

2020 ANNUAL REPORT

The purpose of the Chippewa Soil and Water Conservation District

Is to use available resources to meet the local natural resource needs.

Chippewa Soil & Water Conservation District Projects

In 2020, Chippewa SWCD, together with their partners, cost shared on 14 construction projects and numerous vegetative practices. Total cost share paid out by Chippewa SWCD was \$110,000.

The Chippewa SWCD works with the West Central Technical Service Area engineers to survey and design projects. They also work with the Natural Resource Conservation Service, Chippewa County Land & Resource Management and Hawk Creek Watershed Project to allow more funding opportunities for landowners.

The Chippewa Soil and Water Conservation District has cost share dollars available to landowners for installing or fixing conservation practices on private land in Chippewa County. Cost share dollars could offset up to 75% of the cost of qualifying conservation practices. Some examples of projects that would qualify include but are not limited to; water and sediment control basins,

grade stabilizations, grassed waterways, terraces, critical area plantings, side inlets, field windbreaks, unused well sealing, and stream bank erosion restoration and protection.

Cost share will be available at a first come, first served basis, depending on SWCD board approval. When all cost share funds are encumbered for projects, any new projects may be put on a wait list for funding. Landowners with erosion problems on their property, big or small, are encouraged to stop in our office to discuss any erosion issues. We can review available cost share programs, explore options, determine how to make a conservation practice work with your farming operation, and set up an appointment to do a site visit and do some preliminary surveying. Give us a call at 320-269-2139 ext.3 or stop by the office located in the Chippewa County Courthouse.



Wetland Restoration



Water and Sediment Control Basin



175' earthen embankment with a 48'' concrete structure



Construction of a Water and Sediment Control Basin

District Staff



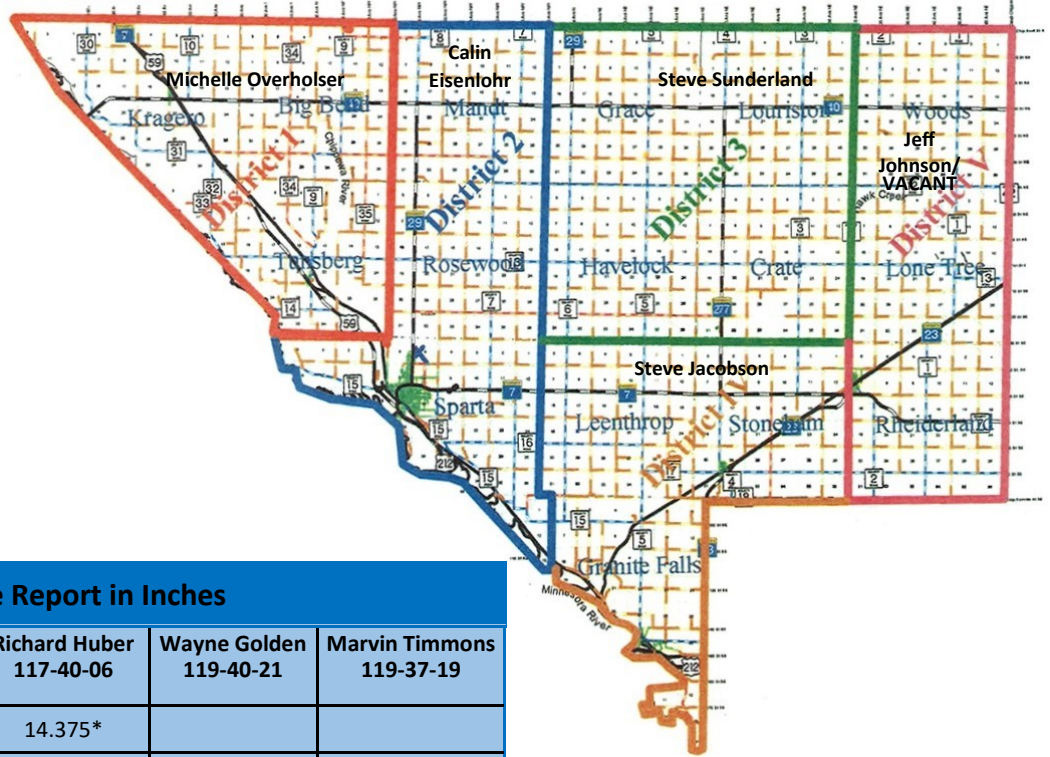
Tom Sletta-District Technician, Desirae Jarett-Office & Financial Coordinator, Tom Warner-District Manager, Zach Bothun-Technical Manager

2020 Board of Supervisors



Board of Supervisors L-R: Steve Sunderland, Steve Jacobson, Jeff Johnson, Michelle Overholser, and Calin Eisenlohr

Chippewa SWCD Districts



USDA-NRCS Staff



Michael Timmerman-Soil Conservationist, Shantel Lozinski-District Conservationist, Nathan Stewart-Ag Engineer

2019 Rain Gauge Report in Inches

*Snow on ground, in inches	Kriste Erickson 119-41-02	Dan Benson 119-38-05	Richard Huber 117-40-06	Wayne Golden 119-40-21	Marvin Timmons 119-37-19
January			14.375*		
February			25.6*		
March			1.6/11.75*	1.5	
April	2.27		1.5	1.97/.4*	
May	5.44	5.2	3.38/18.5*	5.03	5.81
June	1.79	2.35	5.04	2.56	2.47
July	7.47	5.3	1.97	5.51	5.69
August	3.67	3.04	6.48	3.07	3.27
September	5.4	6.39	2.61	5.33	7.12
October	3.87	3.44	5.2		3.58
November			2.95		
December			.23/6.5*		
Total	29.91	25.72	29.46/76.725*	24.97/.4*	27.94

Our rain gauge monitor volunteers partner with the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources State Climatology Office. We are thankful to have dedicated rain gauge monitors in our county to provide accurate precipitation records. This climate data is used to explain past events and to assist planners in defining future climate scenarios. It can also be used to address questions involving the impact of climate on Minnesota and its citizens.



In 2020, the SWCD continued working with landowners to implement the Buffer Law that was passed by Governor Dayton in 2015. This work has included evaluating Chippewa County parcel by parcel to create compliance data, helping landowners interpret their need for a buffer, helping landowner's enroll for buffer cost share dollars, as well as ordering seed and seeding buffers.

This year we continued the implementation of the Local Capacity Funds that were passed by legislation in 2015. The Chippewa SWCD was granted \$100,000 and it has been and will be used for administration and coordination, agricultural practices, equipment and technology, technical assistance, and water storage and treatment practices. We have seen the benefits of this money as we have been able to upgrade some outdated equipment and technology with newer versions that will increase accurate productivity as well as increase the services the staff is able to provide to the county.

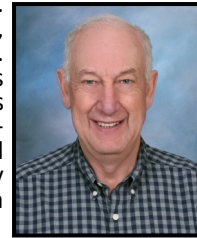
Due to the Covid-19 pandemic the District has had to make several adjustments throughout 2020. Several board meetings were held virtually and many business tasks were done electronically while staff worked from home or the office was closed to the public. Also, due to the pandemic, the SWCD's regular outreach activities were cancelled. Staff was unable to meet with legislators and our Minnesota Association of Conservation District's Annual Convention was held virtually.

While staff had to adapt to more online training and ways to complete their work electronically and remotely, we also know that our landowners had to as well. We would like to thank all of you for your patience and willingness to adapt as we have had to make these

changes quickly and have had to learn as we go.

Although the pandemic put a hindrance on some things, the SWCD kept busy with conservation. Chippewa SWCD has continued their seed program. Zach has been making changes as needed to improve the flow of this service. He has enjoyed pursuing this service and working with landowners on seed and seeding estimates and implementation. Zach and Tom continued the tree program this year, planting approximately 3,600 trees and laying 25,000 feet of barrier fabric. Tom and Tom were on site to oversee the implementation of several projects this year and have been preparing for projects to be completed in 2021. 2020 was a favorable season for completing projects. Please see page 1 for more information on them.

2020 brought an election for District 3 and District 5. Re-elected to District 3 is Steve Sunderland. He represents Havelock, Grace, Louriston, and Crate townships. Newly elected to District 5 is Jerry Schwitters. He represents Woods, Lone Tree, and Rheiderland townships. Sunderland and Schwitters were sworn in by Judge Van Hon at the Chippewa County board meeting on January 5, 2021.



District 3 Supervisor



District 5 Supervisor

2020 was a busy year of creatively working with landowners on services, projects, and programs. I would like to thank the Chippewa SWCD staff for their hard work and dedication to conservation accomplishments in 2020. The Chippewa SWCD looks forward to working with you in the coming year to protect our natural resources in Chippewa County.

WCA Report

By Tom Warner, District Manager

In 1992, the Minnesota Legislature passed one of the most comprehensive laws regulating activities in wetlands in the national—the Wetland Conservation Act. While the Act has gone through several revisions since then, its goal of no-net loss in the quantity and quality of wetlands remains the same. This Act prohibits draining, filling or excavating in a wetland except under limited circumstances.

Wetlands provide many benefits to the natural environment. They filter pollutants from runoff, improving water quality. They provide wildlife habitat for many species. Wetlands also reduce the effects of flooding and protect shorelines from erosion. It is because wetlands do so much that actions that could impact them are so regulated.

Determining the "jurisdictional" wetland boundary can be very difficult, and most cities and the county require a permit before draining, filling or excavating in a wetland. For this reason, landowners are strongly encouraged to contact the local administrator before starting work.

What are federal requirements (ie. Swampbuster)?

Since 1985, the Wetland Conservation provision of the federal farm bills (Swampbuster) requires all agricultural producers to protect the wetlands on the farms they own or operate in order to be eligible for USDA farm program benefits. Producers will not be eligible if they plant an agricultural commodity on a converted wetland that was converted by drainage, leveling, or any means after December 23, 1985, or convert a wetland for the purpose of or to make agricultural commodity possible after November 28, 1990.

What is the state law (ie. Wetland Conservation Act)?

The Minnesota Wetland Conservation Act (WCA) is a state law. Realizing the important benefits of wetlands, the Minnesota Legislature in 1991 enacted the Wetland Conservation Act which aims for no-net-loss of wetlands. Recognizing that local officials may have a better idea of local needs, the WCA gives administration authority of the Act to local governments. Chippewa County delegated the responsibility of the Act to the Chippewa SWCD. The Minnesota Board of Water and Soil Resources (BWSR) oversees the law at the state level. WCA regulates activities that result in the draining, filling, or excavating of wetlands in Minnesota, including those on agricultural land. The law regulated all draining and filling of wetlands and if wetland loss is unavoidable, requires replacement.

What should agricultural landowners do before starting a project, including drainage, and maintenance that may impact a wetland?

1. Complete your "AD1026" form from your local USDA office
2. Bring a copy to the SWCD office and explain what you plan to do.

The SWCD can advise you if your project is allowed under the state

law, WCA, or if you need to submit an application to the local government, DNR, or the US Army Corps of Engineers. Involving your local SWCD is the easiest and best way to avoid problems.

Request a field visit by the SWCD. This can help identify regulated wetland on your property, and regulation that could affect your project. Many wetlands do not contain standing water or are only saturated for part of the year, and can be difficult for landowners to identify.

Tell your contractor to submit a "Contractor Liability Form". Contractors who conduct projects that will impact a wetland are required to notify the Chippewa SWCD.

Communication is the key! Compliance with USDA does not mean compliance with other wetland laws such as the state WCA law, DNR, or the US Army Corps of Engineers. A quick call or stop at the Chippewa SWCD office prior to beginning your project will help you comply with the law and save a project from potential additional cost and delays.

Planning ahead is important. Come in to the SWCD office as soon as possible on a project to find out if there is any possible wetland impact. If there is any potential wetland impact, the SWCD will inform you which agency or agencies will need to be contacted for a permit or authorization to do the work. Plan ahead! Don't come in on Monday and expect an answer on Tuesday. If wetlands are in the vicinity of your project, depending on the project and the agency that has jurisdiction over the wetland, it could take a month or more to get authorization or a permit for your project.

WETLANDS ARE PROTECTED BY THE WETLAND CONSERVATION ACT

The Wetland Conservation Act promotes a no-net-loss of wetlands and protects the benefits wetland provide. The Act moves toward its no-net-loss goal by requiring person proposing to drain or fill a wetland to:

- First, try to avoid disturbing the wetland.
- Second, try to minimize any impact on the wetland.
- And finally, to replace any lost wetland functions and values.

Any questions in Chippewa County contact Tom Warner
Chippewa SWCD Office
320-269-2139, ext. 3

Minnesota Agricultural Water Quality Certification Program announces 1-million-acre goal

The Minnesota Agricultural Water Quality Certification Program (MAWQCP) was the first of its kind in the nation. The program ensures farmers are protecting natural resources while giving them regulatory certainty. Now MAWQCP is doing something else unique. It's setting a major milestone to enroll one million acres by the end of 2022. Governor Tim Walz made the announcement on December 22, 2020.

"This is a key effort we can undertake to ensure our lakes, rivers and drinking water are protected for future generations," said Gov. Walz. "We must do this because Minnesota's natural resources are a unique part of our state and culture. Farmers understand this. They are stewards of our land and water and are already helping to protect these resources."

At the end of 2020, more than 980 farms totaling over 685,000 acres have been certified across the state. MAWQ certified farms have added 2,000 new conservation practices, including over 11,000 acres of new cover crops, that protect Minnesota's waters. Those new

practices have kept over 38,000 tons of sediment out of Minnesota rivers while saving nearly 108,000 tons of soil and 48,000 pounds of phosphorous on farms each year. The conservation practices have also reduced nitrogen loss up to 40% and cut greenhouse gas emissions by more than 39,000 tons per year. Local conservation district staff help farmers

years.

There are also extra endorsements available to water quality certified producers for soil health, integrated pest management, and wildlife. These endorsements celebrate farms and landowners who are going above and beyond to implement conservation efforts on their land.

"We already know that certified farms have a major impact on our environment for the better, but the certification program is also good for our ag economy," said Ag Commissioner Thom Petersen. According to a study by AgCentric, a program of Minnesota State, the average net income of ag water quality certified farms is 26% higher, or \$10,000 more per year, than non-certified farms. Other key financial metrics are also better, such as debt-to-asset ratios and operating expense ratios. The study also indicated increased yield for corn, soybeans, and alfalfa on certified land.

"This provides more stability during these uncertain times, and I encourage farmers and landowners to look into the advantages of certifying their land," added Petersen.



identify and mitigate any risks their farm poses to water quality. Producers going through the certification process have priority access to financial assistance. After being certified, each farm is deemed in compliance with new water quality laws and regulations for 10

Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) Management

By Shantel Lozinski, USDA-NRCS

It's not a secret that all land needs to be managed, even your land enrolled into the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP). Whether you're enrolled in General CRP or Continuous CRP it all needs to be managed. A few things to keep in mind if you're enrolled in any grassland practice such as a CP21- filter strip or a CP23A -wetland restoration, it needs to be maintained as it was planted, grassland. Some of these sites tend to get invaded with volunteer trees. The typical volunteer species found in Chippewa County CRP are Cottonwood, Cedars or Siberian Elm. These trees spread by seed and can be transported by wildlife, mostly birds. Sometimes parent trees can be spotted adjacent to the CRP sites or along a fence line. Depending on the situation, you may want to consider eliminating adjacent parent trees to help prevent long term maintenance issues on your CRP contract.

Many assume that CRP is land for wildlife and trees are good, wrong. Again, grassland practices need to be maintained as grassland. You can maintain your grassland by doing a prescribed



burn, occasional mow or even being clipped off with a hand sickle can prevent volunteer trees from getting too big. Taking care of them when they are small saplings is much more cost effective than when they grow into full size trees. Be sure to make FSA aware of any mid-contract management plans and activities. In some situations, there is assistance for these activities.

Properly maintaining your CRP is important to stay in compliance with your CRP contract and being ready if you choose to re-enroll your CRP when your contract expires.

Walk-In Access 2021

Walk-In Access (WIA) provides public hunting on private land in Minnesota and pays landowners to allow that access. Through WIA, nearly 27,000 acres of private land is open for public hunting from Sept. 1 to May 31. An atlas of hunting parcels is available online at www.mndnr.gov/walkin, at retailers within the WIA area, or by calling the MN DNR at 888-646-6367.

- ◆ The enrollment period this year will run from March 14th through May 14th, 2021. **New this year—\$18/acre flat rate payment.**
- ◆ Purchasing a \$3.00 WIA validation with another hunting license, allows hunting on WIA parcels from Sept. 1 to May 31, one-half hour before sunrise to one-half hour after sunset. WIA validations are available at any DNR license vendor.
- ◆ Landowner participation is crucial to this program, so be respectful and ethical while hunting WIA parcels. No target practice, trapping, dog training, or walking, camping, horseback riding, hiking, fires, or similar activities are allowed by the public.
- ◆ All hunting regulations apply on WIAs and will be enforced by DNR conservation officers.
- ◆ WIA parcels are for walk-in traffic only. Motorized vehicles of any kind are not allowed on WIAs. Parking is along roads or in designated parking areas.
- ◆ WIA seeks landowners with parcels of 40 acres or more with high quality natural cover. This may include, but is not limited to, parcels already in a conservation program. Only small inclusions of crop or hay land may be present.
- ◆ Local Soil & water Conservation Districts (SWCDs) enroll landowners in WIA. WIA agreements are voluntary and include an op-out clause.
- ◆ WIA allows landowners to carry out habitat management according to an approved conservation plan. Therefore, some sites may not have high quality habitat.



The Walk-In Access program is funded by:

- ◆ A grant from the Natural Resources Conservation Service, U.S. Department of Agriculture, under number 69-3A75-16-509.
- ◆ A one-time appropriation from the State Legislature in 2012.
- ◆ A \$5.00 surcharge on nonresident hunting licenses.
- ◆ Donations of \$1, \$3 or \$5 made by hunters when purchasing deer and small game licenses.



Minnesota Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program

By Tom Sletta, SWCD District Technician



The Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP) is a combination of Conservation Reserve Program (CRP), the country's largest private-land conservation program and the Reinvest in Minnesota (RIM) program. Administered by the USDA-Farm Service Agency (FSA), and the Board of Water & Soil Resources (BWSR), CREP targets high-priority conservation issues identified by local, state, or tribal

governments or non-governmental organizations. The proposed federal, state, and local partnership permanently retires environmentally sensitive land using the nationally-recognized RIM program. This is accomplished by establishing conservation practices via payments to farmers, ranchers, and agricultural land owners.

Sign-up and "batching periods" will continue to be used throughout the duration of the MN CREP until the total 60,000-acre goal is met. The next batching period will be from April 12-30, 2021. Contact the Chippewa Soil and Water Conservation District for the next sign-up date. When land-owners enroll land into CREP they will receive Con-

servation Reserve Program (CRP) payments for up to 15 years followed by a perpetual Reinvest In Minnesota (RIM) easement. The MN CREP targets four voluntary perpetual conservation practices:

- CP2 Wellhead Protection
- CP21 Filter Strips
- CP23 100-year Floodplain Wetlands
- CP23a non-100-year Floodplain Wetland

Due to the Minnesota State Buffer Law, land that is required to be established in a perennial buffer may not qualify for a new CREP application. The land that is required to be in a buffer by law, (16.5 along ditches and 30-50 feet along protected water) may have to be donated depending on the new farmbill.

The filter strips can range from 30' to 350' in width and will meet NRCS standard 393 criteria for water quality, wildlife habitat, flooding and farm ability. CP21 filter strips can be utilized to square up fields where ditches run at an angle and where tile intakes are too hard to farm around along ditch systems.

The four practices will each have a native grass mix tailored to meet state and federal practice standards. Not only do the sites con-

Chippewa SWCD Native Grass Seed & Seeding Program

Chippewa SWCD continues to be an outlet for native grass seed for landowners looking to enroll new land into CRP, CREP, RIM, or for property owners that want to enhance their existing habitat on their own. The district also continues to provide native grass seeding services. For any season, the number of sites the district can commit to planting is limited. To ensure a spot on the schedule, contact SWCD staff early to be considered for the service. The spring and fall 2020 seeding seasons were very successful for the Chippewa SWCD. The district seeded 23 sites for a total of 225 acres. Many sites that were too wet to seed in previous years finally dried up and the district was able to catch up on the backlog of sites to be seeded. The seeding of buffers is mostly completed, but some non-compliant sites are still out there. Many landowners and operators have contacted the district to seed some of the remaining buffers this coming spring. If you are still out of compliance with the buffer law and need seed and seeding services, contact the district as soon as possible to get on the schedule and on the road to buffer compliance.

The seed drill service includes 1 op-

erator, tractor and drill. The price for seeding is charged by the amount of acres planted plus a mobilization fee:

- ◆ **\$100 flat mobilization fee within Chippewa County** (add \$1.00 per mile for out of County projects)
- ◆ **\$25/acre planting fee** (\$100 minimum planting fee for 4 acres and less)
- ◆ **\$65/hour for broadcast seeding**

Seeding Dates:

Warm season grasses require soil temperatures of at least 50 degrees before they will germinate. This is 8 to 10 degrees warmer than the requirement for cool season grasses. Therefore, the optimal seeding time for planting warm season grasses, either alone or in combination with cool season grasses, usually occurs between mid-spring and early summer when moisture and temperature are most favorable. May 15th to June 30th is the typical window for planting warm season grasses in this area.

Note: Late April through June is a busy time for the district. The tree program is usually in full swing at the same time CRP and other grass plantings need to be planted. Con-

tacting the district early on to get on the list for planting is crucial. Unfortunately there will be a limit to how many acres the district can plant each spring.

Seedbed Condition:

Note: It is the landowners' responsibility to prepare a decent seedbed before planting.

A firm seedbed is very important when seeding native grasses. The district's seed drill needs a firm seedbed to function properly and it is crucial for seed planting depth. A firm seedbed also helps conserve moisture and ensure good seed to soil contact which is critical for adequate germination and an overall successful planting.

IMPORTANT: Recently tilled ground should be packed with a coil or roller packer, or something equivalent prior to planting. The seedbed is considered firm enough when an adult's footprint penetrates no more than 1/8 to 1/4 inch deep. For example: untilled bean stubble works great for seeding with the Truax drill.

To order seed or get on the seeding list, please contact Zach Bothun or Tom Sletta at: 320-269-2139 ext. 3.

Tree Order Pick Up Day

Chippewa SWCD will again be having a small tree order pick-up day for people who order trees to plant on their own. The trees are usually delivered in mid to late April. Upon arrival, the district will send out notification to all who submitted tree orders with an exact day and time frame to pick their trees up. The location for pick-up will be at the district's storage building located on the



north side of the Chippewa County Highway Department garage. Chippewa SWCD asks that if you cannot make it to get your trees that you find someone who can for you. Customers will be asked to pay for their trees at the time they are picked up. If you have any questions, please contact Chippewa SWCD at 320-269-2139 ext.3.

SEPTIC SYSTEM UPGRADE COST-SHARE AVAILABLE

Up to **\$7,000 cost-share** is available to **low-income** single family homeowners in Chippewa County for Upgrading Existing Septic Systems to improve water quality for a better tomorrow.

For criteria and eligibility guidelines, please contact the Chippewa County Land & Resource Management Office at 320-269-6231.



2020 Tree Plantings

The 2020 tree planting season was similar to many previous successful seasons for the District. There were roughly 2,400 trees planted on 7 acres of new farmstead shelterbelt/wildlife plantings and 4,000 feet of field windbreaks. There were 12 individual plantings in all.

There was also 13,000 feet of weed barrier fabric installed to control weeds, conserve moisture, and accelerate tree growth. The fabric is a 6 foot wide geotextile material that allows moisture to pass through it but does not allow weed growth to occur. Light disking or planting cool season grasses and mowing periodically between the trees is still recommended to control weeds between the tree rows.

Cost share was available to landowners with the qualifying practices above. Cost share was used to offset the cost of the trees and fabric.

Landowners who are thinking about planting trees this spring should stop in ASAP to develop a tree plan and order the trees while supplies are available.

Have you ordered your trees?

Our mission is to provide low cost quality trees to landowners for conservation practices. We sell northern grown stock assuring that the trees will survive and prosper in our Minnesota climate.

What steps do you take if you are planning a conservation tree planting?

- 1) Decide where and what you are doing: a farmstead shelterbelt, windbreak renovation, field windbreak or wildlife planting.
- 2) Call the SWCD office for an appointment to set up a free site visit.
- 3) A plan will be drawn up, trees recommended, soil map checked to determine what type of trees will grow there and the amount of room needed.
- 4) Site preparation should be done in the fall or early spring.
- 5) Trees are ordered in the fall for spring delivery. The earlier the order, the better chance of receiving the tree varieties you want/need.
- 6) Trees are planted in the spring. (Landowner provides tractor and driver.) We hand plant one-gallon pots for \$1.00 per potted evergreen and \$2.00 per two gallon potted evergreen and large bareroot trees. Bareroot tree are machine planted at 25 cents per tree.
- 7) Tree maintenance includes keeping them weed free and watered as needed. Several ways of keeping them weed free is using rolls of fabric matting, tree matt squares, as well as chemical and mechanical control.

For more information, call Tom Warner or Zach Bothun at 320-269-2139 ext. 3.



Trees Available

BAREROOT TREES (\$2.00 each unless otherwise noted)

CONIFERS (Bareroot)

Black Hill Spruce	8-12"
Colorado Spruce	9-12"
Austrian Pine	8-14"
Ponderosa Pine	8-14"
Scotch Pine	8-14"
Eastern Red Cedar	9-12"
N. White Cedar	12-18"

DECIDUOUS (Bareroot)

American Plum	Norway Poplar
Amur Honeysuckle	Red Splendor Crab
Black Walnut	Redosier Dogwood
Buffaloberry	Silver Maple
Flame Willow	Cottonwood
Caragana	Cranberrybush
Chokecherry	Linden
Common Lilac	Nannyberry
Cotoneaster	Bur Oak
Green Ash	Red Oak
Hackberry	White Oak

CONIFERS (Potted)

Black Hill Spruce	15-18"	\$9.50	Austrian Pine	18-24"	\$14.00
	18-24"	\$14.00	Ponderosa Pine	15-18"	\$9.50
	24-30"	\$16.00	Scotch Pine	15-18"	\$9.50
Colorado Spruce	15-18"	\$9.50	Eastern Red Cedar	15-18"	\$9.50
	18-24"	\$14.00			

Use the tree order form on the last page to get your trees ordered today!

Chippewa County Buffer Law Update

Chippewa County buffer compliance for the Minnesota State Buffer Law is at 96.5%. Parcels that have been deemed non-compliant have received a corrective action notice from the county. When the requirements of a corrective action notice have been met, the landowner shall notify the county that they are compliant. The county and/or SWCD will need to conduct a site inspection to confirm compliance. Once deemed compliant, landowners will receive a validation of compliance. If you receive a corrective

action notice but believe that you are in compliance, please contact Chippewa County Drainage Inspector Josh Macziewski at 320-269-7447 or Chippewa SWCD staff at 320-269-2139 ext. 3 to go over buffer evaluation and to set up a site visit to check buffer compliance. Buffers will continue to be monitored for compliance each year.

As buffers become established, proper site maintenance is essential to ensure successful growth and function of the buffer. Mowing can be used as an im-

portant tool in the establishment/maintenance of a buffer. Mowing should be done at least twice in the first season and once in the second season. Mowing is used to decrease competition and allow sunlight to get to the newly seeded grass. Mowing can also be used to control annual and biennial weeds.

After the third or fourth year of establishment prescribed burning is a good tool to use to remove thatch, control weeds and woody plants, and maintain diversity in the buffer.



Buffer Law Requirements & Percentage of Compliance

- ⇒ **Protected Waters:** A 50-foot average, 30-foot minimum width continuous buffer of perennially rooted vegetation.
- ⇒ **County Drainage Ditches:** a 16.5-foot minimum width continuous buffer of perennially rooted vegetation.

Protected Waters Compliance Status

As of January 2021 = 99%

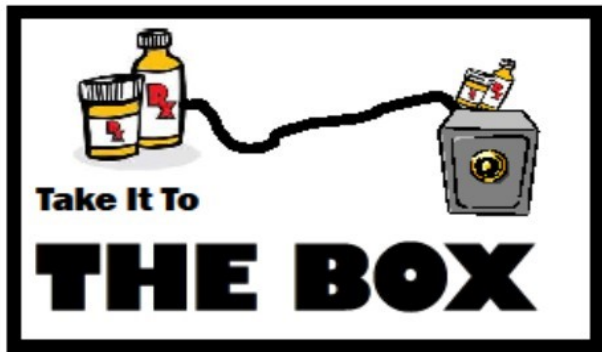
County Ditch Compliance Status

As of January 2021 = 94%

Chippewa County Total Buffer Compliance

As of January 2021 = 96.5%

Contact Chippewa SWCD with any questions regarding the buffer law by calling 320-269-2139 ext.3.



Take It To

THE BOX

A **FREE** & Safe Disposal Option for Unneeded and/or expired Prescriptions & Over-the-Counter Medications for both humans and animals and illegal drugs.

AVAILABLE for **All** Chippewa County Residents.

Location: Montevideo Police Department, Lobby at City Hall, located at 103 Canton Ave., Montevideo, MN.

Times: Monday-Friday 8:00 a.m.-4:30 p.m.

Rules:

YES Only deposit unneeded and/or expired-prescriptions, over-the-counter medication for both humans and animals and illegal drugs.

NO radioactive chemo drugs or IV bags

NO needles or syringes

NO garbage or trash

Thank You for caring.

Proper disposal of medication helps protect our environment. Wastewater treatment cannot remove most medications. Reduce negative impacts to the environment—use the drop box.

Sponsored by:

- Montevideo Police Department
- Chippewa County Sheriff's Department
- Chippewa County Land & Resource Management
- Chippewa County Local Water Plan

2020 Chippewa SWCD Cost Share Projects



RIM Easement weir modification



Wetland restoration with earthen embankment and a rock-lined channel spillway



Wetland restoration with earthen



Wetland restoration with earthen embankment and a rock-lined channel spillway



RIM Easement vegetation cleanout



New rock/earthen control structure



RIM Easement weir modification



Water and Sediment Control Basin

We started off the year with a Minnesota NRCS all employee meeting in February held in Brainerd. After 17 years with the agency this was my first opportunity to go, as they have not been held often. So nice to collaborate with other NRCS employees from other areas of the state in which I have worked in the past. Shortly after getting back was when the reality of Covid 19 hit the Midwest. Trying to do business and follow all agency guidance has been a process, but we made it work. Thank you to all customers who worked with staff to get business taken care of under difficult circumstances. Unfortunately, for the most part this year was the year of no in person meetings, no in person trainings and no local outreach activities.

We continue to have lots of interest in USDA programs including the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP), Environmental Quality Incentive Program (EQIP) and Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP). We have seen a reduction in the number of contracts funded in Chipewa due to state level changes but hopefully with funding being moved back to a more local level, based on the local work group priorities with payment caps put back into place we will see changes in FY 2021 with funding more projects in both EQIP and CSP. In FY 2021 there will be opportunities for both continuous CRP as well as general CRP. This year was a bit of a transition year for us with CRP and completing status reviews. We will now be doing status reviews on every CRP contract the year before it expires, this should help with getting weeds and volunteer tree issues under control before it's up for re-enrollment. It will also help to be doing site visits to ID grasses and forbs during their primary growing season, and not the spring of the expiring year. We will also be out doing status reviews the year after planting to help ensure the site is on the right track. In the past, only a percentage of these were randomly done. So, you may see us out on your CRP more often in the future. I will end on the weather since in a very unpredictable year seems to be the highlight, for the most part we had an amazing growing season, on the drier side of normal with adequate rainfall and good growing conditions for all local crops.

The Natural Resources Conservation Service provides leadership in a partnership effort to help people conserve, maintain, and improve our natural resources and environment.

USDA is an Equal Opportunity Provider, Employer and Lender.

Installing and / or Modifying Drainage Systems

By Shantel Lozinski , USDA-NRCS

August 2011 marked a change in how Minnesota NRCS services AD 1026 drainage requests, this change was done to follow national policy. In the past when you filled out a AD1026 form for drainage we would refer to the existing official determination we had on file and make a recommendation. Now we will complete a certified wetland determination depending on the date on your existing 026 and map on file. If you have had a certified wetland determination completed on a tract of land and now you have changed your tile layout, a new 1026 should be completed with the new layout.

Producers who choose to make drainage improvements without a certified wetland determination need to be aware that any drainage activities done in an area without previous cropping history; or in areas that are consistently wet, pose a high risk of resulting in converting a protected wetland area. Converting protected wetland areas could result in the loss of USDA program benefits on all the land the producer operates. Landowners are also reminded that the State of Minnesota has wetland protection provisions for all land uses including ag-lands. These provisions are administered through the Wetland Conservation Act (WCA). The provisions are completely separate, though on ag-lands, similar to the USDA wetland protection requirements. To minimize your risk of converting a protected wetland area, plan to contact your local USDA Service Center and update your AD 1026 prior to conducting any land clearing and drainage projects. A few tips when making a request.....



- 1026's are serviced on a tract basis unless the owner/operator specifically selects the fields. If you are looking to tile one field and the field is included in a tract of 400 ac, it would speed up the process to just request the determination on the one field.
- If you are fixing an intake, cleaning a ditch or replacing a segment of tile at the same size and depth, be sure to check just 7C and complete a drainage system worksheet describing the current extent of the ditch. This will allow you to get your 1026 back much faster than if you had requested a certified wetland determination.
- Be sure that the tract of land you are requesting the 1026 for shows up on your FSA producer data report. If you have recently purchased land and have not reported it to FSA it can slow the process. The tract of land needs to be on the producer data report before you can request a 1026 form this is done to ensure you have the authority to make the request.
- If you are looking to purchase land at auction be sure you know what you are buying. Request the wetland information from the auction company or realtor before the sale. This is considered private and sensitive information, without an information release we can't give out the information. Plan ahead.

If you are requesting new tile in a field you know has a mapped wetland take the time to complete a drainage system worksheet at the same time as you complete the 1026 request. This form helps us to understand the existing tile on site. It will also save us the time to mail it out to you and wait for it to come back.

If you are planning to remove any old building sites and groves please be reminded you should be completing an AD 1026 for the site. Without completing this form and allowing a determination to be done you run the risk of a violation due to tree removal and/or land leveling. When you add this previously non cropped land to your cropland acres FSA will flag it as a possible violation.

NRCS 2020 Completed Projects

By Shantel Lozinski, USDA-NRCS

A few highlights from this year all funded with the Environmental Quality Incentive Program (EQIP) are a set of five water and sediment control basins that were installed in Big Bend Township, a completed rotational grazing system and a sizeable forage and biomass planting for hay



land/pasture. Water and sediment control basins are used on cropland to stabilize

erosion by building an embankment and forcing the water underground routed through tile to a stable outlet. In taking the water underground it ensures water is no longer running on the surface in the sensitive area where the erosion was occurring. Water and sediment control basins can be narrow with grass backs or be made to be farmable.

On one of the forage and biomass plantings sites we were able to upgrade the cover on both existing pasture and hay land with a mix of cool season grasses with legumes that had become very thin and unproductive. The site was seeded during the late summer window and made good progress during the fall. This project will really help with the quality and quantity of forage that is available on pasture and what can be put up for hay. On a second pasture site we were able to get fence established, in-

stall a heavy use protection area around a watering facility, water tank, and pipeline



to complete a full rotational grazing system. Next year with all practices installed and functional the cattle will be able to be rotated based on grass growth, typically once a week. For more information on these practices or the EQIP program in general feel free to give us a call at 320-269-2139 Ext 3007.

Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP)

By Shantel Lozinski, USDA-NRCS

The EQIP program's purpose is to solve a variety of natural resource problems while being compatible with land use goals. Some of the practices covered by EQIP are water and sediment control basins, terraces, cover crops, prescribed grazing, closure



of earthen manure pits, sealing abandoned wells and many more practices. EQIP is a competitive program that ranks applications based on national, state, and local resource concerns that were identified and prioritized during the local work group process.

Planting and harvest season is an excellent time to check your field for excessive erosion which may also have an impact on water quality. If you find that your farm is washing more than it should be, we may

have a solution to the erosion that has been occurring. Water and Sediment control basins work well when the watersheds are relatively small, by catching the water before it has a real chance to do any damage, to improve farmability of sloping land, trap sediment, reduce downstream runoff and improve downstream water quality, utilizing a surface intake and subsurface conduit to convey the water to a suitable outlet. The maintenance is typically low and is by far the most effective and accommodating practice.

For larger watersheds another option would be a grassed waterway. These are used when watersheds are 40 acres or more. A grassed waterway is an excavated channel with crossable side slopes that would be seeded down to sod forming grasses, to convey runoff from terraces or diversions or water concentrations to reduce erosion and flooding. We would also use subsurface drainage, if needed, to keep the channel dry. These have been a standard practice and can be a useful source of hay once they are established. Grassed and earthen terrace/diversions are another option that may work well in certain situations for sheet and rill erosion or in situations like

water from a road ditch running across farmland. Grade stabilization structures can also be considered for erosion sites with large watersheds dependent on a



close stable outlet. These projects can get expensive fast as large watersheds equates into large tile to help remove surface water and reduce the erosion. EQIP funds can be partnered with other funds such as Hawk Creek Watershed funds and state cost share funds through the Chippewa SWCD typically up to 75% based on availability.

Landowners and producers interested in EQIP are encouraged to contact the office at 320-269-2139 extension 3007.

Comprehensive Watershed Management Planning



Have you ever wondered where the water that falls on your property drains to? We all live in a watershed and we have three significant watersheds that consume all the land in Chippewa County. These watersheds are the Chippewa River,

we are currently in the middle of the planning phase for the Hawk Creek – Middle MN. The Chippewa River planning phase is starting to take off with preparations to apply for a planning grant and begin

Hawk Creek - Middle MN Tributaries, and the Upper Minnesota River Basin watersheds. Each area is a major watershed or an 8-digit Hydrologic Unit Code (HUC-8) Watershed. There are 84 HUC-8 watersheds in the state of Minnesota. Hydrologic Unit Code is a classification system in stream order or level that is like how a family tree would read.

Why is it important to focus on a watershed level you may ask? Because this is how funding will be more evenly distributed around the state for conservation programs and practices that improve and preserve water quality. One Watershed One plan, or a Comprehensive Watershed Management Plan will align local water planning efforts and procedures on watershed boundaries to create a systematic, watershed-wide, and science-based approach to watershed management. These plans will build off existing local government structure, water plan services, and local capacity. They will incorporate and make use of data and information from past watershed resto-

ration and protection strategies as well as any new or current modeling that may be available. The One Watershed One Plan is set up to engage experts from agencies, citizens, and stakeholder groups that will help focus implementation on prioritized and targeted activities that will achieve measurable goals. This new planning method will serve as a substitute for existing comprehensive plans that are held at the county/SWCD level. Statewide transition is set to be completed by 2025.

Each county, watershed district, and Soil and Water Conservation District can be involved in a One Watershed One Plan for each major watershed that falls within their jurisdiction. In Chippewa County, we had the potential to be involved in three separate planning processes. Due to the Upper Minnesota River Basin covering only roughly 10% of the county, we were able to adopt that area into the Chippewa River planning boundary, reducing our county to only two comprehensive watershed planning efforts. In Chippewa County,

the planning phase within the next year.

What does this mean for you in your watershed? It means there will be more emphasis on putting projects on the landscape where they matter the most, reducing sediment and nutrient loading within the watershed and getting the “best bang for the buck” while working towards clean water for future generations. The local, state, and federal funding that will be brought to the planning areas will be one of the most important funding streams for voluntary conservation programs and practices that will be implemented on the landscape.

Anyone who is interested in the One Watershed One Plan as it pertains to the watershed they live in within Chippewa County is welcome to call Zach Bothun at 320-269-2139 ext.3008 or JoAnn Blomme at 320-269-6231 for more information.

Photo: Above is a map of Chippewa County with the 3 major watersheds. Chippewa River- green, Hawk Creek- purple, Upper Minnesota- tan/white.

RURAL HOMEOWNERS AND LANDOWNERS

Take advantage of the 3% Low Interest Loans available for ANY Practice that Improves Water Quality!

- CONSERVATION TILLAGE
- EROSION CONTROL
- WETLAND RESTORATION
- CHEMICAL MANAGEMENT
- FEEDLOT IMPROVEMENTS
- MANURE MANAGEMENT
- SEPTIC SYSTEMS
- WELL RELOCATION, SEALING OR

For more information about the AgBMP Loan Program eligible practices visit www.mda.state.mn.us/agbmploans

For criteria and eligibility guidelines, please contact the Chippewa SWCD at 320-269-2139 ext. 3 or Chippewa County Land & Resource Management Office at 320-269-6231.



Chippewa County Local Water Plan...Locally driven programs to protect your soil & water resources!

Conservation Reserve Program in Chippewa County

By Liz Ludwig, USDA-FSA

The Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) allows participants to enroll eligible acreage into conservation practices with the goals of reducing soil erosion, improving water quality, and providing wildlife habitat.

CRP participation is completely voluntary. Eligible landowners or operators enter into a contract with the federal government which ranges from 10 to 15 years long. In return, the contract holders receive annual rental payments, incentive payments, and cost share for establishment.

December of 2020 ended with 1127 active CRP contracts in Chippewa County, covering 9711 acres. Nine hundred sixty-five producers were paid from these contracts totaling \$1,743,033.

If you have land that you feel may be best suited for conservation purposes, please contact our office to discover eligibility requirements or visit www.fsa.usda.gov. We'll help you any way we can!



Household Hazardous Waste Disposal

FREE

WHEN: Monday-Friday, 8:00 A.M. TO 4:00 P.M.

WHERE: Kandiyohi County Regional HHW

1404 22nd Street SW

Willmar, MN 56201

320-231-3587

Clean Shop Program for Businesses or Ag Pesticide Disposal Program

NOTE: Businesses and Farmers with ag chemicals must call for an appointment at 320-231-3587.

Household hazardous wastes are banned from the landfill due to the pollution threat they pose

Sponsored by the Chippewa County Land & Resource Management Department, Kandiyohi County Regional Hazardous Waste Program and the MN Pollution Control Agency.

Questions? Call 320-269-6231 or go to www.co.chippewa.mn.us.

Chippewa County Land in CRP

CRP Practice Type	Acres
Wetland Restoration with Buffers	4392
Grass Filter Strips with Riparian Buffers	2721
Rare and Declining Habitat	1638
Grass Habitat	198
Field Windbreak/Shelterbelt	396
Living Snowfence/General Trees	68
Pollinator and Wildlife Habitat	298

Heidi Rauenhorst
Project Coordinator



As 2020 has finally come to an end, the Hawk Creek Watershed Project (HCWP) has adapted to the new ways of life to continue to improve water quality throughout the watershed. In 2020, HCWP received several new grants to implement best management practices (BMPs) and outreach in the Hawk Creek Watershed, which includes portions of Chippewa, Kandiyohi, and Renville Counties including a water quality Surface Water Assessment Grant (SWAG).

The sixth year of a cover crop cost-share assistance program was available to producers through a collaborative effort between HCWP and Renville County Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD). Over 1,300 acres of cover crops were signed up through this program in 2020. On February 18, 2020, HCWP, along with the Renville County SWCD, hosted a meeting to discuss reduced tillage and the benefits of cover crops. Ted Mathews (Rural Mental Health Counselor, Center of Agriculture) presented on “Managing Farm Stress”, Dr. Jerry Hatfield (retired Lab Director, USDA Agriculture Research Service) presented on “Water Quality and the Interaction with Ag Practices and the Weather”, local farmers Keith Hartmann, Pete Kramer, and Cody Nelson presented on how they implement reduced tillage and

Dean Dambrotten
Planner/Field Technician

cover crops into their farming operations, and lastly, all the participants were able to break out into small table discussions with each of the presenters. A field day to demonstrate the topics discussed at the reduced tillage and cover crops meeting in February was postponed (as were many meetings in 2020), and instead the HCWP and the Renville County SWCD will be sending out a soil health newsletter in early 2021. More information on soil health is available on the HCWP website www.hawkcreekwatershed.org.

The spring planting and fall harvest conditions were finally more favorable for many producers this year. These favorable conditions allowed for an array of BMPs to be completed, including those that were on the books from past wet years! Since its inception in 1999, HCWP has provided financial assistance to landowners for BMPs and septic loans that have improved water quality and reduced erosion. HCWP, along with its tri-county watershed partners, continues to promote soil and water stewardship and offer cost-share funds for installation of BMPs aimed at improving water quality. HCWP works with area landowners and federal, state, county, and local staff to install a variety of projects. HCWP cost-share funds went to several projects in 2020, including wetland restorations, water and sediment control structures, streambank and grade stabilizations, and cover crops. In addition to the projects listed above, HCWP also provides cost-share funds for many types of BMPs that improve water quality and reduce erosion, such as:

- ◆ alternative intakes
- ◆ lakeshore restorations
- ◆ grassed waterways
- ◆ ag waste/livestock exclusions
- ◆ Terraces

Jordan Austin
Water Quality/Outreach Technician

- ◆ other qualifying projects - just ask!

The HCWP continues to collaborate with the MPCA, Minnesota Department of Agriculture (MDA), and Discovery Farms Minnesota on water quality monitoring projects. In 2020 the HCWP continued sampling three MDA pesticide sites, six Discovery Farms satellite sites surrounding the Renville County intensive monitoring site, an intensive monitoring site in McLeod County, and six MPCA Watershed Pollutant Load Monitoring Network sites located in the Yellow Medicine and Hawk Creek Watersheds. New for 2020, the HCWP sampled fifteen stream sites located throughout the Hawk Creek Watershed and seven lakes located in the headwaters of the Hawk Creek Watershed around the Willmar area. These new sites are all part of the MPCA SWAG grant received in 2020. These sites will again be monitored in 2021.

HCWP was as active as they could be with educational and outreach activities this year. The county fairs were cancelled, as were local elementary school presentations, but HCWP was able to have a booth at the Nature Night at the Willmar Stingers baseball game on August 9, 2020 sponsored by the City of Willmar. Multiple newsletters and informational pamphlets were mailed out to the watershed residents. HCWP was able to hold an annual meeting on March 11, 2020, where multiple speakers with different backgrounds presented relevant topics to the watershed. At the annual meeting HCWP had presentations by Harlan Madsen (Kandiyohi County Farmer and County Commissioner) on his lifelong farming ups and downs, Heidi Rauenhorst (HCWP) with a Hawk Creek Watershed Project update, and Tara Ritter (Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy) on farm policies and

TREE & SHRUB ORDER FORM



Chippewa SWCD
 329 N 11th St., Suite 7
 Montevideo, MN 56265
 320-269-2139 ext. 3

Name:

Address:

Phone:

*Minimum charge of \$75 per planting

DECIDUOUS TREES	PRICE	QTY	TOTAL
Ash, Green	\$ 2.00	-	\$ -
Aspen, Quaking	\$ 2.00	-	\$ -
Birch, Paper	\$ 2.00	-	\$ -
Cottonwood	\$ 2.00	-	\$ -
Crabapple, Red Splendor	\$ 2.00	-	\$ -
Hackberry	\$ 2.00	-	\$ -
Linden, Little Leaf	\$ 2.00	-	\$ -
Linden, American	\$ 2.00	-	\$ -
Maple, Autumn Blaze			
3-4'	\$ 16.00	-	\$ -
4-5'	\$ 20.00	-	\$ -
5-6'	\$ 25.00	-	\$ -
6-8'	\$ 28.00	-	\$ -
Maple, Silver	\$ 2.00	-	\$ -
Maple, Sugar	\$ 2.00	-	\$ -
Oak, Bur	\$ 2.00	-	\$ -
Oak, Red	\$ 2.00	-	\$ -
Oak, White	\$ 2.00	-	\$ -
Oak, Swamp White	\$ 2.00	-	\$ -
Walnut, Black	\$ 2.00	-	\$ -
Willow, Hybrid	\$ 2.00	-	\$ -
Willow, Peach Leaf	\$ 2.00	-	\$ -
SUBTOTAL		0	\$ -

SHRUBS	PRICE	QTY	TOTAL
Buffaloberry, Silver	\$ 2.00	-	\$ -
Chokecherry, Common	\$ 2.00	-	\$ -
Coloneaster	\$ 2.00	-	\$ -
Cranberry, Highbush	\$ 2.00	-	\$ -
Dogwood, Redosier	\$ 2.00	-	\$ -
Hazelnut, American	\$ 2.00	-	\$ -
Lilac, Common Purple	\$ 2.00	-	\$ -
Nannyberry	\$ 2.00	-	\$ -
Plum, American	\$ 2.00	-	\$ -
Serviceberry, (Juneberry)	\$ 2.00	-	\$ -
Willow, Flame	\$ 2.00	-	\$ -
CONIFERS	PRICE	QTY	TOTAL
Cedar, Eastern Red	\$ 2.00	-	\$ -
Cedar, Northern White	\$ 2.00	-	\$ -
Pine, Austrian	\$ 2.00	-	\$ -
Pine, Ponderosa	\$ 2.00	-	\$ -
Spruce, Black Hills	\$ 2.00	-	\$ -
Spruce, Colorado	\$ 2.00	-	\$ -
SUBTOTAL		0	\$ -

POTTED TREES	SIZE	QTY	TOTAL
15-18" 1 gal./\$9.50 · 18-24" 2 gal./\$14 · 24-30" 2 gal./\$16			
Cedar, Eastern Red			
Cedar, Northern White			
Pine, Austrian			
Pine, Ponderosa			
Spruce, Black Hills			
Spruce, Colorado			
OTHER		QTY	TOTAL
Fabric Installed	\$.60 / ft.		\$ -
Fabric Uninstalled	\$.50 / ft.		\$ -
Staples	\$.10 / pc.		\$ -
Tree Tubes	\$ 4.00 / ea.		\$ -
Machine Planted bareroot	\$.25/tree		\$ -
Hand Planting			
1 gallon	\$ 1 / tree		\$ -
2 gallon	\$ 2 / tree		\$ -
large bareroot	\$ 2 / tree		\$ -
SUBTOTAL		0	\$ -

Sales Tax 0
TOTAL \$ -

Signature:
 Date:

The Chippewa SWCD guarantees that the trees planted by the district staff are alive and will grow. Trees that fail to take hold will be replaced at cost the following year. We cannot guarantee that trees will survive drought, rodent or insect damage, winter kill, mechanical or chemical destruction, or improper planting. Trees planted in sod will not be guaranteed.