

RURAL LANDS:



WCD'S NEW "RURAL LANDS" PROGRAM

Washington Conservation District (WCD) recently renewed its commitment to assisting the rural landowners of Washington County in their conservation efforts. The WCD "Rural Lands Program" stems from an identified need for good rural land conservation. For this purpose, we define rural land as: "the hobby farms, horse pastures, fallow farmland, and natural areas on rural residential property of 2.5- to 40- acres in size." This program focus areas were identified by the WCD 2005 Strategic Plan and a Rural Land advisory committee composed of rural land owners, natural resource agencies, and WCD staff. The main goal is to minimize impacts on natural resources on these lands.

How does this program change WCD? Many facets of this program have been in place for years through WCD, the University of Minnesota Extension Service, Washington County, local communities, and other natural resource conservation organizations. We recognize the current need for providing as much helpful information and assistance as possible to the 15,000+ residents of the county who reside on over 100,000 acres of privately-owned rural land. Many rural landowners are new to land management on this larger scale and may not be aware of all the tools and assistance available to become good stewards of their land.

So, how can WCD assist you as a rural land owner? Maybe you want to provide a wind break for your house, a living snow fence for your driveway, increase water



The aesthetics of rural living on this rural Washington County farm.

quality or wildlife habitat, or maybe restore your ecosystem to its native beauty. Whatever your final goal might be, it is important to do a good rural site design using the following three-step process. These are some of the keys to successful and ecologically-sound rural land management. And Washington Conservation District is here to help with every phase!

Again, the following is a series of steps to get you started on the path to achieving your rural conservation goals:

I. MAKE ATTAINABLE GOALS.

Determine reasonable goals for your site.

- **PROTECTING NEARBY LAKES, WETLANDS, & STREAMS.** Wetland buffers, restorations, diversions, and other water conservation practices can help ensure the continued high water quality that is unique to Washington County.
- **IMPROVING WILDLIFE HABITAT.** Think about your specific goals, since most species require different types of habitat at different points in their life. Summer cover, winter shelter, and food sources can be very different, but all are important or necessary in attracting wildlife.
- **REMOVING INVASIVE, NOXIOUS, OR NON-NATIVE SPECIES.** Purple loosestrife and buckthorn are considered by some to be beautiful, but are both non-native and extremely invasive, reducing the overall wildlife value of the areas they invade. Removal of these and other invasives allows native species to return to the land, lending balance to the land processes.
- **ADDRESSING POTENTIAL THREATS.** Properly-placed vegetative windbreaks can help decrease energy bills and control snow drifting. Rotational grazing of livestock can improve forage quality and reduce erosion. Composting manure can reduce pollution that often

ends up in our nearby lakes and streams..

- **AESTHETIC IMPROVEMENTS.** Selectively reducing trees or shrubs can increase sunlight in certain areas, whereas adding trees and shrubs can provide relief from the sun or block an unwanted view. Increasing the number of different types of plants can provide for continual color and create more diversity in your yard.
- **PROVIDING FOR RECREATION OR OTHER USES.** Establish a trail system on your property, or fence in a pasture for new horses. Consider what your land might be used for, and how much room it takes to do each activity.

2. PERFORM A SITE INVENTORY.

Assess, research, and map the existing site conditions and potential impacts.



SOURCE: WCD

WCD staff testing soils on a small horse farm.

- **LOCATE ANY POTENTIAL PROBLEM TYPES AND LOCATIONS.** Specifically look for any areas with invasive species, recreational vehicle use, erosion, and livestock impacts, among others. Temporary fencing may be needed in some areas to protect new plantings and permanent fencing may be considered necessary to provide long-term protection and diversity.
- **EXAMINE WHAT IS OCCURRING ON SURROUNDING SITES.** Determine adjacent land use and anticipate neighbors' potential concerns or interests in your conservation activities. Your neighbor may want to work on a similar project to yours, resulting in cost savings for both parties. Alternately, your neighbor may have issues with some activities such as prairie burns; and many problems can be avoided if plans are discussed first.



SOURCE: WCD

A recently restored wetland in May Township

- **MAKE A SKETCH OF YOUR PROPERTY.** Include existing trees, wet or dry areas, structures, old dumps, manure piles, and other special features. Sketching the area can help to prioritize your efforts, and to calculate materials and costs needed to meet your goals.

And, WCD staff can help you with the following, or any other additional inventories of your site:

- **GETTING ALL REGULATORY INFORMATION.**
- **INVENTORY ANY UNIQUE OR RARE SITE FEATURES.**
- **DETERMINING SOIL TYPES AND CONDITIONS.**

3. DESIGN YOUR SITE.

Now you are ready to plan your project!

- **GETTING YOUR PROJECT INTO THE GROUND.** After you have assessed your site, you may need to adjust your goals to better fit your property better address your land use needs discovered during the inventory. Also, you may need further technical and financial assistance.

Again, Washington Conservation District is here to help you achieve your rural land goals by providing technical, design, and potential cost-share assistance. Give us a call!

DISTRICT NEWS

TREES STILL AVAILABLE!



SOURCE: www.cnr.mn.edu

The Annual WCD Tree Sale is still on-going through April 25th or whenever all the trees are sold. Although we have sold out of many tree species, there are still quite a few great trees left to buy. Again, the trees bought through this program are a great and inexpensive way to create food, habitat, fuel, and shade for years to come! Please check our website for the most up-to-date sales list at www.mnwcd.org.

The Annual WCD Tree Sale Pick-up will be April 28th, from 8:00 am to 8:00 pm, and April 29th, from 8:00 am to 12:00pm (noon) at the Washington County Fairgrounds, Rabbit building. Call for directions.

RURAL LANDOWNER ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS



SOURCE: WCD

As spring and your home improvement projects approach, WCD offers the following assistance to rural land owners to assist in their conservation efforts:

- rural land assistance, including fencing & animal waste management
- erosion control assistance and design
- shoreline, wetland, and upland restoration design
- native and invasive plant identification

The Second Biennial Rainbarrel Workshop is coming up on April 29th. For only \$35, participants will receive the barrel, instruction, and all necessary hardware to put together their own home rain harvesting system. If you missed the first workshop this past fall, here is your second chance to make your own rainbarrel. Registration application and fee must be received by April 19th, but, if you just cannot wait, stop by the office for a set of assembly instructions and a parts list.



SOURCE: WCD

Please visit our website for more information on these and our other programs at: www.mnwcd.org.

PLEASE STOP BY OUR OFFICE IN THE VALLEY RIDGE MALL, ACROSS FROM FRESH FIELDS BAKERY MONDAY THROUGH FRIDAY, 7:00 - 4:30 !

Providing quality technical & educational services for the conservation of natural resources in Washington County since 1942.

1380 West Frontage Road, Highway 36

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www.mnwcd.org



EROSION CONTROL TIPS FOR SAVING YOUR SOILS

"Spring" in Minnesota is synonymous with "construction season." The following is a series of tips to help get you started on maintaining and improving your property for conservation, aesthetics, and wildlife habitat during your own construction season!

TEMPORARY SOIL STABILIZATION

During construction or landscaping, verify that your contractor has installed temporary stabilization measures to minimize erosion and prevent sediment-laden runoff from leaving your property. Silt fence or other sediment control should be in place on the down-slope perimeter, and near curb and gutters, ditches, streams, lakes, and wetlands. Mulch, erosion control blanket, or similar material must cover exposed soil. Permits from the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency (MPCA) and other local units of government may be required before you begin construction.



Properly-installed erosion control measures, such as silt fencing shown above, protect the adjacent water bodies from becoming polluted with eroded soil and chemicals. (SOURCE: WCD)

PERMANENT SOIL STABILIZATION

Establish permanent vegetation or ground cover as soon as possible. With proper planning, it may be possible to skip many temporary stabilization measures by installing permanent stabilization measures initially. Silt fences, downspout extenders, or other temporary stabilization measures can be removed following permanent stabilization. When landscaping, please consider the following:

PERMANENT SOIL STABILIZATION

- Keep and protect existing native plants on your property
- Remove invasive, non-native species (such as buckthorn)
- Schedule landscaping projects for dry weather
- Plant fast-growing annual and perennial grasses
- Use low-maintenance native plants that reduce runoff
- Use lawn alternatives like rain gardens or no-mow lawn mixes
- Route downspouts to heavily vegetated areas
- Use pervious surfaces for walkways, patios, and drives that allow water to seep into the ground
- Leave a buffer strip of undisturbed vegetation along stream banks and lakeshores



A combination of temporary and permanent erosion control measures, such as the hay bales and the permanent native vegetation planting seen above, reduce the overall site erosion potential. (SOURCE: WCD)

COMMON TEMPORARY STABILIZATION METHODS

Sediment Control	Downspout Extenders
May include silt fence, berms, and biologs. These devices slow runoff and allow it to pond, so soil and sediment can settle out before water leaves a site. Proper installation and maintenance is essential.	These devices may be used to protect temporarily stabilized areas from roof runoff. Direct discharge to storm sewers may not be allowed or available in your area; check with local authorities.
Erosion Control	Temporary Vegetation
Materials include straw mulch, wood chips, wood fiber blanket, and many other materials. Provides temporary cover to protect the soil from rain. Areas that have been seeded should be protected with mulch or erosion control blanket.	Annual grasses that sprout quickly such as annual rye, oats and winter wheat. You may need to fertilize, water, or reseed to ensure the vegetative cover is maintained until permanent cover is established.

BEYOND CONSTRUCTION

You can help protect area lakes and streams for as long as you own your home. Stormwater runoff does not go to a wastewater treatment plant; it flows directly into our lakes and streams. Tips that will help you to reduce your home's environmental impact include:

BEYOND CONSTRUCTION

- Minimize the use of pesticides fertilizers and de-icing materials
- Use a no-phosphorus lawn fertilizer
- Keep trash and yard clippings out of the street and storm drains
- Properly dispose of hazardous wastes (such as paint, stain, chemicals, and lead-based products)
- Wash your car on the lawn

SOIL TESTING FOR LANDOWNERS

In order to get the maximum crop yields and to ensure that the right plant is planted in the right area, the University of Minnesota offers soil testing to the public. The basic soil testing service for a residence or garden costs \$15.00 per sample to test for potassium, pH - lime requirement, total organic matter, and estimated texture. If necessary, additional tests are available for excessive salts (extra \$4.00/sample) or a separate lead test (extra \$4.00/sample). The cost is different for agricultural/farm fields.



You can download a soil testing form directly from the University of Minnesota Soil Testing Laboratory, at:

<http://soiltest.coafes.umn.edu/submitti.htm>

or please stop by the WCD office to pick up a kit!



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Since fertilizer does not always help plants that are not yet growing, effectively applying fertilizer to crops is a timing game, based on environmental conditions. Application of fertilizers must be timed just right in order to have the maximum benefits to the crops. Although it is seemingly more efficient to do a single, heavy fertilizer application at the time of seeding, it can actually be more beneficial for plant uptake and useage to do multiple, lighter applications throughout the growing season. In the case of fertilizers applications, it might be true that less is more!

LANDOWNER PROFILE: Lynn & Bruce Keller Of May Township

Highlighting the conservation efforts of Washington County residents



SOURCE: <http://www.bakemiliner/hvdbatholow/>

Bruce drew us to our piece of paradise," says Lynn. Because of their love of nature, both Kellers spent time volunteering at Warner Natural Resources Center, where they were helping to change the face of native Washington County forests and woodlands. Lynn and Bruce have planted more than 100 native plants and trees on their property. The Kellers moved to their current hobby farm, Two-Bit Hollow, in May Township, where they have more than 15 acres of managed pasture in addition to the woods and the wetlands. Lynn is currently a Master Gardener and Bruce has participated in local politics. Congratulations to the Kellers in their on-going land conservation efforts!

! DON'T BE LEFT OUT !

The Washington Conservation District (WCD) wants to make sure we reach as many willing and interested Washington County residents as possible through our programs, workshops, and newsletters. Our aim is to provide useful information about water quality protection and natural resources conservation through sound and innovative land and water management practices. If you or any other interested resident are not yet on our mailing list and want to receive our newsletter, please contact the WCD office at 651-275-1136!

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CLOSING CONSERVATION TIP

Create a buffer! Plant deep-rooted, tall-growing native plants around your property, especially along water bodies. These plants will help reduce erosion, absorb chemicals and nutrients, provide wildlife habitat, & provide visual interest to beautify any size & shape area of your yard. Call us at 651-275-1136 for more information.