

# Stearns

## Soil and Water Conservation District

110 Second St S Ste 128  
Waite Park, MN 56387  
PHONE: (320) 251-7800  
FAX: (320) 251-9171

www.stearnscountyswcd.net

SWCD Board Meeting: 2nd Tuesday of Month



## Top 5 Natural Resource Concerns

1. Improve water quality in impaired waters areas in the County and adjacent watersheds
2. Provide source water protection for safe drinking water for all residents
3. Protect natural resources from residential and commercial development
4. Protect groundwater quality and quantity through nutrient & pesticide management, irrigation water management, and related programs.
5. Provide urban conservation assistance to cities to identify and protect natural resources.

## 2008 Revenue

Intergovernmental Revenue	
City	\$ 28,500
County	\$882,294
State	\$602,936*
Federal	\$118,904
Misc.	\$ 6,595
Charges for Services	\$ 35,562
Misc. Revenue	<u>\$ 36,675</u>
Total Revenue	\$1,711,466

\*A major portion of the State Revenue is paid to landowners for conservation practices.

Note: Revenue does not include USDA programs which provided approximately \$5 million in conservation financial assistance to Stearns County private landowners in 2008.

## Recent Projects

### One-On-One Planning Assistance for AgBMPs

AgBMPs (Agricultural Best Management Practices) are promoted by the Stearns County SWCD through several State (BWSR Feedlot, BWSR State cost-share, and MPCA 319) and Federal programs. The federal Environmental Quality Incentive Program (EQIP) program offers incentives to help landowners make a change in their management practices to positively impact soil and water quality. Popular EQIP practices include nutrient and pest management, conservation tillage and no-till, irrigation water management and prescribed grazing.

SWCD staff work one-on-one with landowners on both State and Federal programs to plan and implement practices that benefit soil and water quality while positively affecting landowner profitability.



Grant Pearson, Stearns County SWCD Nutrient Management Specialist, is completing a manure spreader calibration for a landowner participating in USDA's EQIP Nutrient Management program.

### Sauk River Watershed Ecosystem Services Market

The Stearns County SWCD, along with several project partners, is developing the infrastructure for the Sauk River Watershed Ecosystem Services Market, an affiliate of the Conservation Marketplace of Minnesota (CMM). This new, innovative market is positioning farmers to improve the environmental management of their farms by making it possible

for them to accrue “environmental” credits for market based incentives, called ecosystem services. Ecosystem services connect private and public sector buyers and sellers of environmental based benefits, creating a cost efficient and effective method for sustaining desired land uses that provide multiple ecosystem benefits.

### **Mississippi River Renaissance Project**

The Stearns County SWCD launched the Mississippi River Renaissance project in January 2009 with funding from the McKnight Foundation. The Mississippi River Renaissance project is focused on the 31-mile stretch of the river from St. Cloud to the Blanchard Dam, near Royalton. The project aims to unite and empower the eleven Mississippi River communities in Benton and Stearns Counties to actively protect, celebrate, and improve this stretch of the river, with a shared pride in the local heritage and a common commitment to conserving the River’s vitality and value for future generations of Central Minnesotans. By combining local efforts and interests with sound information and technical assistance, the Mississippi River Renaissance project hopes to renew and revitalize Central Minnesota’s connection to America’s greatest river, the Mississippi.



**Kimberly Thielen Cremers, Stearns County SWCD Mississippi River Renaissance Coordinator, along with the MN DNR and U of M Extension’s NEMO (Nonpoint Source Education for Municipal Officials) led a group of local elected officials and community leaders on a river awareness float.**

## **Future Projects**

### **Discovery Farms Minnesota**

The Stearns County SWCD, along with Minnesota Agricultural Water Resources Coalition (MAWRC), is currently working to identify a “Discovery Farm” dairy cooperator to conduct water quality research. Discovery Farms Minnesota was launched in 2009, with support and assistance from MAWRC (comprised of 15 farm organizations), the Minnesota Department of Agriculture and the University of Minnesota Extension. The mission of the program is to gather water quality information under real-world conditions, providing practical, credible, site-specific information to allow better water quality management decisions.

### **RIM/CRP for Wellhead Protection**

The Stearns County SWCD will be assisting the communities of Cold Spring and Melrose to deliver new funding for voluntary permanent conservation easements through the RIM (Reinvest in Minnesota) program. An additional contract through the USDA Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) will be leveraged with the RIM easement to generate additional revenue for participating landowners.

The Stearns County SWCD will be working with landowners in sensitive groundwater recharge areas to achieve reduction and removal of nitrate/nitrogen in vulnerable groundwater supplies. The State of Minnesota has allotted \$2 million over the next two years to assist in these efforts.

## **Board members**

Chuck Uphoff	Chair	(320) 837-5204	35319 315th Ave, Melrose, MN 56352
Jerome Bechtold	Treasurer	(320) 685-3213	24353 125th Ave, St Cloud, MN 56301
David Brinkman	Vice Chair	(320) 243-4296	14317 Cty Rd 180, Paynesville, MN 56362
Larry Salzer	Member	(320) 654-9002	5549 398th Street, Rice, MN 56367
David Weller	Secretary	(320) 346-2372	29875 County RD 18, Brooten, MN 56316