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CONSERVATION NEWS

Clay Soil and Water Conservation District
Moorhead MN 56560
218-287-2255

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SWCD Staff:

- District Manager- Kevin Kassenborg
- District Coordinator - Amanda Lewis
- District Tech/CFO - Dylan Jeral
- Nat. Res. Mgmt. Tech -Tony Nelson
- District Tech/CAI- Alyssa Schill

SWCD Supervisors:

- Joel Hildebrandt
- Jerry Butenhoff
- Randy Schellack
- Brady Fuglie
- Richard Menholt

Clay SWCD Announces 2025 Outstanding Conservationists



From left to right; Clay SWCD Chairperson, Joel Hildebrandt, Clay SWCD Outstanding Conservationist, Dan Grefsrud and his wife Anne along with their son Max.

The Clay Soil & Water Conservation District (SWCD) is pleased to announce the selection of Dan and Anne Grefsrud as Clay County's Outstanding Conservationists for 2025.

For Dan and Anne, farming is more than just a business; it's a commitment to conservation. Since 2021, they've farmed a small grain and alfalfa operation, raising Red Angus cattle with a deep respect for the land. Their passion for conservation is evident in their innovative practices. The Grefsrud family were early adopters of no-till planting, which preserves soil structure and reduces erosion. They also plant cover crops on their fields, which protect the soil and provide forage for their cattle late into the season. Their implementation of high-management rotational

grazing allows pastures to rest and regenerate, leading to healthier, more productive land. These practices have helped the Grefsrud's see the direct benefits of conservation on their farm. As they say, they are simply being good stewards of the land, ensuring its health for generations to come.

Dan and Anne along with their new son Max attended the 2025 Minnesota Association of Soil and Water Conservation District's (MASWCD) Annual Convention that was held at the Double Tree Event Center in Bloomington, MN December 1-3. where they were honored for their conservation efforts

The Clay SWCD wishes to congratulate the Grefsrud's for being chosen as Clay County's Outstanding Conservationists for 2025.

Clay SWCD is asking you to please submit your email address, so we can provide you with the tree order and newsletter electronically. You can submit your email to: Amanda.lewis@clay.mnswcd.org or by phone at 218-287-2255. We look forward to hearing from you.

Tentative Calendar of Events 2026

- Jan. 8 - SWCD Board Meeting
 - Jan. 19 - Martin Luther King, Jr Day - Office Closed
 - Feb. 12 - SWCD Board Meeting
 - Feb. 16 - President's Day - Office Closed
 - Feb. 27 - Last day to cancel tree order
 - Mar. 8 - Daylight Savings Time
 - Mar. 12 - SWCD Board Meeting
 - Mar. 20 - First Day of Spring
 - April 9 - SWCD Board Meeting
 - April 21 - Compost Workshop
 - April 22 - Earth Day
 - April 23 - Pint Night
 - April 28- Rain Barrel Workshop
 - May 6 - Rain Barrel Workshop
 - May 14 - SWCD Board Meeting
 - May 20 - Make and Paint Rain Barrel Workshop
 - May 21 - Make and Paint Rain Barrel Workshop
 - May 25- Memorial Day - Office Closed
- Watch our Facebook page and Websites for more events

Public Waters Inventory Update Project

In August, we were notified that the 2024 Minnesota Legislature enacted Minn. Stat. § 103G.201 (f) which directed the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) to update the state’s Public Water Inventory (PWI) by correcting errors in the original inventory. The 8-year effort aims to update an average of 12 counties per year, wrapping up by 2032. The DNR will update the inventory on a county-by-county basis, with Clay County being one of the first 4 selected.

County PWI lists and maps were first created by the DNR in the 1980s and remain a tool in protecting water resources across the state. In late October, the Clay County Board invited DNR’s lead hydrologist, in charge of the project, to attend a board meeting to discuss the updating process. The initial notification stated that the PWI Update Project will likely result in adding or removing some waters from the inventory. Landowners adjacent to added public waters will be subject to the State Buffer Law.

On December 15th, we received notice that the DNR has completed a technical review to update the PWI within Clay County. Through their review process, the DNR is proposing a total of 9 public waters corrections including 9 additions and 0 removals in

Clay County.

A list and map of these preliminary corrections as well as details about a 60-day public comment period are available on the PWI Update project webpage (mndnr.gov/pwi-update).

Dates of Interest for Clay County:

Comment period: December 20, 2025, to February 19, 2026

Public meeting: January 20, 2026, at the Hjemkomst Center in Moorhead



Welcoming New SWCD Employee

Hello! My name is Dylan Jeral, and I am the new District Technician/ County Feedlot Officer (CFO) here at the Clay Soil and Water Conservation District. I grew up in Clay County and attended high school in Hawley. I graduated from Valley City State University in 2020 with a business administration degree with a concentration in agriculture.

I worked in crop research from 2017-2025 in Glyndon. I recently got the District Technician/ CFO job in March and have been here now for 9 months.

I am working more heavily in the tree planting program, the no-till drill program, and the county feedlot officer program. I also am starting to work with the buffer law, and I help with the DNR well observation program.

I grew up on a small cow/calf operation north of Hawley. This taught me a lot of my core values and the importance of a strong fence. I would help my uncle with his hay production and would help with running cattle through the chutes. I also worked for my neighbor with his hay production since 2016, where I still try to help when I am available.

Apart from my work life, my hobbies almost always revolve around the outdoors. I try to go elk hunting every other year. Deer hunting is a big family event, pheasant hunting, duck/goose hunting, ice fishing, spearing, boating, camping, and spending

time with family and friends.

I look forward to meeting you all more in the future, so feel free to stop at the office and talk about hunting or where the fish are biting!



Local Water Management

Moorhead Public Service is amending their Wellhead Protection Plan for its drinking water supply wells. As required by the Minnesota Wellhead Protection Rule (part 4720.5330, subpart 6), the Minnesota Department of Health approved Part 1 of the Wellhead Protection Plan for the system. This part of the plan includes information related to:

1. The delineation of the wellhead protection area.
2. The boundary of the drinking water supply management area.
3. Vulnerability assessment of the well and drinking water supply management area.

Look for additional announcements from Moorhead Public Service in the next few months for progress and dates as we move through this process.

For additional information please contact Moorhead Public Service @ [\(218\) 477-8000](tel:2184778000)

Rain Gauge Report

Since 1982, the Clay SWCD and some of the county’s residents have been participating in daily climate observations for the State of MN Climatology Office. Each day observations are recorded on the amount of rainfall, snowfall, and any other weather events. At the end of the month the weather observation sheets are returned to the Clay SWCD and we send them off to the State. The SWCD provides each participant with a rain gauge, observation sheets, and envelopes with paid postage. We are looking for more Clay County residents to participate in the program, so if you are interested, please contact the office!



Conservation Camp Scholarships

Clay SWCD would like to notify Clay County residents of their summer Conservation Camp Scholarships that they offer for children ranging in age from 11-15 that are interested in conservation. Each year, the Clay SWCD Board members select and provide 2 scholarships to Clay County children.

In the past, children attended conservation camps such as the Outdoor Explorers Camp, the Forkhorn Camp, and a Fishing Camp. Attendees have attended camps through the Long Lake Conservation Center, near Palisade, MN as well as the Deep Portage Learning Center, near Hackensack, MN. Each location offers different camps during different time frames. If you know of a child in this age range that you think would be interested in attending one of these camps, please check the camp websites at;

<https://.deep-portage.org> or the <https://www.longlakecc.org> for more information on the different camps available.

Those interested in being chosen for a scholarship are asked to please contact the office at 218-287-2255, where further instructions on the process will be explained such as, how to apply, and the need to write a narrative explaining “why I would like to attend conservation camp.” Applications and narratives will be accepted through March 31, 2026.

Following that date, all applications and narratives will be judged by the Clay SWCD Board members with 2 applicants being selected to attend the camp of their choice.

We look forward to hearing from you.



2026 Tree Pickup Reminder

Please remember to watch your mail for a postcard in April/May advising you of the day and time of the tree pickup

Tree Program

Now is the time to think about ordering trees for planting this Spring. Our 2026 tree ordering will be done the same as the 2025 season which was online. Our website will open up on January 1, 2026. These orders are for handplant trees only. **If you would like us to plant your trees, please do not order online, but call or stop in and we can draw up a tree plan for you!** Please scan the QR code at the end of this article or enter the web address; clay-swcd.myshopify.com to place your order on your own. If you are not comfortable ordering online, you can give us a call or stop in and we can place the order for you! All trees will be sold in bundles of 5, potted trees may be ordered individually, on our website. As in the past, we will accept cancellations with no penalty on or before February 27th, 2026.

Tree Planting

Those landowners requesting machine tree planting, please remember that we require the site to be tilled once or twice before we schedule your plant job. Once your ground has been tilled and prepped, you can call

the office to schedule your planting. Please do not call for scheduling before your ground is ready.

Need help preparing your site? We offer rototilling as a service for just this purpose (see page 4 article).

Managing Weeds

Weed control is critical to the survival of your newly planted trees. The Clay SWCD offers matting installation over tree rows. We charge \$70/100'. This price includes the matting and the installation.

This service is also available for the cost-share program on qualifying plantings. Contact us for more information.

Fabric Management

Make sure you inspect your fabric periodically to ensure the edges are firmly anchored. Control weeds in openings. Make sure you enlarge openings as needed to prevent stem girdling.



Implementing Innovative Irrigation Practices

Look for financial assistance to be available in 2026 for producers with irrigation systems.

Clay SWCD will be one of 26 SWCDs who will be working closely with the Minnesota Department of Agriculture (MDA) and USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) putting emphasis on improving irrigation efficiency, optimizing nitrogen management, and protecting groundwater resources.

The Project will focus on irrigation Best Management Practices (BMPs) utilizing a flexible, tiered approach where irrigators can participate at a level that is appropriate for their operation and attitude towards technology adoption and risk management. Examples of relevant BMPs may include installation of soil

moisture sensors, updates to panels and nozzles, crop sensors, and variable rate fertigation systems.

Applications will be accepted February 2–27, 2026.

Farmers interested in applying are encouraged to contact their local SWCD office early during the application period to learn more about eligibility, available practices, and next steps.



Low Interest Loans Available

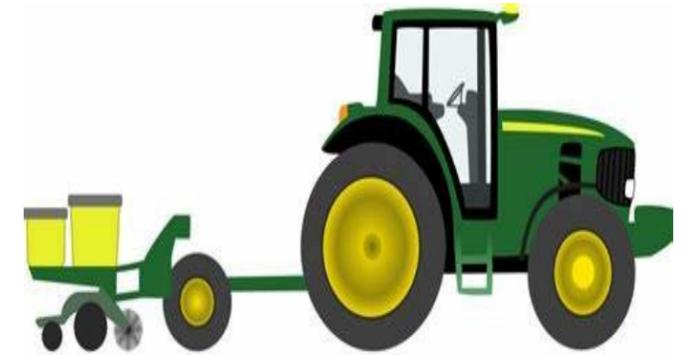
Low interest, Ag Best Management Practice (Ag BMP), loans are available again this year. Farmers, rural landowners, and ag supply businesses, are eligible to apply. With all Ag BMP Loans, the project must have a direct impact on improving or protecting water quality. Eligible items/practices must fall into one of the following categories:

Conservation Tillage Equipment, Septic Systems, Ag Waste Management Systems, Manure Application Equipment, Erosion Control Structures, Well Replacement, or other practices that improve water quality.

Applications are made at the Clay SWCD office, and approved applications are processed through a local lender. The maximum loan amount is \$200,000. Loan rates are fixed at 3% interest. The lender, however, may charge a customary processing fee. The lender is responsible that all funding is repaid to the Ag BMP loan program within the maximum 10-year term limit.

These loans are used to protect the natural resources in Clay County. For more information contact the Clay SWCD office or visit the Minnesota Department of Agriculture website at:

<https://www.mda.state.mn.us/agbmploan>



MN WIA Program



CREP/RIM Programs



Aquatic Invasive Species



The MN Walk-In Access (WIA) program continues to provide public hunting opportunities on private land and rewards landowners for keeping their land in high quality habitat.

The Clay Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD) works directly with landowners for program enrollment. Landowners can earn up to \$18/acre per year for eligible habitat enrolled. Eligible lands should be 40 acres or larger and include high quality wildlife habitat. Clay County currently has 7 WIA areas with almost 2,000 acres. We are always looking to expand public options and opportunities and would welcome any questions about enrollment from all landowners. If you, or someone you know is looking for a way to supplement their income and provide an opportunity for a fellow sportsman, please contact our office for additional information.

The MN Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP) and the Reinvest In Minnesota (RIM) programs are voluntary, federal/state funded natural resource conservation easement programs that use a science-based approach to target environmentally sensitive land throughout the state. This is accomplished through permanent protection by establishing conservation practices via payments to farmers and agricultural landowners. Programs are available that prioritize native grasslands, wetland restorations, groundwater protection and others depending on location and eligibility. If you, or someone you know, is looking for an option to manage difficult farmland or create an oasis for your own private hunting area, with the benefit of financial and technical assistance, please contact us at the Clay SWCD office for more information.

The SWCD is continuing its efforts to prevent and educate Clay County citizens about the threat and consequences of Aquatic Invasive Species in Clay County and the surrounding lakes areas. In 2019 the Clay County Board transferred the Aquatic Invasive Species (AIS) prevention program to the Clay SWCD. In 2026 we will continue our efforts to educate and provide information about the AIS program. In addition, we would like to expand our efforts and hear new ideas from citizens of the county. If you are a member of a local lake association and would like a member of our staff to attend a local meeting, or want to discuss some ideas about how to help prevent the spread of AIS within Clay County please contact us at Clay SWCD, we would love to hear your ideas .



County Feedlot Program

The Clay SWCD took over the County Feedlot Program in 2007. At that time, there were 120 registered feedlots in Clay County. There are presently 77 registered feedlots. The Clay SWCD administers the County Feedlot Program under the rules and regulations set forth by the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency (MPCA). The MPCA requires all active feedlots to re-register in a 4-year cycle. The last re-registration was done in 2021, which means 2025 was a new re-registration year. We want to thank everyone for getting the re-registration paperwork completed and mailed back to us in a timely manner!

The SWCD provides a local point of contact and administration for the feedlot program. One of the requirements under the MPCA rules is to inspect 7% of the feedlots in the county every year to ensure they are in compliance. This means we will conduct 6 feedlot inspections in 2026.

A few things to keep in mind if you are a feedlot owner: Any feedlot with 50 or more animal units (AU), or 10 or more AU within shoreland, is required to be registered with the MPCA. One AU = 1,000 pounds. One of the biggest reasons why we have the Minnesota Feedlot Rules is to make sure manure doesn't end up where it doesn't belong. Manure is a valuable resource and it is important to manage it

properly to minimize the loss of nutrients. When stockpiling manure, it is important to choose an appropriate site, one that will ensure no manure contaminates surface or groundwater. Some setback guidelines include;

- 300 feet of flow distance and 50 feet of horizontal distance to surface water, open tile intakes, and uncultivated wetlands.
- 300 feet flow distance to any road ditch that flows directly to one of the waters listed above, or 50 feet flow distance to any other road ditch.
- 100 feet from private wells or 200 feet from private wells with less than 50 feet watertight casing. Slope of the land should also be taken into consideration when selecting a stockpiling site.

If you plan on expanding your feedlot, please contact the Clay SWCD and the Clay County Planning and Zoning office to make sure you have the proper permits in place before moving forward.



ATTENTION LIVESTOCK PRODUCERS
Before purchasing or custom feeding additional livestock, contact the Clay SWCD office to ensure you are in compliance with local feedlot rules and regulations

Drill Rentals and SWCD Custom Work

The Clay SWCD has two 15-foot John Deere 1590 no-till drills available for rent. Many producers use these drills for planting alfalfa, soybeans, wheat and other crops into standing residues. They are not recommended for native grass plantings, with light fluffy seed, but our newest drill does have a small agitator that can handle some grass mixes. No-till planting can help conserve moisture, reduce the number of passes over the field, and slow down wind and water erosion. The drills are always greased, ready to go, and delivered to your farm. The rate is \$11/acre or a \$350 minimum charge.

In addition to our grain drills, we also have a small native grass/ forb drill with a seeding width of 3 feet. This drill can be pulled behind an ATV, side by side, or small tractor. Currently, we are allowing people to rent this machine for \$150/day, or we can

plant your plot for you at a rate of \$100/hour with a \$50 mobilization fee.

The Clay SWCD also owns a Maschio rototiller and a 10 foot mower in order to prepare land for various projects, such as tree plantings or pollinator projects. The fees for this service are also \$100/hour with a \$50 mobilization fee. We are excited to work with you in your efforts of conservation!



COUNTY AGRICULTURE INSPECTOR (CAI)

The Minnesota Noxious Weed Law affects growing plants. Some plants are noxious because they can harm people, animals, the food we eat, and nature. The Minnesota Department of Agriculture (MDA), county, city, and township officials inspect land and ask owners to control and eradicate noxious weeds that are present in order to keep them from spreading and harming neighboring lands.

In 2026, there will be some additions and changes occurring to the noxious weed list. Some weeds will be changing categories on the list, and there will be new weeds added to the eradicate list. Once that list becomes available in early 2026, we will have copies of them in our office. They are also available on the MDA website.

This winter a noxious weed book with weeds that are specifically found in Clay

County will be created. It will be small sized and easy to keep in your back pocket or glove box. So when you are out scouting fields or taking a drive and encounter a plant you maybe haven't seen before this book can be used to help identify the new plant. Hopefully the book will be completed by the annual spring meeting of the Association of Township Officers.

During the spring meeting the annual noxious weed training will be taking place. This is a good refresher course on how to identify noxious weeds as well as the roles and responsibilities of local weed inspectors. Which each township should have their own local inspector who monitors for weeds on township and county roads and personal property as well.

Leafy Spurge and Canada Thistle continue to be noxious weeds that thrive every year in Clay County, but also around the state and in surrounding states. Wild Parsnip, Common Tansy, and Poison Hemlock continue to try to get a foothold across the county, although they are still limited to small patches here and there. We saw our first reported locations of Purple Loosestrife in the county. This plant tends to grow on the edges of ditches and wetlands so be on the lookout for purple flowers growing in wet areas! For more information on noxious weeds, visit the MDA website at <https://www.mda.state.mn.us/plants-insects/noxious-invasive-weed-program>.



Wild Parsnip



Common Tansy



Purple Loosestrife



Poison Hemlock

Wetland Conservation Act

A number of updates were made to the Minnesota Wetland Conservation Act laws in recent Minnesota legislative sessions. State agencies are in the process of updating rules and procedures governing wetland resources to include agricultural activities. Please contact our office about any activities or questions associated with wetlands before you start a project! The Clay SWCD is tasked to administer the MN Wetland Conservation Act (WCA) for the county, but perhaps more importantly, assist landowners and producers through the administrative process of federal, state and local rules and regulations. The Clay SWCD recognizes the challenges of working through processes at all levels of

oversite and are committed to assisting landowners and producers through those processes. Our goal is to ensure that the necessary information is made available to assist landowners in making decisions regarding wetland resources.

The MN Wetland Conservation Act (WCA) was passed into law in 1991 with the purpose of:

- Achieving no net loss in the quantity, quality and biological diversity of existing wetlands.
- Increasing the quantity, quality and biological diversity of wetlands by restoring or enhancing diminished or

drained wetlands.

- Avoiding direct or indirect impacts from activities that destroy or diminish the quantity, quality, and biological diversity of wetlands.

- Landowners, Ag Producers—Please help us in providing quality assistance to our valued customers and continue to contact our staff to discuss any wetland related concerns. We can assist you through the entire process from the federal to the local level!

One Watershed, One Plan Cost Share

One Watershed, One Plan cost-share funds are available again this year for landowners within the Buffalo Red River Watershed District and the Wild Rice Watershed District. Over the past few years, numerous projects have been completed utilizing these funds. We have cost shared on cover crop plantings, water and sediment control basins, side water inlets, and streambank stabilization projects. For some projects the rate is as high as 90%, meaning the landowner only has to pay 10% of the total project cost! We have also worked hand in hand with NRCS and their EQIP funding. We can “piggy-back” our funding with EQIP funding, for eligible practices, to be able to cover up to 90% of the project cost. This is a good partnership to be able to utilize both federal funds and local funds to complete a project. There are separate funding pools for each watershed district, and new funding typically becomes available every two years.

Cover crops are typically seeded after cash crop harvest but can also be inter-seeded into cash crops before harvest. They are used to control soil erosion from both wind and water, increase soil organic matter and soil health, control weeds, alleviate compaction, and more. Water and sediment control basins are embankments built across a depressional area of concentrated water runoff in a farm field. The basins slow down water runoff by trapping water and sediment for a short period of time, allowing sediment to settle and water to slowly move down the hill through a tile pipe. Side-water inlets are used to stabilize grade changes and control gully erosion. An example of a side-water inlet would be in an area where concentrated water is flowing off a field into a body of water. A pipe would be installed to slow water down and control erosion. Streambank restorations, such as stream barbs or toe wood-sod mats, are typically used on the outside bends of rivers and streams where water is undercutting and sloughing the bank away. These projects help to restore and stabilize the riverbank to prevent further erosion. If you see a need for any of these types of projects on your land, please give us a call and we can discuss options and cost-sharing with you!

Side Water Inlets



Streambank Restorations



2025 Outreach Update

Clay SWCD has been participating in an Urban Conservation program for the past 10 years. Since that time we have been working with numerous entities to get the program up and running.

Rain Barrel Workshops - We have held 2 workshops per season and the last 3 years we added a third two-part Make and Paint Workshop in which individuals from the area attended a session where they listened to a presentation, build their rain barrel and then came back the second day to paint a scene on their barrel.

Compost Workshop - This was one of the original workshops that was being held by River Keepers, a nonprofit who advocates for safe and sustainable use of the Red River of the North. We partnered with them the first year and have built an ongoing relationship over the years. Currently we partner with them on our Rain Barrel and Compost Workshops. We have also held 2 compost workshops per season for the past 8 years. The past 2 years we went to having just one class due to the barrel inventory. This session has participants listen to a presentation on composting, then they build their compost bin. All of our barrels are recycled food grade barrels that we receive from different partners throughout the community. All barrels are triple rinsed before the classes.

Pollinator Workshop - The Clay SWCD started this workshop in 2018. It is one of the most attended workshops with participants attending a two-part workshop

series where they listen to a presentation on pollinators and the importance of them, they are then sent home with homework to decide on an area they would like to plant a small pollinator garden in their yard and an envelope of native grass and flower seeds. The second day consists of participants attending a workshop at a local pollinator planting to identify different native plants and ask questions on their specific planting. They then go home and plant their garden. All of these classes fill up fast, so if you have interest in conserving water, composting, or planting a pollinator garden, please watch the Moorhead Community Educations spring catalog to register for one or all of the workshops.

Pint Night - This is one of our favorite events that Clay SWCD holds. We partnered with Junkyard Brewing to host a Pollinator Pint Night where individuals in the community can attend an evening filled with pollinator friendly events. Junkyard made a beer called “Money Honey” which is a pollinator friendly beer made out of honey, peanut butter, and bananas. The evening consists of individuals attending at Junkyard Brewing in Moorhead, MN where they can purchase the pollinator friendly beer in which Junkyard then donates \$1 for every pint sold back to our pollinator efforts in Clay County. There are door prizes and attendees can plant their own native flowers to take home with them that evening. Sol Ave Kitchen even gets involved by having a pollinator friendly menu with delicious entrees like, Bee Pollen Goat Cheese Dumplings, Honey

Glazed Pork Ribs, and desserts like the Queen Bee 7, which consists of honey and graham cracker, lavender syrup, blackberry compote, vanilla bean buttercream, and honey sponge candy. YUM! If this doesn't sound like a great event, I don't know what does. Last year there were over 250 attendees in an open house setting. If this sounds like fun and you want to join us watch Junkyard Brewing Events as well as our Facebook page and our website.

Crestwood Pollinator site - Six years ago Clay SWCD partnered with Clay County and Pheasants Forever to complete a restoration project where we returned flood buy out properties back to a native prairie. This site is an ever changing ecosystem where you will find many native species as well as many different wildlife and is open to the public for recreational use. We have a lot of people who enjoy fishing and hunting in this area as well as some that just come out to walk their dogs or enjoy the area. If you ever want to check this planting out please do, it is located on 60th Avenue South just before the Red River Bridge on the south side of the road.



Soil Health Programs

Currently the SWCD has two different funding opportunities for producers in Clay County.

West Central RCPP: This is in partnership with the Red River Basin Commission, Clay, Grant, Traverse, West Otter Tail and Wilkin SWCD's. Currently we have funding for cover crops(\$30/acre), reduce-till(\$15/acre), no-till(\$20/acre) and crop rotation(\$5/acre). The grant ends in 2028 so we can enroll anywhere from 1-3-year cover crop contracts and 1-2 year no-till, reduce till and crop rotation contracts.

BWSR RCPP: This is another option which came from the federal government to the state and then to the SWCD's. This grant also expires in 2028 and is on a first come first serve basis. Practices and payment rates are as follows. Cover Crops: 320-acre cap; single species: \$35/acre, multiple species: \$45/acre, Conservation

Cover (pollinator plantings): 90% cost share up to \$1,000/acre, No-till: \$30/acre, Pasture or Hay planting: \$240/acre.

The goal of this program is to help reduce soil erosion, build soil organic matter, increase soil microbial life, and improve the overall health and resiliency of your soil. SWCD staff will assist in designing cover crop mixes and planning field operations to make these practices fit into your operation. SWCD staff can also meet with you to talk about soil health and do some soil testing (water infiltration rate, compaction testing, earthworm count, etc..) to see how your soil improves over time. We have ongoing signups happening year round.



Soil Health Bus Tour

One of the highlights of the summer was an event that two staff members and two producers in Clay County got to attend. It was a Soil Health bus tour that was organized by the **Becker SWCD**. There was a lot to experience on the tour. Our first stop was at Hough Farms near Barnesville. Here they had some of their equipment on display that they use for their no-till and cover crop applications. On display was their air seeder and tractor. Our next stop was at Ressler Farms near Hillsboro, ND. Here we were shown a roller crimper that they are going to be using to terminate their rye cover crop. We also were brought out to a field that they seeded with a 16 species mix. It was end of July when we visited and the crops were coming in nicely. The mix included sunflowers, grasses, peas, radish, turnips just to name a few. The goal is to use this as pasture in the fall to feed their beef cattle. Next stop of the tour was Black Leg Ranch near Bismarck ND. They have a large operation where they raise grass fed beef and bison as well. We discussed a large variety of topics, from how the owner's father acquired the land, how they are able to sustainably ranch the acres that they have, and how they grew into not only a ranch but a brewery and wedding venue as well. It was a very interesting long first day on the bus but it was capped off with dinner at the Black Leg Ranch which was great!

The next day we traveled to Menoken Farms which is operated by the Burleigh County SCD. This is a 150-acre demonstration farm where they do a lot of different farming practices that focus on soil health. Cover crop trials, integrating livestock, different species of crops all change on a yearly basis at the farm. Not to mention, they do a lot of work in urban conservation and have their own arboretum where they showcase the different types of trees that they sell. Overall a fantastic

learning opportunity, so thank you to Becker SWCD for putting it on!

