

2025

# ANNUAL REPORT



## **FREEBORN COUNTY SOIL & WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICT**

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### **Mission Statement**

To serve the residents of Freeborn County by creating an awareness of soil and water resource concerns, by offering practical alternatives to manage these concerns, and by providing technical assistance (as local resources allow) to apply and maintain best management practices (BMPs) that impact water quality while sustaining soil productivity and land-user profits.

# SERVICES PROVIDED



- Site visits to investigate resource concerns, creation of engineering plans, structure layout, and supervision of construction for conservation practices. The most common practices include grassed waterways, water and sediment control basins, and grade stabilization structures.
- Implementation of the Cost-Share Programs. This includes visiting with landowners & producers to establish goals, assisting in application to the programs, design of practices/structures, record keeping of activities, and site visits of current and past contracts to ensure proper installation/maintenance of the practice/structure.
- Manage and Implement the Reinvest in Minnesota (RIM) and Conservation Reserve Enhancement Programs (CREP). Coordinate sign-ups and easement processing. Which included outreach, applications, conservation plans, RIM agreements, title work, easement closings, restoration plans, engineering assistance, construction, payments. etc. Everything from easement interest and sign up to a restored closed easement.
- Implementation of the Minnesota Agricultural Water Quality Certification Program (MAWQCP). This includes educational outreach, assisting with the application process, and maintaining current certifications.
- Implementation of four One Watershed One Plan (1W1P) for the major watersheds within the county. This includes participating in planning, advisory, policy meetings, and the education and implementation of conservation practices to reach the goals of the Comprehensive Watershed Management Plans.
- Management of the Freeborn County Soil & Water Conservation District No-Till Drill Program to assist landowners in various conservation seedings. This includes coordination with landowners for scheduling, delivery, and pick-up.
- Implements an annual Tree Sale to provide quality, affordable trees for conservation purposes to residents of Freeborn County.
- Farmstead and Field Windbreak design, species selection, on-site layout, and planting equipment rental.
- Assisting landowners with compliance issues with the Minnesota Wetland Conservation Act (WCA), which was passed in 1991. This may include reviewing maps to determine potential applicability of the Act or discussing alternatives in cooperation with the LGU and Technical Evaluation Panel (TEP) Membership.
- Conservation compliance planning and assistance with other aspects of the current Farm Bill.
- Assisting and working cooperatively with various conservation partners. This includes, but is not limited to: the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), Minnesota Board of Water & Soil Resources (BWSR), Minnesota Department of Agriculture (MDA), local Watershed Districts (WDs), Freeborn County Environmental Services, and other Soil & Water Conservation Districts (SWCD).
- Conservation education projects, demonstrations, and workshops.
- Participates in the Local Workgroup for local priorities in NRCS funding.
- Partnership with local producers and conservation partners through the Freeborn Area Soil Health Team.

# LETTER FROM THE CHAIRMAN



Dear Reader,

As we reflect on 2025, it was truly a year full of transitions and growth for the Freeborn SWCD. After 27 years of service, District Manager Brenda Lageson retired. To continue the success of the SWCD, Linda Mestnik was hired as Finance & Administrative Specialist, Lindsey Cornell was promoted to District Manager, and Chad Billat to Project Manager/Private Lands Biologist. Both Mark Trnka and Senja Viktora stepped into new roles at the end of the year, positioning our district for continued growth, sustainability, and long-term success

We also experienced changes at the board level. In 2025, we welcomed three new supervisors: Casey Madson (District 1), Scott Lightly (District 2), and Brad Kramer (District 5), who joined the board following the retirements of Chris Dahl, David Ausen, and Don Kropp. To help orient our new supervisors, staff hosted a project tour in September, providing board members with a firsthand look at conservation practices implemented in Freeborn County.

Freeborn County is uniquely situated with six watersheds in the county. As a result Freeborn SWCD is an active partner in One Watershed One Plan (1W1P) initiatives. Four plans cover five of those watersheds. Three plans – Cedar/Wapsipinicon, Le Sueur River, and Shell Rock/Winnebago-- are complete, with the Blue Earth River plan set to begin in 2026. In 2025, these plans brought over \$150,000 in additional conservation funding into Freeborn County, funding that would not have been available prior to 1W1P. We are excited about the continued opportunities these partnerships will provide.

Beyond 1W1P, the SWCD continues to offer a variety of funding opportunities for producers and landowners. In 2025 the rollout of the Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCCP) marked an important addition, creating new opportunity for producers to enroll significant acres in soil health practices. With both longstanding and new funding sources available, our staff remains committed to working closely with landowners to implement conservation programs that improve soil and water quality throughout the county.

On behalf of the Freeborn SWCD Board of Supervisors, I would like to sincerely thank the many local agencies, organizations, units of government and individuals who partner with us to deliver conservation programs and put conservation on the land. They include, but are not limited to:

Freeborn Co. Landowners & Producers

Southeast Minnesota -Area 7- Soil & Water Conservation Districts

Freeborn Co. Board of Commissioners

Minnesota Board of Water & Soil Resources

Freeborn Co. Environmental Services

Greater Blue Earth River Basin Alliance (GBERBA)

Minnesota Department of Agriculture (MDA)

Cedar River, Turtle Creek & Shell Rock River Watershed Districts

USDA - Farm Service Agency (FSA)

Minnesota Pollution Control (MPCA)

Mn. Department of Natural Resources (MN-DNR)

Ducks Unlimited

Pheasants Forever

US-Fish & Wildlife Service (USFWS)

USDA - Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS)

We hereby submit the following Annual Report of Freeborn County Soil and Water Conservation Activities for calendar year 2025.

**Curt Helland, Chairman**

# DISTRICTS



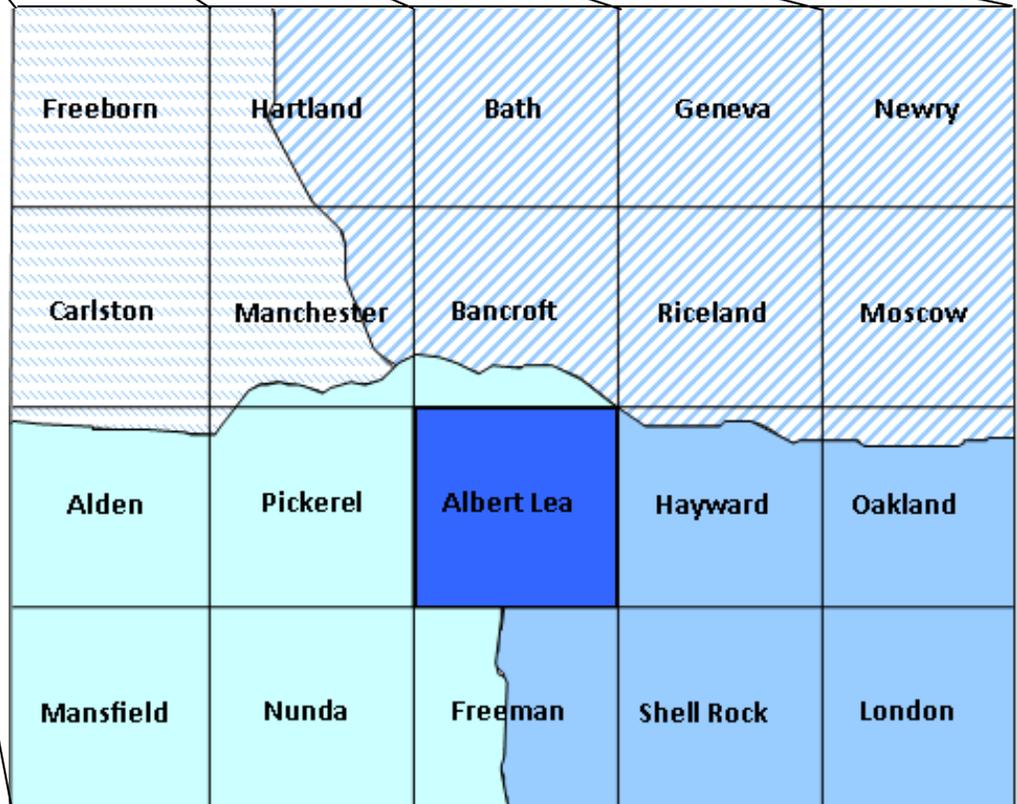
 District 1  
Casey Madson

 District 3  
Vickie Heers

 District 2  
Scott Lightly

 District 4  
Curt Helland

 District 5  
Brad Kramer



# BOARD OF SUPERVISORS



**Casey Madson**  
Supervisor  
District 1



**Scott Lightly**  
Vice-Chairman  
District 2



**Vickie Heers**  
Treasurer  
District 3



**Curt Helland**  
Chairman  
District 4



**Brad Kramer**  
Secretary  
District 5

# SWCD STAFF



**Lindsey Cornell**  
District Manager



**Chad Billat**  
Project Manager



**Mark Trnka**  
Conservation  
Technician



**Senja Viktora**  
District Technician



**Linda Mestnik**  
Finance &  
Administrative Specialist

# NRCS STAFF



**Barbara Marshall**  
Farm Bill Technician

# NRCS TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE

Luther Newton | **Assistant State Conservationist**

Tom Borth | **Area Engineer**

Aaron Janz | **Area Resource Conservationist**

Stuart Veith | **Area Resource Soil Scientist**

Samuel Jameson | **Agricultural Engineer**

Matthew Baltes | **GIS Specialist**

April Sullivan | **Area Program Specialist**

Terrance Rowe | **ITS**

Penelope Peters | **Area Administration Coordinator**

# 2025 HIGHLIGHTS

## 2025 Outstanding Conservationists

On Wednesday, December 3rd, 2025, Wayne and Linda Nelson were honored at the Minnesota Association of Soil and Water Conservation Districts Annual Convention and Tradeshow in Bloomington, MN.

The Freeborn County Soil & Water Conservation District is proud to recognize Wayne and Linda Nelson as their 2025 Outstanding Conservationists.

When Wayne and Linda Nelson of Alden Township began planning for their retirement in 2015, they reached out to the Freeborn County SWCD to explore conservation programs that would suit their 250 acres of land. After many years of working closely with Chad Billat at the Freeborn County SWCD, the Nelsons' dedication and love for their land led to its permanent restoration.



*Wayne & Linda Nelson on their easement.*

Their journey to restore their land brought them closer to neighbors, who followed the Nelsons' lead and enrolled their own land into conservation programs. This created a nearly 500-acre restored natural area!

Now the Nelsons spend their years in retirement enjoying the beautiful views and abundant wildlife.

## Legislative Briefing & Day at the Capitol



*Chad Billat, Curt Helland, Sen. Gene Dornink, Lindsey Cornell and Brad Kramer inside the State Capitol.*

The Freeborn County Soil & Water Conservation District visited the Minnesota State Capitol on March 4 & 5, 2025 to engage with legislators about conservation efforts and priorities for Soil and Water Conservation Districts (SWCDs) statewide.

Several staff and board members from Freeborn SWCD attended, including: Board Manager Kramer, Board Manager Helland, Project Manager Billat, and District Manager Cornell. They had an opportunity to meet with Gene Dornink, Peggy Bennett, and Patricia Mueller.

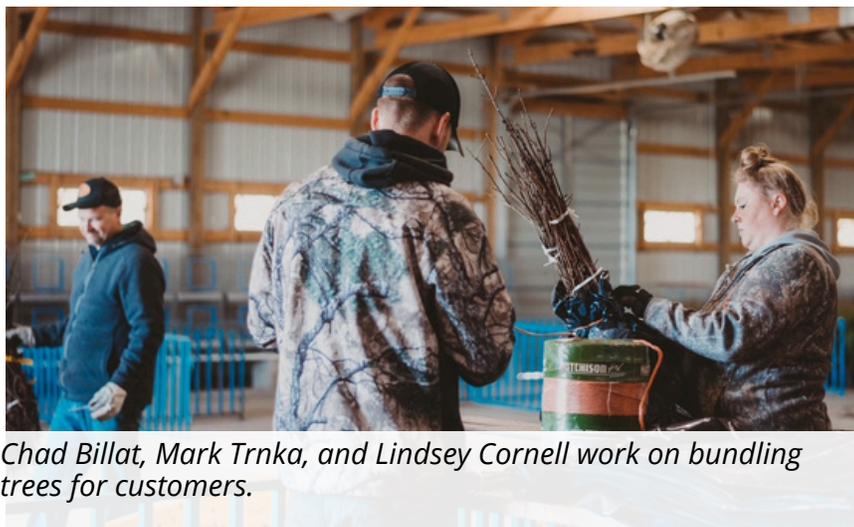
Among the top priorities discussed was assisting SWCD's with maintaining increased stable funding. Permanent funding for SWCDs was an important step in improving the ability of all SWCDs to deliver the services essential for performing their statutory duties, however, a decrease in aid starting in 2025 does not match the demands put on districts. While meeting with the legislators this year, Dornink, Bennett, and Mueller showed support of maintaining stable funding for SWCD's and were aware there was a significant short fall in funding for the next biennium in the legislature.

# 2025 HIGHLIGHTS

## 2025 Annual Tree Sale

The Freeborn County Soil & Water Conservation District's annual tree sale has offered local landowners affordable, quality trees for windbreaks and wildlife plantings for 53 years. More than 20 species are available, along with native plant packs and planting supplies that help to support successful planting projects. Tree planter rental is available for large projects.

The 'Resilient Hardwoods' Bundle was introduced this year and quickly sold out. Each bundle included five bare root of Black Cherry, Hackberry, American Linden,



*Chad Billat, Mark Trnka, and Lindsey Cornell work on bundling trees for customers.*

Bur Oak, and Swamp White Oak. As the USDA Plant Hardiness Zones shift, the tree species in this bundle are predicted to be resilient to those changes.

In 2025, Freeborn SWCD sold 8,925 bare root trees/shrubs and 1,595 potted trees, totaling 10,520 trees/shrubs. The top five sellers were: 1) Black Hill Spruce, 2) Redosier Dogwood, 3) White Pine, 4) Norway Spruce, and 5) Cranberrybush. An additional 20 native plant packs from Minnesota Native Landscapes were sold. The packs consisted of 36 plants containing 6 different species.

Trees were delivered to the Freeborn County Fairgrounds on April 29, 2025. and distributed May 1-2. These plantings will provide lasting financial, aesthetic, wildlife, soil, water, and air quality benefits to Freeborn County and beyond for years to come.

## Volunteer Rain Gauge Network

The State Climatology Network helps sponsor our local rain gauge reporting program. We have 15 dedicated volunteers that take daily rain totals, tally them up, and send them in to our office. Our staff then records these totals on the State Climatology web site.

<https://climateapps.dnr.state.mn.us/hidenannual/>

Station ID	Network	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	AGR	HYD	ANN	GRO
24 101N 19W 35	SWCD				4.69	2.73	6.05	10.76	4.51	1.88	1.41						25.93
24 101N 20W 17	SWCD		0.45	3.33	3.56	2.45	6.29	9.45	5.8	2.43	1.35	1.61	1.47				26.42
24 101N 23W 8	SWCD	0	0.21	3.66	3.49	1.92	4.68	7.6	4	1.38	1.29	1.23	0.6	31.67	31.78	30.06	19.58
24 102N 20W 8	SWCD	0	0.81	2.05	4.67	2.49	9.61	10.14	8.94	1.06	1.36	1.89	1.18	44.8	44.64	44.2	32.24
24 102N 21W 5	SWCD			1.35	4.72	2.31	8.01	9.28	4.87	1.65	1.26	0.48					26.12
24 102N 21W 16	SWCD	0.2	0.85	1.6	4.45	3.32	7.52	7.78	7.38	1.36	0.98	1.82	0.65			37.91	27.36
24 102N 21W 16	SWCD	0.02	0.23	1.77	3.64	1.74	6.51	8.17	5.84	1.39	0.94	1.06		33.22	33.51		23.65
24 102N 21W 16	NWS	0.01	0.25	2.36	4.17	2.68	6.2	8.33	6.42	0.95	1.31	1.33	0.66	36.18	36.24	34.67	24.58
24 102N 21W 17	SWCD	0.03	0.55	3.22	4.52	2.71	7.49	9.27	5.07	1	1.21	1.7	1.24	39.56	39.65	38.01	25.54
24 102N 22W 10	SWCD				4.8	2.25	7.2	8.55	4.85	1.1	1.35						23.95
24 102N 23W 36	SWCD	0.05	0.22	1.95	3.67	2.4	8.5	8.91	3.31	0.89	1.19	2.17		34.8	34.86		24.01
24 103N 19W 1	SWCD				5.13	2.22	10.52	6.23	6.41	2.25	1.25						27.63
24 104N 22W 9	SWCD		0.41	3.38	4.11	2.74	5.8	5.17	8.57	1.57	0.6	1.94	1.05				23.85
24 104N 22W 35	SWCD				5.04	2.5	5.62	12.65	8.27	1.31							30.35
24 104N 23W 36	SWCD			1.28	5.21	2.72	6.67	9.44	8.41	0.96	1.13	0.73					28.2
<b>COUNTY AVERAGE</b>		<b>0.04</b>	<b>0.44</b>	<b>2.36</b>	<b>4.39</b>	<b>2.48</b>	<b>7.11</b>	<b>8.78</b>	<b>6.18</b>	<b>1.41</b>	<b>1.19</b>	<b>1.45</b>	<b>0.98</b>	<b>36.71</b>	<b>36.78</b>	<b>36.97</b>	<b>25.96</b>
<b># of observations</b>		<b>7</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>15</b>

*2025 Freeborn Co Monthly Precipitation, Totals*

# 2025 HIGHLIGHTS

## Freeborn County Fair Booth

The 2025 Freeborn County Fair ran from Tuesday, July 29th through Sunday, August 3rd, 2025. This year's display focused on 'Water Erosion'. Informational posters were created that described:

- What is Water Erosion
- Processes of Water Erosion
- Factors that Increase Water Erosion
- Using Vegetation, Management, and Wetland Restorations to Fight Erosion.

New this year was a children's board game called "The Healthy Soils Game". Children were invited to play with a staff member on Thursday to learn how certain conservation practices help protect soil from adverse events. A Water Cycle Bracelet was available to take home or do with a staff member on Friday during the fair.



Staff member Viktora sat at the fair to interact with visitors.

## Southeast Area Envirothon

The 2025 Southeast Area Envirothon was held May 6 at the Byron Sportsman and Conservation Club near Byron, MN. The event brought together 9 high school teams and 7 junior high teams for a day of hands-on environmental competition.

In the high school division, Goodhue White earned 1<sup>st</sup> place, Northfield placed 2<sup>nd</sup>, and Goodhue Black took 3<sup>rd</sup>. In the junior high division, Northfield Middle 1-"Missers" claimed 1<sup>st</sup> place, followed by Goodhue Middle 2 in 2<sup>nd</sup>, and Northfield Middle 2-"Turtles" in 3<sup>rd</sup>.

The top three high school teams advanced to the state Envirothon competition held May 18, 2025, in Finland, MN.



High school first place winners: Goodhue White

## Freeborn Area Soil Health Team

The Freeborn Area Soil Health Team is an active, locally driven group made up of agency professionals, agricultural businesses, farmers, lenders, and other ag partners who share a common interest in advancing soil health. The team's mission is to foster collaborations that encourages, educates, and demonstrates practical ways to improve soil health and water quality while enhancing farm productivity, profitability, and long-term sustainability of natural resources.



Audience members of the Soil Health Winter Workshop in February 2025.

In 2025, the Freeborn Area Soil Health Team continued to provide educational events for producers and agricultural professionals who support them. In February, the group partnered with neighboring SWCDs to host the HWY-14 soil health tour in Owatonna. Presenters Ryan Gibbs, Andy Linder, and Sam Ireland shared insights on soil health economics, current research, and first hand soil health experience with 110 attendees. The event was held at Torey's Restaurant and provided valuable discussion and networking opportunities for participants.

# 2025 HIGHLIGHTS

## Minnesota Buffer Law

The Freeborn SWCD continued working with landowners in 2025 to ensure compliance with the Minnesota Buffer Law, assisting those out of compliance in establishing the required buffers or implementing approved alternative practices.

Freeborn SWCD staff conduct annual monitoring on approximately one-third of all parcels impacted by the Buffer law. Landowners who are not currently in compliance are encouraged to contact the SWCD staff to develop a plan and work toward meeting requirements. If compliance efforts are not initiated, Freeborn County, the regulatory authority for the Buffer law, may issue enforcement action letters. The SWCD's role is to provide technical assistance and support to help landowners achieve and maintain compliance.

In addition, Freeborn SWCD provided funding to establish 556 acres of cover crops in 2025 on fields directly adjacent to waterbodies subject to the Buffer Law, further supporting water quality protection efforts.

## Minnesota Agricultural Water Quality Certification Program (MAWQCP)

MAWQCP takes a whole farm approach to conservation and improving water quality by assessing all owned and rented tracts and evaluating them on various categories. Producers who become certified are guaranteed Ag Certainty, which is 10 years where they are deemed in compliance with any new State water quality regulations. The program is non-regulatory, and certification is completed on a voluntary basis. A signed application is an invitation for staff to contact the producer and from that initial contact a meeting is set up to gather the relevant information. Financial and technical assistance are available for certified and producers actively pursuing certification.

There were a total of 27 new certifications and 6 re-certifications for the SE Region in 2025, for a total of roughly 30,000 acres of certified farmland. One new certification was in Freeborn County. This brings our total to 410 MAWQCP Certified Farms in the SE Region.

There were a total of 34 reviews conducted in the SE region in 2025. Two of those reviews took place in Freeborn County.



## Capacity Funding

For nine years, the Freeborn SWCD utilized Capacity Funding to help meet the growing conservation needs of our county. In 2025, that program came to an end; however, stable funding through SWCD was written into legislation and will now provide a more consistent, long-term source of support for our work.

The impact of those capacity Funding years will continue well into the future. Investments in expanded staffing and equipment have strengthened our district's ability to deliver conservation programs efficiently and effectively. In 2025, our Great Plains 1006NT drill was once again put to good uses, seeding approximately 240 acres of native prairie mix, pasture grass, alfalfa, and cover crops across Freeborn County.



Great Plains 1006NT Drill

Capacity Funding served as an important bridge, allowing us to grow and adapt until permanent, stable funding was secured. We are grateful for the opportunities it provided and look forward to build on that foundation in the years ahead.

# 2025 HIGHLIGHTS

## One Watershed One Plan (1W1P)

The One Watershed One Plan process was developed to transition water planning from a county basis to a watershed basis in 2014 with a focus on prioritizing and targeting the most important resources on a larger, watershed scale. As of 2025, Freeborn County SWCD is operating under three plans for the: Cedar-Wapsipinicon 1W1P, Shell Rock/Winnebago 1W1P, and Le Sueur 1W1P, with work on the Blue Earth 1W1P close to adoption.

**Cedar-Wapsipinicon River Watershed:** In 2025 work continued on the third grant. There were 133.3 acres of cover crops, 3 well sealings, and 17.1 acres of CRP incentives implemented in 2025 through 1W1P funds.

**Shell Rock/Winnebago Watershed:** In 2025 we continued to work on implementation within the watersheds. There were 2,185.9 acres of cover crops and 5 well sealings completed in 2025 through 1W1P funds. A survey was sent to landowners in the watershed to provide insight on conservation practices.

**Le Sueur River Watershed:** In 2025 many projects were completed across the watershed. In Freeborn County there were 2 well sealings and 1 CRP Incentives Contract.

**Blue Earth River Watershed:** In 2025 many agencies continued to gather creating the plan in the Blue Earth River Watershed. The plan will be implemented in 2026.

**Cannon River Watershed:** For the Cannon watershed in Freeborn County, we decided to opt out of that plan due to the small amount of watershed located in the county. However, we have been able to continue to partner with the Rice SWCD and Steele SWCD to hold a soil health event to utilize some of those funds.

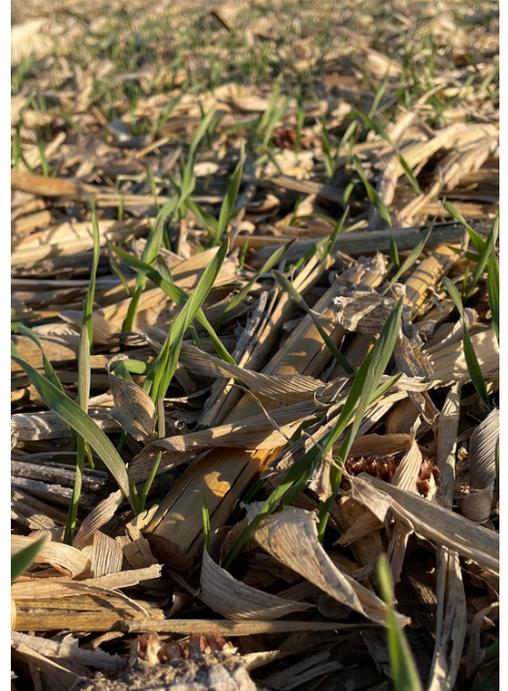
## Greater Blue Earth River Basin Alliance (GBERBA)

The Greater Blue Earth River Basin Alliance (GBERBA) is a joint powers organization made up of ten counties and Soil and Water Conservation Districts (SWCDs) within the Blue Earth, Le Sueur, and Watonwan River watershed. GBERBA facilitates collaboration among local government units (LGUs) by hosting technical meetings and policy discussions.

With the transition to One Watershed One Plan (1W1P) funding, GBERBA has shifted its focus towards administering watershed plans through the joint powers organization. The Le Sueur 1W1P chose not to use GBERBA for fiscal administration, which resulted in the Freeborn Soil and Water Conservation District becoming less active in the group.

However, in 2025 the Blue Earth 1W1P selected GBERBA to serve as its fiscal agent. This has created a new opportunity for the Freeborn SWCD to become more engaged with the organization. As a result, Freeborn SWCD has chosen to remain a member of GBERBA, while Freeborn County has opted to withdraw its membership.

GBERBA is also implementing a soil health grant that includes the development of a website where farmers can access short videos highlighting soil health practices used by other producers. This resource will also be available to farmers within Freeborn County.



*Cover crops planted with the help of WBIF funds.*

# 2025 HIGHLIGHTS

## Conservation Easements

2025 brought a lot of changes in state easement funding. Only a few years ago the state had funding for all RIM programs and even created some new programs to open the door to new opportunities for landowners across the state. Shortages in state funding and a large increase in landowner interest in the state have now used all the funding for the majority of RIM and CREP programs. In Freeborn we were able to utilize a lot of the funding before it was exhausted. We have several large group projects involving multiple landowners and were successful in expanding those group projects into large wetland complexes and water storage sites. These easement projects are one of the biggest reducers of pollutants in the watershed and help us exceed our One Watershed One Plan reductions goals. We have also been working with Pheasants Forever Biologists to assist with our substantial easement workload.

The MN House Bonding Committee visited southeast Minnesota to tour numerous projects in the area that are requesting funding in 2026. One of the stops was a CREP restoration in Freeborn County where staff highlighted the easement restoration, the interest in these programs, and the need for future funding to address the interest by landowners and the many resource concerns these projects correct.



*Project Manager-Chad Billat-explains to lawmakers restoration work completed on the easement.*

## Reinvest in Minnesota (RIM)

Even with limited funding we had several new RIM easements approved for funding in 2025. We had seven RIM Wetlands and One Watershed One Plan applications, with five being approved for funding. The state was able to acquire funding for peatlands soils which was used to fund the five approved RIM Wetland applications. We had our first RIM One Watershed One Plan easement close with restoration finishing up in 2026. We had a RIM Riparian Working Lands easements approved which will allow the easement to be grazed under an NRCS grazing plan. Various management/enhancements were completed on several easements that included tree removal, clipping, and prescribed burns. We also closed one RIM wetlands easements of approximately 25 acres. A pollinator enhancement seeding was completed on recently closed easement that was previously in CRP on 20 acres.

## Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP)

We had four CREP applications submitted to the state and all four were approved for funding of approximately 250 acres. Construction was completed on one CREP easements of approximately 80 acres. We closed and recorded three CREP easements of approximately 190 acres. Native seeding was completed and vegetation established on 2 CREP easements of approximately 200 acres. Restoration was fully completed on one RIM/CREP easements of approximately 80 acres (construction completed/vegetation established). For site preparation for our native seedings we planted approximately 170 acres of cover crops on three easements that will be seeded to native grasses and forbs. We also had an enhancement to a CREP easement that will fully restore an approximately 20 acre basin.



*Restoration work completed on CREP easement-Photo courtesy of Mark Yrjo*

# 2025 HIGHLIGHTS

## Conservation Easements continued...

Easement Type	Number of Easements (Freeborn County)	Acres
Reinvest in Minnesota (RIM): Riparian Easements	6	395
Reinvest in Minnesota (RIM): One Watershed One Plan Easements	1	40
Reinvest in Minnesota (RIM): Marginal Agricultural Land Easements	6	90
Reinvest in Minnesota (RIM): Working Lands Easements	1	45
Permanent Wetland Preserve (PWP) Easements	11	220
Reinvest in Minnesota (RIM): Wetland Restoration Easements	22	550
Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP)	19	610
Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP II)	13	560
Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP III)	34	2,370
Wetland Reserve Program (WRP) Wetland Restoration Easements	44	2,855
RIM/WRP Wetland Restoration Easements	51	4,075
Emergency Watershed Protection (EWP) Easements	5	250
Total:	213	12,060

*Summary of easements closed to date (12/31/2025)*

## Cost Share Programs

In 2025, Freeborn SWCD executed 40 new cost-share contracts, encumbering a total of \$644,134.80 to advance local conservation efforts in 2025 and subsequent years. These projects were funded through a combination of programs, including Conservation Contracts, Soil Health Delivery, Buffer Law, Cedar/Wapsipinicon Watershed Based Implementation Funds (WBIF), Shell Rock/Winnebago WBIF, and the Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP).

During 2025, payments were issued on 38 contracts totaling \$272,175.62 for conservation practices successfully completed during the year. These payments included multi-year and single year contracts executed in 2025 as well as contracts executed in prior years, and whose practices were completed and certified in 2025.

### Cost-Share Payments in 2025

PRACTICES	Implemented in 2025	2025 Payments
Cover Crops	4,082.1 ac	\$232,553.50
Residue Management: No-Till/Strip Till	160.0 ac	\$4,800.00
Well Sealing	8 each	\$10,543.12
CRP Incentives	30.4 ac	\$24,279.00
<b>Total Payments 2025:</b>		<b>\$272,175.62</b>

*Summary of contract payments from 1/1/2025-12/31/2025*

# NATURAL RESOURCES CONSERVATION SERVICE (NRCS) UPDATE



REPORTED BY LEANNA SMEBY | DISTRICT CONSERVATIONIST

## CONSERVATION TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE (CTA) AND CONSERVATION PROGRAMS

Environmental Quality Incentive Program: Out of twenty three (23) applicants, seventeen (17) conservation plans were developed, and three (3) were accepted for financial assistance in FY 2024 for EQIP totaling \$99,966.82 in obligations.

Conservation Stewardship Program: Seven (7) Classic CSP Applications were submitted in Freeborn with Zero (0) obligated in 2026.

PRACTICES	PLANNED IN 2025	APPLIED IN 2025	EXPENDED FUNDS 2025
<b>EQIP:</b> Cover Crops	229.4 ac	229.4 ac	\$13,402.30
<b>EQIP:</b> Grassed Waterways/Mulching	0 ac	0 ac	\$0
<b>EQIP:</b> Residue Management: No-Till/Strip Till/Mulch Till	151 ac.	151 ac.	\$5,063.03
<b>EQIP:</b> Brush Management	12.9 ac.	12.9 ac.	\$2,772.04
<b>EQIP:</b> Waste Facility Closure	1 ea.	1 ea.	\$36,711.04
<b>EQIP:</b> Water Wells	1 ea.	0 ea.	\$0
<b>CSP:</b> Forestry Related Practices & Enhancements	4.9 ac.	4.9 ac.	\$2,362.00
<b>CSP:</b> Nutrient Management and Associated Enhancements	4,528.9 ac	4,528.9 ac	\$46,401.00
<b>CSP:</b> Pest Management and Associated Enhancements	8,964.1 ac	8,964.1 ac	\$163,278.00
<b>CSP:</b> Cover Crops and Associated Enhancements	2,014.5 ac	1,460.4 ac	\$17,943.00
<b>CSP:</b> Reduced Tillage Enhancements	2,070.7 ac	2,070.7 ac	\$6,954.00
<b>TOTAL UNITS/FUNDS FOR 2025 CRP:</b>	1012 Contracts	11,768.00 ac	\$3,458,912.00
<b>TOTAL UNITS/FUNDS EXPENDED FOR 2025 EQIP:</b>	See Above	See Above	\$67,119.20
<b>TOTAL/UNITS/FUNDS EXPENDED FOR 2025 CSP:</b>	See Above	See Above	\$334,809.00

# REVENUES & EXPENSES

Freeborn County

Jan - Dec 25

Revenues & Expenses

January Through December 2025

(Unaudited)

## Revenue

Charges for Services	\$ 181,423.09
Intergovernmental Rev - County	\$ 183,000.00
Intergovernmental Rev - State	\$ 380,592.88
Misc. Revenue Intrest	\$ 23,121.92
Misc. Other Revenue	\$ 652.88
<b>Total Revenue</b>	<b>\$ 768,790.77</b>

## Expense

Dist.Op. Capital Outlay	\$ 37,396.10
Dist.Op. Services & Charges	\$ 74,887.07
Dist. Op. Personnel Services	\$ 463,601.68
Dist. Op. Supplies	\$ 3,055.28
Project Expense - SWCD	\$ 9,035.72
Project Expense - State	\$ 125,253.93
<b>Total Expense</b>	<b>\$ 713,229.78</b>

**Net Income \$ 55,560.99**