

CONSERVATION NEWS

MORTON COUNTY SOIL CONSERVATION DISTRICT

Volume 22, no 1

2016 Annual Report

2016 Conservation Achievement Winner : Doug & Carol Hille



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Rocky Bateman
Aaron Steckler

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Duane Olsen
Don Tanaka
Travis Wolf

District Personnel:

Beth McCleary
Brandon Schafer
Adam Pacht

NRCS Personnel:

Michele Doyle
Paula Kvernum
Sharon Potts-Sayler
Melissa McCann



Doug Hille writes: Conservation and resource management has been part of our management objectives since we purchased our ranch. We feel very strongly that as conservationists, we can use and still improve our natural resources. Our family, Doug, Carol, children Ryan, Rachel, and Stephanie, along with NRCS, SCD and others, have taken an abused and run down ranch and turned it into a productive, vibrant environment for wildlife and livestock.

The Hille's have accomplished this feat by adding many miles of fence, pipelines, new wells, buildings, trees and a feedlot. The list doesn't stop there as they have been practicing no-till for nearly 20 years, implemented a rotational grazing system and have been great advocates of Soil Health and utilizing cover crops.



2016 Annual Report

January— The Morton County SCD hosted its 2016 Winter Workshop on January 19th at the Baymont Inn & Suites in Mandan. This year's workshop featured Clayton Robins from Brandon, Manitoba. Clayton is a rancher, former researcher, and Nuffield Canada Scholar. There were about 70 people that attended the workshop. Other speakers included Kenny Miller, Jerry Doan, Justin Zahradka, and Dr. Kendall Swanson. The topic this year was "Cover Crops for Grazing: Above, Below, and for your Bottom Line". The Morton County SCD board reorganized and re-elected Ted Becker as Chairman.



March Continued— The SCD Staff and NRCS Staff attended Diversity Day hosted by the USDA at the Baymont Inn & Suites in Mandan. Sharon Potts-Sayler and her husband presented on Deaf Culture.



A 3rd Shop Talk was hosted by the MCSCD at Roger Hoovestol's Shop (picture above). About 13 producers attended.

Adam attended a windbreak technology training at the Comfort Inn & Suites in Bismarck, ND.

April— The Morton County SCD, NRCS, and Morton County Water board staff hosted the Water Festival at Nazarene Church in Mandan.



May – June - On May 4th the Tree Crew started tree planting.

On May 4th Brandon presented at Christ the King's Eco Ed Day and presented "All About Trees!"

Adam and the Tree Crew finished tree planting on May 26th.

The Tree Crew started applying fabric on June 2nd. On June 10th the Morton County SCD had its annual Tree Surplus sale in New Salem.

February – MCSCD staff presented at the 2016 KFYS Living Ag Classroom. Brandon Schaffer, Beth McCleary, and Adam Pachl taught the students about water quality, point and non-point source pollution. There were about 1,400 students from ND that attended this year.



The Morton County SCD and NRCS hosted a shop talk at Woody Barth's shop in St. Anthony. The shop talk was very well attended with a total of 25 people.

Michele Doyle and Dr. Don Tanaka were the main presenters. The shop talk focused on cover crops and the importance of soil health.



March— Beth and Adam attended the Tree Promotional meeting at the Comfort Inn & Suites on March 16-17. Brandon attended the ND Water Quality Monitoring conference at BSC.

The MCSCD hosted a 2nd Shop Talk at the Pizza Pantry in Hebron, ND

Brandon and Beth attended the 319 Coordinator meeting at the Comfort Inn & Suites in Bismarck, ND. SCD & NRCS Staff sponsored a Nutritional Balance Workshop at the Mandan ARS Station on March 9th.



July– The Morton County SCD attended the Area IV meeting hosted by Stutsman County SCD on July 20th.

Farmers Union hosted a Range Shop Talk at Flasher park on the 21st. Michele Doyle and Brandon Schafer presented to the producers about the OMG Project as well as grazing and cover crops.



August– 9th - Morton County SCD hosted a Range Tour in Morton County at Dwight Keller's. On the 16th the Morton County SCD hosted a Soil Health Mentorship Tour which took place at Travis Rossow's and John Steckler's Field. Jim Hopfauf also presented information about the progress on his field.

16th-18th - Adam Pachl attended a Windbreak training at the comfort Inn in Bismarck.



August 9th Range Tour



August 16th SHM Tour

September– Brandon Schafer collected bale samples for the soil health mentor project.

October– On the 6th the Morton County SCD Sponsored a Soil Health Tour hosted by Travis Wolf. Topics included Soil Health Components, Nutritional Value for Cattle, and the Economics of Cover Crops. The Tour also included a demonstration of the NRCS Rain Fall Simulator. Speakers included Hal Weiser and Jay Fuhrer.



November– On November 1st the OMG Board met at the USDA Service Center in Mandan to approve the ranked OMG applications.

21st - 22nd - North Dakota Soil Conservation Annual Convention held at the Ramkota Hotel in Bismarck. The Morton County SCD nominated Doug Hille's Family as Morton County's 2016 Achievement Winner.

December– On December 2nd the Morton County SCD had an annual Holiday Board meeting hosted at Chairman Ted Becker's House in Almont, ND. 5th - 9th - Tom Gibson presented to Morton County School students on his TREES Program presentations.

2016 Conservation Practice Implementation:

Cover Crop ~ 1,138.4 ac.
Residue Management/No-Till ~ 1,129.1 ac.
Forage & Biomass Planting ~ 203.8 ac.
Water Well Decommissioning ~ 1
Fence ~ 55,908 ft.
Pipelines ~ 23,046 ft.
Watering Facilities ~ 13 --- 21,046 gal.
Prescribed Grazing ~ 117.4 ac.
Pumping Plant ~ 2
Portable Windbreak ~ 2
Windbreak Establishment ~ 10,627 ft.
Tree/Shrub Site Preparation ~ 7.7 ac.
Windbreak Renovation ~ 6,220 ft.

North Dakota Conservation District Employees Association

Conservation Studies Scholarship

The North Dakota Conservation District Employees Association (NDCDEA) established a scholarship for high school and college students interested in pursuing conservation education. The scholarship is open to high school seniors and college students who are residents of North Dakota and intend to or are currently pursuing an agricultural/natural resource management/environmental or related field at a two or four year university in the state of North Dakota. One scholarship will be awarded in the amount of \$1000.00.

Interested applicants are required to complete the application form and compose an essay of no more than 500 words on the topic chosen by the NDCDEA. Applicants will need to maintain at least a 2.5 GPA and be a full time student. The scholarship will be paid after the President of the Association receives the previous semester transcript. The \$1000.00 will be sent to the school of attendance unless the recipient is a graduating college senior, in which the scholarship money will be paid directly to the recipient. If the scholarship winner does not maintain the 2.5 GPA, the second place qualifier will be awarded the \$1000.00. Applications and essays must be mailed by **March 3rd, 2017**. Essays will be judged by the NDCDEA board of directors. The scholarship winner will be notified following the selection.

2017 Conservation Studies Scholarship Topic:

"The Balance between Agriculture and Resource Conservation"

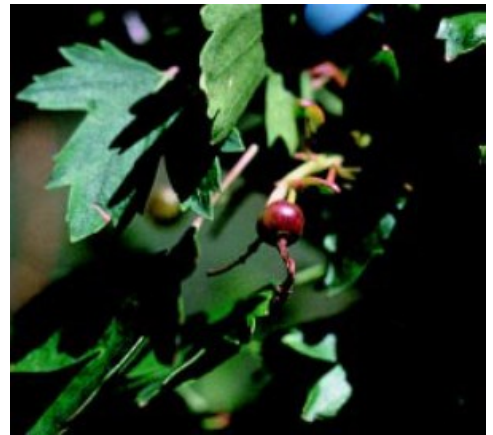
*Please contact the Morton County SCD office for an application and more information.
701-667-1163 ext. 3*

Tree of the Quarter—Golden Currant— *Ribes odoratum*

Golden Currant is a small shrub that is native to North Dakota. Because it is native to our region it is well suited for growing in our harsh conditions. It is suited to a variety of soils and can tolerate soil pH ranging from 5.5 to 8.0, it is tolerant of saline soils, and is fairly drought tolerant.

The shrub has light green leaves that turn to yellow in the fall, with a shape that resembles a tiny maple leaf. At maturity it ranges from 3-6 feet tall, as well as 3-6 feet wide. It is not a shrub that suckers heavily, however it can sucker in a limited capacity. This, combined with the spread of the crown, makes it a shrub that can be used to form a short hedge. It has yellow, clove scented flowers which produce black or purple berries that are edible for humans. The berries can be very tasty and can be eaten fresh or used in products such as jellies or jams.

Golden Currant is a valuable shrub for wildlife. It is a preferred species for songbirds, being used for roosting, loafing, and/or nesting. Many species of birds will eat the berries if they are present. It is a species that mule deer prefer to browse, but is not preferred by white tail deer, making it an option for plantings that may be bothered heavily by white tail deer.



Solutions for Drifting Snow



As everyone has come to realize, we are in the heart of an exceptionally cold and snowy winter. Although it is hard to take many positives from conditions like these, it does offer the opportunity to step back and evaluate how parts of your operations are working. This winter is a perfect one to assess your windbreaks- or lack thereof- and decide if you need to put in a new windbreak or renovate an existing one. This can help with both snow deposition and energy consumption, as the cold winter winds can dramatically increase your energy needs when it comes to keeping your buildings warm. There are a few things to keep in mind when planting or renovating a windbreak, such as species composition, distance from the area to be protected, and spacing between the trees and rows. All of these things have an effect on how and where snow piles up, so it is important to make sure there is a good plan in place. If you are noticing a need for new trees come talk to Adam and we can determine the best option for you and your operation. We may even be able to find opportunities for cost share!



Morton County Northeastern Watershed Project Update

Here is a list of the Best Management Practices (BMP's) that have been put in place since the start of the Morton County Northeastern Watershed Project in 2012. These BMP's have been installed through the 319 Watershed Project, NRCS, and/or ND Game and Fish Department in the Otter Creek/Harmon Lake, Crown Butte, Sweet Briar and Square Butte Watersheds.

<u>BMP Type</u>	<u>Units</u>	<u>BMP Type</u>	<u>Units</u>
Cover Crops	1,760.69 acres	Riparian Forest Buffer	11.2 acres
Pipelines	18,244 feet	Riparian Herbaceous Cover	26.8 acres
Fence	36,486 feet	Site Prep. Light w/ Chemical	38 acres
Trough/Tank	4 units	Weed Barrier	9,000 feet
Well (Livestock Only)	2 units	Site Prep. Heavy Mechanical	2.9 acres
Rural Water Hookup	1 unit	Windbreak (Trees)	10,100 feet
Feedlot	1 system	No-Till Management	1,477.3 acres
Forage and Biomass Planting	56.6 acres	Nutrient Management	735.8 acres
Portable Windbreaks	600 feet	Obstruction Removal (Trees)	1.3 acres
Septic System Renovations	3 systems	Obstruction Removal (Fence)	1,970 feet
Riparian Easement	30 acres	Comprehensive Nutrient Man. Plan	1 Plan



Update for the O-M-G Grassland Improvement Project



As some of you may know, the Oliver, Morton and Grant County SCD's received a grant from the North Dakota Outdoor Heritage Fund in 2016 in order to cost-share certain pasture practices. Some of these practices include water developments, cross-fencing and grass seeding's. In the first batching period, 28 of the 43 applications were approved.

A second batching period is planned to open in February for any new or previously unfunded applications.

If you have plans for the coming spring that will include cross-fence, water developments and/or grass seeding's you may want to consider this project, as it can cover 60% of the actual costs. Call or stop by the Morton County SCD for more information.

Soil Health and No-Till Planter Workshop



Paul Jasa (pictured to the left) is a nationally recognized expert when it comes to Ag-Engineering. He works for the University of Nebraska-Lincoln as the Extension Research Engineer. Burleigh and Morton County were lucky enough to schedule a few days with him coming up on March 1 and 2.

March 1st will be a workshop at BSC that is outlined BELOW this article. March 2nd is the real hidden gem, Paul has agreed to present at 2 "shop" talks – 1 in Burleigh and 1 in Morton County at a producer's farm. What Paul would like to do is have a used no-till planter available, in a heated shop, to do a hands-on session that would highlight what to look for when getting the planter ready for spring (Ex: Setting proper down pressure, seeding depth etc.). It would be around a 2 hour program and be kept to a smaller group of participants. If you would like to volunteer your shop and/or planter, contact the Mandan Office @ 701-667-1163 ext. 3 and we can go over the details with you.

Soil Health Workshop— "Building the Soil Health Foundation"

Wednesday, March 1st, 2017

Sponsors: Burleigh County Soil Conservation District, Morton County Soil Conservation District, Dakota Prairies Resource Conservation & Development, and Natural Resources Conservation Service.

Location: Bismarck State College - Bismarck Public Schools Career Academy - Multi Purpose Room

Time: 9:00 am—3:00 pm CST (lunch will be provided)

Host: Jay Fuhrer

Main Speaker: Paul Jasa, Extension Engineer, University of Nebraska—Lincoln

***There will also be a **producer panel** discussing how they use the five soil health principles on their operation.

Please contact the Burleigh County Soil Conservation District to RSVP at - 701-250-4518 ext. 3

Please RSVP by February 22, 2017

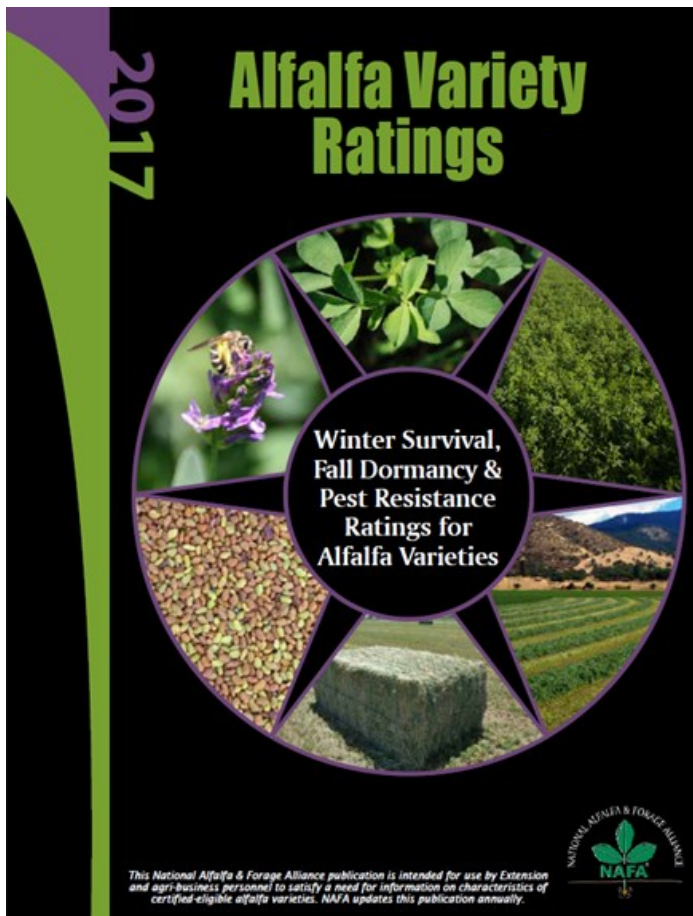
Morton County NRCS 2016 Conservation Program Summary

The year 2016 was a busy and productive one for conservation in Morton County. The NRCS & SCD staffs focused on work related to implementing conservation practices and ranking NRCS conservation program applications for potential funding. Through the Environmental Quality Incentive Program EQIP, the NRCS office processed 44 requests for technical and financial assistance with the installation of grazing land and cropland improvement practices. The estimated cost associated with these EQIP applications totaled over \$1.1 million. The conservation practices associated with the applications included livestock water systems, cross fencing for grazing systems, grass and hayland plantings, feedlot designs, and soil health improvement practices.

After the ranking was completed, Morton County was awarded 16 contracts for a total of \$534,475. The contracted acres exceeded 9,100 acres. Conservation practices on cropland contracts totaled \$112,100 on over 3300 acres. Over 4,800 acres in livestock operations were planned for treatment utilizing over \$396,000. Contracts were also developed for farmstead windbreak renovations and feedlot designs.

NRCS's Conservation Stewardship Program CSP had a successful 2016. All Morton County applications were accepted into new contracts. Conservation plans were developed on 15,760 acres for a total of \$811,546. CSP participants plan to achieve more advanced conservation management practices. The plans address all land under the control of the participant. In Morton County, popular management enhancements included soil health monitoring, practices to build soil organic matter and break compaction layers, pasture monitoring, and determining the nutritional level of the grazing land.

Salt Tolerant Alfalfa



One thing we have been seeing more often in Morton County is higher salt affected fields. Several people have mentioned that they would like to put in alfalfa but they are uncertain as to what variety to go with. There are many different varieties and they all have different characteristics. Here are some things you can watch for when you are choosing your alfalfa.

The first thing you will want to look for is a salt tolerant variety of alfalfa. For example, Rugged is one variety that is salt tolerant. The next thing you want to look at is the Winter Survival Index (WSI). In North Dakota we have found that a Winter Survival Index rating of two or less is the most suited for our winters.

There are many options for selecting a salt tolerant variety of alfalfa. A great source of information that we use here in the office is the Alfalfa Variety Ratings publication that is available each year online at <https://www.alfalfa.org/varietyLeaflet.php>. If you still aren't sure which variety you should go with you can always ask your seed distributor.

MORTON COUNTY SOIL CONSERVATION DISTRICT

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The Morton County Soil Conservation District would like to thank the following sponsors:

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Dakota Community Bank—Mandan, ND
K2S Engineering Inc.—Ypsilanti, ND
Earth Energy & Water Systems, Inc.—New Salem, ND

UPCOMING EVENTS

Please Note: The Morton County SCD will not have a 2017 Winter Workshop.

February

14th-15th—KFYR Ag in the Classroom @ Bismarck Event Center
16th—SCD Board Meeting @ USDA Service Center, Mandan
20th—George Washington's Birthday Holiday—Office Closed

March

1st—Soil Health Workshop @ Bismarck State College
2nd—Planter Adjustment Shoptalk in Morton County—Specific location to be determined
7th—Morton County SCD 2017 Women's Ag Day @ Baymont Inn & Suites
9th—SCD Board Meeting @ USDA Service Center, Mandan

April

11th—Morton County Water Festival @ Nazarene Church, Mandan
13th—SCD Board Meeting @ USDA Service Center, Mandan