



Brandon Hinderman started farming in 2003. His wife, Sarah, and their children, Ethan and Olivia, also help out on the farm near Sleepy Eye. Through the Watershed Conservation Planning Initiative, the Hindermans are working with a conservation planner to identify potential solutions for resource concerns across their farm.
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 Hinderman family

Taking a whole-farm approach to conservation, water quality



Peterson

A BWSR-NRCS collaboration, the \$3 million Watershed Conservation Planning Initiative helps producers identify resource concerns across their operation, outlines options to benefit water quality, fit budgets

The Watershed Conservation Planning Initiative is preparing producers like beef cattle and crop farmer Brandon Hinderman to implement projects when the time is right.



Carpenter

Hinderman, whose 300-acre family farm lies within the Middle Minnesota River Watershed, approached the Brown Soil & Water Conservation District about a permanent fix for a recurring gully. He agreed to a whole-farm resource assessment that gave him a comprehensive look at his conservation concerns and laid out potential solutions.



said WCPI Coordinator Mary Peterson of the Minnesota Board of Water and Soil Resources.

The three-year, \$3 million initiative brings dedicated watershed conservation planners to each of seven selected

The Hindermans grow about 300 acres of crops and raise beef cattle.



Hahn

“The client is in the door for a single resource concern. But our goal is to promote the importance of looking at all of the resource concerns on all of the fields so that together we can formulate alternatives that will benefit water quality, and will benefit groundwater, and also be economical for them to implement,”

watersheds. It encompasses 35 soil and water conservation districts within the Blue Earth, Chippewa, Lower St. Croix, Middle Minnesota, Root, Sauk and Upper Cedar watersheds.



Funding is evenly split between Clean Water Funds from BWSR, and the USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service.

"A goal of this project is to increase landowner readiness to implement conservation practices by providing science-based planning assistance during these field assessments," Peterson said.

Implementation is voluntary.

Free engineering and technical assistance is available to those who pursue projects within the three-year timeframe.

Hinderman had been seeking a solution for the gully in a field near the Minnesota River since spring 2014, when a 10-inch rain caused mudslides and opened a vein of silt. He had tried removing accumulated sediment from the basin in front of the berm his dad built 30 years ago.

"We just can't get ahead of it," Hinderman said.

This spring, Hinderman was waiting to see engineers' plans. He liked the idea of stanching the erosion higher in the watershed — one of the ideas he discussed during a January site visit with Middle Minnesota Watershed Conservation Planner Jennifer Hahn.

"If we're going to do it, it's going to be done correctly, and hopefully it should be something that should last for another 25, 30 years," Hinderman said.

Within each watershed, local work groups will determine priority areas. The resource assessment that comes from site visits will identify concerns and options, which the producer and planner will review together. Farmers within



The Hindermans raise Holstein bull calves, which they receive at 2 to 7 days old. They sell about two-thirds of the cattle once they reach 400 pounds, and finish out the rest. The operation includes 340 hutches.

Conservation Planners

The seven conservation planners, the watersheds in which they work and the SWCD office in which they are based follows.

Hannah Neusch, Blue Earth River Watershed, Martin SWCD; **Paul Hunter**, Upper Cedar River Watershed, Mower SWCD; **Ian Olson**, Chippewa River Watershed, Douglas SWCD; **Mary Jo Youngbauer**, Lower St. Croix River Watershed, Chisago SWCD; **Jennifer Hahn**, Middle Minnesota River Watershed, Redwood SWCD; **Dan Wermager**, Root River Watershed, Root River SWCD; **Tessa Zee**, Sauk River Watershed, Stearns SWCD.

the targeted watersheds have a unique opportunity to receive field- or farm-scale conservation planning assistance that meshes with their farm goals and watershed-wide objectives.

"Being able to gain that additional person

to help organize across county lines and provide that direct technical assistance to landowners is a pretty key piece and a good opportunity for NRCS and BWSR to collaborate within watersheds," said NRCS' State Water Quality Specialist Shannon Carpenter. "The end goal is to provide better customer service to landowners as a joint effort. That's our No. 1 priority."

All seven planners are on board. Working with producers in the designated watersheds, they will develop a total of 700 conservation plans.

Since she started on Oct. 1, Hahn has completed 25 conservation plans, met with 52 producers and completed more than 40 site visits. She works with producers within locally prioritized areas of the eight-county Middle Minnesota Watershed, where soil erosion, water quality, and water storage tend to be farmers' top concerns

Based in Brown County and hosted by Redwood SWCD, Hahn had worked with producers in Redwood, Renville, Cottonwood and Brown counties during her 12 years with NRCS.

A few years ago, she worked with the Hindermans on a manure storage facility. In January, they discussed the washouts, and talked about replacing a battered windbreak with a more diverse grove.

"My dad and I know the lay of the land. We know where our issues are. You (might) have somebody else who comes out here and doesn't really listen to your issues or take your point of view into consideration. I just felt like when (Hahn) came out that we were on the same page and could get something finalized," Hinderman said.



BWSR

The Minnesota Board of Water and Soil Resources' mission is to improve and protect Minnesota's water and soil resources by working in partnership with local organizations and private landowners.
Website: www.bwsr.state.mn.us.



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