

# **Benton Soil and Water Conservation District**

## **2009 Annual Plan of Work**



## **Introduction**

It is the mission of the Benton Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD) to protect and enhance Benton County's soil, water, and other natural resources; to nurture a conservation ethic by educating county residents on conservation and environmental issues.

The Benton Soil and Water Conservation District Annual Plan is prepared so that goals can be set to utilize public funds effectively in order to improve water quality, water quantity, control erosion, improve soil condition and wildlife habitat in Benton County, and plan the workload of the staff.

The Benton SWCD has adopted the Comprehensive Local Water Management Plan as the SWCD's Comprehensive Plan. The plan was updated in 2008.

Significant events that affect the 2009 work plan include:

- Benton SWCD will continue to coordinate the Comprehensive Local Water Plan in 2009.
- We will continue to provide assistance to the Elk River Watershed Association by providing support for the Elk River Watershed Priority Lakes II (Phosphorus Reduction) 319 grant.
- The district will complete the Little Rock Creek impaired waters stressor identification report by June 30, 2009. We anticipate entering into a contract with the MPCA to begin phase III of this TMDL project in 2009. Phase III includes the writing of the TMDL for the stream.
- The Little Rock Lake TMDL study will continue in 2009 as outlined on our contract with the MPCA.
- TMDL studies for Mayhew Lake, Big Elk Lake and the Elk River immediately below Big Elk Lake will continue in 2009. Although Big Elk Lake and the Elk River segment are located in Sherburne County, their watersheds extend into Benton County. Work in 2009 will include phase II items, primarily water quality data collection and stakeholder meetings. The watershed coordinator, a shared position between Benton and Sherburne SWCD's, will manage these activities.
- The US Congress passed a new farm bill in 2008. We anticipate that the rules for conservation programs will be completed in 2009 and we will be assisting the USDA with implementation of those conservation programs. We expect to dedicate a significant amount of resources towards these programs in 2009.
- We received Clean Water Legacy grant continuation funding from BWSR to continue to provide technical assistance for low cost feedlot and manure management practices in 2009. We will dedicate one staff person towards this initiative.

## Annual Objectives

### **Feedlot and Manure Management**

Goal 1: Reduce or minimize the negative impact of animal manure and fertilizer on surface and groundwater.

Objective 1: Increase adoption of feedlot site Best Management Practices (BMPs)

Action Items:

1. Host field days, meetings, publish written material, etc.
2. Recruit participants through non-traditional methods, i.e., on farm visits
3. Support compliance with MN Rule 7020 and other regulations related to water quality
4. Promote low cost feedlot solutions
5. Demonstrate economic, environmental, and other benefits of BMP adoption
6. Promote and advertise pasture/grazing management planning
7. Identify and work with non-compliant farms to install BMP's

Objective 2: Increase adoption of manure and fertilizer application Best Management Practices (BMPs)

Action Items:

1. Provide basic manure management tools and services, i.e. spreader calibration, manure and soil testing, spreading equipment, etc.
2. Conduct demonstration trial plots and other on farm educational work with producers in cooperation with private/public entities
3. Host field days, meetings, publish written material, etc.
4. Demonstrate economic, environmental, and other benefits of BMP adoption
5. Recruit participants through non-traditional methods, i.e., on farm visits
6. Support compliance with MN Rule 7020 and other regulations related to water quality
7. Promote and advertise pasture/grazing management planning
8. Promote adoption of manure management BMP's targeting efforts on dairy and poultry manure and/or land areas of highest concern

Objective 3: Increase the adoption of improved manure handling, pasture management, and other BMPs related to water quality with small non-traditional hobby/enterprise farm operators

Action Items

1. Promote and advertise pasture/grazing management planning
2. Partner with other entities who provide programs and services to this audience to adopt BMPs

Objective 4: Resolve feedlot regulation/delegation issue

Action Item:

1. Host exploratory meetings regarding the feedlot delegation topic

## **Development**

Goal 1: Balance open space and development in Benton County in such a way as to maintain and/or improve the region's water quality.

Objective 1: Develop a natural resources inventory that identifies rare/critical/vulnerable resources relating to water quality.

Action Items:

1. Continue to assist in the development of a geologic atlas.
2. Continue to promote the use of the new digital web soil survey as it relates to development.
3. Support the Mississippi River Coordinator (Stearns SWCD employee) provide technical and coordination expertise in the Mississippi River Renaissance area in order to protect this vital stretch of the Mississippi River through conservation and development projects.

## **Groundwater**

Goal 1: Protect and maintain groundwater quality resources

Objective 1: Maintain/promote existing cooperative partnerships that monitor groundwater

Action Items:

1. Support Department of Agriculture Central Sands Monitoring Network
2. Continue to offer free nitrate testing.

Objective 2: Develop and implement Wellhead Protection Plans (WHPA) for all public/community water supplies in County

1. Work with partners to educate landowners within the WHPA (BMPs)
2. Promote federal and state programs (EQIP, State Cost Share, MDA Low Interest Loan Program, Etc.) to install BMP's (irrigation water management, abandoned well sealing, septic system upgrades, etc.) in WPA's

Objective 3: Develop plan to eliminate unused wells

Action Items:

1. Promote and utilize cost share programs to seal unused wells

Goal 2: Protect and maintain groundwater quantity resources

Objective 1: Establish relationships between Benton County Local Government Units (LGUs) for water resource sharing and protection

Action Items:

1. Continue to monitor groundwater levels.
2. Work with municipalities and agricultural community to conserve water use & implement BMP's

Objective 2: Assist in the development of the County Geologic Atlas

Action Item:

1. Work with appropriate entities to identify aquifer thresholds to maintain adequate water supply for consumptive use
2. Maintain surface water resources (i.e. lakes, rivers, wetlands)

**Ongoing Activities**

Goal 1: Provide support to the Elk River Watershed Association

Action Items:

1. Participate in board meetings
2. Assist with administration of the 319 grant program. Educate landowners about available programs and assist with the installation of BMP's (manure/nutrient management, riparian pasture management, wetland restoration/enhancements)
3. Assist with new TMDL development.
4. Provide support to the Watershed Coordinator employee.

Goal 2: Continue the Little Rock Creek TMDL study

Action Items:

1. Continue working through the stressor identification process as outlined in the contract with the MPCA.
  - a. General project administration
  - b. Coordinate Technical Advisory Committee meetings
  - c. Coordinate Stakeholder meetings
  - d. Assemble the stressor identification document and report
2. Move forward with phase III of the Little Rock Creek TMDL study.
  - a. To be determined when the stressor identification report is completed

Goal 3: Continue the Little Rock Lake TMDL study

Action Items:

1. Provide general administration and other items identified in the MPCA contract for the nutrient impairment study.

Goal 4: Provide Environmental Education

Action Items:

1. A committee will meet to identify changes to our education program.

2. Provide environmental education as identified by the education committee
3. Continue to provide coordination of the poster, essay and mural contest to 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> grade students in Benton County
4. Continue to support Sherburne Environmental Education Days for Benton County students at the Sherburne National Wildlife Refuge.

Goal 5: Support the Wetlands Conservation Act

Action Items:

1. Provide technical support for the wetlands conservation act. Serve as a member of the Technical Evaluation Panel, complete plans for restoration orders, assist in wildlife habitat improvement exemptions.

Goal 6: Strengthen conservation partnerships with other LGU's, agencies and groups.

Action Items:

1. Assist the DNR Waters with the Water Appropriation Permit Review Program
2. Assist NRCS in the promotion and administration of USDA's programs
3. Assist Little Rock Lake Association in addressing their resource needs
4. Assist the State Climatologist in gathering precipitation data for the Rainfall Monitoring Program
5. Cooperate with the cities in Benton County in implementing their Wellhead Protection Programs
6. Assist US Fish and Wildlife Service to implement wetland restoration projects

**Staffing Needs**

**SWCD Staff**

<b>Staff</b>	<b>Title</b>	<b>Primary Responsibilities</b>	<b>Area of Emphasis</b>	
			<b>Technical</b>	<b>Admin.</b>
Annie Felix	Water Plan Technician	Local Water Plan, WCA, Little Rock TMDL's	0.3	0.7
Pam Kuhn	Program Assistant	Administrative, Clerical	0.0	1.0
Gerry Maciej	Manager	Administrative, BMP's	0.1	0.9
Mike McMillin	Technician	BMP's; Feedlots, Manure and Nutrient Management	1.0	0.0
Katie Evans	Technician	BMP's; Wetlands, Soil Erosion, Pasture Mgt.	1.0	0.0
<b>Staff Years</b>		<b>5.0 Available</b>	<b>2.4</b>	<b>2.6</b>

### NRCS Staff

Staff	Title	Primary Responsibilities	Area of Emphasis	
			Technical	Admin.
Pat Gehling	District Conservationist	NRCS Program Admin., BMP's	0.5	0.5
Barb Zeroth	Soil Conservation Technician	BMP's	1.0	0.0
<b>Staff Years</b>		<b>2.0 Available</b>	<b>1.5</b>	<b>0.5</b>

### Other Staff

Staff	Title	Primary Responsibilities	Area of Emphasis	
			Technical	Admin.
Tiffany Determan	Watershed Coordinator	Elk River Watershed TMDL's, BMP's	0.1	0.65
Ross Reiffenberger	TSA 2 Professional Engineer	Conservation practice survey and design	0.15	0.0
Nathan Hylla	TSA 2 Technician	Conservation practice survey and design	0.1	0.0
Kimberly Theilen-Cremers	Mississippi River Coordinator	Mississippi River Renaissance project	0.2	0.2
<b>Staff Years</b>		<b>1.4 Available</b>	<b>0.55</b>	<b>0.85</b>

### State Cost-Share Program Requirements

#### A. High Priority erosion & water quality problems

"High priority erosion problems" means areas where erosion from wind or water is occurring:

- equal to or in excess of 2 x T tons per acre per year or
- is occurring on any area that exhibits active gully erosion or
- is riparian in location or
- is identified as high priority in the comprehensive local water plan.

"High priority water quality problems" means areas where sediment, nutrients, chemicals, or other pollutants discharge to DNR designated protected waters or to any high priority waters as identified in a comprehensive local water management plan or ground water. Little Rock, Mayhew and Big Elk lakes have been identified as impaired due to excessive nutrients therefore practices in these watersheds are considered a high priority. Little Rock and Mayhew Creeks are impaired for biota therefore practices in these watersheds are considered a high priority. All identified wellhead protection areas are considered a high priority.

The Benton SWCD will dedicate \$16,695 in State Cost Share dollars to the implement practices in Benton County. The remainder (20%) will be used for technical and administrative assistance.

**B. Special Projects**

Installing native buffers with species of local origin has been identified as a special project for 2009. Projects located in the Little Rock Lake watershed have been given higher priority.

By June of 2009 the district will run out of Clean Water Legacy cost share dedicated solely to installing low cost feedlot improvement practices. The district will seek out additional sources of funding for these projects. If other sources are not obtained, implementing these practices with State Cost Share funds will be a priority.

**2009 Operating Budget**

**Revenue**

Charges For Services	\$47,710
County (including pass through grant dollars)	\$175,257
State	\$114,731
Federal	\$5,000
Miscellaneous	\$11,800
Total Operating Revenue	\$354,498

**Expenses**

Personal Expenses	\$285,173
Other Services and Charges	\$57,163
Capital	\$0
Project Expenses	\$27,850
Total Operating Expenses	\$370,186

The shortfall of \$15,688 is forecasted to be paid for from the unencumbered fund balance (carry over) anticipated at the end of 2008.