



Rice Soil and Water Conservation District

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Drainage Ditch Inspector's Report for 2008

Beginning May 1, 2008, Rice SWCD began performing the duties of Ditch Inspector for Rice County. The current agreement expires on December 31, 2009. The SWCD accepted the role to provide the county a person of contact when drainage issues arise. Primarily, Adam Arndt and Steven Pahs have been the two staff members that have been performing the ditch inspection work.

This first year we faced many challenges with the ditch inspection program. Numerous calls were received from the public regarding needed maintenance on ditch systems across the county. The county owned ATV formerly used by the previous inspector was transferred to us and needed some repairs to become operational. Most of the work that was done in 2008 was a result of landowners contacting us for assistance. In 2009, we plan to view many of the ditch systems and document the status they are in. This will help us determine future needs and we can develop a maintenance plan for all the county ditches instead of reacting to various problems that come up on an on-going basis.

The following is a summary of work done on drainage systems in Rice County for 2008:

Nearly all county ditches were sprayed by TerryJon Aerial Applicators in June. There were a few places that were not sprayed for various reasons. Several calls were fielded asking us not to spray the ditch banks, and a few called requesting them to be sprayed. The contractor carries insurance for any damages that may occur.

CD 30: repaired 2 tile outlets that were damaged.

CD 26: reviewed ditch to determine needs. One landowner requested delaying a cleanout so he could remove trees.

CD 23: landowner request for cleanout. SWCD surveyed and determined areas where cleanouts are needed. Presented findings at a public meeting for CD23 landowners.

CD25: landowner request for erosion repair. Authorized work to be done and was completed by Badger Excavating.

CD 32: landowner request for cleanout. Surveyed many reaches of the ditch to determine needs. Held 2 meetings with ditch group regarding the repairs and also how a proposed wetland restoration project would affect the ditch. Excavated county tile lines to determine size and location. County Board authorized work to be done.

CD 15: request by landowner to clean. Investigation shows a need for cleanout. Hired Dahle Enterprises for the work.

CD 9: landowner request for tree removal. Met landowner and reviewed concerns. Agreed to hire contractor to remove trees. Beaver dam removed.

CD 4: landowner request to clean ditch. Reviewed and surveyed part of ditch. Need to do more surveying to determine extent of cleaning needed.

The Rice SWCD spent a significant amount of time reviewing county records to learn about some of the history on many of the ditches we worked on. The records are not often organized and frequently lack significant detail. Staff also attended drainage workshops to gain a better understanding of drainage law and how it applies to Rice County.

One item of concern that we have noticed is that many of the drainage systems are overgrown with trees. Most of the trees we see are boxelders. The trees do not adequately protect the ditch from bank erosion, and often times are falling into the ditch and backing up water. In addition, when the drainage ditch is in need of a cleanout, there will be more expense and time to remove them. Over the next several years, it is our goal to remove the undesirable vegetation and continue with the annual spraying to control the trees in the future.

In closing, after working through several projects, we believe that there is a need to raise the \$5000 cap on the amount of work that can be done without board approval. Costs for cleanouts and repairs continue to rise, which decreases the project size accordingly. We would like to propose increasing the limit to \$10,000 per drainage system. As always, if we feel a project is controversial, we will discuss with the drainage authority for their direction.

We look forward to another busy year and will continue to provide the best service possible to the drainage inspection program.

Steven R. Pahs
District Manager, Rice SWCD