



Mille Lacs Soil & Water Conservation District

2018 Program Highlights

2018 was an exciting year for Mille Lacs SWCD, we created work plans that had an emphasis on Civic Governance. All the staff worked hard engaging local stakeholders in what their role is and what they could do to improve and protect water quality. Local Capacity grants from the state Clean Water Fund allowed the district to embark on additional projects and provide increased response to the needs of residents, landowners, townships, and cities. This has put the District in a strong financial, organizational, and technical position to continue our work to protect and restore our shared natural resources.

Mille Lacs Lake Initiative to Improve Water Quality

- ❖ A variety of outreach strategies resulted in invitations to visit with five landowners to discover what actions they can take on their shoreland to protect water quality in Mille Lacs Lake. Shoreland stewardship plans were developed from all five visits. BMPs were chosen where water quality goals found common ground with landowner goals.
- ❖ Planned the Healthy Land Healthy Lake Event to promote conversation and discussion about the watershed with a focus on water quality and protecting and improving the area around Mille Lac Lake and the lake itself.

General Citizen Outreach

- ❖ Provided local, non-regulatory information and technical support for inquiries from approximately 200 members of the public.

District Activities to Improve Soil Health and Diversity in Our Forests.

- ❖ 9,100 native trees and shrubs were planted by private landowners for conservation purposes and 50 were donated to the FFA Program.
- ❖ Soil health in our county and neighboring counties were improved by the rental of the no-till drills. The Tye No-Till Drill was rented 12 times and planted 98 acres. The Truax No-Till Drill was rented 21 times and planted 408 acres.

Groundwater Protection to Increase Water Quality

- ❖ Hosted five free events where 58 individuals tested well water for nitrates. If nitrates are higher than 10 ppm this contaminant can cause serious health problems in infants and pregnant women.
- ❖ Sealed three unused wells to permanently prevent chemicals and nutrients from directly entering groundwater.
- ❖ Two AgBMP loans were applied for to help local residents to upgrade their non-compliant septic systems.

Conservation Education & Outreach

- ❖ Organized the annual Conservation Awareness Day for over 250 elementary students from around Mille Lacs County to learn about the importance of conserving natural resources and what they can do to help.
- ❖ Assisted in the annual Envirothon, an annual environmentally themed academic competition for high school aged students, which area high schools participate.

- ❖ Engaged directly with residents by regularly posting on Facebook (256 total followers, which has an increase of 63 followers from last year), updating the website, and publishing articles in the local papers and the County newsletter.

State Water Quality Initiatives

- ❖ Assisted Mille Lacs County landowners with technical assistance that were not in compliance with the buffer law. In the spring of 2018, our Agricultural Technician flagged the required buffer area for many landowners to ensure their compliance with the law. As a result, all but four parcels were determined compliant or “needs review” as they work with SWCD staff. Three of the four landowners have spoken with us and are complying with the state law with our assistance.
- ❖ Continued close partnership with Mille Lacs County to implement the Wetland Conservation Act and finalized the County Local Water Management Plan.

Noxious Weed Control

- ❖ Worked with the County, townships, and cities to control noxious weeds in public rights-of-way, emphasizing non-chemical methods to protect both groundwater and neighboring agriculture.