Rice County Soil & Water Conservation District
Conservation News
Fall Edition

Buffers: New Programs and Management Options

Ashley Tabery
District Technician

The Soil and Water Conservation District has always had programs and opportunities for buffers. However, now there is a new program that may fit your needs.

This program works for those who already have buffers, or those wanting to establish a buffer. Buffers are minimum of 50 feet wide or up to 350 feet, depending on the location and the landowner’s conservation goals. There is even an option for haying these buffers.

The District was awarded money through the Clean Water Fund and Outdoor Heritage Fund for Reinvest In Minnesota (RIM) Riparian Buffers. These buffers are permanent easements.

The permanent easement is acquired by the Minnesota Board of Water and Soil Resources (BWSR), in return the landowner receives a payment. The average payment per acre in Rice County for cropped land is $5,399 and $3,238 for non-cropped land.

For this sign-up, land currently in CRP will be paid at the cropped rate. The land remains in private ownership and the landowner retains responsibility for maintenance and paying applicable real estate taxes. The landowner also controls access to the land as it remains private property of the landowner.

Buffers have multiple benefits. They filter surface runoff, provide wildlife habitat, and help stabilize stream banks. If you are interested in a buffer, or want to learn more about the program, please contact Ashley at 507-332-5408.

New Employee—Ashley Tabery (District Technician)

Ashley Tabery
District Technician

My name is Ashley Tabery and I am the new District Technician for Rice County.

I will be working on a variety of programs including; Conservation Reserve Program (CRP), various Clean Water Fund projects, State Cost-Share, Reinvest in Minnesota (RIM) easement projects and other opportunities that come along.

I will be doing some ecological work, as well as survey and design of practices.

I am originally from Rosemount, Minnesota. After high school, I attended the University of Minnesota-Twin Cities where I received a Bachelor’s degree in Environmental Science, Policy, and Management.

I have worked for various local and state governments, as well as non-profits, including MN DNR MinnAqua Program, Minneapolis Park Board Environmental Programs, and Friends of the Mississippi River.

I most recently come from Storm Lake, IA, where I worked on the Mississippi River Basin Initiative for the Buena Vista Soil and Water Conservation District.

Rice County has a diverse and beautiful landscape to work with. I look forward to meeting and working with farmers and landowners in Rice County!
Storm Damage Update: State Aid Coming to Rice County

Eroded Spillway on an Earthen Dam

Steve Pahs—District Manager

In mid-June, a rain storm dumped up to one foot of water on parts of northern Rice County, causing extensive damage to cropland. Washed out sediment control basins and terraces, eroded grassed waterways, and road ditches filled with topsoil are the most common types of damage we have been seeing in that area of the county.

Many landowners have contacted the conservation office to report damage, but we believe there are many more sites that need assistance. So far, we have identified over $300,000 in conservation work needed in Rice County as a result of these late spring and early summer storms.

On August 24, the state legislature approved $11 million in funds for sediment and erosion control practices and rehabilitation of existing structures. We are expecting to receive a significant piece of that funding for Rice County.

Continue checking with us to find out when you will be able to apply for funds. If you have conservation work in need of repair, or have land that needs a conservation practice, please contact our office at your earliest convenience.

1026’s and Certified Wetland Determinations

Tom Coffman
NRCS District Conservationist

As a reminder, if you plan on tiling this fall, you need to indicate where on an aerial photo at the FSA office and then sign an AD-1026 form. This then is referred to NRCS to prepare a “certified wetland determination”. With the increased interest in drainage, we have a backlog of 1026’s that continue to pile up.

NRCS plans to hire additional wetland specialists to prepare these determinations. In the near future, District Conservationist’s will not be preparing these determinations.

In the interim, you may proceed with your drainage plans prior to receiving a “certified determination” only if you know for sure you won’t be draining a wetland. If there is an area in question, request our assistance. Also, be aware of wetlands that border your field, tiling setbacks are dependent on soil types and elevations and are usually around 100 feet.

No-Till Drill

Get on our waiting list for this coming spring’s use of our no-till drill for your native grasses and forbs plantings!

Nutrient Management Update

Katie Richards
Nutrient Management Specialist

Many of you might not have met me yet, but I started at the Rice SWCD in October of 2020.

In this position, I write nutrient and manure management plans. These plans are an unbiased recommendation for the plant nutrient needs.

With each plan, the producer will get a field by field recommendation of the nutrients that can be applied in an economical and environmentally friendly manner. Also, there will be maps that illustrate setbacks and will show where winter application can occur with minimal impact to surface and groundwater.

There are also a few programs that producers can consider when implementing these plans. The NRCS has EQIP sign-ups for Ag Waste Management Systems, the MDA has a Nutrient Management Initiative, and American Farmland Trust has the BMP Challenge.

Contact Katie today for more information.
Ag Best Management Practices (BMP) Loan Program

Tim Labs
District Program Manager

The Ag BMP Loan program is a water quality program that provides low interest loans to farmers, rural landowners and agriculture supply businesses. The purpose is to encourage agricultural best management practices that prevent or reduce runoff from feedlots, farm fields and other pollution problems identified by local water plans.

The Rice SWCD still has loan funds available for soil conservation erosion control projects, ag waste management systems and conservation planting and tillage equipment.

The interest rate is 3% plus 1/2% origination fee. Loans are processed through a local lender.

Contact me with any questions or for more information.

Volunteer Opportunities:

Ashley Tabery
District Technician

There are many opportunities out there for the District to work with new and exciting practices. We just need willing land owners. Some of these practices include:

Drainage water management: control structures in tile lines hold back water in dry times and allow it to flow freely when fields are wet.

Cover crops: various crops such as radishes, rye, or canola provide protection from erosion, add organic matter to soil, and can help manage nutrients.

Saturated buffers: a structure diverts tile water into a riparian buffer and allows it to flow through the buffer before reaching the stream.

Bioreactors: tile water is diverted into an underground trench of woodchips that converts nitrates into nitrogen gases.

Strip trials: a form of on farm research that allows the testing of different nutrient management plans or tillage implements at no risk.

Discovery farms: a network of farms in MN that conduct field scale water quality monitoring.

Two stage ditches: constructing a ditch with two levels, one for low flows, another for high flows. This helps stabilize ditches and mimics natural streams.

Trying something new often involves some monitoring and research of the practice to evaluate its effectiveness. This provides a fun opportunity to learn more about your land and work with multiple partners.

If you like to be on the cutting edge, and have an interest in any of the above practices, or even have a new idea, please let us know!

2013 Tree Program News

Steve Pahs
District Manager

Once again we will be selling trees and shrubs for distribution in April of 2013.

Orders can be placed starting in December, and the deadline will be February 28th.

Quantities are limited, so please order early to ensure availability.

Most of our inventory is sold in bundles of 25 bare-root trees, but we also have some individual potted trees such as spruce and pine trees.

If you need tree supplies such as tree mats, tree shelters, or deer repellant, you can purchase those items at any time throughout the year.

Check out our website www.riceswcd.org for up to date information on order forms and inventory.
Mission Statement
Assisting Rice County, Minnesota land users in the management and conservation of soil and water resources by means of educational, financial and technical assistance.

Contact Information
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Fax: 507-332-9892

District Manager: Steve Pahs: steven.pahs@mn.nacdnet.net
District Secretary: Deb Skarupa: debbie.skarupa@mn.nacdnet.net
District Program Manager: Tim Labs: tim.labs@mn.nacdnet.net
District Technician: Ashley Tabery: ashley.tabery@mn.nacdnet.net
Nutrient Management Specialist: Katie Richards: kathrine.richards@mn.nacdnet.net

NRCS District Conservationist: Tom Coffman: thomas.coffman@mn.usda.gov

...And a Few Words on Erosion
Tom Coffman
NRCS District Conservationist
We will be extremely busy this year surveying and designing structural conservation practices to be built this fall. However, please call if you want us to view an erosion problem on your farm.
We like to do our needs determinations and prepare alternatives and estimates before you do your fall tillage.
And speaking of tillage, soybeans no-tilled into corn stalks performed exceptionally well this year in regards to soil erosion and soil moisture.
Consider leaving your erosion vulnerable fields untilted this fall.

Calendar
Meetings occur every 3rd Wednesday of each month at 1:30 pm. Public is welcome to any board meeting.
(Sept. 19, Oct. 17, Nov. 21)

Sept. 19—Manure & Nutrient Management Field Day
Sept. 20—Bus Tour of Rice County

Areas of Representation

Board of Supervisors
District 1 (Northwest: Erin, Forest, Webster, Wheatland)
  Robert Duban 507-645-8024
District 2 (Southwest: Morristown, Shieldsville, Warsaw, Wells)
  Richard Huston 507-332-8533
District 3 (Southeast: Cannon City, Richland, Walcott, Wheeling)
  Jim Purfeerst 507-334-3552
District 4 (Northeast: Bridgewater, Northfield)
  Gary Wagenbach 507-645-8549
District 5 (Central: City of Faribault)
  Dale Neirby 507-334-8045