

CONSERVATION NEWS

MORTON COUNTY SOIL CONSERVATION DISTRICT

Volume 20, no 3



2015 Tree Planting Review

By: Adam Pachl

Well, another planting season is now behind us. This season was fun for the Morton County SCD Tree Planting Crew, if not challenging at times. Along with our new District Technician, we hired three people to fill out a four person crew. Not only did we have someone new running our tree crew, but only one of our seasonal employees had any previous experience, so the learning curve was steep.

This spring the Morton County SCD purchased a new tractor, and the first order of business was to figure out the controls and how to adjust anything that needed adjusting. After finally figuring out how to slow down the hydraulics so the tree planter did not resemble a mechanical bull, we were finally ready to plant. We were able to get to two planting sites on the first afternoon, and planted a quick 2,200 feet. We were feeling pretty good about what we were doing and were excited to get the trees in the ground, when the theme of the season showed up.

That night it rained; the next day it rained, and over that weekend it rained. It rained enough to keep us out of the field for a whole week. Through the whole season we were never able to put in one full week of uninterrupted planting without rain shutting things down for a day or so. All that moisture was greatly appreciated, but as I'm sure many people can understand, it got frustrating at times.



With all the wet weather we had it took nearly a month to plant all of the trees. Once we got started with fabric, things moved even slower. It took a while to get use to the new process, as well as all of the adjustments that need to be made to the fabric machine to keep things running smoothly at each site. On top of it all, we broke two discs on the very first day! The rain continued to come at just the right time in amounts just enough to slow things down for a day or so, but after another month we were able to lay down the last bit of fabric on July 22nd. It was pretty late in the year for a finish like that, but it is hard to argue

with Mother Nature. We would really like to thank our tree crew for the year, as well as all of the Morton County SCD and NRCS staff that helped us get everything completed.

All in all, we were able to plant nearly 70,000 feet of tree rows, which came out to 10,040 trees and we were able to put down over 60,000 feet of weed barrier fabric. Being that it was my first year I am pretty proud of those numbers, but I know we can do a lot better. So I am really looking forward to working with the residents of Morton County to push those numbers up next year and to put even more trees in the ground.

That being said, there is still plenty of time to put a plan together. Whether it be through EQIP, CRP, 319, or a private planting, there are lots of options for us to custom fit a tree planting to your needs and I would love to work with you to do so. In addition, there is a great new program through the Forest Service to cost share shelterbelt renovations, and you can read more about that in this issue. To our landowners who had a tree planting in 2015, thank you for letting me help you, and to anyone thinking about planting in 2016 or further in the future, please come in and let's visit. I look forward to working with you!

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SCD Supervisors:

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Adam Pachl

County Agent:

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Melissa McCann

Pheasants Forever Farm Bill Biologist:

Justin Edwards

Windbreak Renovation Initiative



Many planted shelterbelts and farmstead windbreaks in North Dakota have deteriorated due to age or disease and are no longer functional. Through the North Dakota Statewide Windbreak Renovation Initiative, the North Dakota Forest Service (NDFS) will offer technical and financial assistance to private landowners to restore, protect and enhance this deteriorating resource. NDFS and partners will assess windbreak condition and provide a written plan for renovating the windbreak to restore functionality. Through a grant from the North Dakota Outdoor Heritage Fund, this initiative will provide cost-share to landowners to implement their written windbreak renovation plan.

Interested landowners will complete the Windbreak Renovation Questionnaire located on the NDFS website. This questionnaire also serves as the pre-application. Pre-applications will be accepted on a continuous basis. Periodic deadlines, or cut-off dates, will be used to group applicants into pools. Upcoming pool deadlines are August 15th, 2015 and March 15th, 2016.

NDFS will review the information provided on the landowner questionnaire to determine if the project is eligible to participate. If the project is eligible a forester or technician will work with the landowner to develop a Windbreak Renovation Plan. There is no cost for this service and no obligation for the landowner to implement the plan. If the landowner desires to implement the plan, the forester or technician can assist in applying for cost-share.

Applications for cost share will be reviewed, ranked, and approved or denied based on funds available. Successful applicants will sign a cost-share agreement with NDFS. The landowner will have two years to complete the windbreak renovation as described in the Windbreak Renovation Plan. When the renovation is complete and inspected, the landowner will be reimbursed for 50% of the actual cost of implementing the plan, subject to project-specific practice and payment limits as described in the cost-share agreement.

Please visit the NDFS website www.ndsu.edu/ndfs or contact Adam Pacht at the Morton County SCD at (701)667-1163 ext. 3 for more information.

Nasty Weeds to watch for!

Name: Black Henbane (*Hyoscyamus niger* L.)

A close relative of the deadly night shade, this plant is poisonous to both animals and humans. Even Henbane's odor can cause nausea in people. Gloves should be worn when dealing with this plant. Black Henbane has been seen in several locations around Morton county. If you see this plant please call the Morton county weed control officer.



For more information contact Morton county weed control officer Cody Schnabel 701-667-3362

Name: Houndstongue (*Cynoglossum officinale* L.)

This plant is poisonous to livestock. It produces a small flat bur which readily attaches to livestock and can accumulate so thick it resembles an uncomfortable suit of armor! Houndstongue has been seen in several locations around Morton county. If you see this weed please contact your local weed control officer.



For more information about both plants please look at the Morton County weed board webpage as well as in the NDSU extension publication Identification and control of invasive and troublesome weeds in North Dakota.

Almont Garden Club Presentation

By: Justin Edwards- Pheasants Forever Farm Bill Biologist



On Saturday, July 18th, I had the opportunity to speak at the Almont Garden Club monthly meeting. The meeting was held in a unique location. Instead of sitting in a room giving a boring Power Point presentation and putting people to sleep the meeting was held outside the Almont Museum on an old wooden bridge. Other than a little wind it was a beautiful morning to be sitting outside, drinking coffee, eating muffins, and giving a presentation.

For a Pheasants Forever Farm Bill Biologist this is a little different type of audience to say the least. Normally we talk to land-owners interested in enrolling their land into a conservation program, wildlife professionals or youth. Now, what can a Farm Bill Biologist

possibly talk to a garden club about? They left the topic wide open for me and once I got thinking about it, pollinators and pollinator friendly plants made perfect sense. After all, it is a garden club!

Pollinators such as monarch butterflies and honey bees have been in the news over the last several years about their declining population, so talking about planting pollinator habitat fit right in with a garden club. Pollinator plantings attract various species of insects that pheasant chicks feed on for the first 2 months of their lives and provide open space near the ground for the chicks to be able to walk around and hunt for those bugs. Pollinator plantings also provide various food sources for pollinating insects such as butterflies and honey bees. The bottom line is high quality pollinator habitat equals excellent wildlife habitat. I was able to link the two in my talk and also provide information for several different programs that can be utilized to plant pollinator habitat.

I enjoyed speaking to the Almont Garden Club about pollinators and would like to thank them for inviting me to do so. Everyone can help make a difference for our declining pollinators!



2015 ND Range Management School

September 9-11, 2015 Western ND 4-H Camp Washburn, ND

This year's school will focus on the principles of range management and how to integrate them into your livestock operation. The school will include ranch tours and presentations from livestock producers.



Register Today!

Registration is limited to the first 20 operations

**Early bird rate: First person \$150 and \$75 for each additional person from operation*

****Early bird rate ends August 27***

Standard rate: First person \$200 and \$100 for each additional person from operation

Contact Jen Obrigewitch to Register Phone: 701-260-2108

Email: jplumbum@hotmail.com

*****The Morton County SCD will sponsor 2 participants from Morton County who attend the 2015 ND Range Management School. The District will cover \$75 for the first 2 participants who submit the application form. For more information and a copy of the application form please visit mcsd.com or call 701-667-1163 ext. 3*****



NRCS

2016 CONSERVATION PROGRAM SIGN-UP



Cover Crops



Water Well/Tank/Solar Pump

Technical and Financial Assistance is available for Conservation Practices such as:

- ξ Residue Management
- ξ Nutrient Management
- ξ Tree Renovation
- ξ Tree Planting
- ξ Water Well/Tank/Solar Pump
- ξ Cross Fencing
- ξ Grass Seeding



**Residue Management
No Till**

EQIP (Environmental Quality Incentive Program)

CSP (Conservation Stewardship Program)

ACEP (Agricultural Conservation Easement Programs)



Portable Windbreak



Watering Facility

Applications are available at the NRCS office.

Please submit your application before Friday, October 16th, 2015.

USDA Programs: EQIP, CSP

The **Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP)** provides financial and technical assistance to agricultural producers to help plan and install conservation practices on their land. "EQIP can be viewed as the **entry level** conservation program," according to District Conservationist Michele Doyle. "If you're planning range improvements, or soil health improvements, this is the program to help you get moving toward those conservation goals through financial assistance with installation."

Rangeland practices such as livestock water developments, cross fencing, and prescribed grazing are popular components of an EQIP contract. Cropland practices include residue management, cover crops, and nutrient management. "Almost any conservation practice that addresses natural resource concerns can be included," says Doyle. EQIP contracts are developed between participants and NRCS. Contract lengths are commonly 5 years but can extend to 10 years. Other areas of EQIP emphasis include animal feeding operations, shelterbelt renovations, energy conservation, seasonal high tunnels, and organic farming.

A conservation plan must be developed along with the EQIP application. NRCS and producers work together to develop a conservation plan. Producers may also apply for financial assistance to hire Technical Service Providers (TSP) to develop specialty plans called **Conservation Activity Plans (CAP)**. CAP's address certain activities, such as agricultural energy management, feedlot designs, and nutrient management, or irrigation water management plans.

The **Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP)** helps agricultural producers maintain and improve their existing conservation systems. Participants pick & choose from an extensive list of conservation enhancements intended to further improve natural resources. "Once you've achieved your initial conservation goals, CSP is the program to help you take it to the next level," said Michele Doyle.

Participants earn CSP payments for conservation performance - the higher the performance, the higher the payment. CSP provides two types of payments through 5 yr contracts: 1) annual payments for installing new enhancements & maintaining existing practices; 2) supplemental payments for adopting a resource-conserving crop rotation. An annual payment is made each year in the fall. Contracts can be renewed if the initial contract is successfully fulfilled.

For both **EQIP** and **CSP**, producers must have effective control of the land for the term of the contract. Check out the website, www.nrcs.usda.gov and click on Programs for more information, or contact the Mandan NRCS office at (701) 667-1163, ext 3.

CRP Programs Available



The United States Department of Agriculture has allotted 4,000 more acres FY 2015 for the CP-38E Pheasant SAFE program. Pheasant SAFE is under continuous enrollment meaning participants can sign up at any time until the acres have been allocated. Morton County CRP soil rental rates vary from \$31 per acre to \$46 per acre with a \$38 average. The program also comes with a one-time up front incentive payment of \$100 per acre for newly seeded habitat. There is also a Practice Incentive Payment of 40% to install the practice.

A General CRP sign up will begin in December for interested landowners. Additional Continuous CRP acres will also become available this fall. There will be details to come.

NDSU Extension Community Forums

The NDSU Extension Service is scheduling 11 community forums across the state from September 24 to October 8, 2015. The purpose of the forums is to gather public feedback about issues affecting ND to be used as guidance for setting Extension's programming priorities. Morton County clientele is encouraged to attend either: A noon lunch will be provided at each location.

- Tuesday, Sept 29, 2015. ND 4-H Camp, Washburn, 12 Noon to 3:00 PM. Please respond by Monday September 21st
- Thursday, Oct 8, 2015. Prairie Knights Casino, Ft. Yates, 12 Noon to 3:00 PM. Please respond by Thursday October 1st

Please respond to Morton County Extension Office, Jackie Buckley at 701-667-3340

Road Ditch Hay: Sampling Available

NDSU is looking to take samples of road ditch hay according to Jackie Buckley, Morton County Extension Agent. The samples will be analyzed for nutrient value, and dust content. The study seeks a wide range of cutting dates and broad distribution across North Dakota. NDSU researchers will collect the hay samples. If you're interested in participating, please contact Jackie at (701) 667-3340.

Morton County Northeastern Watershed Project

Providing **technical** and **financial** assistance in the:

Crown Butte, Otter Creek/Harmon Lake, Square Butte, and Sweet Briar Watersheds

60% Cost Share Available for these Practices:

Cropland Management

Cover Crops

Nutrient Management

Saline Soil Management

Grassed Waterways

Forage Plantings



Rangeland Management

Prescribed Grazing

Pipelines

Range Planting

Cross Fencing



Also Available for 60% Cost Share:

Windbreak/Shelterbelt Establishment

Wildlife Plantings

Septic System Renovations



For more information or questions, Contact Brandon Schafer at (701)667-1163 ext. 119

New 319 Watershed Coordinator in the Mandan Office



Hi there, I'm Brandon Schafer, your new 319 watershed coordinator. As your new coordinator I would like to tell you a little about myself. I am a 2007 graduate of my hometown of Flasher, ND where I grew up on our family farm and ranch north of town. In 2011, I received my B.S in Biology from Jamestown College. Shortly after graduation, I accepted a position with the Stutsman County SCD as the 319 Watershed Project technician and was chosen to be the coordinator for Foster County in the summer of 2014.

I am glad to be closer to home and I am very excited to work with the farmers and ranchers in the area! Feel free to stop in or call me about any projects involving fencing, animal feeding operations, windbreak panels, cover crops, nutrient management, pipelines/water tanks, range seeding, pasture/hayland planting and many more. You may be eligible for 60% cost-share on projects you have already been planning!!!

2015 Saline Tour Recap

On July 7th The Morton County SCD and NRCS office held an informative tour for the public that covered Salinity issues on range and cropland. 35 people attended the event which featured 3 guest speakers.

Mike Ulmer (retired NRCS soil scientist), covered saline areas on rangeland and how to manage those areas, common plant communities that are found there, and what is happening with the soil in these areas.

Chris Augustine (NDSU Extension Soil Health Specialist) covered salinity management on cropland. He discussed how saline areas are related to the landscape, because of water movement, and can be a result of a management practice in an adjacent field and not just on the field of concern.



Brent Gustafson (NRCS- Fargo) capped off the event at a soil pit that was dug to show the benefits of root structure in the soil. Brent explained how to use cover crops as a tool to manage saline areas and how perennial vegetation can put saline areas back into crop production, but, this doesn't happen overnight and it may take more than a year or two.

A special "Thanks" goes out to Gordon Knoll, John Steckler and Aaron Steckler for allowing the tour to be held on their land and also to Mike and Suzette Gartner for providing refreshments, door prizes and snacks.

Reclaiming Your Saline Areas

Saline soils, they're everywhere in the region nowadays with the wet cycle we have been in. No one likes unproductive land, it just takes money out of your pocket. So, how do you get these areas back into production?

The first thing to do is to **SOIL TEST** these areas. You need to know **WHAT** your problem is and **HOW** bad it is. Your soils could be sodium affected and not "saline areas." There's a big difference between the two! Sodic soils typically require gypsum to be applied so that calcium ions will replace the excess sodium ions. Soil tests will also give you an idea of what can be grown there successfully by looking at the EC (electroconductivity) reading.

The next thing to do is contain the problem. You want to prevent the saline area from getting any bigger. For this, the best thing to do is establish perennial vegetation (like alfalfa) bordering the area. Alfalfa can use 30 inches of water a year (corn= 20, wheat= ~12). This high water usage will help lower the water table which allows the salts to be pushed down (where they should be) by the rains that occur throughout the year(s). Another option is establishing cover crops before and/or after a cash crop. The cover crops then use water during the non-cropped months and can also be used to extend your grazing season if cattle are integrated into your operation.

If you can't establish "good" vegetation in the area, it is always best to **KEEP** what is growing. It may be kochia or foxtail barley but these are still growing plants that use water. Maybe, as we get into later June, these areas dry out enough to be mowed. This will help prevent them from going to seed and create a mulch layer. The mulch layer will give the soil some "armor" and help keep the salts from coming out of solution, which creates that ugly white crust.

Try to **AVOID** spraying into these areas!!! Most all chemicals **ADD SALTS** and while it helps control the weeds; adding salts compounds your problem and kills plants which would normally be using water. (i.e. Active ingredient in a very common spray is glyphosate isopropylamine SALT)

To recap, saline soils are not a soil problem, they're a water problem. If the water table is lowered, there is no way for the salts to get near the surface and cause problems. You need to know **WHAT** and **HOW BAD** the problem is in order to treat it. Take soil samples! Next, look at establishing perennial vegetation, like alfalfa for a few years, even if it is just bordering the saline area. If you choose to continue cropping, look at saline tolerant species like barley and cover crops after harvest. Frost seeding is also an idea for those real wet areas. Lastly, even if it's only weeds growing in the saline area, some plant growth is better than none. Weeds are still a tool to use.

MORTON COUNTY SOIL CONSERVATION DISTRICT

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All Programs and Services of the Soil Conservation District are offered on a nondiscriminatory basis without regard to race, color, national origin, religion, sex, marital status, age, or handicap.

Pheasant Fun Fact

Did You Know

Rarely, if ever, does a pheasant die of old age. In fact, the average life span is less than 1 year. The pheasant is a prey species and must face major sources of mortality beginning the day it is laid in the nest as an egg.

- *Survival Rate* - Mild winter, good habitat: 95%
- *Survival Rate* - Severe winter, good habitat: 50%
- *Survival Rate* - Mild winter, poor habitat: 80%
- *Survival Rate* - Severe winter, poor habitat: 20%



www.pheasantsforever.org

UPCOMING EVENTS

September

7th—Labor Day Holiday—Office Closed

9th-11th—ND Range Management School @ Washburn 4-H Camp

10th—SCD Board Meeting @ USDA Service Center, Mandan

16th-18th—The Grassfed Exchange Conference— Mt. Pleasant MI

October

2nd—Morton County Range Tour @ Kenny Miller's, Fort Rice

2nd—ND Stockmen's Association All Breeds Cattle Tour @ Steele, ND

8th—SCD Board Meeting @ USDA Service Center, Mandan

8th—Collaboration Efforts to Manage Rangelands & Wildlife Symposium @ Bismarck State College

12th—Columbus Day Holiday —Office Closed

November

11th—Veteran's Day Holiday—Office Closed

12th—SCD Board Meeting @ USDA Service Center, Mandan

26th—Thanksgiving Day Holiday—Office Closed