

Winter/Spring 2024

# NEWSLETTER

### SWCD Staff:

Brenda Lageson | District Manager  
 Lindsey Zeitler | Resource Conservationist  
 Chad Billat | Private Lands Biologist  
 Mark Trnka | Conservation Technician  
 Senja Viktora | District Technician



### SWCD Supervisors:

Chris Dahl | Chairman  
 Don Kropp | Vice Chairman  
 Dave Ausen | Treasurer  
 Curt Helland | Secretary  
 Vickie Heers | Supervisor



## TREE Open House

WEDNESDAY | 31 | JANUARY

FROM 9AM-4PM

STOP IN AND VISIT WITH FREEBORN SWCD STAFF AT THEIR OFFICE TO LEARN ABOUT PROGRAMS, COST SHARE OPPORTUNITIES, SPECIES SELECTION, AND TO ORDER YOUR TREES.

1400 West Main Street, Albert Lea, MN

 [freebornswcd.org](http://freebornswcd.org)



Robert & Darlane Muilenburg on their restored easement.

## 2023 Outstanding Conservationists

The Freeborn County Soil & Water Conservation District is proud to recognize Robert & Darlane Muilenburg of Hollandale, MN as their 2023 Outstanding Conservationist.

The Muilenburg's are second generation vegetable farmers and have grown corn, soybeans, sweetcorn, carrots, onions, potatoes, and peas throughout their operation. From years of farming mainly peat soils, Bob understands the importance of keeping soil in its place and has implemented cover crops with his vegetables for over 30 years.

Our outstanding conservationists have enrolled in numerous

conservation easements, most recently a large CREP Easement which significantly increased floodwater storage adjacent to Geneva Lake. During heavy rain events, water can enter the easement from the adjacent county ditch where it is stored, filtering out sediment and nutrients, before slowly releasing back into the public system. Other conservation work the Muilenburg's have implemented are water and sediment control structures, waterways, filter-strips, reduced tillage, prescribed burns, brush management, food plots, CRP, and participation in the annual SWCD tree sale.

Congratulations to Robert & Darlane Muilenburg!



Outlet Structure on Muilenburg's Restored CREP Wetland.

# Emerald Ash Borer | In Freeborn County

Emerald Ash Borer (EAB) is a pest native to East Asia. It was first discovered in Detroit, Michigan in 2002 and in 2021 was identified in Freeborn County near Alden, Minnesota.

Emerald Ash Borers kill ash trees, and no ash tree (*Fraxinus spp.*) is safe from this pest. They are a major concern, especially here in the state of Minnesota since we have the highest volume of ash trees in the U.S. from our forestland to our urban areas. In Freeborn County, ash trees were popular to include in windbreak plantings due to their large canopy and relatively fast growth rate.

The majority of EAB's lifecycle takes place below the bark where larvae feed on the inner bark and create tunnels called galleries. These galleries cut off vessels that carry water and nutrients to the upper portions of the tree, ultimately resulting in death. Signs to watch for an EAB infestation:

- ◇ **Canopy Dieback:** Tree begins shedding leaves from the top 1/3 and progresses to the bottom until the tree is bare.
- ◇ **Epicormic Shoots:** branches grow from the roots & trunks with leaves often larger than normal.
- ◇ **Serpentine Galleries:** feeding marks that weave back & forth across the woodgrain under bark on the trunk of the tree.
- ◇ **D-Shaped Exit Holes:** 1/8 inch-

wide holes created when adults emerge from bark. Difficult to find since most are often high in the tree & very small.

- ◇ **Bark Splitting:** Vertical splits in bark. Galleries can be exposed under split.
- ◇ **Increased woodpecker activity & damage:** Woodpeckers remove outer bark of trees to reach larvae in infected trees. Trees become covered in lighter colored bark.

Unfortunately, once these symptoms become apparent the tree generally dies within one to three years. There are no treatments for already infected trees.

A quarantine has been placed in Freeborn County to help slow the spread of EAB to other areas in Minnesota. This means it is illegal to transport ash logs, ash tree waste, ash chips/mulch and **all firewood** (non-coniferous) into and out of Freeborn County.

For properties that have rows of ash trees in their windbreaks the best course of action would be to brace for the loss of the ash trees and renovate the windbreak by replacing them with another tree species.

The Freeborn SWCD can assist you with species selection for a windbreak renovation. If you suspect an EAB infestation call 'Report a Pest' at 888-545-6684 or email: [reportapest@state.mn.us](mailto:reportapest@state.mn.us).



## Keys to Identify Ash Trees



1. Has branches that grow directly across from one another.



2. Has compound leaves (a group of leaflets joined by a stalk to a woody stem).



3. Has five to many leaflets with smooth or finely toothed margins

## Lawns to Legumes | Your Yard Can **BEE** the Change

Populations of pollinator species have significantly declined worldwide in recent years with the loss of natural habitat being one of the top reasons. Do you want to provide valuable habitat and help protect pollinators in your backyard? The Lawns to Legumes program aims to empower Minnesota residents to help pollinators in their own yards. The program offers workshops, coaching, planting guides and cost-share funding for installing pollinator-friendly native plantings. The goal is to help people create habitats for at-risk species like the rusty patched bumble bee and the monarch butterfly.

Minnesota is home to more than 500+ native bee species. Pollinators include butterflies, moths, beetles, and native flies. All play a key role in pollinating many food crops and native plants. It is estimated that one out of every three bites of food we eat exists because of pollinators.

Minnesota residents can apply during active signup periods to be reimbursed for up to \$400 in costs associated with establishing pollinator habitat in their yards. Individual Support grant recipients must provide at least a 25% match for their total reimbursement request. Workshops and coaching are offered to recipients to ensure project success. An application period will open in February for fall 2024 projects.



Interested residents (city or rural) can find more information and apply on Blue Thumb's website [bluethumb.org/lawns-to-legumes/](https://www.bluethumb.org/lawns-to-legumes/).

## Many Easement, Wetland Restoration, and Water Storage Options Available

If you have wet spots or other unproductive cropland that you would like to retire and get considerable compensation; a wetland restoration, water storage, or other easement practice might be a great fit for your land. There are several easement options available and more to come in the future. However, with the high easement enrollment rates, the sign-up is competitive. Landscapes with depressions or other areas that could store water are what helps applications obtain that highly competitive score that gets projects accepted.

Recently, easement rates were updated to reflect current land sales. Some easement programs allow for payments to be distributed over 15 years and others receive an upfront one-time payment at easement closing. We anticipate interest in these programs to increase significantly once word gets around on the new rates.

If interested don't hesitate to contact, Chad Billat, Private Lands Biologist at 507-373-5607 ext. 3, by email at [chad.billat@usda.gov](mailto:chad.billat@usda.gov).



Swans enjoying a wetland restoration.

# SWCD Updates No-Till Drill in 2023



During the summer of 2023 we updated our no-till drill to a new Great Plains 1006NT. The drill was put to good use straight away and completed 17 projects; approximately 200 acres of pasture, hay/alfalfa ground, cover crops, filter strips, and CRP/CREP were planted across Freeborn County. The drill rental is on a first come first serve basis. However, we try to group sites together that are in the same region to better utilize staff time and limit the number of times the drill is hauled from one side of the county to the other. We already have a list started for the 2024 season, so if you are interested in renting the drill or have any questions, please call the SWCD staff at 507-373-5607 ext. 3.

### Drill Features:

- 3 seed boxes
- 10' planting width/12.7' wheel to wheel
- 7.5" row spacings
- Hydraulic hookups

### Examples of what the drill can plant:

- Soybeans
- Cover crops
- Native seed mixes
- CRP and CREP plantings
- Alfalfa
- Buffers

### Rental Fee:

- \$100 delivery fee
- \$12 per acre seeded
- Rental fees increase if used outside of Freeborn County
- Fees are subject to change

## Additional Equipment Rentals

Have a smaller project? We have hand broadcast seeders available. Great for seeding fluffy native seed in hard to access locations. The Seeders are available for free with a holding deposit.



Thinking of planting some trees this coming spring? We also have tree planting equipment available. We rent out a pull type tree planter along with several tree planting bars. Rental rates for the planter are \$35/day plus \$.05/tree. The tree planter bars are free to use with a holding deposit.



## Freeborn SWCD 75th Anniversary

On May 10th, 1948 a referendum vote was passed to create the Freeborn County Soil & Water Conservation District after townships petitioned for assistance over concerns of increased soil erosion and depletion of soil fertility.

To celebrate our 75th year, on September 14th, 2023 we hosted an event for landowners, farmers, and residents of Freeborn County at the Three Oak Vineyard & Winery. Guests took a bus tour through rural north-east Freeborn County that highlighted conservation practices installed with the help of the Freeborn SWCD. And afterwards, guests enjoyed supper from Erin's Street Bistro Food Truck.

We are so grateful for all those who came to celebrate with us and the vendors that made our event possible. Thank you!



From Left to Right: Dave Ausen, Chris Dahl, Senja Viktora, Brenda Lageson, Vickie Heers, Mark Trnka, & Curt Helland.



**Freeborn County SWCD**  
**Spring 2024 Tree Order Form**  
 1400 W Main Street, Albert Lea, MN 56007  
 507-373-5607 Ext. 3  
 email:lindsey.zeitler@mn.nacdn.net  
 www.freebornswcd.org

Name: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Address: \_\_\_\_\_  
 City, State, ZIP: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Phone: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Email: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Check #: \_\_\_\_\_

Evergreen- Bare Root	Size	Price/ Bundle	# of bundles	Total Cost	Stock is limited, order by <b>February 23rd</b> for best selection			
Sold in Bundles of 25					No cancellations after this date.			
Cedar, Eastern Red	9-15"	\$49.00						
Pine, Red	7-15"	\$49.00						
Pine, White	7-15"	\$49.00						
Spruce, Black Hills	7-15"	\$49.00						
Spruce, Norway	7-15"	\$49.00						
Evergreen- Potted	Size		Price/Pot	# of pots	Total Cost	Bareroot trees will be sold in bundles only. If you want fewer trees we recommend purchasing potted.		
Sold Per Tree	Pot	Height				Not seeing something on the list? Contact the SWCD and we may be able to order it for you.		
Arborvitae, Am.	1 Gal.	15-18"	\$14.00					
Arborvitae, Am.	2 Gal.	18-24"	\$19.00					
Pine, Red	1 Gal.	15-18"	\$15.00					
Pine, White	1 Gal.	15-18"	\$15.00					
Pine, White	2 Gal.	18-24"	\$20.00					
Spruce, Black Hills	1 Gal.	15-18"	\$15.00					
Spruce, Black Hills	2 Gal.	24-30"	\$20.00					
Spruce, Meyer	1 Gal.	12-15"	\$14.00					
Spruce, Meyer	2 Gal.	15-18"	\$20.00					
Spruce, Norway	1 Gal.	15-18"	\$15.00					
Tamarack <b>NEW</b>	1 Gal.	36"+	\$16.00			Order and pay for orders in our online store at <a href="http://www.freebornswcd.org">www.freebornswcd.org</a>		
Deciduous Trees-Bare Root	Size	Price/ Bundle	# of bundles	Total Cost	Not Ordering Online? You can still mail in your order with your payment.			
Sold in Bundles of 25					Make checks payable to: <b>Freeborn County SWCD</b>			
Birch, Paper	2-3'	\$51.00			The SWCD sells good quality trees, but offers no guarantee of survival or availability of items ordered.			
Crabapple, Red Splendor	2-3'	\$51.00			We will contact you when the orders are ready to be picked up, generally around the 3rd or 4th week of April.			
Maple, Red	2-3'	\$51.00			<b>*Plant Packs will be available for pick up mid-May.</b>			
Maple, Sugar	2-3'	\$51.00						
Oak, Bur	18-24"	\$49.00						
Oak, Red	2-3'	\$51.00						
Serviceberry (Juneberry)	18-24"	\$49.00						
Walnut, Black	2-3'	\$51.00						
Willow, Hybrid	2-3'	\$51.00						
Deciduous Shrubs-Bare Root	Size	Price/ Bundle	# of bundles	Total Cost				
Sold in Bundles of 25								
Arrowwood	18-24"	\$49.00						
Cranberrybush	18-24"	\$49.00						
Dogwood, Redosier	18-24"	\$49.00						
Hazelnut, American	18-24"	\$49.00						
Lilac, Common Purple	18-24"	\$49.00						
Nannyberry	18-24"	\$49.00						
Plant Packs*	Price	# of packs	Total Cost	Other	\$/ Item	# of Items	Total Cost	
36 plants per pack								
Monarch Plant Pack	\$65.00			Tree Mats (1 per tree)	\$1.50			
Pollinator Plant Pack	\$65.00			Fertilizer (1 per tree)	\$0.40			
Special Orders	Price	#	Total Cost	Tree Tubes (1 per tree)	\$3.50			
				Subtotal				
				Sales Tax 7.875%				
				Balance Due				

### Evergreen

<p><b>Arborvitae, American:</b> <i>Thuja occidentalis</i> - Height of 40 – 50'. Also known as Northern White Cedar. Pyramid shaped tree with flat, soft green scale- like needles. Excellent windbreak tree for home sites. Susceptible to drying out in dry, cold winters so water well.</p>	<p><b>Cedar, Eastern Red:</b> <i>Juniperus virginiana</i> – Height of 40 – 50'. Native to IA. Sharp green scale-like needles. Good for wildlife. Tolerant of most light and heavy soil conditions.</p>	<p><b>Pine, Red:</b> <i>Pinus resinosa</i> – Height of 50 - 80'. Also known as Norway Pine. Long needled, pyramid shaped tree. Prefers well-drained, sandy soils. Popular Christmas tree species. Needs up to 20' spacing to avoid overcrowding of lower branches.</p>	<p><b>Pine, White:</b> <i>Pinus strobus</i> – Height of 80-100'. Fast growing, tallest conifer species in MN. Needles in groups of 5. Pyramid shaped when young, broadening with age. Prefers sandy or silt loam soils, but will tolerate a wide range. Needs at least 20' spacing to avoid overcrowding of lower branches.</p>
<p><b>Spruce, Black Hills:</b> <i>Picea glauca</i> var. <i>densata</i> – Height of 40 – 50'. Native to Black Hills, SD. Strain of white spruce. Slow growing, conical tree with dark green needles. Hardy &amp; more drought resistant than White Spruce.</p>	<p><b>Spruce, Meyer:</b> <i>Picea meyeri</i> - grows to mature heights of 40-100'. Being used to replace Colorado Spruce because of it being disease prone. Grows 13-24" per year. Can handle droughty conditions and likes the sun.</p>	<p><b>Spruce, Norway:</b> <i>Picea abies</i> – Height of 80 – 100+'. Native to Europe. Pyramidal tree with drooping branches. Fastest growing, and tallest species of spruce.</p>	<p><b>Tamarack:</b> <i>Larix laricina</i> – Height of 50-75'. This is a deciduous conifer it loses its needles every fall. It can tolerate a wide range of soil conditions but grows most commonly on wet to moist organic soils. Very shade intolerant.</p>

### Shrubs

<p><b>Arrowwood:</b> <i>Viburnum dentatum</i> – Height of 6-10'. Native of eastern &amp; mid western U.S. Produces cream colored flowers followed by small blue or purple fruits. Favors moist but well-drained soils of varying pH. Good food source for wildlife.</p>	<p><b>Cranberry, American Highbush:</b> <i>Viburnum trilobum</i> – Height 10 – 16'. Produces white flowers &amp; red edible fruit, with excellent fall color. When planted as a hedge, makes a good snow fence in winter. Good for wildlife. Tolerates a variety of soils.</p>	<p><b>Dogwood, Redosier:</b> <i>Cornus sericea</i> – Height of 8-10'. Fast growing native shrub. This shrub has bright red stems and produces clusters of white fruit. Good for wildlife. Prefers moist sites.</p>	<p><b>Hazelnut, American:</b> <i>Corylus americana</i> - Height of 3-10'. Shade tolerant. Produces edible nuts eaten by birds and mammals. Variable fall color. Can reproduce by suckering.</p>
<p><b>Lilac, Common Purple:</b> <i>Syringa vulgaris</i> - Height of 10-15'. Large, round-headed shrub. Profuse bloomer, with purple flowers in the spring. Prefers well-drained soils and full sun for best flowering effect.</p>	<p><b>Nannyberry:</b> <i>Virburnum lentago</i> - Height of 10-20'. Fast growing. Glossy leaves with cream flowers followed by blue-black berries. Tolerates a wide range of soils and pH. Attractive for shiny foliage and red fall color.</p>		

### Deciduous Trees

<p><b>Birch, Paper:</b> <i>Betula papyrifera</i> - Height of 50 - 70'. Hardy native and fairly rapid growing with shallow roots. Somewhat borer resistant, but not pollution tolerant. Easy to transplant and casts light shade.</p>	<p><b>Crabapple, Red Splendor:</b> <i>Malus "red splendor"</i> – Height and spread of 15-25'. Leaves are green or reddish, flowers are white or pink followed by fruits ¼" to 1" in diameter. Full sun. Quality food source for wildlife.</p>	<p><b>Maple, Red:</b> <i>Acer rubrum</i> – Height 40-70'. Native to MN. Saw toothed lobed leaves. Shade tolerant, grows in very wet to dry conditions, moderately fast growing. Leaves can turn red, yellow or orange in fall.</p>	<p><b>Maple, Sugar:</b> <i>Acer saccharum</i> – Height of 60-80' Produces dense, oval crown and bright fall colors ranging from yellow to orangish red. Slow-growing, needs well-drained, loamy soils. Not tolerant of wet soils. Shade tolerant.</p>
<p><b>Oak, Bur:</b> <i>Quercus macrocarpa</i> – Height of 70-80+'. Has simple lobed leaves and produces acorns. Good for wildlife. Tolerates a variety of soil types. Long-lived but slow growing initially.</p>	<p><b>Oak, Red (Northern):</b> <i>Quercus rubra</i> – Height of 60-80+'. Simple lobed, bristle-tipped leaves. Red or brown fall leaf color. Good for wildlife. Prefers deep, rich soils, intolerant of drier alkaline soils. Long-lived &amp; fastest growing oak.</p>	<p><b>Serviceberry, (Juneberry):</b> <i>Amelanchier alnifolia</i>- small tree 6-15 ft. Expands by suckers. Prefers loam - sandy loam with high organic matter. Limited drought tolerance. Will not sustain in ponded conditions. Full/partial sun.</p>	<p><b>Walnut, Black:</b> <i>Juglans nigra</i> – Height of 50-60+'. Native to IA. Fast growing. Leaves are pinnately compound and produce a hard- shelled nut. Good for wildlife. Prefers moist well-drained soils.</p>

### Other

<p><b>Willow, Hybrid:</b> <i>Salix matsudana/alba</i> - Large tree up to 75'. Single stemmed tree good for windbreaks. Avoid planting near other willows and in areas where uncontrolled spread is possible.</p>	<p><b>Tree Tube:</b> A plastic, vented tube which protects hardwood trees and some shrub seedlings from animal browse, mower and spray damage. Stakes are not provided; any 5' stake will work along with zip ties.</p>	<p><b>Fertilizer Packet:</b> A small packet filled with a pre-measured amount of fertilizer that is placed alongside the seedling at time of planting. The packet slowly releases nutrients to help new seedlings get an extra boost.</p>
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### Plant Packs

<p><b>Monarch Pack:</b> A mix of native species to benefit Monarch caterpillars and butterflies. Species include Showy Milkweed, Meadow Blazing Star, Showy Goldenrod, Sky Blue Aster, Purple Prairie Clover, and Side Oats Grama.</p>	<p><b>Pollinator Pack:</b> A mix of Spring, Summer, and Fall blossoming species in a variety of colors to provide food for a range of pollinators year-round. Species include Yarrow, Prairie Coreopsis, Pale Purple Coneflower, Sky Blue Aster, Hoary Vervain, and Little Bluestem.</p>	<p><b>Tree Mat:</b> A three foot square permeable woven plastic sheet that greatly reduces weed competition, reduces maintenance time, and increases soil moisture. Each tree mat comes with 5 tree mat staples.</p>
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## Incentive Cost-Share Available



Prairie strips provide habitat, reduce erosion and can be used to square up odd shaped fields or in areas of low crop production.

The Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) has many benefits across the landscape. It gives a landowner the option to put less productive land into a short-term program or square up fields all while receiving a fixed payment, improving water quality, protecting soil from erosion, and providing wildlife habitat. Whatever it may be, every situation is different and could be prioritized differently but the top question is: “How much are the rental rates per acre if I enroll? “

Over the last several years there hasn't been a lot of movement in CRP rates and payment caps have been placed on CRP preventing the rate from exceeding a certain amount. With these caps in place and all the benefits of CRP, special funding has been created to incentivize landowners to enroll in the CRP program. This incentivized funding is available through Watershed Based Implementation Funding (WBIF). WBIF originates from a major watershed that has completed a One Watershed One Plan and have within their plan funding for CRP incentives. Current rates are \$50-\$80 per acre per year paid upfront.

When a watershed decides to implement a CRP incentive program they decide which CRP practices are eligible to receive funding and those vary from watershed to watershed. The easiest way to determine if a CRP practice you are interested in is eligible, contact the Freeborn SWCD office and talk about eligibility with a staff member.

To qualify for this additional funding: persons must meet CRP eligibility requirements with the Farm Service Agency (FSA) and land must also be located within the participating watershed that has available funding. Currently, the Cedar River Watershed, Shell Rock River Watershed, and Winnebago River Watershed have incentive funding available.

## Financial Assistance for Soil Health

Over the next several years there will be an influx of funding for cover crops, strip-till, no-till, and other conservation practices related to water quality. If you have been thinking about trying cover crops, strip-till, or no-till, now may be the time! Funding is available through local SWCDs and federal programs with the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS).

Cover crop payment rates will vary depending on the number of species in the cover crop mix and other variables. Payments are typically on a per acre basis. Many cover crop programs are paying to cover the cost of the seed, planting expenses, and then some.

No-till and strip-till payment rates are on a per acre basis. Through some programs no-till or strip-till can be paired with cover crops, so you could qualify for a cover crop cost share payment along with a no-till or strip-till payment.

In addition to cost share for cover crops, no-till, and strip till, there is also funding for structural projects such as grassed waterways, water and sediment control basins, grade stabilization structures, and many other qualifying practices. Many cost share rates are funding up to 90% cost share in some instances.

To determine what program may be the best fit for you and your operation, set up an appointment with a Freeborn SWCD staff member to assist with potential program selection.



Soybeans growing in strip-tilled field.



Multi-species cover crop flown on by airplane into standing corn.

# Soil Health Winter Workshop: HWY-14 Tour Stop, Owatonna, MN



## Maximizing Profitability with Carbon, Small Grains, Manure, and More.



**February  
22, 2024**

**8:30am-2:30pm**

**Torey's Restaurant**

208 N Cedar Avenue

Owatonna, MN 55060



### Registration

No Cost to Attend

### RSVP for lunch

by February 15, 2024

507-320-3728

Lindsey.Zeitler@mn.nacdn.net

Scan QR Code to Register Online



### Agenda

**8:30-9:00:** Registration

**9:00-9:15:** Introduction

**9:15-10:15:** Martin Larsen

*-Small grains & building carbon*

**10:15-10:30:** Break

**10:30-12:00:** Carolyn King

*-Carbon Intensity Score*

**12:00-1:00:** Lunch

**1:00-2:30:** Manure Panel

*-Implementation of manure in soil health systems*



### Carolyn King

Continuum Ag—Carbon Intensity Score

Carolyn is the Director of Operations for Continuum Ag, a soil health data intelligence company that enables farmers to profit from sustainable and regenerative practices. Carolyn grew up on her family's farm in Western Illinois, where sustainability practices are a regular part of the operation. She received her Bachelor's and Master's Degrees in Agronomy from Iowa State University.



### Martin Larsen

Small Grains Farmer

Martin is a small grains farmer near Byron MN. In addition to implementing small grains, Martin farms corn and soybeans while implementing cover crops and no-till. Martin has a passion for preserving our soil and water resources while being profitable and enjoys sharing what has been working for him with the belief that it can work for others as well.

### Manure Panel

Panel of farmers in MN applying manure.



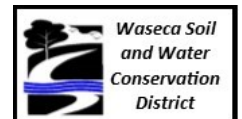
Panel will tackle the subject of applying manure in minimum and no-till situations. Panel attendees will each be bringing their own expertise from dry litter to hog and cattle manure.

### CEU Opportunities Available!

Thank you to the sponsors making



STEELE  
SWCD





## Minnesota Agricultural Water Quality Certification Program

The Minnesota Agricultural Water Quality Certification Program (MAWQCP) is a voluntary opportunity for farmers and agricultural landowners to take the lead in implementing conservation practices that protect our water. Those who implement and maintain approved farm management practices will be certified and in turn obtain regulatory certainty for a period of ten years.

This year the MAWQCP program reached one million certified acres with a total of 1,423 certified producers. Of those 1,423 certifications 357 were in Southeast Minnesota. And of the 357, thirty-six of those are in Freeborn County. If interested in participation in MAWQCP contact SWCD staff at 507-373-5607 ext. 3

Benefits of MAWQCP Include:

- ◆ Applications Available Year Round
- ◆ Non-Regulatory and Voluntary Program
- ◆ 10 years of Regulatory Certainty
- ◆ Whole Farm Assessment for Water Quality Risk
- ◆ Priority Financial and Technical Assistance
- ◆ \$5000 Grant Available Each Year of Certification



MAWQCP Endorsements

## Volunteer Rain Gauge Reader Network

After moisture falls, volunteers read their rain gauges and record precipitation amounts on data sheets. At the end of each month volunteers submit their readings to our office where we enter the data into the statewide archives on behalf of the Minnesota State Climatology Office. The data collected is used for various studies and weather prediction simulations.

Freeborn County has 18 dedicated rain gauge monitors, however we continue to seek volunteers. Rain gauges and data sheets are provided to volunteers free of charge. If you are interested in becoming a volunteer, contact the Freeborn SWCD.



## Natural Resource Conservation Service | Update

The NRCS CST Team 19 comprised of Freeborn, Mower, Steele, and Dodge Counties had 76 Environmental Quality Incentive Program (EQIP) applications for 2023. EQIP is designed to target resource concerns and provide financial assistance for approved contracts based on eligibility and ranking. Producers can sign up any time of the year with a cutoff in November for assessment and ranking.

Freeborn County has 16 active EQIP contracts with 3 new EQIP obligations in 2023. Mower County has 28 active EQIP contracts with 16 new EQIP obligations in 2023. Steele County has 7 active EQIP contracts with 4 new EQIP obligations in 2023. Dodge County has 5 active EQIP contracts with 5 new EQIP obligations in 2023. Total is 84 active EQIP contracts for 2023.

Contracts for fiscal year 2023 consisted of cover crops, residue and tillage management-no-till/strip till, grassed waterways with subsurface drain, water and sediment control basins with underground outlets, high tunnel systems, energy efficient ag operation, brush management, and prescribed grazing.

The NRCS CST Team 19 had 29 active Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP) contracts to manage for 2023 (Freeborn: 21, Mower: 3, Steele: 2, and Dodge: 3). The common practices implemented with the approved contracts include Cover Crops, Nutrient Management, Integrated Pest Management, and Monarch and Pollinator Habitat. Unlike EQIP, CSP is more intensive because of the requirement to meet various thresholds pertaining to the priority resource concern. A minimum of one enhancement involving the entire operation on the cropland acres is recommended.

Freeborn also has 2 renewal CSP contracts obligated in 2023.

NRCS staff are available to assist you, so please do not hesitate to contact us at 507-373-7960 ext. 3.



### NRCS Staff

Gary Kurer | District Conservationist-CST Lead  
Sam Jameson | Agricultural Engineer  
Barbara Marshall | Farm Bill Technician  
Lezlie Sorenson | Administrative Assistant

*USDA is an equal opportunity provider,  
employer, and lender.*

FREEBORN COUNTY SWCD  
1400 W MAIN STREET  
ALBERT LEA, MN 56007  
507-373-5607 EXT. 3  
EQUAL OPPORTUNITY EMPLOYER

VISIT US ON THE WEB:  
WWW.FREEBORNSWCD.ORG

# Order trees by February 23<sup>rd</sup> for best selection!

*USDA is an equal opportunity provider and employer. To file a complaint of discrimination, write: USDA, Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights, Office of Adjudication, 1400 Independence Ave., SW, Washington, DC 20250-9410 or call (866) 632-9992.*



## MORREIM DRAINAGE, INC. Water Management Specialists

Land Drainage  
Conservation Construction  
Septic Systems • Road Boring  
Backhoeing • Consulting  
Wild Life Ponds

Mark Morreim  
Cheryl Morreim

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