



# 70 Years

*"A Partner in Conservation Since 1935"*



*Thou shalt inherit the holy earth as a faithful steward, conserving its resources and productivity from generation to generation. Thou shalt safeguard thy fields from soil erosion, thy living waters from drying up, thy forests from desolation, and protect thy hills from overgrazing by thy herds, that thy descendants may have abundance forever. If any shall fail in this stewardship of the land, thy fruitful fields shall become sterile, stony ground and wasting gullies, and thy descendants shall decrease and live in poverty or perish from off the face of the earth.*

*W. C. Lowdermilk  
Conquest of the Land through 7,000 Years  
Former Assistant Chief  
U. S. Department of Agriculture  
Soil Conservation Service, 1953*



## Former Minnesota State Conservationists



**Herb Flueck**  
1942 - 1968



**Harry Major**  
1968 - 1983



**Donald Ferren**  
1983-1986



**Gary Nordstrom**  
1986-1995



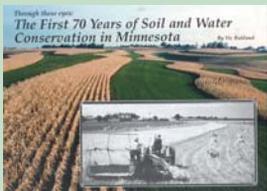
## A Partner in Conservation Since 1935



**William Hunt**  
State Conservationist in Minnesota  
1995-present



*Through these eyes:  
The First 70 Years of Soil and Water Conservation in Minnesota*



**Vic Ruhland**  
NRCS Earth Team  
Volunteer and Author



## Conservation Milestones Natural Resources Conservation on America's Private Land



# 1930's

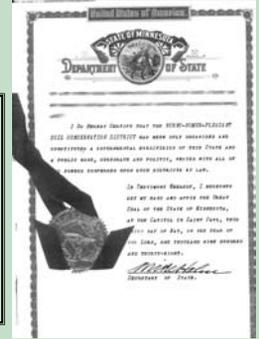
Legislation authorizing the formation of soil and water conservation districts as Special purpose subdivisions of state government was approved

In response to the Dust Bowl of the 1930s. Soil Erosion Service work in Minnesota started in September of 1934.



# 1930's

Burns-Homer-Pleasant Soil and Water Conservation District, later consolidated into Winona Soil and Water Conservation District, became Minnesota's first Soil and Water Conservation District in 1938.



# Creation of the SCS



**April 27 1935** - The US Congress declares soil erosion "a national menace" in an act establishing the Soil Conservation Service in the Department of Agriculture. Under the direction of Hugh H. Bennett, the SCS developed extensive conservation programs that retained topsoil and prevented irreparable damage to the land. Farming techniques such as strip cropping, terracing, crop rotation, contour plowing, and cover crops were advocated. Farmers were paid to practice soil-conserving farming techniques.



# Soil Conservation Winners of 1964



# CCC

March 1933, President Franklin D. Roosevelt proposed to enroll thousands of unemployed young men in an "army" to battle soil erosion and deforestation. Senate Bill 5,598, the **Emergency Conservation Work Act** creating the Civilian Conservation Corps was introduced on **March 27** and was through both houses and on the president's desk for signature by March 31. Roosevelt promised to have 250,000 men in camps by the end of July, and the first enrollee was inducted on **April 7**.



A CCC-themed board game was issued in the 1930s by the Indoor Game Co. of Minneapolis.

## 1940's



Civilian Conservation Camps officially closed on **June 30, 1942**. Their story in Minnesota is interpreted at the Minnesota CCC History Building near Chisholm, MN.



Tools used at CCC camps bear the agency's initials, like this wrench.



## 1940's



The Flood Control Act of 1944 (PL 534) gave USDA responsibilities (SCS) in 11 watersheds in the nation, including the Little Sioux Watershed located in Iowa and Minnesota. SCS State office was established in 1942 Green fields *curving around the hill instead of up and down the slopes* became common in the Midwest!



## 1940's



Interest in drainage work is first mentioned in the 1942-43 SCS Annual Report for Minnesota. Formations of Soil Conservation Districts during this period frequently occurred because of the wet soil problems.



The "*Daughters of the Soil*," a Ladies Auxiliary group of district supervisors was started in Freeborn county, MN in 1949.



## 1950's

Another nationwide reorganization of SCS occurred in 1953-54. The regional offices, including the Milwaukee office, were abolished. Greater responsibilities were given to the State offices.



## 1960's

- A 1961 amendment to the district law passed by the state legislature called for a fifth farmer member to be added to the State Soil Conservation Commission and making the SCS State Conservationist an ex-officio member.
- "**Locating Elmer**" was the slogan used during this period
- A 3-day conference for SCS Soil Conservationists in Minnesota was held October 4-6, 1967. The theme was "total resource and community planning."
- **National Environmental Policy Act** of 1969 (NEPA) had a major impact on conservation activities.
- The first Black SCS employee in Minnesota was **Ray Brown, Civil Engineering Aid** in the state office.



## 1970's

- The **U.S. Environmental Protection Agency** was established in 1970.
- By 1975, some 64,000 landowners and operators in Minnesota had become cooperators with SWCD's.
- The use of **crop residue management/conservation tillage** was recognized and promoted.
- **Irrigation developments** increased during the 1970's, especially following the drought of 1976.
- **SCS** adopted a symbol in 1970. It was a blue drop of water in a green basin below the SCS letters.
- The **Land and Water Resources Conservation Act (RCA)** of 1977 gave SCS the responsibility to survey, monitor, and inventory all resources on private land.



## 1980's

- The **Metropolitan Agricultural Preserves Act**, which safeguards farmland in the seven-county Metro area, was passed in 1980.
- The 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the establishment of SCS occurred on April 27, 1985.
- **Mary Jane Reetz** became the first woman District Conservationist in Minnesota in 1981.
- 1982 **National Resources Inventory (NRI)** was conducted to update information on land use and treatment conditions.
- Targeting was the new approach for the USDA's soil and water conservation program in 1982.



## 1980's

- **Food Security Act (FSA) of 1985** – After 50 years of existence, SCS was about to change toward more of a regulatory agency because of the 1985 Farm Bill.
- **FSA** included four major provisions: *conservation reserve program, conservation compliance, swampbuster, and sodbuster*



## 1990's

- The **Anoka Sand Plain Demonstration Project** was established in east-central Minnesota in 1990 amid local concerns about ground water quality in the sand plain.
- The **Olmsted County Hydrologic Unit Area (HUA)** Project was an 8-year effort 1991-1998 addressing the contamination of water aquifers in six townships surrounding the city of Rochester, Minnesota.
- October, 1994, SCS received a new name-**Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS)**.



## 1990's

- A new concept of mapping by **Major Land Resource Areas (MLRA)** took hold nationwide. Instead of mapping one county at a time, several counties within the same MLRA were mapped or updated together.
- In 1998, the **Minnesota Soils Webpage** (<http://mnr.nrcs.usda.gov/soils/soils.html>) made soil survey information in Minnesota available to the world.
- A **Center of Excellence Program** for soil map compilation was established by NRCS and the Fond du Lac Tribal and Community College in 1998 near Cloquet, Minnesota. The federal Center of Excellence program supports partnerships and improved working relationships between USDA agencies and tribes.



## 2000's

- The Farm Bill; new technologies in soil and water conservation including **global positioning systems (GPS)**, soil map digitization, and new or revised models came to field offices
- Patti Jackson-Kelly became the **first Black female District Conservationist** in 2002.
- May 13, 2002 the **Farm Bill** was signed. The 2002 Farm Bill ushered in NRCS's newest program, "**The Conservation Security Program.**"
- August 26, 2004 Jim and Peggy Pahl of Vernon Center, MN signed the **first CSP contract in US history.**





NRCS Minnesota

<http://www.mn.nrcs.usda.gov>