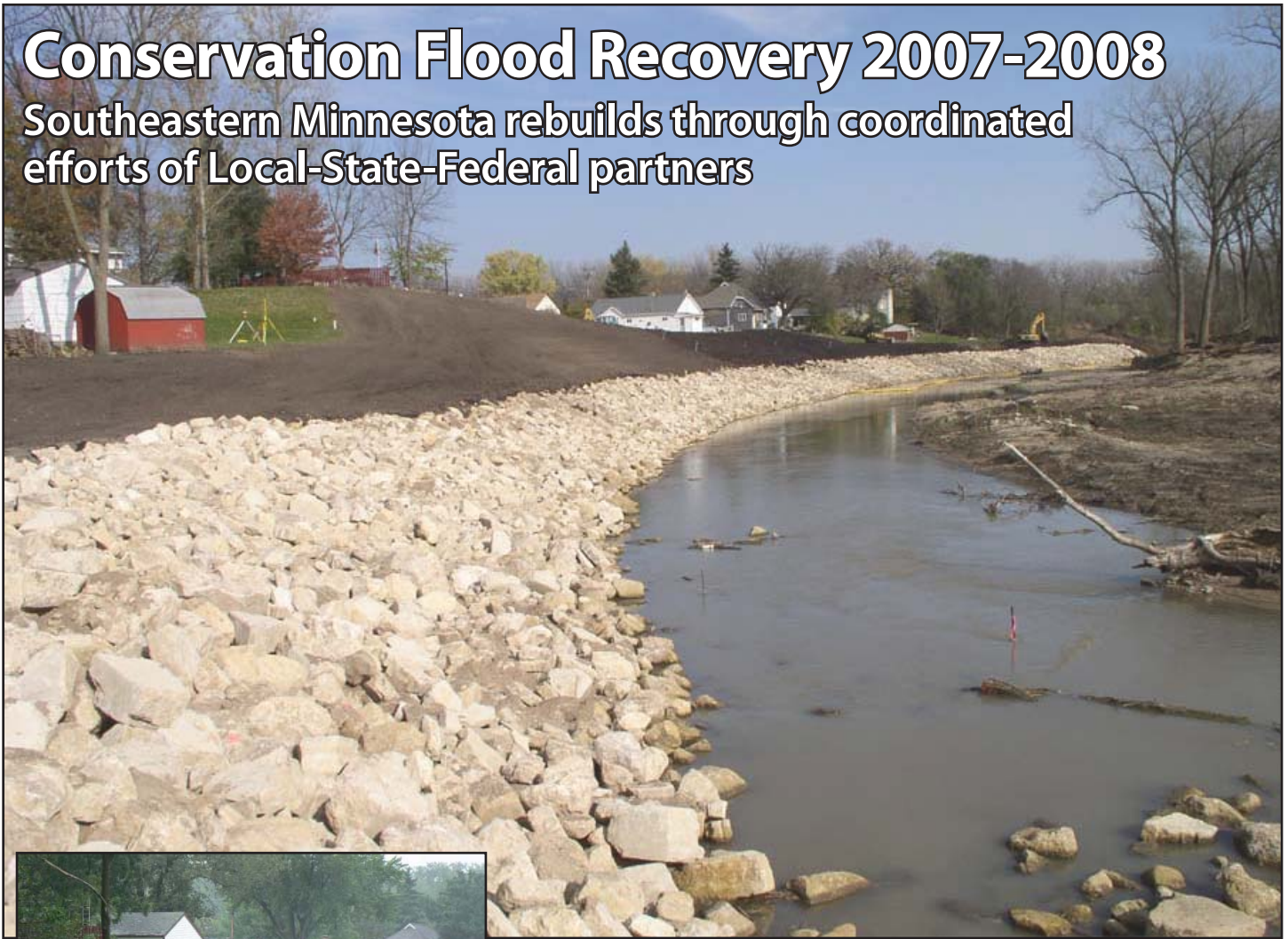


Conservation Flood Recovery 2007-2008

Southeastern Minnesota rebuilds through coordinated efforts of Local-State-Federal partners

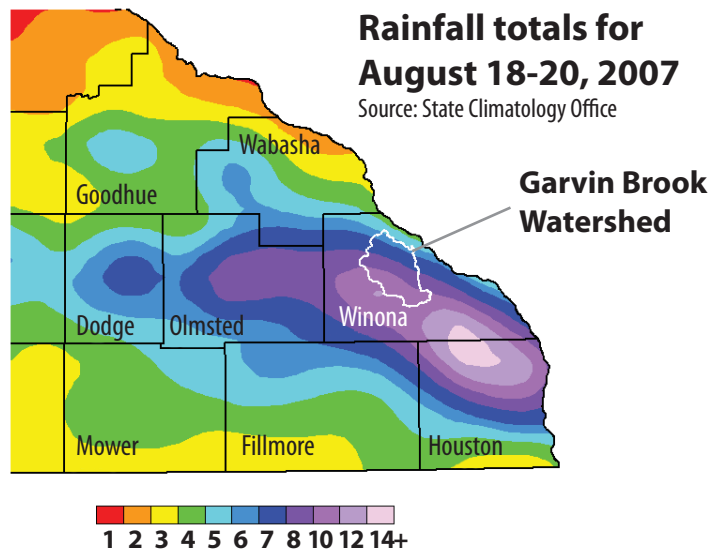


1 August 2007: Garvin Brook, in Minnesota City, Winona County.



2 September 2007: State and federal funding is authorized, and project is underway.

3 October 2007: A streambank stabilization project on Garvin Brook in Minnesota City was completed less than three months after one of the most severe flooding events in Minnesota history. Estimated cost was \$631,000, including \$473,000 in federal funding through USDA Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) + \$158,000 state through the Board of Water and Soil Resources. SE Minnesota received 8-20 inches of rain over three days, including more than 15 inches of rain in 24 hours in some areas. This is the largest total ever recorded by an official of the National Weather Service reporting location in Minnesota.



Conservation partners respond

A 7-county area in SE Minnesota was devastated by a greater-than-100-year flooding event in August 2007. Part of this area was again flooded in June 2008. Recovery response was swift, thanks in part to Minnesota's coordinated approach to conservation. Good working relationships already were in place among local, state and federal entities involved in the recovery effort.

Local

Soil and Water Conservation Districts (SWCDs) work directly with landowners to promote voluntary conservation programs, and they provide technical services to get projects on the ground. Each SWCD works cooperatively with local USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) staff. NRCS and SWCD staff in the disaster-declared counties were essentially first responders -- their technical expertise and connections with community landowners made them uniquely positioned to lead the damage assessment and recovery efforts. Other local government partners have worked closely with SWCDs, including the cities of Stockton, Rollingstone and Minnesota City, and the Crooked Creek Watershed District. Cities, counties and townships also contributed staff and resources to the recovery.



State

The Board of Water and Soil Resources (BWSR) works with local government units, federal agencies and other organizations to leverage dollars and channel financial, technical and administrative assistance to the local level. BWSR management and field staff worked with other conservation partners and elected officials to secure funding and to provide technical and administrative assistance to SWCDs to get projects completed efficiently and effectively.



Federal

The USDA NRCS leads the Emergency Watershed Program (EWP) effort, and the **USDA Farm Service Agency (FSA)** leads the Emergency Conservation Program. NRCS staff worked with counties, cities and townships to document emergency erosion measures and identify sites for EWP federal funding. Through this funding and the expertise of NRCS staff, debris was removed from stream channels and several priority projects were completed to remove threats to life and property in the aftermath of the flood. NRCS also administers the EQIP program, which has brought additional federal funds to SE Minnesota for installing and repairing conservation practices on privately owned lands.

Timeline

August 2007

August 23, federal disaster declared for Dodge, Fillmore, Houston, Olmsted, Steele, Winona and Wabasha counties. Disaster response is coordinated by the MN Recovers Task Force, which consists of 17 state and federal agencies, including BWSR.

SWCD and NRCS staff and local officials begin to assess flood damage and estimate conservation funding needs.

September 2007

Gov. Tim Pawlenty calls Legislature into Special Session and authorizes nearly \$148 million for flood recovery, including \$4 million for BWSR.

BWSR/LGU meet in Rochester to plan conservation-related strategies.

BWSR approves SE MN Flood Relief Resolution based on SWCDs' input for prioritizing project fixes and rule waivers needed to get the work done. BWSR provides \$650,000 to SWCDs to begin project repairs.

October 2007

MN Recovers Task Force receives \$12 million in requests for sedimentation/soil erosion control.

SWCD/BWSR staff develop RIM program guidelines for permanent easements on flood-damaged riparian lands.

BWSR staff coordinate a Garvin Brook Watershed meeting as requested by Rep. Steve Drazkowski. Local leadership request watershed-planning assistance from NRCS.

BWSR allocates additional state funds.

November 2007

House Wetlands, Watersheds and Buffers Subcommittee tour flood-damaged areas, guided by Root River SWCD staff in Houston County.

Conservation partners meet and submit application to MN Recovers Task Force for additional engineering and technical staff.

About 70 people attend public information meeting in Stockton on watershed management options.

December 2007

Newly formed Garvin Brook Steering Committee meets to discuss watershed goals with conservation partners.

SWCD/NRCS staff conduct "after harvest" assessment of flood damage repair needs and assist landowners in applying for federal and state programs.

Status report of projects completed, current workload and emerging issues presented at BWSR board meeting.

January 2008

A total of \$1.8 Million already allocated to SWCDs for conservation flood recovery.

SWCDs submit 56 landowner applications for enrolling over 1,376 acres and requesting \$3.6 million of RIM funds.

Governor provides legislature with funding/policy changes needed for flood recovery.

BWSR approves Clean Water Legacy Program funds of \$51,700 for MN Conservation Corps work in flood damaged areas.

State funds for conservation

As of September 2008, the state of Minnesota has spent \$5.6 million toward conservation projects, and a federal match of \$1.6 million is anticipated. Additional state funding for permanent conservation easements in flood-prone areas was appropriated by the Legislature and Gov. Tim Pawlenty in 2008.

SE Flood Relief Cost-Share Funds

\$3 million for the Conservation Cost-Share program to restore and repair conservation practices on privately owned lands, including projects that control feedlot runoff, repair septic systems, or reduce soil erosion from cropland or riparian areas. Expenses related to debris removal have also been paid with this funding.

\$725,000 (\$450,000 available in FY 2009, \$275,000 available in FY 2010) supplemental budget in 2008.

\$1.85 million from the Department of Employment and Economic Development was transferred to BWSR to use for conservation projects. Some of these dollars will be used to hire engineering staff on a temporary basis.

\$51,700 from a BWSR Clean Water Legacy grant to pay for the Minnesota Conservation Corps to work in partnership with the Winona SWCD, Crooked Creek Watershed District, and the Root River SWCD.

Total grant funds:	\$5.615 M
Engineering staff / subcontracts	- \$1.278 M
Grants available to SWCDs	= \$4.337 M
Expenditures to date:	
Completed/Active Projects	\$2.198 M
Obligated as per assessments	\$2.139 M

Easements

\$2.1 million (\$1 million from the 2007 session and \$1.1 million from previous appropriations) available to pay for conservation easements through the Reinvest In Minnesota (RIM) Reserve program. BWSR received 56 applications totaling over \$3.6 million. Also, a new native buffer cost-share program has provided dollars that are being used to enhance these RIM lands for diversity of native vegetation.

Technical Assistance

Experienced staff with the technical expertise to design and build these projects has made Minnesota's flood recovery efficient and effective, however, **weather conditions, contractor availability, and the tremendous workload for engineering and technical staff have been obstacles.**

In response to the collective requests of SWCDs in the disaster-declared counties, BWSR has hired a Project Engineer and an Engineering Technician to assist SWCDs, NRCS and FSA to investigate, design and install engineering practices for erosion control and water quality for the next 2-plus years. BWSR is also in the process of hiring one more engineering technician for this conservation partnership effort in SE Minnesota.

February 2008	March 2008	April 2008	May 2008	June 2008	July - September
<p>Legislature hears testimony from Winona SWCD regarding flood disaster and recovery.</p> <p>Conservation partners continue technical assistance and conservation planning to landowners in preparation for spring.</p> <p>Rudy Spitzer, Chairman of the Winona SWCD board of supervisors, testified before a legislative subcommittee during a tour of SE Minnesota, and also testified during the legislative session in St. Paul.</p>	<p>BWSR/NRCS/SWCD implementation meeting held to reaffirm short/long term engineering needs and to plan spring construction workloads.</p>	<p>Forum on SE flood's implications for natural resource management draws 150-plus resource professionals and local officials.</p> <p>Work continues on repair projects and damage assessment.</p>	<p>Legislature and Gov. Pawlenty provide:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • \$725,000 for flood recovery • 2-year extension for using existing funds • SE disaster counties have priority for additional RIM funds • BWSR Native Buffer Cost-Share program funds allocated to SWCDs in flood-damaged counties <p>BWSR/NRCS/SWCD makes plans for hiring BWSR SE engineer and two civil engineering technicians to increase technical capacity.</p>	<p>DEED authorizes transfer of \$1.89 million to BWSR for conservation practices and engineering staff.</p> <p>NRCS presents preliminary conclusions on Garvin Brook Watershed assessment and steering committee looks at alternatives.</p> <p>Flooding again causes major damage in disaster-declared counties, and in Mower and Freeborn counties.</p> <p>NRCS EWP and EQIP sign-up begin for 2008 flood damaged sites.</p>	<p>\$3.2 million of additional repair needs documented by SWCDs through August. Over 70 sites have been damaged as a result of the June 2008 flood event.</p> <p>Conservation partners coordinate federal EWP/EQIP and state funds to maximize flood recovery.</p> <p>BWSR sends additional state cost-share allocations to SWCDs for flood recovery.</p> <p>BWSR engineering staff hired. BWSR/NRCS/SWCD meet to coordinate technical workload.</p>



Highlights: 405 projects completed or underway ...

Winona SWCD

Pictured below, this buffer strip was repaired and replanted to native prairie. This area protects an important trout stream. Project costs: \$2,066.52 (\$1,352 state, \$714 federal).



The spillway of a dike was cut out (pictured above) and the repair was completed Nov. 18, 2007. This pond helps protect County Road 117 below St. Charles, a 203-acre drainage area. Project costs: \$1,755.

Project Status in the 7-county area

	Total Projects		Total Costs	
	Completed	Active	Dollars Spent	Dollars Encumbered
Pond clean out/repair	8	32	\$9,523	\$83,856
Gully repair and filter strip	20	43	\$56,405	\$163,251
Unused well sealing	85	94	\$32,850	\$75,400
Terrace/ water diversion	10	6	\$17,837	\$10,944
Grade Stabilization	15	38	\$169,002	\$201,356
Grassed Waterway	5	23	\$5,045	\$62,754
Streambank & Shoreland Protection	4	10	\$168,591	\$216,719
Water & Sediment Control Basin	2	1	\$2,633	\$2,566
Debris removal	3	3	\$2,625	\$6,453
Total	152	253	\$464,512	\$842,595

... through unprecedented financial and technical coordination

Root River SWCD (Houston County)

Pictured right: EWP and State Cost-Share funds were used to complete this project in Houston County. Total Cost: \$220,000 (EWP \$165,000, State \$55,000)

Pictured below right: A grade stabilization project on a farm in Houston County for a 400-acre drainage area. Total cost of structure and emergency spillway repair: \$3,500 (state funds \$3,280).



Fillmore SWCD

Flooding in the city of Rushford caused many wells to be contaminated. The SWCD had completed nearly half of these 177 projects through August 2008.

Fillmore SWCD also worked with a landowner who lives adjacent to Torkelson Creek, to repair a severely eroded stream bank. The lush green grass outlining this popular fishing area was severely scarred with debris deposited throughout the area. The township was replacing a nearby bridge, and the DNR Fisheries was installing rip rap below the new bridge, so it was the perfect time to restore the damaged stream bank. DNR Fisheries staff designed the rip rap plan with the bridge contractor agreeing to do the work. Trout Unlimited paid for the landowner's share of the project and plans to use this for a demonstration site. The Fillmore SWCD purchased and installed fiber blanket along the banks of the creek to reduce erosion and allow the seeding to get established faster. Total project cost: \$2,820.



Pictured: (above/right a typical sand point well project), and (lower right) a larger scale well sealing project.



Pictured right: Torkelson Creek after repair work

Flood recovery / prevention through conservation easements

On October 31, 2007, BWSR announced a special Reinvest In Minnesota (RIM) Reserve conservation easement program for disaster-declared counties in southeast Minnesota. The intent of the sign-up was to take perpetual RIM Reserve easements with willing landowners on lands damaged by the flood events this last August, and on lands that will help to reduce the impacts of future flood events.

The following lands were eligible for this program: 1) crop and non-crop lands that were damaged, 2) riparian cropland within the 100-year floodplain, 3) riparian cropland outside the 100-year floodplain if it has history of flooding, and 4) wetland restorations.

Funds for this new easement program came from a special session appropriation of \$1 million, and BWSR made available \$1.1 million from its existing bonding appropriation for a total of \$2.1million. **BWSR originally received 56 applications for a total of 1,376 acres totaling over \$3.6 million.**

BWSR received additional RIM Reserve dollars during the 2008 Legislative Session, and enrolling flood-damaged riparian lands in the next RIM signup will be a high priority.



Flood-prone riparian areas like these in Winona (top) and Houston (bottom) counties were high-priority lands for the special RIM signup.



2007 special RIM enrollment for SE Minnesota

County	Acres enrolled	Payments to Landowners	Costs to Install Practice	Total Costs
Fillmore	150*	\$318,943	\$50,250	\$369,193
Houston	280	\$618,053	\$32,650	\$650,703
Olmsted	7	\$20,208	\$2,360	\$22,568
Winona	319	\$799,564	\$136,580	\$936,144
Total	749	\$1,700,350	\$238,550	\$1,978,608

* 13 acres were donated in Fillmore County

Project highlight: St. Charles riparian buffer

The Whitewater River Watershed Project is partnering with the City of St. Charles to develop a riparian buffer plan (pictured right).

Approximately 2,600 feet of the South Branch of the Whitewater River runs through City Park in St. Charles. The riparian area through the park is currently mowed turf grass, and city officials have been excited about the idea of planting the area to native grasses and wildflowers. The city is applying for funds through the Winona Soil and Water Conservation District, for BWSR Native Buffer program funding.



Other flood-recovery highlights

Minnesota Conservation Corps

A \$51,700 Clean Water Legacy grant in 2008 was awarded to the MN Conservation Corp (MCC) to work with Winona, Root River and Fillmore SWCDs on several flood-recovery activities. Pictured: MCC crews removed debris and restored vegetation in Farmers Community Park. MCC has also worked with the Winona SWCD to develop GIS layers of ponds, waterways and streams in Winona County to help with damage assessments and watershed modeling of the Garvin Brook watershed. In Fillmore County, MCC is working with the SWCD to conduct an inventory of road culverts for water management planning.



Federal dollars leveraged

Total EWP Funds spent to-date \$973,916
 Additional approved EWP projects in the works \$725,500

2008 EQIP Flood Assistance

to Dodge, Fillmore, Freeborn, Houston, Mower, Olmsted, Steele, Wabasha and Winona counties

Practices	Total Costs	
	Dollars Spent	Dollars Encumbered
Gully repair and filter strip	\$3,016	\$23,628
Unused well sealing	\$2,386	\$22,071
Terrace/ water diversion	\$21,300	\$76,682
Grade Stabilization	\$8,356	\$279,925
Grassed Waterway	\$11,152	\$61,335
Streambank & Shoreland Protection	\$52,313	\$52,313
Water & Sediment Control Basin	\$14,559	\$49,500
Debris removal	\$7,141	\$47,308
Total	\$120,223	\$612,762



Winona SWCD representatives and residents toured projects during the SWCD's 70th Anniversary event. Pictured is a project to repair a grade stabilization structure on an area farm.

Total estimated cost of the project is \$19,750, which includes \$7,547 from EQIP and State Conservation Cost-Share paying \$12,230.

Ongoing assessment indicates demand for technical assistance

The following projects and cost estimates have been reported as of Sept. 4, 2008. SWCD/NRCS field staff continue to conduct site assessments and cost estimates to determine reasonable fixes, priority for state funds and leveraging federal program funds. These assessment numbers are a snapshot in time and will continue to evolve as technical assistance is delivered to the landowners.

SWCDs have staff with Technical Approval Authority (TAA) for some projects. **The #In need of engineering indicates projects that require the SWCD to work with an engineer, either through the USDA NRCS or a private firm.** BWSR has hired three full-time employees to provide technical assistance for SE Minnesota flood recovery projects.

# Projects To Be Completed						
	Total Projects	August 2007 event	June 2008 event**	# Within TAA Capacity of SWCD	# In need of engineering	
Dodge	3	3	0	0	3	\$88,000
Fillmore*	15	0	15	11	5	\$68,000
Mower	13	0	13	0	13	--
Olmsted *	18	18	0	5	13	\$100,000
Root River*	94	51	43	29	65	\$1,305,350
Wabasha*	14	14	0	0	14	\$698,700
Winona	144	144	0	111	33	\$1,008,053
Total	301	230	71	156	146	\$3,268,103

*Preliminary cost estimates have been completed on 25% of projects.

** BWSR does not have the authority to fund these projects. Existing SE flood relief funds are for the August 2007 event.

Types of Projects To Be Completed

SWCD	Civilian Conservation Corps Project Repair	Vegetation establishment for erosion control	Debris Removal	Grade Stabilization	Gully Washout	Pond Cleanout/repair	Sinkholes	Streambank Stabilization	Diversion/Terrace Repair	Waterway Repair	Driveway Washouts	Total
Dodge								3				3
Fillmore			10	1				1		2	1	15
Mower					12			1				13
Olmsted			1	7	3				4	3		18
Root River		13	5	12	6	14	1	22	6	11	4	94
Wabasha								14				14
Winona	1	1			16	51	8	27	17	24	1	144
	1	9	23	20	30	77	9	74	26	46	6	301



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