

Resource Conservation and Development



Pembina Trail RC&D Council member Russ Severson harvesting oats on the compost plots in Polk county , Minnesota

Resource Conservation and Development (RC&D)

RC&D helps communities improve their economic, social, and environmental conditions throughout the state of Minnesota. By using locally led, grassroots efforts, local residents identify problems and establish goals and objectives, develop alternatives, and implement solutions.

NRCS has eight approved RC&D Areas covering 64 counties in Minnesota. A ninth-Coteau des Prairies RC&D in southwest, Minnesota -is seeking USDA authorization as an official RC&D area. This proposed area covers nine counties in southwestern Minnesota. Additionally, 4 counties in East Central Minnesota have banded together to start the initial process of formulating an RC&D council. Sherburne, Wright, Benton and Stearns county encompass this proposed area known as Mid-Minnesota-Mississippi RC&D.

RC&D activities include many varied projects throughout the state of Minnesota such as educational projects, recreation and tourism projects, woodland management, and fire protection and prevention. RC&D's in Minnesota work extensively with the state's 11 Indian Reservations.

RC&D purposes

- To promote conservation, development and use of natural resources
- To improve the general level of economic activity
- To enhance the environment and standard of living in local communities



Summer RC&D Tour as sponsored by Three-Rivers RC&D.

RC&D's work through the Minnesota Association of RC&D Councils, which consists of local citizens and staff. Additionally, RC&D Councils in Minnesota have a state-wide 501 (c) 3 organization known as the Minnesota Association of RC&D's (MARC&D).

For more information about RC&D's in Minnesota check out the MN NRCS web site at:

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

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Accomplishments

A partial listing of RC&D projects for FY 2003 follows:

Giziibii RC&D worked with the Blandin Foundation and several other Minnesota partners to host a 2-day workshop and product marketing forum on promoting special forest products. The 1st annual "Goods From the Woods" conference was held September 27-28, 2003 in Grand Rapids, MN. Giziibii has done Outreach with several Minnesota Tribes, including the White Earth Reservation, the Leech Lake Band of Ojibwe, and the Red Lake Band of Chippewa. Projects covered a wide range of topics including seed collection and storage workshops and community gardens.

Hiawatha Valley RC&D entered into an agreement with the Minnesota Association of RC&D Councils (MARCD) to perform contract development and administration services for the EQIP Education Program. Seventeen agreements totaling \$82,350 were developed and implemented with local RC&D Councils and MARCD. Grazing education, nitrogen management, wellhead protection, land stewardship opportunities for women, and manure management were just a few of the workshops that were conducted in Minnesota by the RC&D's

Laurentian RC&D became involved with the Fond Du Lac Tribal College in the Renewable and Sustainable Energy Project. This project is envisioned to provide sustainable energy biomass generation plants, promote a green energy source, and introduce new businesses on Tribal lands, which will provide jobs both on and off the Reservation. Laurentian joined with Onanegozie and WesMin Councils in this unique outreach project.

Pembina Trail RC&D has replicated compost plots with compost applied at various rates. Crops grown for the project included spring wheat, oats, and soybeans. Pembina Trail RC&D Council member Russ Severson and Extension Educator Russ Severson performed the majority of the work for this project. Compost application benefited the 54 organic farmers in Northwest Minnesota.

Three Rivers RC&D received an \$800,000 EPA grant for the Greater Blue Earth River Watershed. Twenty watershed projects (out of 176) in the nation were chosen for funding through the EPA Watershed Initiative program. The Greater Blue Earth River Watershed Initiative implementation plans include wetland restoration, cost share for conservation practices, promotion of third crops, nutrient management, GIS database updates, water quality education, and monitoring in the next two years.

Prairie Country RC&D was a recipient of the Make-A-Splash Grant. This grant enabled Prairie Country to fund two enviroscape models, a stream flow table model, a watershed wall display, and a 3-D watershed model. Through a \$6,300 Conservation Partners Grant obtained from DNR, Prairie Country implemented seven "Direct Seeding of Hardwoods" demonstration projects over the past two years. Seeds planted included oak, walnut, hackberry, ash, and maple. Hardwood plantings were completed at the following locations: Swift county, Chippewa county, Renville County, Meeker County and a site at Sibley State Park.

Coteau des Prairies RC&D in southwest, Minnesota is seeking USDA authorization as an official RC&D area. This proposed area covers nine counties in southwestern Minnesota. RC&D Council's throughout Minnesota have carried on with the "Minnesota nice" tradition of helping the new council.

WesMin RC&D worked with the NRCS in Minnesota to contribute funding for a wildflower brochure called "Wildflowers of the Tallgrass Prairie". Partnering agencies and groups involved included the Leech Lake Band of Ojibwa, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Audubon Society, Minnesota Department of Natural Resources, the Nature Conservancy, Ehrbridge Energy, Kaste Seed, Bergeson Nursery, Minnesota Prairie Chicken Society, Friends of the Prairie Wetlands Learning Center, and Ottertail Wild Ones. WesMin will celebrate its 40th Anniversary in 2004.

Onanegozie RC&D

Onanegozie RC&D held a Ladies Night on April 23, 2003 entitled "Wild about Conservation." 435 women attended the workshop. A brochure called "Conservation Programs and Services" was given to workshop participants which was made possible through EQIP funds. Beginners Grazing School and Pasture Walks were also held during the summer of 2002 in Pine county and Mille Lacs county.