



# What's Working:

## Conservation Project Planning & Promotion

February 2015

### Partnering

- Groups that are important partners include birding clubs, environmental groups and chapters, and sportsmen's and conservation organizations such as Wildlife Heritage Association, Ducks Unlimited, Pheasants Forever, MN Waterfowl Association, and MN Pheasants Inc. (DNR Roadsides for Wildlife Program).
- Multiple cost share opportunities throughout the county drive a lot of our projects. We always have a minimum project input of 25% from the homeowners. Hoping they will be more vested in the project and want to maintain it (Ramsey SWCD).
- If you use volunteers on a project, this can reduce the overall cost of the project, and if they are local, can give them a sense of ownership in the project, so it is a good thing. Here are some tips I have learned when working with volunteers. Beforehand, give them a clear idea of what they are expected to do, so they can dress appropriately--no open-toed shoes, yes leather gloves, etc. This goes a long way in how effective and happy they are on the project. Before they start the work, show them the project site and acquaint them with the goals and objectives of the project. While they are working, give them plenty of attention, monitoring their activities fairly closely--that way you catch, right away, things that they may be doing incorrectly so that you don't have to re-do anything later. After the work is over, get feedback from them so that you and they can both learn for future projects (Joe Walton, Refugia LLC).
- Renville SWCD has been successful in partnering with neighboring SWCDs, Counties and LCCMR and state and federal agencies to protect unique granite rock outcrops along the Minnesota River Valley with perpetual RIM easements (Renville SWCD).
- A project was recently proposed to clean out sediment in a DNR protected watercourse that had already been straightened many years ago. The proposed project needed approvals from DNR Waters, WCA, Swampbuster, and the Corps of Engineers. Some of those agencies were quick to want to rubberstamp the project because the work maintenance and ditch were part of the request, but a couple of those agencies were not so quick to approve the project. To make a long story short, several of those agencies got together and met in the field to determine if the proposal was truly a maintenance project vs. a drainage improvement project. It sure appeared on the profiles that were provided to be more of an



---

improvement project. After several hours of field work by people from 5 different agencies it was confirmed that the proposed project to clean out the watercourse was indeed well beyond just removing sediment that had been deposited over the years. The proposal would have lowered portions of the watercourse causing significant drainage to wetlands along this watercourse and very likely would have increased sedimentation into a large wetland on a WMA by excavating into natural soil profiles that had potential for high velocity flows from the steeper grade. In the end, I think this effort by many people is a great example of when resources can be protected ahead of time through cooperation amongst different agencies and the diligent work by staff in the regulatory field. It is not usually rewarding to say “NO” to applicants but for this project I feel the regulatory people involved felt ok or even good about saying “NO” because the reward of protecting the natural resources was very real (Kane Radel, Minnesota Board of Water and Soil Resources).

- Since 2006, BWSR and the local Soil and Water Conservation Districts in Morrison, Crow Wing, and Cass Counties partnered with the Department of Defense and the National Guard Bureau to convey easements within a three mile corridor around Camp Ripley in central Minnesota. Camp Ripley was the second military base in the country to receive funding for the initiative to secure land surrounding their training facility to ensure the continued ability to train soldiers year around. Already partnered with the MN Dept of Natural Resources and The Nature Conservancy since 2004, the program struggled with getting the program dollars spent since they dealt with primarily fee title acquisitions and most of the landowners were interested in easements instead. It was a perfect fit for BWSR who already held thousands of easements state wide under the Re-Invest in Minnesota program and CREP. Since mid 2006 BWSR has received \$10,892,500 in federal funding. In 2010, the state matched the effort with a Lessard/Sams grant to coordinate ACUB with another initiative to protect the Nokassippi Wildlife Management Area. The Lessard/Sams grant in the amount of \$618,000 was paired with a matching amount of federal ACUB dollars and in less than eight months secured approximately 1100 acres in permanent easements. Not only reducing development in the ACUB zone and surrounding the WMA, the easements protect valuable forestry resources, and for under \$1,200 per acre. The remainder of the Lessard/Sams grant went to the DNR for fee title acquisitions in the WMA area. The SWCD’s and Camp Ripley have well over 300 landowners that have signed their Landowner Interest/Ranking forms. The Camp Ripley ACUB program has been nationally recognized as the most successful in the country and has fostered partnerships that are being held up as the ideal nationwide (Helen McLennan, Morrison SWCD).