

CONSERVATION NEWS

MORTON COUNTY SOIL CONSERVATION DISTRICT

Volume 21, no 2



Tree Planting Preparation

About a week and a half ago I was out walking my dog in the pasture near my house and I happened to look down and notice a crocus that was just starting to bloom. About 20 minutes after that I heard a meadowlark singing from a nearby fencepost, and I had to stop and smile for a moment. I realized that spring was finally here.

Spring is a busy time of year, as the conservation district is gearing up to get all of our tree plantings done. It is also a busy time for people who want to plant their own trees, or have us do it for them. If you have a conservation district planting scheduled this year and haven't done your site prep, NOW is the time! Here are a few steps you need to take to make sure your planting is successful:

1. If the site is being tilled, then start tilling! Whether you work up a large area, or individual rows, the soil needs to be worked in order to get good root to soil contact necessary for tree survival. If the soil is rough and lumpy, then the roots may not have good contact with the soil which can cause them to dry out and die. The goal is the get a consistency you would want for a vegetable garden. No big lumps, but not a fine powder either.
2. If we are doing a no-till planting, it is time to spray! No till plantings still require some work, and the first thing to do is to kill off all the vegetation that is growing in the planting area. Spraying with a glyphosate or other broad-spectrum herbicide will get a good kill off, although you may need to spray more than once. Once all the vegetation has been killed, the site needs to be mowed as short as possible. This makes it easier for the planting equipment to get through the soil and does a better job getting your trees in the ground.
3. **MARK YOUR ROWS!** If the rows aren't marked, it can be very difficult to know exactly where the trees are supposed to go. Remember, if we show up to plant and the rows aren't marked there is an additional charge for us to take the time and do that.
4. Finally, contact North Dakota One Call and make sure all utility lines have been marked. We cannot plant on top of the easements, and we definitely don't want to hit an underground line with our equipment! All you need to do is call 1-800-795-0511 OR 811. You can also schedule them to come out through their website, ndonecall.com.

Remember, if we show up to plant your trees and the site isn't ready, we may just move on to the next one. At that point there is an extra charge for us to come back later, or you may not get your planting done and you will lose your down payment. We try our best to give you at least a 2 day notice before we come plant, but by that time it is usually too late to get your preparation done in time.

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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



Good
Prep



Bad
Prep



Ask a Conservationist

Question: What are some benefits of a rotational grazing system?

Answer: There are many reasons why a rotational grazing system is beneficial including:

- Allows the vegetation time to recover from being grazed
- More even utilization of the forage
- Increase pasture yields
- Better quality pasture
- Better distribution of manure nutrients
- Increased carry capacity = improved income

If you have a question and would like the chance to have it published in the next newsletter please email your question to Melissa McCann at Melissa.McCann@nd.usda.gov or contact the Mandan Field office at (701) 667-1163 ext. 3.

Spring Ahead with Grazing!



It's time to spring into the grazing season! Here are some important things to keep in mind when planning for the upcoming grazing season. The first thing to think about is what is your goal for this year? Is it to gain weight on your cattle, is it to enhance your range/pasture health, or you might just want to try something new. Maybe you want to implement a new grazing system like a twice-over grazing system! That is great because it will benefit your land and your cattle. Making a grazing schedule at the beginning of the spring/summer can also help reduce stress for your cattle, and for your land. The Mandan NRCS is here to assist you any way that we can.

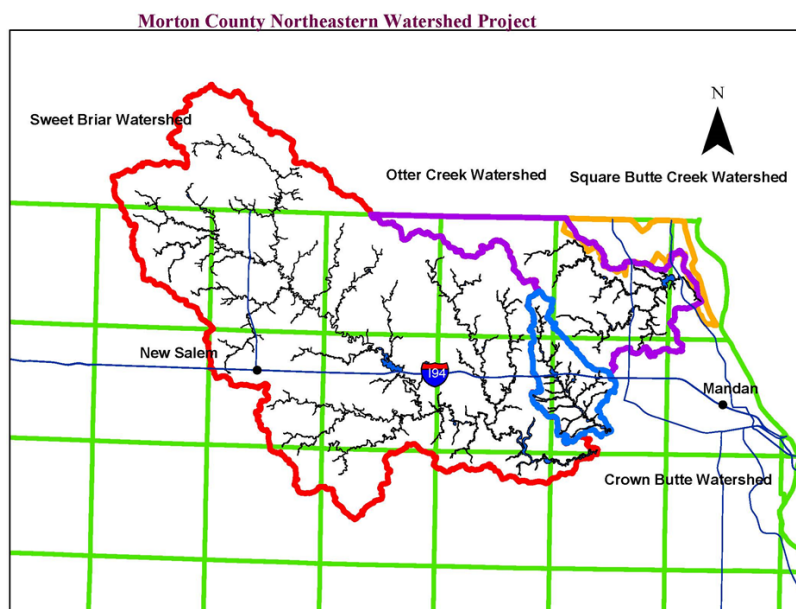
We can talk about your grazing and pasture plans and goals. NRCS Range Conservationist can help develop a rotational grazing plan that will improve forage production. Our Conservationists will conduct range inventories to assist you with your planning; free of charge! If you have any questions please contact us at the Mandan field office at 701-667-1163 Ext. 3.

What's Going on in the Watershed World?

As spring rolls around, water sampling has commenced, once again, in the Big Muddy Creek Watershed near Almont. This year, I have also started to sample Sweet Briar, Crown Butte, and Harmon Lake. Why? You may ask. These are part of ongoing or possible future watershed projects.

As new project areas are looked at, sampling is required to establish a baseline for things such as nutrients, E. coli, and total suspended solids. The lakes I am sampling this summer are in the current watershed project. Since the project has been ongoing since 2012, samples are needed to see if the project has been effective. It is also important to note that the lakes are not always tested for the same things as moving bodies of water. These particular lakes are being sampled for nutrients, dissolved oxygen content, water temperature, trace metals, major cations/anions, and chlorophyll.

What does all of this mean for people living in the current watershed? It means cost-share is available to you for the practices listed on page 5, along with many more. And the best part is, the funds are FIRST-COME, FIRST-SERVED, and the project is completely voluntary!! All of the eligible practices can positively impact water quality which is why they were chosen. Here is a map of the current watershed project.



Think a Year Ahead of Time



By: Justin Edwards-Pheasants Forever Farm Bill Biologist

Throughout the winter and into the spring I talk with a lot of landowners who want to create habitat for wildlife on their land for the upcoming season. Some common projects are food plots, grass seeding, and tree/shrub planting. All of these can benefit wildlife, however if proper site preparation is not done ahead of time the risk of failure greatly increases.

Ideally, habitat projects would go into existing cropland. Other than a possible spray application to kill weeds before planting, the land preparation is virtually done when it comes time to do your project. However, life is rarely ideal and many of the projects that landowners wish to do are located in areas with existing vegetation (i.e. grass). There are several problems associated with planting in existing grass stands. First, native rangeland is disappearing across our state and once it is broken, the land will never return to its original state. In native rangeland, it is often better to manage wildlife habitat through other practices such as grazing rather than planting it to other species. When planning wildlife habitat, people often focus on one species such as deer or pheasant, but their actions can have negative impacts on the other species that utilize our native grasslands.

Other grasslands such as old grass/alfalfa fields or old CRP fields can create problems if a landowner wishes to do a habitat project on them. Those grass stands are commonly made up of cool season invasive grasses such as smooth brome grass and Kentucky bluegrass which are highly competitive. If no control measures are taken before project implementation, the cool season invasives will likely prevent your project from being successful.

If the project that you wish to do is going to go into an old grass/alfalfa field or old CRP field here are a few tips to give you the best chance of success. First, no-till whenever possible. If land is tilled up, there can be a lot of noxious weeds that show up even if you have never seen them before. Second, remove the existing vegetation (Haying). Haying will remove the old grass providing easier access for chemicals such as glyphosate to reach growing vegetation. Spray and kill the grass stand several times throughout the year. Spray once after haying when the grass greens up. Follow that up with a late summer-early fall spraying when the cool-season grasses are growing again. Finally, spray one more time in the spring before planting. Always follow label instructions.

With some advanced planning and patience you can take a project that is likely to fail to a project that will succeed and provide excellent wildlife habitat.



Example of a successful pollinator planting with proper site preparation



Example of poor site preparation and Kentucky bluegrass invading a grass planting

Morton County Soil Health Shop Talks



Morton County producers are hosting Shop Talk sessions for friends & neighbors interested in learning about and improving their soil health. The evening sessions are informal and relaxed get-togethers. The setting is someplace warm - usually in the host's shop, with heaters or wood burners to take the chill off.

The idea for Shop Talk came during a Morton County SCD meeting a few years ago. The SCD board members were enthusiastic and excited after attending the popular Burleigh Co. Soil Health Workshop. Wanting to bring this valuable information to farmers and ranchers that don't usually attend large workshops, the SCD decided to bring their soil health message to small group settings- at kitchen tables or in the shop. Perhaps a small group of neighbors would be more appealing to those folks.

So in December 2012, SCD board member, Jim Hopfauf, hosted the 1st Shop Talk in his cozy shop NE of Flasher. Since then, many more Shop Talks have been hosted in warm & cozy, and big & drafty shops throughout Morton County.

Shop Talks are usually held in the evening. Discussion is facilitated by Soil Health Mentors and SCD Associate Board member, Dr. Don Tanaka, retired ARS agronomist. NRCS and SCD board members & 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. Popular topics included cover crops in the system, diversity in the crop rotations, soil carbon cycling, soil health testing, and the importance of eliminating soil disturbance in the cropping system.



The Shop Talks have been a great soil health educational tool. Dr. Tanaka is pleased with the small group venue. It takes very little prompting to get the group talking about successes and analyzing failures. "People are asking the right questions about their soil," he says. "We don't do a formal presentation at Shop Talks. Just a few pictures & graphs, maybe a flip chart for illustration or notes. And the conversation for the evening picks up momentum."



The session lasts about 3 hours depending on the crowd. Michele Doyle, DC explains, "Over the course of the evening, conversation can shift from soil issues, problem fields, cattle & cover crops, and diversifying crop rotations. The group ponders the situations presented and offer advice based on their own experiences. A lot of spring planting decisions are made in those few hours."

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

Range Planting

Cross Fencing

Livestock Water Systems



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



United States Department of Agriculture
Natural Resources Conservation Service

2017

Program Sign-up



• Shelterbelts



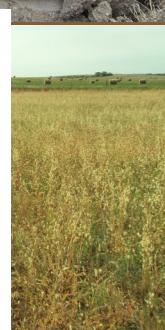
• No-Till



• Pipeline



Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) Financial Assistance for Installing



• Watering Facility



• Fence



• Solar Pump

- Water Well
- Grass Seeding
- Nutrient Management
- Erosion Control
- Wildlife Habitat
- Tree Planting
- Tree Renovation
- Cover Crop
- Grazing System

Apply NOW to be considered for next available funding.
Stop at the NRCS office for more information.
Contact NRCS (701) 667-1163 Ext. 3

USDA is an equal opportunity provider, employer and lender.

Tree of the Quarter—Green Ash

The Green Ash is one of the most common deciduous trees found in our area, if not the most common. This is due in part to its ability to thrive in most soil conditions. There are 17 different suitability ratings for soils as far as trees and shrubs are concerned, and the Green Ash can survive in 13 of them. It is also drought and alkali resistant, as well as being able to withstand short periods of flooding. On top of that, it can easily handle our cold winters.

Green Ash is a nice tree for windbreaks, as it can reach anywhere from 35-65 feet tall at maturity, and its crown can grow up to 40 feet wide in ideal conditions. It produces a seed that is eaten by different birds and mammals, and can also provide some cover, as well as nesting sites for tree nesting birds. It has been used to replace many American Elm trees that have succumbed to Dutch Elm Disease.

Green Ash is susceptible to diseases such as stem decay, cankers, and leaf rust. There are a few pests which can harm it, but the most threatening is the Emerald Ash Borer. While there have been no known cases of the Emerald Ash Borer being found in North Dakota, it has been discovered in neighboring Minnesota and has been responsible for killing hundreds of millions of ash trees in the United States and Canada. This is causing some people to look to other trees for their plantings, but in cases where soils are poor the Green Ash can be a good answer to filling in a tree row.



Photos taken from The North Dakota Tree Handbook.

ND Youth Range Camp 2016

The Primary goal of Youth Range Camp is to teach the basic principles of range management, especially related to livestock and wildlife. We hope that the participants will acquire an understanding of the complex nature of the interactions and relationships between rangeland resources and other resources and uses.

Youth Range Camp is held at Hanson's Logging Cabin Ranch 16 miles north of Amidon. A detailed program will be sent to campers. For further information, contact Kevin Sedivec at (701) 231-7647 or kevin.sedivec@ndsu.edu.

Youth Range Camp runs from Tuesday, June 21, through Friday, June 24. The cost for attending the camp is \$140. Sign-up deadline is June 14, 2016.

The Morton County SCD Board would like to sponsor 10 Morton County students who attend the camp in 2016. The Morton County SCD will cover \$100 per selected student who submits the sponsorship application form, which can be found on www.mcscd.com. The board will review each sponsorship application essay portion and select 10 students to sponsor. Please send your sponsorship form to Beth by June 14th, 2016. Please mail to Morton County SCD 2540 Overlook Lane Mandan, ND 58554 or email the form to beth.mccleary@nd.nacdn.net. Please call Beth at (701) 667-1163 ext. 101 for any questions.

MORTON COUNTY SOIL CONSERVATION DISTRICT

2540 OVERLOOK LANE
MANDAN, ND 58554-1593

www.mcscd.com

Phone: 701-667-1163 ext. 3

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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

A Pheasant's nest averages 12 eggs per nest. Once the first egg is laid it will take the hens 2-3 weeks to lay a full clutch. Once all of the eggs have been laid, the hen incubates for approximately 23 days, meaning nests will start hatching mid-June and into July



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

UPCOMING EVENTS

May

- 12th—SCD Board Meeting @ USDA Service Center, Mandan
- 16th—Spring into Horticulture @ Morton County Fair Grounds - New Salem, ND
- 30th—Memorial Day Holiday—Office Closed

June

- 9th—SCD Board Meeting @ USDA Service Center, Mandan
- 21st—NDSA Feedlot Tour
- 21st-24th—ND Youth Range Camp @ Hanson's Logging Cabin Ranch, Amidon, ND

Please watch for the dates for our Surplus Tree Sale in the Morton County Newspapers, www.mcscd.com, and our Facebook page!

July

- 4th—Independence Day Holiday—Office Closed
- 14th—SCD Board Meeting @ USDA Service Center, Mandan

August

- 30th– Sept. 1st—ND Range Management School for ranchers @ ND 4-H Camp in Washburn, ND