



2020

Freeborn County Soil & Water Conservation District (SWCD)

Annual Plan of Work



Observing a ditch bank repair.



Engineer surveying basin on County Ditch 8 Project.



Utilizing survey equipment while viewing gully erosion.



RIM Easement

**Freeborn County Soil & Water Conservation District (SWCD)
is organized under provisions of MN Statue Chapter 103C
and is governed by a board of five elected supervisors**

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Our 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.

**FREEBORN COUNTY SOIL AND WATER
CONSERVATION DISTRICT
2019 ANNUAL PLAN**

I. Introduction:

The purpose of this Annual Plan is to identify a course of action for 2020 that will help guide supervisor policy decisions and resulting staff initiatives. Because Freeborn County SWCD has adopted the Freeborn County "Local Water Management Plan" as our Long Range Comprehensive Plan, we will address those areas of concern in the water plan that apply to our roles & responsibilities as directed by state statutes 103c. We will briefly describe several objectives and supporting action items that we plan to concentrate on. The action items will identify specific work efforts aimed at accomplishing the objective described.

A Staff Model will show how time may be allocated in 2020 utilizing present staff.

High priority erosion areas will be identified and needed conservation Best Management Practices (BMPs) will be discussed.

A summary of specific practices applied in 2019 will illustrate which practices are in demand and give us an indication of potential workload for 2020. This will include estimated revenues and expenditures.

II. Objectives and Action Items:

Objective #1

Address soil erosion and soil quality concerns (pages 46-48 in County Water Plan) by planning and implementing a variety of conservation practices. Practices will include Water & Sediment Control Basins, Terraces, Waterways, and Grade Stabilizing Structures etc. Vegetative seeding will help protect the structural integrity of these practices.

Action Items:

1. Work with landowners/operators with high priority erosion problems to identify their needs, discuss conservation practice alternatives and then provide design and construction supervision assistance to install 25 structural practices on 20 tracts.
2. Use all available information and education methods to promote conservation practice installations. Inform them of cost sharing opportunities that may exist and technical assistance available from our local SWCD/NRCS Office.
3. Spot check and monitor existing cost shared practices during the contract lifespan to insure continued function and effectiveness in erosion control and water quality protection.
4. Communicate with State and Federal legislators, County Commissioners and local agency officials to keep them aware of our programs, services and funding needs.
 - a. Attend and Participate in MASWCD Legislative Day at the Capitol.
 - b. Keep County Commissioners informed of our programs, services and financial needs through our Annual Plan, Annual Report, and Web Site.
5. Participate in soil health team to promote use of soil health practices on working lands.
6. Assist landowners to effectively plan native grasses, native wildflowers, pasture mixes, and no-till soybeans by having a no-till drill available for use.

Objective #2

Address surface water concerns (pages 34-42 in County Water Plan) by working cooperatively with the Greater Blue Earth River Basin Alliance (GBERBA) and local landowners.

Action Items:

1. Provide information to GBERBA staff for future Clean Water Fund Implementation Grant and other grant applications.
2. Use local news media and our SWCD Newsletter, etc. to inform and educate landowners about current and future expected assistance opportunities.
3. Use GBERBA grants to encourage and cost share high priority BMPs.

Objective #3

Address drainage concerns (pages 54-62 in County Water Plan); reduce sediment delivery to water bodies; increase surface water storage capacity and enhance wildlife habitat by enrolling 200 acres in long-term easements for wetland restoration and riparian buffers.

Action Items:

1. Work with NRCS, Ducks Unlimited, FSA, and other local partners to promote and implement ReInvest in Minnesota (RIM), Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP), and Wetland Reserve Easement (WRE) program.
2. Encourage landowners to enroll in easements in high priority areas such as Grass Lake, historic Upper Twin Lake Marsh, historic Lake George in Bath Twp., historic Lake George in Freeborn Twp., and Cobb Creek wetland restoration in Freeborn Twp., Sec. 35.
3. Encourage landowners to enroll in easements in high priority areas for buffers as identified in the "Other Waters" list completed in 2017.
4. Work with NRCS in monitoring existing easements for compliance and effectiveness.
5. Include the above mentioned program opportunities in all ongoing informational and educational programs.

Objective #4

Address drainage concerns (pages 59-62 in County Water Plan) by assisting with the implementation of the state's goal to achieve a no net loss in the quantity, quality and biological diversity of existing wetlands.

Action Items:

1. Continue to partner with Freeborn County Environmental Services, The City of Albert Lea and the MN Board of Water & Soil Resources to implement the Minnesota Wetland Conservation Act (WCA) Rules, Chapter 8420 of state statutes by continued representation on the local Technical Evaluation Panel (TEP) for WCA.
2. Assist local landowners by keeping them informed of Minnesota Wetland Conservation Act rules and direct them to NRCS for USDA – "Swampbuster" rules that may apply.
3. Include wetland concerns in our educational and informational programs.

Objective #5

Address soil erosion and soil quality concerns (pages 46-48 of County Water Plan) by maintaining our existing Tree Planting Program.

Action Items:

1. Continue to provide a source for landowners/operators to access quality tree & shrub planting stock for conservation purposes at reasonable prices.
2. Continue to offer Windbreak and Shelterbelt design assistance to those requesting it.
3. Continue to provide planting equipment for rent at reasonable rates.
4. Use local newsletter and media to inform residents of tree programs & services available.

Objective #6

Address surface water concerns (page 36 of County Water Plan) by maintaining an effective informational and educational program.

Action Items:

1. Publish an annual newsletter highlighting programs, services and current events.
2. Use our SWCD Web Site and Facebook page to keep the public informed and provide access to our services.
3. Continue to provide timely educational initiatives for presentation in our County Fair Booth.
4. Write periodic newspaper articles on events, new programs and services.
5. Use the local Shopper or Newspaper to purchase advertising as needed for local projects.

Objective #7

Address surface water concerns (pages 34-42 in our County Water Plan) by working cooperatively with the LeSueur River Watershed Project, Winnebago Watershed Project, MPCA, Freeborn County Environmental Services, and involved local landowners to implement BMP's in Priority Management Zones (PMZ).

Action Items:

1. Review information for LeSueur River Watershed, Winnebago Watershed, and Cedar River Watershed.
2. Contact landowners and operators in watersheds to discuss BMP options.
3. Inform landowners of existing conservation programs and identify sites for future grant applications.

Objective #8

Address surface water concerns (page 34 of County Water Plan) by implementing the MN Buffer Law as directed in MN statute 103F.48.

Action Items:

1. *Inform landowners, producers, and partners of law requirements and provide conservation technical and financial assistance.*
2. *Provide comments on Buffer Protection Map created by MN DNR.*
3. *Assist landowners in implementation.*
4. *Review the summary of watercourses for inclusion in the local water management authority's plan.*
5. *Develop or adopt a procedure for validation of compliance when requested by landowner.*

Objective #9

Address surface water concerns (page 36 in the County Water Plan) by assisting landowners in applying to and being certified in Minnesota Agricultural Water Quality Certification Program (MAWQCP).

Action Items:

1. *Inform landowners and partners about the program through newsletter, website, and informational meetings.*
2. *Assist landowners through the application and certification process.*
3. *Assist landowners with implementation of new BMPs to achieve certification and inform them about technical and financial assistance opportunities.*

Objective #10

Address soil erosion and soil quality concerns (page 46 in County Water Plan) by implementing the soil loss ordinance as directed in MN statute 103F.400.

Action Items:

1. *Inform landowners, producers, partners, and citizens of the ordinance.*
2. *Field complaints and work with BWSR as identified in the statute.*
3. *Assist landowners to become compliant and inform them of technical and financial assistance opportunities.*

Objective #11

Address surface water concerns (pages 34-42 in County Water Plan) by participating in One Watershed One Plan (1W1P) for the Cedar River Watershed and Shell Rock & Winnebago Watershed Planning area.

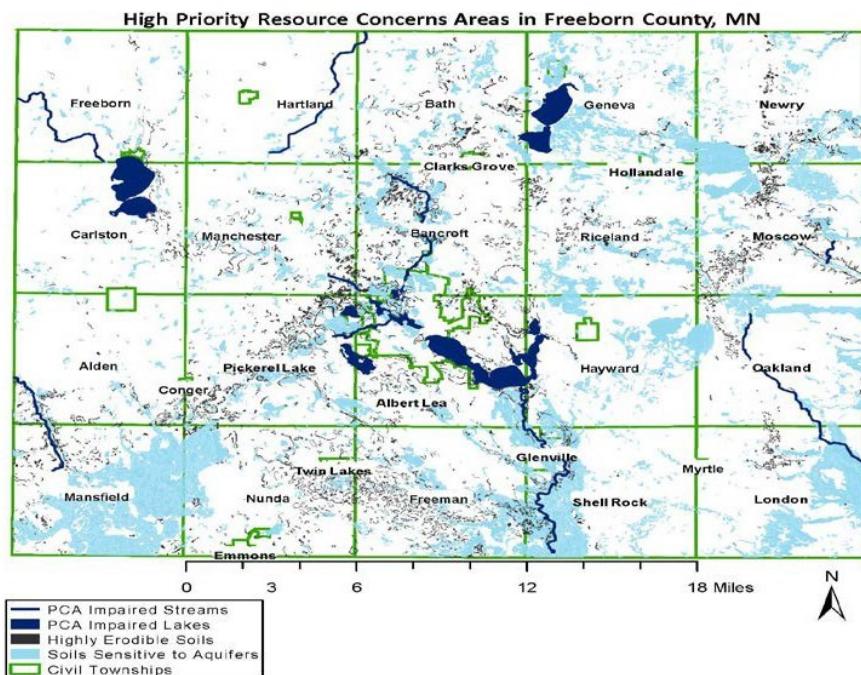
Action Items:

1. Have a Supervisor represent Freeborn SWCD on Policy Board.
2. Have staff represent Freeborn SWCD on Planning Work Group and Advisory Board.
3. Communicate priorities and needs of Freeborn SWCD so that they can be included in the Cedar River Watershed 1W1P and Shell Rock & Winnebago Watershed Planning area.

III. High Priority Resource Concerns:

Areas needing conservation practices installed: As shown in map below

Practices needed to control high priority erosion problems: Waterways, terraces, water and sediment control basins, conservation tillage systems, grade stabilizing structures, and windbreaks.



The MN Pollution Control Agency has determined through Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) studies that the streams and lakes shown above are impaired for aquatic life and aquatic recreation.

The soils map unit is considered highly erodible (HEL) if the potential erodibility exceeds 8 times the Soil Loss Tolerance (T). T is the maximum amount of soil erosion that can occur on a soil type without decreasing long-term productivity. Most HEL soils have steep slopes.

Soils sensitive to aquifers are generally sandy or silt soils where water infiltration rates can be high and the potential exists for groundwater pollution. These soils are generally more vulnerable to wind and water erosion as well.

Data Sources: MN Pollution Control Agency
USDA-Natural Resources Conservation Service

IV. High Priority Erosion Problems:

"High priority erosion problems" include areas where erosion from wind or water is occurring equal to or in excess of 2 X "T" tons per acre per year, areas that exhibit active gully erosion, is identified as high priority in the comprehensive local water plan, or is identified in the conservation district's comprehensive plan. Soil loss tolerance (T) is the maximum amount of soil loss in tons per acre per year that can be tolerated and still permit a high level of crop productivity to be sustained economically and indefinitely.

V. High Priority Water Quality Problems:

"High priority water quality problems" means areas where sediment, nutrients, chemicals, or other pollutants discharge to Department of Natural Resources designated protected waters or to any high priority water as identified in a comprehensive local water plan or the conservation district's comprehensive plan, or discharge to a sinkhole or groundwater. The delivery rate of pollutants to the water source is in amounts that will impair the quality or usefulness of the water resource.

VI. High Priority Feedlots:

- Freeborn County considers every site over 10 animal units a feedlot, the State of Minnesota considers a feedlot 50 animal units or more unless in shore land, then the threshold is 10. The following numbers reflect all livestock sites in Freeborn County over 10 AU; 241 total feedlots.

VII. State Cost-Share Allocation and Implementation Policies:

- Freeborn County SWCD's policy is to reserve all of its available contract money for high priority erosion and/or water quality problems. Primarily gully control in Highly Erodible Land (HEL) or near sensitive surface water bodies (see map on Page 4). However, because soil inclusions can make it possible to find small highly erodible areas in Non-HEL soil types, the evidence of gullies is used to determine eligibility.
- Buffer cost share at Flat Rate of \$300/acre or 75% for structural practices.
- The maximum cost share rate is 75% of project cost for standard cost share. The storm events of 2014 brought an additional cost share source named Disaster Recovery Assistance Program (DRAP) and cost share assistance may be up to 100%. However, the district may limit cost share to a smaller percentage when deemed appropriate by the board of supervisors. Occasionally, state and federal cost share is "piggy-backed" on large scale projects. This may provide the incentive needed to encourage a landowner to install a high priority project. When cost share requests exceed funds available, the district board prioritizes according to location to sensitive resources and cost effectiveness etc.
- Our State Cost Share standard allocation for **Fiscal Year 2019** was **\$16,482**. After deducting the allowable 20% for Technical and Administrative Expenses, the balance available for projects is **\$13,186**. Applicants are paid based on invoices or receipts from the contractor after the project is satisfactorily completed. **A Non-structural Land Management Plan was adopted for 2019 that allows a flat rate to be paid on buffers, cover crops, and no-till.**
- The DRAP allocation came in four different funding cycles. 2015 – \$44,000, 2016 – \$ 42,240, fall of 2016 – \$55,010, and 2018 – \$19,200, Technical and Administrative is also an allowable expense under these grants of 20%.

State Cost Share Program (2019 calendar year) Summary contracts finalized – payments made from CWF-MDM CD8, 17 Capacity, 17 State Cost Share, 18 Buffer Cost Share, and DRAP 2 & 3	Dollar Amount
6 – Cover crop contracts – Capacity Funds and FY17 State Cost Share	\$12,160
6 – Structural Contracts	\$53,360
3 – Buffer Contracts	\$ 990
Federal Environmental Quality Incentive Program (EQIP) \$'s	Dollar Amount
Cover crops, residue and tillage management (no-till/strip till/mulch till), prescribed grazing, grassed waterways, forage and biomass planting, fencing, water facilities, pipeline, heavy use protection area, critical area planting, underground outlets, subsurface drain, and roofs and covers..	\$140,331 – EQIP \$476,095 – CSP

Freeborn County SWCD Staffing Model – 2020

Goal: High functioning staff contributing to significant impacts for conservation in the Freeborn County SWCD District.

Objective(s): Plan for and distribute work wisely across staff in order to fulfill legal requirements, comply with agreements (especially with funding obligations) and attain conservation goals/objectives set by the Freeborn County SWCD Board

Manager	Private Lands Biologist	Resource Conservationist	District Technician
Adm./Personnel Mgmt. – 37%	Easement Lead – CREP/RIM/CRP – 50%	Structural BMP Lead - 48% Grassed Waterways, Grade Stabilization Structures, other eFOTG structural practices. Included State Cost Share and NRCS funded programs.	AgCertainty (MAW/QCP) Lead – 50%
Fiscal Mgmt./Bookkeeping – 30%	WCA – 8%	Non-Structural/Soil Health Lead – 18%	Structural BMP Assist - 25% Grassed Waterways, Grade Stabilization Structures, other eFOTG structural practices Included State Cost Share and NRCS funded programs.
Local Water Management – 18% 1W1P Cedar, Shellbago, LeSueur	Structural BMP Assist - 21% Grassed Waterways, Grade Stabilization Structures, other eFOTG structural practices Included State Cost Share and NRCS funded programs.	Buffer Law Implementation/ Excessive Soil Loss Law – 15%	Outreach, education, - 10%
Overall Prog. Mgmt. – 10%	Local Water Management – 12% 1W1P Cedar, Shellbago,	Local Water Management – 10% Blue Earth, 1W1P Cedar/Wapsipinicon, Shell Rock Advisory	Assist on other programs –5%
Training, Project Development, General Adm. – 5% or more	Tasks as assigned – 2%	Tasks as assigned – 2%	Tasks as assigned – 3% of FTE
	Training, Project Development, General Adm. – 7% or more	Training, Project Development General Adm. – 7% or more	Training, Project Development General Adm. – 7% or more
100% FTE	100% FTE	100% FTE	100% FTE

IX. 2020 Approved Budget:

Freeborn County Soil & Water Conservation District (SWCD) 2020 Budget

Expenditures	
District operations	
Personnel services	\$ 349,588
Other services and charges	\$ 41,355
Supplies	\$ 3,793
Capital outlay	\$ 15,000
Total district operations	\$ 409,736
Project expenditures	
District	\$ 21,504
State	\$ 31,760
Total project expenditures	\$ 53,264
Total Expenditures	\$ 463,000

Revenues	
Intergovernmental	
County	\$ 188,000
State grant	\$ 186,227
Total intergovernmental	\$ 374,227
Charges for services	\$ 33,073
Miscellaneous	
Interest earnings	\$ 2,000
Other	\$ 100
Total miscellaneous	\$ 2,100
Total Revenues	\$ 409,400