Washington Conservation District

Conservation Connections

FALL 2012

Reading the Landscape

Air photos are a great way to understand our county. When Washington Conservation District (WCD) staff members look at the images, we notice the waterway connections between lakes and rivers, the parking lots and other impervious surfaces in our large urban areas and the mix of grassland, cropland and woods. We use air photos daily — and with satellite imagery readily available online, the average resident can also do a virtual fly-over of the county.

"At our County Fair booth, people are drawn to maps with air photos," said WCD's Jessica Thiel. "They look for a familiar landmark, try to find their house and notice things like which areas have the most swimming pools."

Trees are a notable feature of county air photos, providing vital information and documenting the more than one million trees planted by WCD over the years.

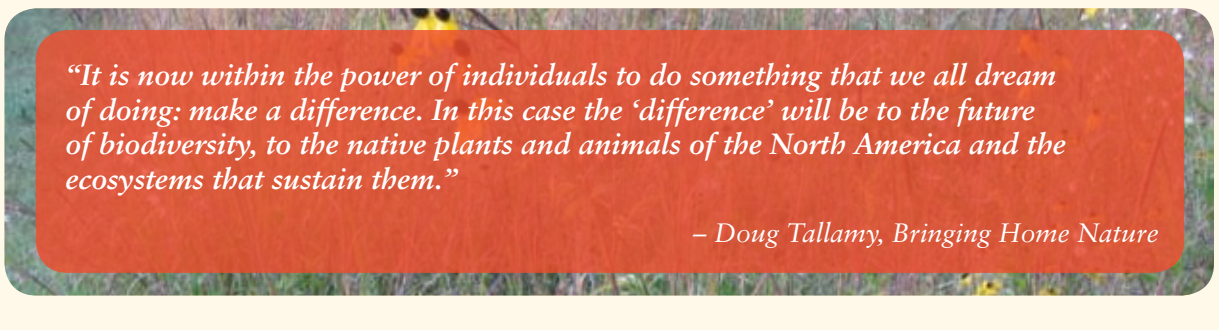
Straight lines of trees along a field edge may show where there was clearing for a road, or they may be trees that were planted as a shelterbelt to block wind. The edge might curve to follow topography or skirt around a wetland. The old shelterbelts planted by WCD have straight lines, and ninety-degree angles to surround the windy sides of farmsteads.

Dense, dark trees are likely to be evergreens. They provide a distinct "wall" effect, making them useful for delineating property boundaries. As the evergreens grow, routine mowing along their edges often ceases, and the residual plant life emerges in an understory — sometimes buckthorn, but sometimes oak and aspen.

Deciduous forests have a varied appearance, with splotches of shades of grayish brown among the green. This rough pattern shows the leaf and branching systems of dominant trees. Oaks hold a dense canopy of leaves late into the year, while aspens have a thinner layer. Tall, regal cottonwoods may rise above the rest of the forest, and can even cast a shadow onto the forest top. Large contiguous forests have the potential to harbor forest interior birds, which include different species than those that thrive in narrow bands of trees.

"Trees are a long-term investment on the land," said WCD's Jyneen Thatcher. "Whether they are planted with the intention of harvesting them in the future, for bird habitat in the next decade, shade next summer or just to build memories of today, they add to the overall image of Washington County." So take out your order form and get ready to plant some trees!

Air photos offer a great view of evergreens (dark green) and deciduous trees (grayish) on the landscape.



"It is now within the power of individuals to do something that we all dream of doing: make a difference. In this case the 'difference' will be to the future of biodiversity, to the native plants and animals of the North America and the ecosystems that sustain them."

– Doug Tallamy, Bringing Home Nature

Your Last Chance to Buy WCD Trees!

Since 1975, WCD has been selling low-cost tree seedlings to county residents for planting to support wildlife, shelter farm fields and add to the health of our landscape. Over the years we have worked hard on reforestation across the county, with our staff planting 97,000 trees in one year alone.

The white oak has 518 larval insects to offer, making it a great option for people looking to provide food for birds, bees and butterflies.

Today, while tree planting remains vitally important, a change in state law will be closing the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources' nurseries, our main source of affordable seedlings. For this reason, our popular tree sale will end after this year.

As you will see in the enclosed tree order form, WCD's final tree sale will have a great variety of bare-root trees available in bundles of twenty-five per species. (Landowners interested in 500 or more trees have one last year to order directly from www.dnr.state.mn.us.)

When choosing a tree species, think carefully about your goals, advises WCD's Natural Resources Specialist Wendy Griffin. "Choosing species that have a high insect biodiversity, for example, will help birds find food in the winter months, and provide bird, bee and butterfly food in the spring and summer," she said.

Even though the tree sale is ending, WCD will continue to provide advice and assistance to landowners interested in planning a field windbreak or wildlife planting. For more information contact Wendy at 651-275-1136, ext. 24.

Tree order form enclosed.

ORDER EARLY FOR THE BEST SELECTION!

It's time for WCD's annual (and final) tree seedling sale! Take a look at the enclosed tree order form and submit it early for the best selection. Each tree seedling is 18-24 inches long, including the root. We are offering primarily native species except for two, Norway spruce and lilac, which are popular because they provide shelter and cover to wildlife in the winter. Trees will be available for pickup the last weekend in April 2013.

STAFF UPDATE

WCD welcomes Jed Chesnut, who will be working with us on wetlands and Best Management Practices (BMP) projects. Jed has a biology degree from Carroll College in Montana and a master of science degree in taxonomy and biodiversity from the Imperial College of London. He most recently worked as a private consultant assisting communities with natural resource projects and wetland permitting. Jed enjoys most outdoor activities — don't be surprised if you meet him hiking with his family (including daughter Maddie) in local parks.

SUPERVISOR NEWS

Supervisors for all Soil and Water Conservation Districts, including the Washington Conservation District, are up for election in November 2012. For candidate information, visit www.maswcd.org

Washington Conservation District (WCD)
Board of Supervisors
Bob Rosenquist, District 1
Sarah Hietpas, District 2
John Rheinberger, District 3
Louise Smallidge, District 4
Jim Levitt, District 5

Office Staff
Call us at 651-275-1136 or visit the staff page of our website – www.mnwcd.org – for e-mail addresses.
Jay Riggs, District Manager, ext. 20
Shari Larkin, Administrative Assistant, ext. 27
Erik Anderson, Water Resource Specialist, ext. 32
Amy Husveth, Natural Resource Specialist/ MSCWMO Administrator, ext. 22
Jed Chesnut, Wetland Specialist, ext.25
Matt Downing, Senior Water Resource Technician, ext. 29
Wendy Griffin, Natural Resource Specialist, ext. 24
Angie Hong, Water Resource Education Specialist, ext. 35
Karen Kill, Brown's Creek Watershed District Administrator, ext. 26
Adam King, Water Resource Technician, ext. 23
Tara Kline, Natural Resource BMP Technician, ext 28
Andy Schilling, Watershed Restoration Technician, ext. 43
Rusty Schmidt, Natural Resource Specialist, ext. 36
Jyneen Thatcher, Natural Resource Specialist, ext. 37
Jessica Thiel, Senior Water Resource/GIS Technician, ext. 30
Katie Wigen, Water Resource Technician, ext. 44
District Engineer, ext. 21

IT'S TIME TO ORDER TREES!

ORDER FORM ENCLOSED.

WCD

Were you wishing you had more shade last summer? Looking for more protection from wind now? Maybe you need to plant a few dozen trees or shrubs.

Washington Conservation District
1380 West Frontage Road, Hwy 36
Stillwater, Minnesota 55082

NON-PROFIT
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CONSERVATION CONNECTIONS FALL 2012

PARTNERS IN CONSERVATION

Anne and Kevin Bisgaard

Many Washington County residents own land that is bigger than a typical subdivision, but smaller than a hobby farm. When landowners make improvements to these five or six-acre properties, it can make a big difference in the health of our county. Anne and Kevin Bisgaard are great examples of landowners that are plugging away on environmental improvements.

Soon after they purchased their rural residence, Anne and Kevin started tinkering with it. They heard about our tree seedling program, and ordered a few bundles to plant at the edge of the clearing, near the house site. They ordered more the next year. Mostly, they purchased evergreens to complement the surrounding oak and aspen woods.

In 1995, the Bisgaards became aware of buckthorn, and have been working to control it ever since. After years of girdling, pulling and stump treatment, Kevin purchased a tractor and brush-hog. With power equipment, "life changed," says Anne. They have been able to get ahead of the buckthorn invasion, and by mowing the area twice each year, they have kept the understory clear. The battle isn't over yet, but they have begun to plant additional shrubs and evergreen seedlings to complete the forest strata. The ground layer is rebounding in native wildflowers, including jack-in-the-pulpits, wood anemone, bedstraw, violets and woodland sedges.

Anne and Kevin bought a rain barrel last spring and are already contemplating their next project. It may be a prairie patch, a shrub thicket or more Charlie Brown trees to be shared with family. "It's always fun to experiment," said Kevin, "even if you don't know what to expect."

While some WCD partners are conducting big projects that receive regional and even national attention, we are also very proud of landowners like the Bisgaards who are out working to make a difference on their rural residential lot. Thank you and keep up the great work!

WCD

As part of their improvement efforts, the Bisgaards plant tree seedlings in a holding bed with just the right amount of sunlight. This strategy allows the trees to grow for a few more years before being transplanted to their permanent location.

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Focus on Farmland Improvements

John and Vickie Dotolo have made important improvements to their Scandia-area farmland, reducing erosion and preventing sediment from flowing into a St. Croix River tributary. With staff leadership from WCD, in partnership with the Board of Water and Soil Resources and the Carnelian-Marine-St. Croix Watershed District, they installed two large projects that effectively stabilize the upper half-mile of an area dominated by row crops. Both sites are visible from Highway 95 in Scandia. The Dotolos have demonstrated that, even in a growing metropolitan area, agricultural conservation practices are still an important part of the overall efforts to protect and restore water quality.

Fall Events Calendar

Tuesday, Oct. 23, 8am-noon Snow and Ice Control Workshop for Contractors $30
Learn snow and ice control basic for parking lots and sidewalks to minimize cost, maximize effectiveness and protect water resources. Information on application rates, equipment calibration and more. Contact: Louise Watson 651-792-7956, louise.watson@rwmwd.org.

Saturday, Oct. 27, 9am-noon Annual Buckthorn Pull at Bailey School Forest in Newport
Meet neighbors, help remove buckthorn and learn about resources for buckthorn removal and clean water projects on your own land. Contact: Newport City Hall 651-459-5677.

Saturday, Feb. 23, 9am-3pm Horse Workshop
Join us at the Washington County Fairgrounds to learn about equine nutrition, hoof care, pasture and land management and other topics. See www.mnwcd.org for registration information and other details.

? Conservation Quiz ¿

WCD

What is this?

A. Typical seedlings from our annual sale
B. A forest in a bag or box
C. One way to stabilize the land
D. All of the above

Answer: D. Typical seedlings from our sales are small enough for easy planting at a reasonable cost, but large enough to form the start of a forest within a relatively short time. Wherever they are planted, they will provide soil stabilization and wildlife habitat.