

Celebrating a major milestone in Fillmore County

October 2017 Snapshots

A major milestone in conservation delivery was celebrated this year in southeast Minnesota. The Fillmore Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD) had their 75th Anniversary.

The first SWCD in Fillmore County was organized in 1940, but only encompassed the eastern half of the county. It was two years later in 1942 that the western SWCD was created, which marked the beginning of soil conservation for all of Fillmore County. It wasn't until 1962 that the two Districts merged to form the Fillmore SWCD as it is known today.

Donna Rasmussen, Fillmore SWCD District Manager, says historically the District was able to provide a more active outreach program, with frequent one-on-one meetings with landowners to assist with conservation planning. One reason for this is the District has had to adapt from relatively few programs initially to a complex system of funding sources and programs to administer. The District's focus has also changed over the years.

"We are now looking into a whole farm approach, including things like nutrient management and soil health, versus just soil erosion." Rasmussen said.



BWSR Executive Director John Jaschke presents Fillmore SWCD Board Chair Travis Wilford with a plaque commemorating the SWCD's 75th Anniversary.



Dan Nath, NRCS Soil Scientist, and Dean Thomas, Area Soil Health Technician, conduct a rainfall simulator demonstration.

Among a myriad of special events and programs throughout the year, the SWCD also held a conservation tour and banquet in June to bring together past and present staff, board supervisors, local partners, and citizens to celebrate 75 years of conservation in Fillmore County.

Tour stops included an overview of the history and current status of the East Willow Creek Flood Control Project, a visit to the Root River Field To Stream Partnership Project's edge-of-field monitoring site in the Crystal Creek subwatershed, and a discussion by the Department of Natural Resources and Minnesota

Geologic Survey staff on how the local geology influences the water quality in this karst landscape.

Highlights from the banquet included several demonstrations on recent SWCD programs and projects, including a rainfall simulator that compares soil erosion and infiltration under conventional tillage, reduced tillage, managed grazing, and other land management practices. The program also featured a panel of current and former staff and board supervisors talking about how conservation has changed over the years in this part of Minnesota. Both the Minnesota Association of Soil and Water Conservation Districts and the Minnesota Board of Water and Soil Resources (BWSR) recognized the SWCD for their continued service to natural resource stewardship in Fillmore County.

When asked what changes she sees coming down the road for the SWCD, Rasmussen noted that the biggest changes in recent years involves the use of technology. Examples include the use of tablets in landowner visits and water quality monitoring, as well as advances in survey equipment.

“This equipment will continue to impact how we look at our water quality long-term and hopefully see positive changes that we can relate directly back to the customers.” said Rasmussen.

The SWCD has also adopted a comprehensive watershed management plan that covers the entire Root River Watershed which, along with the use of targeting tools such as the Prioritize, Target, and Measure Application (PTMApp), will change how implementation of conservation practices in the county occurs to more of a watershed approach.

According to Rasmussen, “This type of planning across a watershed leads to more cooperation and collaboration between neighboring partners to make a larger impact on our overall goals for the watershed.”



Todd Hendrickson, Field To Stream Partnership cooperator, speaks about soil health practices on his farm adjacent to the edge-of-field monitoring station.