10:30 am, have three speakers till noon and serve a lunch. After lunch we would open the floor to questions and discussion. Once again, feel free to give the feedlot office some input on topics for this meeting, call Barry at 320-634-5020, or email barry.bouwman@co.pope.mn.us.

ANIMAL MORTALITY & HANDLING

Producers should be looking at alternatives in handling animal mortalities. Composting is becoming popular & the good news is cost share is available to get a compost structure installed on your property. Contact the NRCS office for more information at 320-634-5143. However, if a compost structure is not in your plans here are some other methods of legal disposal. Just a reminder State requirements do apply to animal mortalities.

Bury

Operators choosing to bury dead animals must select sites very carefully! This is due to risk of ground water contamination. Buried animals must stay 5' above the seasonal high water table, stay away from lakes, rivers, streams or ditches, be covered without delay, and covered so that scavengers can not get at the carcass. Animals can not

be buried in sand or gravelly soils and must have 10' of vertical separation between the carcass and the bedrock.

Incinerate

For an operator to incinerate dead animals the incinerator must be fitted with an afterburner that maintains flue gases at 1,200° F for at least 3 seconds. It is also recommended that the incinerator be big enough to handle each days mortalities.

Render

Rendering is another option, but animal carcasses left at an off site pick up point must be kept in an animal proof enclosed area. Must not be within 200 yards of neighbors buildings. Must be picked up within 72 hours.

Compost

Once again I want to mention this option. If you have interest in composting, please contact the feedlot office at 320-634-5020, or email barry.bouwman@co.pope.mn.us.

MANURE APPLICATION

Producers are encouraged to review manure management plans and consider runoff potential when applying manure on frozen ground.

Keep applications 300' from all water features including tile inlets, wetlands, and road ditches, which are intermittent streams.

Avoid areas that will likely become channels during snowmelt. Try to apply manure to vulnerable areas when rainfall is unlikely and incorporation can be done quickly.

If you need help with a nutrient management plan. Contact the NRCS office they can help you to get a plan started and can cost share to get started. The requirement is that you follow university guidelines for fertilizer recommendations.

WORKING LANDS INITIATIVE, WHO WE ARE

The working lands initiative (WLI) is a collaboration of different agencies that target areas of rare and declining native prairie sites. In these areas they work together to provide landowners with information and assistance to help protect what little native prairie is left.

The goal of the working land initiative is not to set the land aside from production. The goal is to work with the land to keep it healthy. Healthy native prairie is disturbed by fire and grazing. From experience the different agencies are seeing that unmanaged conservation land will grow into undesirable trees and weed species.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, MN Department of Natural Resources, Soil & Water Conservation Districts, the Natural Resources Conservation Service, Farm Service Agency, and landowners are trying collaborate to provide assistance to landowners interested in identifying economically viable conservation focus areas. A meeting was held on January 28th for landowners and agencies to provide information on what is available. The meeting also tried to gather ideas from landowners on what the landowners are interested in. From there they hope to create incentives and form more programs for the priority areas.

Currently there are three working lands initiative priority areas in Pope County. One that focuses on rotational grazing and prescribed burning, another that utilizes goats to remove invasive woody vegetation, and a third that focuses on tree removal and noxious weed control. For more information the Working lands initiative please contact the Pope SWCD at 320-634-5327.





CFL'S, WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

You have seen them in the store. Maybe even at your friends house but you arer just not sure about them. They are Compact Florescent Lights or CFL's. Here is the cool part, they could save you money!

If you think of Cfl's you probably think of that curly cue light bulb, and for some that may have been a deterrent for even thinking about putting them in your house. The truth is CFL's have come a long way in the past few years. Companies have put some work into designing them so they would be more attractive to consumers. CFL's now come in a variety of style/shapes, wattages, three way, and some are now even dimmable.

So, why would you want to use CFL's. Well lighting makes up 20 percent of the electricity you use in your home. According ot energyhog.org "The EPA ENERGY STAR® program estimates that by changing the five most-used lights in your home, you'll save more than \$60 every year in energy costs." So maybe \$60 dollars a year does not sound like much but when you think of that over the course of five years (the average life of a CFL) that's \$300.

So maybe now you are thinking \$60 does not sound so bad. Yet, you are wondering how you choose a CFL that is right for you? First, decide how much light you need. CFL's come in a range of color categories from yellow to white to bluish white light. By lumping them into three major categories we would have soft white, the most similar to incandescent bulbs, bright white recommended

for kitchens and workspaces, and daylight recommended for reading.

Next, choose a wattage that is right for the location you want to install a CFL. Look for comparisons on the packaging. Manufactures will have some sort of comparison on their package, for example the package may say comparable to a 60 watt replacement. See the table at the right for a quick comparison.

One more thing to remember is to choose a bulb that is right for the task. If you need a dimmable light make sure the package says dimmable.

On a final note CFL's contain a small amount of mercury so it is important to recycle them. The EPA is working with CFL manufacturers and major U.S. retailers to expand recycling and disposal options. Consumers can contact their local municipal solid waste agency directly, or go to www.epa.gov/bulbrecycling or www.earth911.org to identify local recycling options.

For more information on CFL's or other energy saving suggestions check out the following website: http://www.energystar.gov/index.cfm?c=lighting.pr_lighting.

Incandescent Lights (Watts)	CFL (Watts)
25	4 to 9
40	9 to 13
60	13 to 15
75	18 to 25
100	23 to 30

IRRIGATION WATER MANAGEMENT SERVICE AVAILABLE

Did you complete a conversion to a low pressure irrigation system thru EQIP? Did you know that you must complete three years of irrigation water management to stay in compliance with your EQIP agreement? Pope SWCD can help you with your water management.

The goal of Irrigation Water Management is to properly manage irrigation pivots and schedule irrigation amounts & times. If you properly manage your irrigation you can help

conserve our water resources, prevent erosion problems, and conserve the valuable top soil. In addition, you will optimize the quality and potential yield of your crop with the least amount of inputs possible.

Pope SWCD can provide the following services pivot uniformity testing, weekly individual field moisture assessments, weekly graphs and updates telling when and how much to irrigate, and rain fall gauges. The cost is \$200.00 for the first field and \$175.00

for every field signed up after that.

Once again, If you have an irrigation conversion contract with NRCS you must also complete three years of Irrigation Water Management to comply with your agreement. Contact Pope SWCD for more information at 320-634-5327, and ask for Kelly.





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POPE SOIL & WATER OBTAINS GRANTS FOR LOCAL PROJECTS

The Minnesota Board of Water and Soil Resources (BWSR) has approved more than \$14 million in state grants for projects that will protect and restore Minnesota's streams, rivers, lakes and groundwater. The 20-member board approved the grants at its Jan. 28 regular meeting.

Pope County SWCD applied for two grants and was awarded funds for both grants. \$209,000 was awarded to fix a ravine that originates from a 24" culvert that runs under Highway 55. The State of Minnesota took over management of Highway 55 in 1939; however the worst of the erosion in this area has been in the last ten (10) years. The ravine measures up to 20' deep and 30' wide in some places and has uprooted trees, rocks and other debris. Installation of riparian cover and check dams in the ravine will decrease further erosion and suspended sediment in storm water during high flow events from entering Lake Minnewaska.

Also, included in the \$209,000 grant is relocating a 50' X 490' impervious surface parking lot at the City Beach on the shoreline of Lake Minnewaska. This will decrease the direct flow of storm water from entering Lake Minnewaska. The new parking lot will be installed so that storm water flows into a holding area located between State Highway

104 and the parking lot. To further hold Storm water out of Lake Minnewaska, three (3) rain gardens, with plants native to Pope County, will be installed in the grassy area where the parking lot was located. This project will keep an estimated 400,000 gallons of storm water filled with debris and various pollutants from entering Lake Minnewaska annually.

The second grant that Pope SWCD applied for and was awarded was a continuation and expansion of the Cooperative Weed Management Area, Pope CWMA. The CWMA is expanding to include Swift county. The CWMA received \$25,000 to continue their efforts to control and manage invasive weeds.

Funding for the competitive grants includes money from the state's general fund and from the Minnesota Clean Water Fund -- one of four funds established through the Clean Water, Land and Legacy Amendment (approved by voters in 2008). Most of the funded projects also leverage local and federal dollars. "These dollars are targeted for projects that will provide the greatest environmental outcomes," said John Jaschke, BWSR Executive Director. "These dollars will enable local organizations to install conservation practices that have proven to be effective in reducing nonpoint pollution."

Competitive grant applications were submitted by cities, counties, soil and water conservation districts, watershed districts, and watershed management organizations. The applications were reviewed and ranked by an interagency team that included BWSR, Minnesota Department of Agriculture, Minnesota Department of Health, Minnesota Department of Natural Resources, and the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency.

Many of the projects will establish conservation practices to control storm water runoff in urban and agricultural areas. Others will improve water quality by replacing problem septic systems, upgrading feedlots and by establishing native vegetation along shorelines in environmentally sensitive areas.

The complete list of funded projects is available on the BWSR website, www.bwsr.state.mn.us.

The Minnesota Board of Water and Soil Resources consists of 20 members, including local government representatives that deliver conservation programs, state agencies, and citizens. Board members are appointed by the governor to four-year terms. The board is the state's administrative agency for soil and water conservation districts, watershed districts, metropolitan watershed management organizations, and county water managers.



THE NEW WETLANDS RESERVE PROGRAM!

With the signing of the 2008 Farm Bill, came some changes to the Wetlands Reserve Program (WRP). Starting after September

30th, 2008 applicants now have to have owned the land they would like to place in WRP for 7 years at the time of application. Appraisals are no longer necessary. Applicants now know how much money they will receive for placing their land in WRP at the time they sign an application. Rates have been derived for each township based on the previous year's average estimated market value reported by each county's assessor. WRP is still a permanent easement that purchases the cropping, grazing, haying, and drainage rights, in order to restore and provide habitat for migratory wildlife where feasible. The landowner maintains ownership, control of access, hunting and fishing rights, the responsibility of controlling noxious weeds and paying property taxes. The

landowner can sell or lease the land for hunting. WRP provides 100% cost-share to restore wetlands and the surrounding upland to native prairie.

In Minnesota, WRP has been paired with the Reinvest In Minnesota (RIM) easement program to offer a better payment to landowners considering retiring their land from cropland. By combining a 30 year WRP easement with a permanent RIM easement, applicants can receive 135% of 2009 estimated market value for cropped acres and 70% for non-cropland.

To be eligible for this WRP RIM partnership program applicants must offer **land that has drained wetlands** (via tile or ditch) of which at least half of them can be fully restored. Wetlands that have been previously restored through CRP or by a partner like the FWS count as restorable wetlands. Existing wetlands can be placed in

the program as well, however if the existing wetland is a MN Department of Natural Resources protected water, no payment will be received on those acres. A maximum of 4 upland acres can be offered for every 1 wetland acre. There is no minimum upland acreage, but a minimum of a 100 ft. upland buffer around the wetlands is required. There is no cropping history requirement and land currently enrolled in CRP is eligible.

WRP is a competitive program and all applications receive a score based on multiple factors of which a few are: the number of restorable wetlands, proximity to other existing permanent habitat, and if the land is currently under a CRP contract that expires within 5 years.

To apply for WRP or get more information about the program contact Fred Kollmann or Craig Bower at 320-634-5143 ext. 3 or stop by the USDA Service Center in Glenwood.

POPE SOIL & WATER



CONSERVATION DISTRICT

1680 Franklin St North
Glenwood, MN 56334



Pope SWCD and the USDA prohibits discrimination in all their programs and activities on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, religion, age, disability, political beliefs, sexual orientation, and marital or family status.

"Winter is the season in which people try to keep the house as warm as it was in the summer, when they complained about the heat."

- Author Unknown

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IMPORTANT DATES

January

1st Happy New Year

18th Martin Luther King Day

February

15th Presidents Day

March

14 Daylight Savings Time Begins

20 First Day of Spring

Board Meetings are held the third Tuesday of each month.

The public is welcome to join us.



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