



Another summer in the books – Conservation apprentices wrap up 2013 internships

September 2013 Snapshots

After a three-month internship at the Scott County Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD), Kris Larson feels like he has a better idea of what is involved in working in environmental conservation.

Larson, one of 35 Conservation Apprentices working at SWCDs this summer, said his co-workers made him feel like a part of the office. "I now know what kinds of positions are available at SWCDs, and I better understand the qualifications needed for these positions," Larson said.

Managed by the Conservation Corps of Minnesota and Iowa (CCMI) and funded through the Minnesota Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund, the Conservation Apprentice Academy partners youth and mentors to build a solid foundation for future management of the state's natural resources.



Kris Larson, 2013 Conservation Apprentice.

Eric Antonson, CCMI program director, said that the program benefits both students and conservation districts. "Apprentices gain hands-on experience and SWCD managers increase the number of conservation practices delivered. It's a win-win," Antonson said.

This summer, Larson worked on a variety of projects, noting the most valuable skill he learned is how to better communicate with landowners. "Landowners want to take part in conservation practices for many different reasons and you have to understand the angle they are coming from. I've learned how powerful communication is," Larson said. "Depending on how you communicate, doors stay shut or swing right open."

Originally from Scott County and a recent graduate of Westminster College in Salt Lake City, he hopes to use the skills he learned during his apprenticeship while he pursues a career with an SWCD near the Twin Cities.

Ryan Holzer, Resource Conservationist at Scott County SWCD, supervised Larson over the summer and said his work has allowed the SWCD to further strengthen relationships with residents of Scott County to improve water quality by implementing projects that otherwise would not have been possible.

"Kris and his predecessors have worked with 16 different landowners to stabilize nearly 4,300 feet of eroding streambanks since 2011. These streambank projects consisted of low-cost bio-engineered practices including cedar tree revetments and live staking. The Corps provided the labor, and the only out-of-pocket expense for the landowner was for materials used to anchor the cedar trees," Holzer said. "This offered an alternative to residents who wanted to implement conservation but couldn't afford more conventional methods and/or wouldn't qualify under traditional cost share programs."