Wally Hildebrandt receives well-deserved award for “50” Years as Rice SWCD Supervisor

Wally Hildebrandt received an award on December 16 for serving “50” years as a supervisor for the Rice Soil and Water Conservation District. Wally was nominated as a Rice SWCD supervisor in 1959, started serving his first term January 1, 1960, and has been re-elected every term since then. Besides being an Area Director for the eleven-county (Area 7) Southern Minnesota Association of Soil and Water Conservation Districts, Wally was also president, at the state level, of the Minnesota Association of Soil and Water Conservation Districts. Providing leadership as an active member of the Cannon River Watershed Partnership, the Rice County Planning Commission, and currently serving his third term as Chairman of the Hiawatha Valley Resource Conservation & Development are some of his many accomplishments towards changing agricultural policies and conserving soil and water resources at the area, state and national level. The Hildebrandt farm is in Richland Township where Wally and his wife Doris also raised seven children and have twelve grandchildren.
2010 Tree Program

We are now accepting tree and shrub orders for the spring of 2010. We sell on a first-come, first-served basis, so order early to make sure you get what you want! This year we have the highly desired Princeton American Elm available. Until now, you could not get this Dutch Elm disease resistant tree in bare root seedlings. The Princeton on Elm is a true elm, not a hybrid, and is a vigorous grower. Other new trees/shrubs we have on our list include Butternut, Nannyberry, and larger sizes of Black Hills Spruce and Norway Spruce. Use the order form in the newsletter or fill one out from our website at www.riceswcd.org.

Need help with planning a new windbreak for your building site? We would be happy to recommend trees, spacing, and designs for you at no cost! We can also give you ideas for wildlife plantings and riparian buffers. Give us a call at 507-332-5408.

Wildlife Enhancement Award

(Sally & Bernie Rosckes - Richard Huston)

Since 2006, Rice SWCD has recognized individuals who have done extraordinary work in enhancing and protecting wildlife. This year the award was given to Sally and Bernie Rosckes. The Rosckes’ have done many conservation practices over the years including: upland nesting cover, a 30 acre wetland restoration, hardwood tree plantings, native prairie grasses, Conservation Reserve Program, wildlife tree plantings and food plots.

Drainage Ditch Report

Since May 2008, Rice SWCD has served as the ditch inspector for all public drainage ditch systems in Rice County. The single biggest problem we have seen on the majority of ditches is the overgrowth of trees in the ditch corridor. Trees do not belong in drainage ditches. They inhibit cleanout efforts and some species like boxelder contribute to soil erosion and unstable banks. Tree removal is very expensive, and the cheapest way to deal with them is to maintain grass cover along the ditch. Our goal over the next few years is to restore the ditch banks by removing the trees and following up with chemical control for new growth.

Soil erosion and bank sloughing is also a common problem. Landowners can help reduce this problem by establishing grass buffers along the ditch. Call us for information about conservation programs available for buffer strips along any ditch or stream.

Cleanouts and culvert replacement is perhaps the most common question we get. In general, the policy on culverts is that if a culvert is failing and was part of the original construction of the ditch, we will replace it and the cost will be picked up by the drainage system. If a culvert was installed by a private landowner, they are responsible for upkeep and replacement. With cleanouts, we will sometimes do a survey to determine where the problem areas are, and then hire a contractor to perform the work. If the project is large, a hearing may be requested.

For more information or specific questions about public ditches, please give us a call or stop by our office and we will be glad to hear your concerns.

Raingarden Recap: Last summer over 15 raingardens were installed in Rice County through a grant from MN Waters. A raingarden is a shallow depression that is positioned to collect rain water. The water that enters a raingarden is either used by the plants or percolates through the soil. Interested in installing a raingarden? Winter is the perfect time to start planning a raingarden. See: www.bluethumb.org.
NRCS is now taking EQIP & CSP Applications

NRCS is now taking applications for the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) and Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP). EQIP provides technical and financial assistance for practices such as terraces, water and sediment control basins, grassed waterways, feedlot fixes, nutrient management, no-till residue management, well sealing, and buckthorn removal.

CSP is a new voluntary program that launched in 2009. CSP encourages producers by providing annual payments to maintain existing conservation practices while adopting additional ones on their operations. CSP is available on cropland, woodlands, and pasture. Please contact Tom or Kelly for additional information at 507-334-1887 x3.

Maintenance Reminder:
NRCS Staff would like to remind landowners and producers with terraces and water and sediment control basins to remove volunteer trees. Trees and shrubs will root into the drainage tile and damage the tile. Please cut and remove the trees and treat the stumps to prevent re-sprouting.

RE-INVEST IN MINNESOTA (RIM)
RESERVE SIGNUP

We are currently taking signups for the RIM program for filter strips located adjacent to public waters defined as streams, ditches and lakes. The acreage must be currently enrolled in the CRP program under a riparian buffer filter strip. Other criteria include:
* Permanent easements only
* Buffer widths must be a minimum of 50 feet and no more than 100 feet maximum average
* Must be owned by the applicant for 1 year prior to application

Contact the SWCD office at 507-332-5408 for payment rates or questions.

Marginal Cropland Areas May be Eligible for CCRP

The USDA is offering a program through the Continuous Conservation Reserve Program (CCRP) called Farmable Wetland Program (FWP). FWP allows landowners with areas difficult to farm due to flooding or pooling of storm water, an opportunity to enroll eligible acres in exchange for annual rental and in centive payments. The purpose of FWP is to restore the functions and values of wetlands that have been devoted to agricultural use.

Landowners enrolling cropland into FWP agree to sign a 10 or 15 year contract in exchange for annual rental payments, incentive payments and cost share for installing necessary practices.

If you are interested in FWP or other CCRP practices, please call the office at 507-332-5408 or stop in with any questions.

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<th>Start Date</th>
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<th>May</th>
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Growing Season Totals: 21.77 15.49 44.04 27.68 68.10 9.74 66.32 253.14

Averages: 1.98 1.41 4.00 2.52 6.19 0.89 6.03 23.01

A special thank you to our rain gauge readers in 2009. Precipitation measurements help predict flood levels, crop maturity and long-term climate changes, just to name a few. See www.climate.umn.edu for other interesting weather facts.
The Rice Soil and Water Conservation District thanks the following businesses for supporting this newsletter:

**KEVIN ELLINGSON**
WEST CONCORD, MN  55985
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