

# CONSERVATION NEWS

MORTON COUNTY SOIL CONSERVATION DISTRICT

## 2015 Annual Report 2015 Conservation Achievement Winner

Volume 21, no 1



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### SCD Supervisors:

Ted Becker  
Travis Wolf  
Jim Hopfauf  
Rocky Bateman  
Aaron Steckler

### Advisory Supervisors:

Duane Olsen  
Don Tanaka  
Richard Tokach

### District Personnel:

Beth McCleary  
Brandon Schafer  
Adam Pacht

### County Agent:

Jackie Buckley

### NRCS Personnel:

Michele Doyle  
Paula Kvernum  
Sharon Potts-Sayler  
Melissa McCann

### Pheasants Forever Farm Bill Biologist:

Justin Edwards



The Jade and Sonya Friesz family of Flasher have been chosen as the 2015 Conservation Achievement Winners by the Morton County Soil Conservation District. Jade and Sonya Friesz along with their three boys: Jace, Javin and Kelton are very proud of their conservation practices.

The Friesz's have participated in both EQIP and the Conservation Stewardship Pro-

gram. Each program has helped them install practices that benefit the land and their operation. Some of these practices include: no-till farming, cover crop plantings, grassed waterways, pasture/hayland plantings and a prescribed grazing system that was made feasible by installing cross fences, livestock tanks, pipelines and wells. Jade is also a participant in the SCD's Soil Health Mentoring Program. Like all participants, he has allowed a cropland field to be monitored over a 3 year period for changes in soil health. The field is managed like normal, and a special mix of cover crops are fit into the management scheme. The Friesz's say that implementing no-till and a rotational grazing system has been very positive for their operation's production while improving the land.



# 2015 Annual Report

**January**— The Morton County SCD presented its 2015 Winter Workshop on January 29th featuring Kathy Voth! Kathy presented her training method for teaching cows to eat weeds. There were about 100 people who attended the workshop at the Baymont Inn & Suites in Mandan. Other speakers included Dr. Blaine Hopfauf, Dr. Brian Jenks, and Ron Moehring.



The Morton County SCD Board of Directors reorganized and elected Ted Becker as Chairman.

**February** — MCSCD presented at the 2015 KFYP Living Ag Classroom. John Bauer and Joseph Stegmiller from the district presented to the children about the differences between no-till and tillage. The children got to listen to all the different businesses and organizations give presentations.



**March**— The Morton County SCD hosted the 2015 Women's Ag Day at the Baymont Inn & Suites on March 12th. The theme this year was Bling Out Your Yard with Flowers and Trees. Speakers included Craig Stange, Jackie Buckley, and Dave Dewald. The District presents Women's Ag Day every 2 years.



 Melissa McCann joined the NRCS team and became the new Soil Conservationist in the Mandan Field Office. Melissa is from Albertville, MN and graduated from NDSU receiving a Bachelor's Degree in Natural Resources Management and a Masters in Range Science.

**April**— Adam Pachl started April 6th as the New District Technician in the Mandan Office. Adam is from Beulah, ND and graduated from the UND and received a B.S. in Fisheries and Wildlife Biology. Contact Adam for all your tree planting needs!




Water Festival—Morton County SCD hosted Water Festival again for schools in Morton County. The kids greatly enjoyed the interactive teaching techniques.



**May**— In the Beginning of May, the SCD had its Hand Plant and Replacement Tree pick-up sale where the district sold 8,408 trees.

In the middle of May, Adam started planting trees for Morton County producers.

 The Morton County SCD hired Brandon Schafer as the new 319 Watershed Coordinator in the Mandan Office. Brandon is from Flasher, ND and graduated from Jamestown College receiving his B.S. in Biology.

**June**— The SCD staff and tree crew finished the tree planting season and planted a total of 10,040 trees. The crew started laying fabric on June 9th.

The Morton County SCD had 2 surplus sales in 2015 and sold 2,513 trees.

The Morton County SCD board and staff attended the Area IV meeting hosted by the Kidder County SCD.



The Morton County SCD sponsored 3 students to attend the ND Youth Range Camp.



**July–** The SCD staff and tree crew finished laying fabric on July 22nd. This year we laid 62,100 feet of fabric.

Beth and Adam attended a Insect and Disease training in Minot put on by NDSU Extension and ND Forest Service.

The Morton County SCD and NRCS hosted a Salinity Tour for the public that covered salinity issues on range and cropland .



**August–** Michele Doyle and Melissa McCann attended the District Conservationist meeting in Jamestown, ND.

**September–** The Morton County SCD Staff and Board attended the Area 4 Research Farm 2015 Twilight Tour at the ARS Station.

On September 29th the Morton County SCD held a Soil Health Mentorship Program Tour. There were stops at 6 of the 10 fields enrolled in the program. The tour covered a variety of topics including, full season cover crops for grazing, cover crops following wheat harvest, cover crops seeded with a hay mix in order to graze the regrowth, rejuvenating old grass stands with the use of cover crops and how they can help with saline areas. Speakers at the tour were Dr. Don Tanaka and Hal Weiser.



**October–** The Morton County SCD staff replaced the roof at the District Tree Shed.



**November–** The Morton County SCD Supervisors and staff attended the ND Association of Soil Conservation Districts Annual Meeting held in Bismarck at the Ramkota Inn. The Morton County SCD 2015 Conservation Achievement winner Jade Friesz and family were honored.

The Morton County SCD and NRCS staff also nominated Mike and Suzette Gartner who were selected for the Layperson Award.



**December–** The Morton County SCD Supervisors and staff held a Holiday themed board meeting at Ted Becker's house to celebrate another great year!

The District sponsored the TREES Program presented by Tom Gibson again this year to Morton County Elementary Schools.

## Summary of the year

### 2015 Conservation Practice Implementation:

Cover Crop ~ 822.7 acres  
Residue Management/No-Till ~ 1879.3 acres  
Forage & Biomass Planting ~ 133.4 acres  
Range Planting ~ 246.0 acres  
Fence ~ 49,112 ft.  
Pipelines ~ 48,927 ft.  
Watering Facilities ~ 28 --- 43,880 gallons  
Wells ~ 3  
Pumping Plant ~ 5  
Irrigation Sprinkler System ~ 63 acres  
Portable Windbreak ~ 1  
Windbreak Establishment ~ 5023 ft.

# CRP Workshop



## General CRP Sign-Up Dec 1st-Feb 26th

The Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) turned 30 this past December. To help celebrate this milestone, the USDA has created the General Sign-Up 49. CRP is one of the most successful conservation programs in the country and Pheasants Forever will be hosting a CRP Workshop for anyone interested in learning about the CRP program and the general sign-up.

Location: New Salem Fairgrounds

Date: January 28th, 2016

Time: 1:00 PM-3:00 PM

### Speakers:

Justin Edwards-Pheasants Forever Farm  
Bill Biologist

Levi Jacobson— North Dakota Game and  
Fish PLI Biologist

Michele Doyle— NRCS District Conservationist

Brandon Schafer— Morton County Soil Conservation District 319 Watershed Coordinator



For more information contact Justin Edwards—Pheasants Forever Farm Bill Biologist

Phone: 701-667-1163 Ext. 3





# Biodiversity: Life Insurance for our Changing World

By: Ted Becker

This is a theme of the United Nations. Unfortunately, these concepts are frequently abstract goals. I suggest we can use some of these concepts on our farms to increase our resistance to odd weather years. One of the concepts is an assortment of different plants tends to be more stable and productive than a monoculture or just a few plants. Growing seasons are rarely the same. With a large selection of plants, it is more likely that some of the plants grow better than others on that particular year.

Most crops are grown as monoculture- clean fields with no weeds. We also have field edges, waterways and unfarmable draws. There can be a variety of plants to provide a stable habitat for beneficial insects including pollinators. Cover crops provide diversity and maintain soil health. Pastures have a more stable production with a variety of grasses and broad leaf plants.

Our tree rows and windbreaks at home don't need to be uniform rows of the same tree. When a tree dies, plant a tree of a different kind. A mixed stand of trees is more resistant to disease and insect attacks. Also in nature there is an understory of smaller woody plants in tree stands. My tree rows have buckbrush, honeysuckle and wild current spreading throughout. The wild mint grows in clumps and drawn large numbers of bumblebees in September. This year the mint was 4-5 feet high. I think the understory will help the trees hold snow.

All these things add to the stability of nature on my farm. With these policies, I do my little bit for diversity without interfering with farm operation and perhaps improving forage.

## Silver Buffaloberry



The Silver Buffaloberry (*Shepherdia argentea*), also known as bullberry, is a hardy shrub that grows well in the harsh conditions of North Dakota. Its name comes from the historical use of the berries to accompany bison meat.

The plant has silvery green leaves with thorns around the stem. Buffaloberries produce a bright red fruit that is very attractive to many species of birds, and the plant also serves as browse for deer. Occasionally the berries are yellowish-orange.

Its thorny branches and suckering growth habit also make it excellent nesting cover. It can tolerate a wide variety of soil types, making it very good for growth in Morton County. The colorful red berries are edible, although they are very tart. They can be processed to be used in jams and jellies.

A cultivar of the Silver Buffaloberry, the Sakakawea Buffaloberry, was developed in Bismarck. This cultivar is more tolerant of alkaline and high pH soils, and is great for revegetation of disturbed areas. Roughly 15-20 percent of fruit produced by the Sakakawea cultivar will be yellowish-orange as pictured above.

These plants are great for both wildlife plantings as well as the outside row of a shelterbelt. They will quickly form a thicket, resulting in great cover for wildlife as well as dense growth to catch snow and stop the wind. Either way, if you are thinking about planting a row of shrubs, give the buffaloberry some thought!

## Technical and Financial Conservation Programs Available for 2016

There are a lot of different voluntary conservation programs available to Morton County Producers this upcoming year. Feel free to call or stop by if you have any questions about the available programs.

**Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP)**- CSP encourages producers to maintain and improve existing conservation practices while implementing additional activities that address priority resource concerns. This program “rewards the best and motivates the rest”. CSP contract life span is 5 years. Eligible producers can earn up to \$40,000/year for agreeing to implement conservation enhancements on land they operate.



**Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP)** – The goal of EQIP is to enhance natural resources, particularly through improvements to soil health, conservation of water resources, improving air and water quality, enhancing habitat and more. Landowners receive financial and technical assistance to implement conservation practices or conduct conservation planning.

Popular conservation practices include livestock water developments (water well, tank, solar pump, pipeline), grazing systems (cross fences, prescribed grazing), grass planting for hay, pasture, and rangeland, shelterbelt renovation & plantings, and cropland enhancements (cover crops, residue management, nutrient management). Seasonal high tunnels (plastic hoop houses) and portable livestock windbreak fences are relatively new practices that are offered.

### **Agricultural Conservation Easement Program (ACEP)** –

ACEP provides financial and technical assistance to help conserve agricultural lands and wetlands and their related benefits by use of easements. This program is designed to protect the long term viability of the nation's food supply by preventing conversion of productive working lands to non-agricultural uses. The program also protects important wetlands that will provide habitat for fish and wildlife, improve water quality by filtering sediments, reduce flooding, and more.

**Conservation Reserve Program (CRP)** – CRP encourages agricultural landowners to establish conservation cover on sensitive agricultural lands to reduce erosion, improve water quality, and establish wildlife habitat. There are a wide array of practices to choose from to meet the landowner's objectives including, filter strips, saline practices, and field windbreaks. USDA pays a yearly soil rental rate based on county averages of the 3 dominant soil types in the field while also providing 50% cost share for establishment practices as well as other financial incentives.

**North Dakota Stockman's Association Environmental Services Program**- This program is available to North Dakota beef producers including cow/calf operators, backgrounders, finishers, and stockers to implement Best Management Practices to help address any environmental concerns. They offer 60% cost-share assistance.

**North Dakota Department of Agriculture's Livestock Pollution Prevention Program (LP3)**- The LP3 program is a voluntary pollution prevention program designed to identify, reduce, or eliminate any release of livestock waste into surface or ground water.





## Technical and Financial Conservation Program\$ Available for 2016



**Morton County 319 Northeastern Watershed Project-** The goal of this project is to improve water quality of Sweet Briar Creek, Crown Butte Creek, Otter Creek/ Harmon Lake and it's tributaries by using best management practices such as: Ag Waste Systems, Cover Crops, Watering Facilities, Fences, Range Plantings, Wind-break Panels and more! The current project was scheduled to end on September 30th of 2016. It has since **been extended to go through October of 2018!** This is great news to anyone living in the areas in and around the waterbodies listed above as cost-share and technical assistance is still available. A new watershed project will also be applied for during 2017 which will be in the Danzig Dam/Hailstone

Creek watershed or the Big Muddy Creek watershed. Surveys will be sent out to landowners in those watersheds to better gauge the interest in each area. Keep your eyes peeled!!!

**North Dakota Statewide Conservation Tree Planting Initiative –** This program is available for various tree planting practices such as wildlife, shelter-belt, farmstead windbreak, and living snow fences. The program can provide up to 60 percent cost-share on trees and fabric. Come in or call the Morton County Soil Conservation District for more information on this program.



### **North Dakota State University Forest Service Windbreak**

**Renovation Program-** The NDSU Forest Service has a grant to help landowners renovate old shelterbelts that are deteriorating or no longer serving their intended purpose. This grant covers up to 50% of all project costs up to \$10,000. In-kind money can also be earned for work that the landowner does themselves. You can start the process by filling out a questionnaire on the NDFS website, by calling or stopping in to the Morton County Soil Conservation District Office.

## Upcoming Shop Talks

Over the last few winters the Morton County SCD has organized “shop talks”. The evening sessions are informal and relaxed get-togethers of neighbors. The setting is someplace warm - usually in the host's shop, with heaters or wood burners to take the chill off. The evening's discussion is facilitated by Soil Health Mentor and SCD Associate Board member, Dr. Don Tanaka, retired ARS agronomist. NRCS and SCD staff are also on hand to contribute to the information, and a member of the NRCS Soil Health team if available. The soil health topics and conversation flows in whatever direction the group takes it. Most meetings consist of about 15 neighbors getting together. Popular topics included soil carbon cycling, soil health testing, committing to NO tillage, cover crops in the system, and diversity in the crop rotations. The “shop talks” are typically short notice. If you'd like to be notified on upcoming talks or are interested in hosting a talk, please send your contact information to [brandon.schafer@nd.nacdnet.net](mailto:brandon.schafer@nd.nacdnet.net) or call 701-667-1163 ext. 3.



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## Pheasant Fun Fact

### Did You Know

Pheasant's favorite food is corn, insects, and seeds. Their preferred habitat is undisturbed grassland.



<https://www.pheasantsforever.org/Habitat/Why-Habitat/Pheasant-Facts.aspx>

## UPCOMING EVENTS

### February

9th & 10th—KFYR Ag in the Classroom @ Bismarck Event Center

15th—George Washington's Birthday Holiday—Office Closed

18th—SCD Board Meeting @ USDA Service Center, Mandan

### March

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

### April

12th—Morton County Water Festival @ Nazarene Church, Mandan

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