
An aerial photograph of a pond in Benton County, Minnesota. The water is covered with a thick layer of green algae. Several ducks are visible swimming in the water. The pond is surrounded by lush green trees and vegetation. A dark green semi-transparent box is overlaid on the top portion of the image, containing the title text in white serif font.

**Benton Soil and
Water Conservation
District**

**2021
Annual
Report**

Benton County, Minnesota

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About Benton Soil and Water

Our mission is to protect & enhance Benton County's soil, water & natural resources; to nurture a conservation ethic by educating county residents on conservation & environmental issues. *Serving Benton County since 1948.*

SWCD's niche is providing soil and water conservation services to owners of private lands. Privately owned lands make up 78% of the land in Minnesota. Managing these lands, whether agricultural, forest, lakes, or urban, is key to Minnesota's quality of life.

Soil and Water Conservation Districts (SWCDs) are local units of government that manage and direct natural resource management programs at the local level. Districts work in both urban and rural areas, with landowners and with other units of government, to carry out a program for the conservation, use, and development of soil, water, and related resources.

Contact Us



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Foley MN 56329**



www.soilandwater.org



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Facebook



SWCD Staff

Gerry Maciej
District Manager

Nathan Sanoski
District Tech

Mike McMillin
District Tech

Jessica Hohesiel
District Tech

Kendra Sommerfeld
Water Plan Tech

Renee Thell
Admin Assistant

Tiffany Muellner
District Tech



NRCS Staff

Joey LeBlanc
Civil Engineer
Tech

Bonnie
Haubenschild
Office Assistant

Pat Gehling
(retired end of
2021)
District
Conservationist

Pat Gehling's retirement from the NRCS on December 30th marked the end of a 34-year career with the agency. Pat spent most of his career serving the citizens of Benton County since March of 1992. He certainly left his mark in our community. He assisted with many of the conservation projects you can see (and many you can't see) as you drive through our county. Benton County wouldn't be where it is today without Pat's dedication.

Congratulations on your retirement from NRCS Pat!



Kendra Sommerfeld
Water Plan Technician



Jessica Hoheisel
District Technician

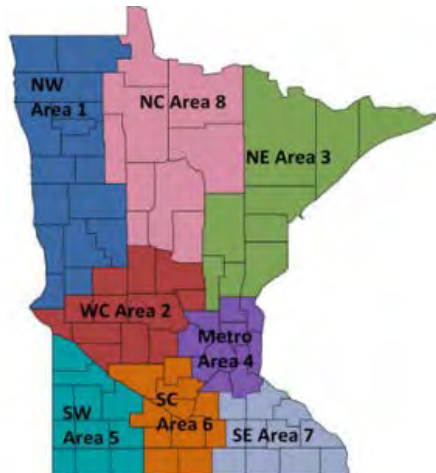


Tiffany Muellner
District Technician

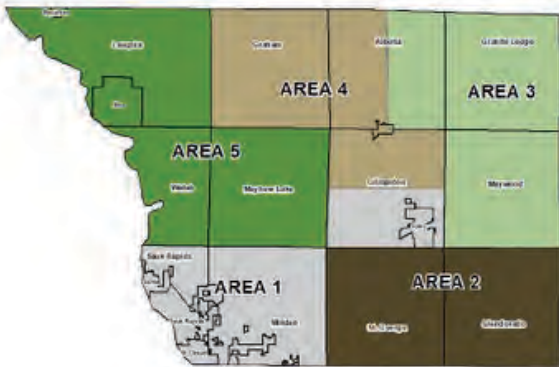
At the local level supervisors play an important role in how the county deals with natural resource management issues. Serving as a supervisor is a great opportunity for people who want a voice in how we manage our environment.

The Benton SWCD's board is made up of 5 elected supervisors who are elected by nomination districts on the general ballot. Supervisors do not participate in the primaries and their terms are staggered.

At the state level Benton SWCD Supervisor Chuck Rau serves as the Vice-President of the Minnesota Association of Soil and Water Conservation Districts (MASWCD). He will continue to serve as a supervisor for the Benton SWCD and represent area 2 SWCDs on the MASWCD board of directors.



The MASWCD is a not-for-profit Association that represents Minnesota's SWCDs. It helps to set policy for various conservation programs including: Reinvest in Minnesota (RIM) Program, Minnesota Wetland Conservation Act, and the Clean Water, Land and Legacy Amendment, and more.



AREA 1
Wade Bastian
320-266-688

AREA 2
Joseph Jordan
763-856-3192

AREA 3
Jake Scherer
320-355-2343

AREA 4
Bernie Thole
320-266-8436

AREA 5
Chuck Rau
320-393-4834



Left to right: Wade Bastian, Joe Jordan, Bernie Thole, Jake Scherer, Chuck Rau

Thank you to everyone involved including our Benton County Commissioners, state and federal legislators, state conservation agencies, local conservation organizations and our property owners for taking the initiative to improve this community.

2021 Benton County Board of Commissioners

West Central Technical Service Area (WCTSA) Staff



Front Row, Left to Right: Beth Schlangen, Ed Popp
Back Row, Left to Right: Scott Johnson, Steve Heinen, Jared Gapinski

WCTSA staff left to right: Luke Herkenhoff, Ross Reiffenberger, and Steve Linow. Not pictured Mark Greve and Tim Ebnet.

We would not be able to operate without the continued support of the Benton County Commissioners. In 2021, **\$239,500** was allocated to the SWCD by Benton County to support our conservation efforts.

The WCTSA staff fills a critical role for SWCD's by providing engineering and technical assistance for projects that could not be completed within an individual SWCD. TSA staff also assists us with drone footage of projects.

Welcome to our new Benton County Commissioners - Scott Johnson, Jared Gapinski, and Beth Schlangen!



Thank you to all of our partnering agencies!



United States Department of Agriculture
Natural Resources Conservation Service



CLEAN
WATER
LAND &
LEGACY
AMENDMENT

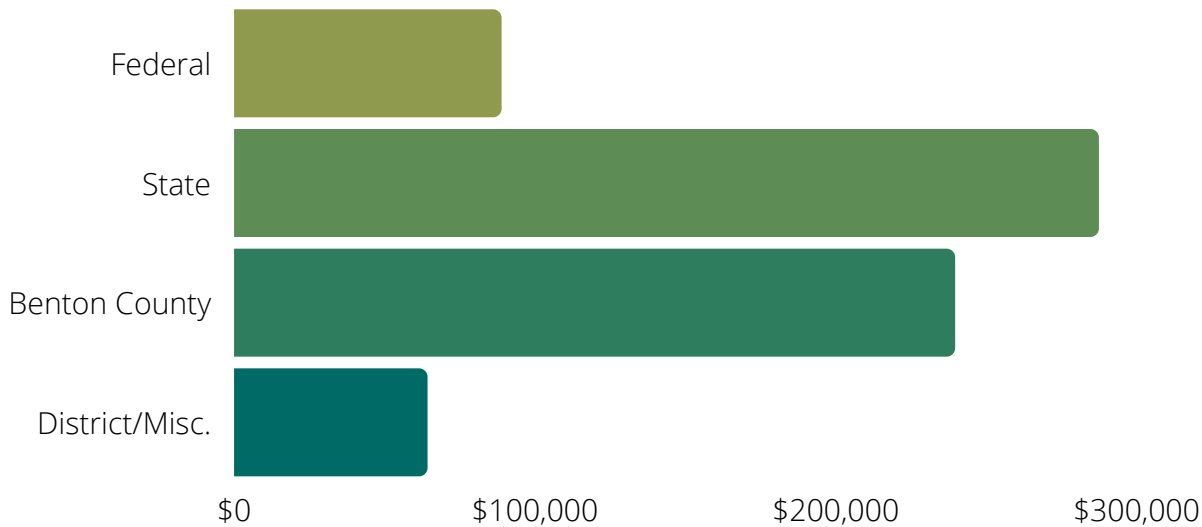


2021 FINANCIAL SUMMARY

Benton SWCD operational revenue sources include federal, state, county, district (tree/product sales and equipment rental) and other. We also rely on a variety of financial contributions from cost-share, incentives, program development and annual rental payments.

\$679,652

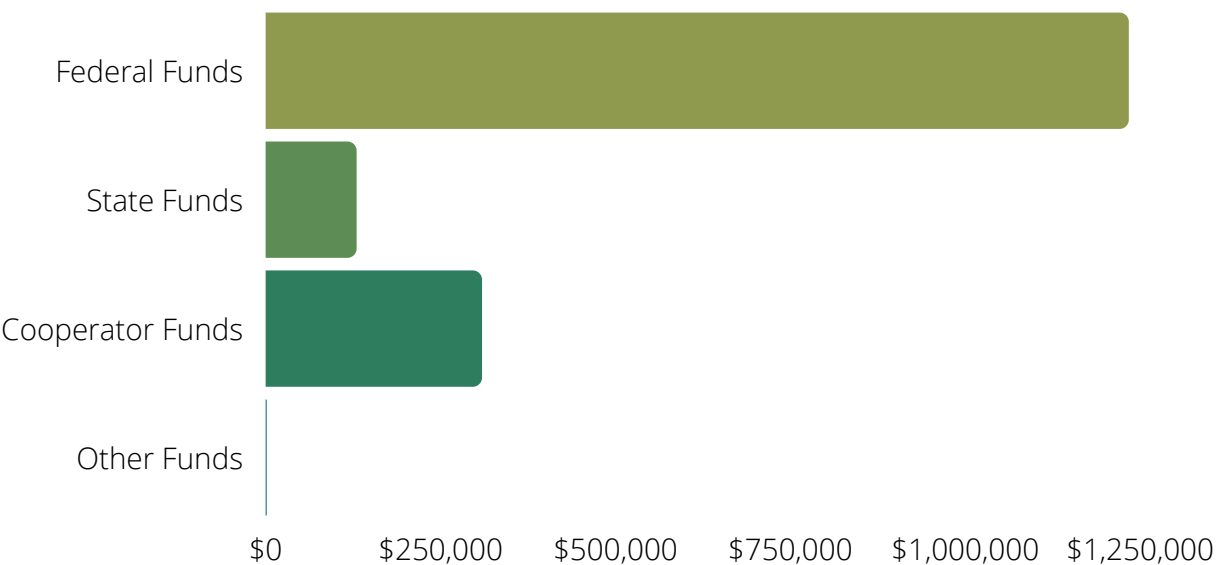
OPERATIONAL REVENUE IN 2021



These funds are used for personnel salary and benefits, Supervisor and Water Resources Advisory Committee member expenses, rent, supplies, travel, tree program, environmental education programs and other related expenses

\$1,674,650

IN CONTRIBUTIONS FOR CONSERVATION PROJECTS IN 2021



Funds administered through the SWCD, NRCS, FSA and Benton County Program. Landowner contributions for federal funded projects are not available so cooperator funds displayed are estimates.

2021 ECONOMIC IMPACT

Our projects bring outside resources into Benton County and encourages citizens to invest in their resources locally. Local contractors and resources are used in many of our projects.

\$1.67M

**TOTAL SPENT ON CONSERVATION PRACTICES
IN BENTON COUNTY IN 2021**

\$1.23M

**SPENT FROM FEDERAL COST SHARE
FUNDS**

\$129,404

**SPENT FROM STATE COST SHARE
FUNDS**

\$308,777

**SPENT FROM LANDOWNER
CONTRIBUTIONS/COST SHARE**

\$837,325

**LOCAL FUNDS RECIRCULATED IN BENTON
COUNTY**

ASSUMING 50% OF TOTAL FUNDS IS USED LOCALLY

EDUCATION AND OUTREACH

Benton SWCD has made a conscious effort to increase our education and outreach to the community. In 2019, the first Education and Outreach plan was created and continuously updated.

2021 Education Outreach Highlights

- 2021 SWCD Tour of Practices in person event
- Benton SWCD's Outstanding Conservation Contest 2021
- Coloring, essay, posters contest
 - Theme was "Healthy Forests Healthy Communities"
 - Total of 511 coloring sheets, 397 poster, 56 murals, and 54 essays!
 - Total of \$1,344.00 worth of prize money issued to the winning students and teachers.
- Project time-lapse videos
- Sold 25,520 trees/shrubs in our 2021 Tree Program
- YouTube Video of seed drill rental
- Weekly Facebook posts
- 5 social media videos to advertise projects, programs, and funding opportunities
- Numerous newspaper articles
- New infographics, brochures, and handout materials for programs



Education and Outreach

Benton SWCD's Outstanding Conservation Contest 2021

Each year, SWCD's in Minnesota recognize individuals and organizations for outstanding accomplishments in implementing conservation practices and improving Minnesota's natural resources.



Gerry Maciej (Benton SWCD Manager), Joe Jordan (Benton SWCD Supervisor), Rice Sportsman Club board members Mike Kahl and Mark Reimer, Chuck Rau and Wade Bastian (Benton SWCD Supervisors)



Rice Area Sportsmen's Club was awarded the Benton SWCD's 2021 Outstanding Conservationist.

Below are some of the conservation activities the Club has done;

- Re-enrolled 145.76 acres in CRP in 2020
- Established a 13.1 acres of pollinator habitat planted in 2021.
- Financial sponsors of the Little Rock Lake Drawdown project of 2019, Farm Bill Assistance Program, and Soil and Water Stewardship Week.
- Donated 2 tree planters and a plot master to Benton SWCD.
- and many other conservation practices throughout the years!



GRANT PROGRAMS AND PROJECT HIGHLIGHTS OF 2021



Clean Water, Land and Legacy Amendment

Clean Water Funds



The Minnesota Legislature appropriated approx. \$261M of clean water funds to water resource activities for fiscal years 2020-2021. Clean Water Fund dollars come from the Clean Water, Land and Legacy Amendment.

Approx. 33% of those funds are dedicated to the Clean Water Fund to protect, enhance, and restore water quality in lakes, rivers, streams, and groundwater in Minnesota.

Many of Benton Soil and Water Conservation District's programs, projects, and activities are funded through the Clean Water Funds and Clean Water, Land and Legacy Amendment.

These funds are very important for protecting and improving our water quality in Benton County.



Elk River Watershed Grant Program Highlight

Benton SWCD has installed 36 BMPs since 2016 in this watershed with 2 Clean Water Fund grants totaling \$500,000. This 613-square-mile watershed spans across Benton and Sherburne county.

This grant will aid in reducing the frequency and severity of the algae blooms and enhance aquatic life and recreation for users of both Mayhew Lake and Big Elk Lake. Recent monitoring data shows decreasing trends in bacteria levels, phosphorous and chlorophyll- a levels. More data results coming in 2022-2023.

The 2020 Big Elk & Mayhew Lakes Phosphorus Reduction Program grant of \$350,000, helped complete projects in 2020 and 2021.

Another grant was awarded in late 2021 to continue this work.

2021 HIGHLIGHTS

6 wetland restorations
(35.75 acres)
7 cover crop projects
1 terrace
1 septic system repair
1 water and sediment
basin

\$160,798

COST SHARE IN 2021

554 LBS

PHOSPHOROUS POLLUTION
REDUCED

503 TONS

SEDIMENT POLLUTION REDUCED



Elk River Watershed Grant Program Highlight

RAPIDS HERALD

Benton SWCD secures grant

Will receive nearly \$500,000 for operating costs, projects

BY JAKOB KOUNKEL
STAFF WRITER

FOLEY – The Benton Soil and Water Conservation District has once again found success in receiving a grant that will bolster operating costs and contribute to conservation practices in Benton County. This time, though, Benton SWCD received nearly \$500,000 from the state in a hyper-competitive pool of candidates – one of the largest allocations the conservation district has ever received.

Benton SWCD Director Gerry Maciej said of the \$22 million requested through 53 proposals, only \$11 million was dished out to various conservation-focused groups across the state. Benton County's conservation district ranked 13th on the list, receiving \$491,000.

The grant includes \$85,000 for operational costs, \$240,000 for existing feedlot projects, and the rest is for various conservation work and activities. Operational

costs include money for vehicles, employee salaries and keeping the lights on at the Foley-based site.

Maciej also said, because of federal match for these types of projects and because of landowner contributions, he thinks the \$491,000 will turn into an approximately \$2 million initiative.

"When we focus our efforts on doing conservation to the areas that are going to provide the most environmental benefit, the state likes that, and so do we," Maciej said, who writes the grants himself along with support from staff. "The state likes to get that biggest bang for the buck."

The grant will be largely dedicated to conservation practices in Benton County. More specifically, the grant will provide 75% funding (with a 25% match from landowners) to help eliminate precipitation runoff from surface water contaminated with undesirable nutrients that eventually make their

way into larger bodies of water, especially rivers and streams.

"What this grant does is it allows us to work with property owners parcel by parcel or landowner by landowner to identify practices that can be done to keep those nutrients out of the water as it makes its way to lakes and rivers," Maciej said.

Benton SWCD identified three projects in its grant proposal, but the conservation district also has much of the money earmarked already – a sign that landowners in the area not only need the funding help, but also that they are prepared and ready to move forward with their projects.

Mike McMillin, a Benton SWCD conservationist, has been working with a number of farmers over the last few years on feedlot projects. Although final details are not confirmed until the money is received from all parties, McMillin said there are two dairy operations and a cow-calf operation struggling to manage erosion and surface water runoff.

The solution is simple: Build a structure over the problem area so that precipitation does not fall on the area.

"When you drive by it, it looks like just a

normal shed or storage building," McMillin said. "Plus, animals stay dryer and cleaner, and they do not need as much bedding. It's easier to cut back on some of those things."

Over the past five years, Benton County has averaged just over \$1.2 million in cost share between state and federal grants and landowner contributions every year. This year, though, that figure could double or more.

"We're just blessed that a lot of people are willing to do really good projects," Maciej said. "It requires an investment from the state, landowners and federal government. It's just a really good deal."

But their work is nowhere near complete. The Benton SWCD has between 30 and 35 projects so far this year, ranging anywhere from the beginning stages to waiting for funding to come through, McMillin said. If the average cost of one of those projects is \$200,000 – which McMillin said may be conservative – \$6-\$7 million will be needed to complete those projects.

However, Maciej said, the conservation district is willing and ready to take on whatever projects its citizens are ready to throw at them.



Elk River Watershed: Project Highlight

A property owner in the Elk River Watershed completed a wetland restoration in 2021. The project will restore approximately 2.25 acres of drained seasonal wetland habitat.

This is part of a larger scale effort to combat non-native aquatic invasive species such as reed canary grass and hybrid cattails in Benton County.

Wetland restorations can improve wildlife habitat, floodwater retention, water quality and increase beneficial native wetland plants.

Partners:

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

Benton County (Aquatic Invasive Species grant).

Fish and Wildlife was the engineer and overseen construction for the project.

0.11 LBS

PHOSPHOROUS POLLUTION REDUCED PER YEAR

0.44 TONS

SEDIMENT POLLUTION REDUCED PER YEAR



Little Rock Lake Watershed

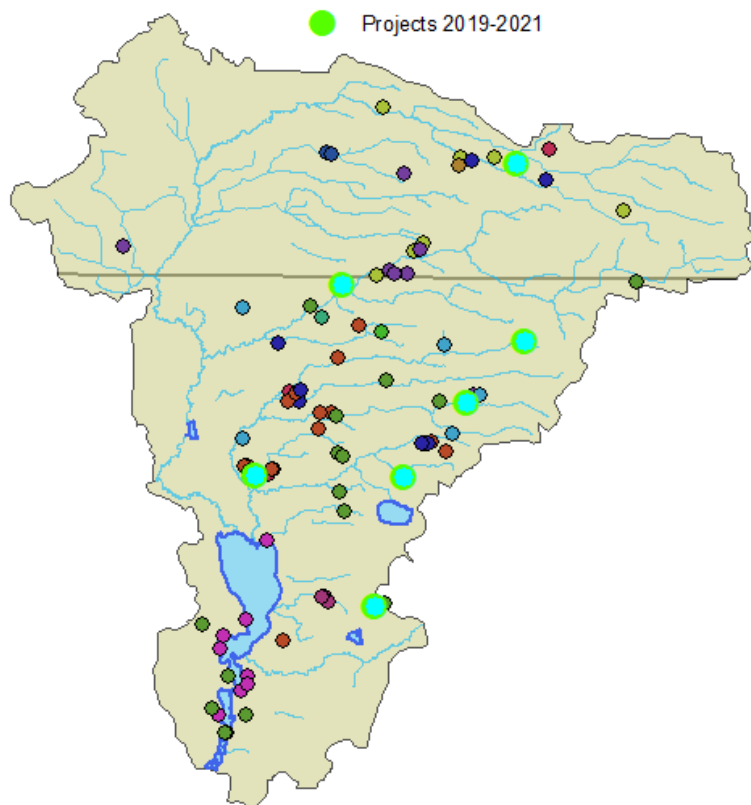
Since the TMDL was completed in 2012, there's been 95 projects completed in this watershed.

Projects used cost-share funds provided by the Minnesota Clean Water Land and Legacy Amendment, the landowner, Little Rock Lake Association, and federal program funds.

These projects have resulted in reductions of suspended solids, sediment, phosphorus, nitrogen and fecal coliform in the watershed.

Projects from 2019-2021

● Projects 2019-2021



2

PROJECTS IN 2021



Little Rock Lake- Benton County

Little Rock Lake Watershed: Project Highlight

This landowner had some significant erosion issues from excess water. Part of this project was completed in June of 2021 with funds from the Little Rock Lake Grant.

This project will benefit the Little Rock Lake Watershed water quality and will to reduce sediment and phosphorous pollution rates for years to come.

36.8 TONS

SEDIMENT POLLUTION
REDUCED PER YEAR

32 LBS

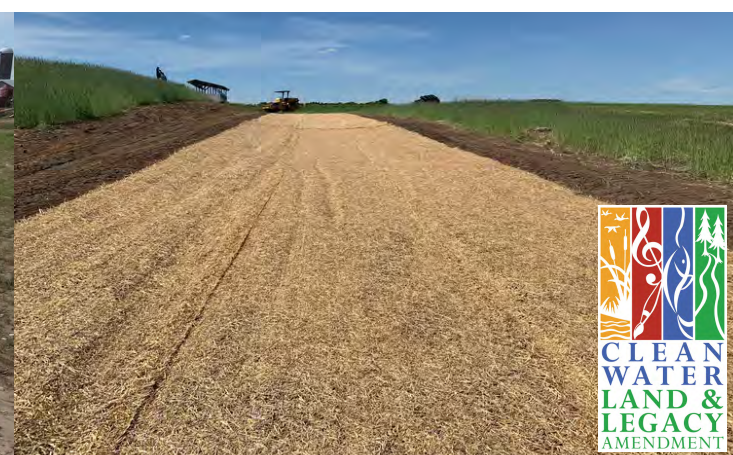
PHOSPHOROUS POLLUTION
REDUCED PER YEAR



Before



After



Little Rock Lake Watershed Stream Monitoring

We've has been monitoring Little Rock Creek, Bunker Hill Creek and Sucker Creek since 2016 in order to evaluate the effectiveness of best management practice implementation towards achieving water quality goals with the help of MPCA.

A monitoring report completed in 2018 comparing 2016-2018 data to 2006-2008 data indicated improvement in Little Rock Creek and Bunker Hill Creek.

Water quality in these waters are important as they drain into the Miss. River just upstream of the St. Cloud Drinking Water Treatment Plant which provides drinking water to the City of St. Cloud.

Monitoring results from 2020 and 2021 are currently being. Future plans to monitor water quality at Sucker Creek in 2022.



18 WATER SAMPLES

FROM LITTLE ROCK CREEK IN 2021

15 WATER SAMPLES

FROM BUNKER HILLS CREEK IN 2021

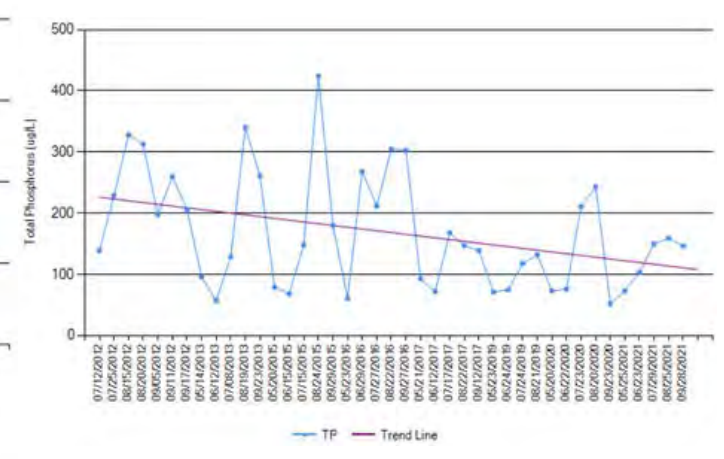
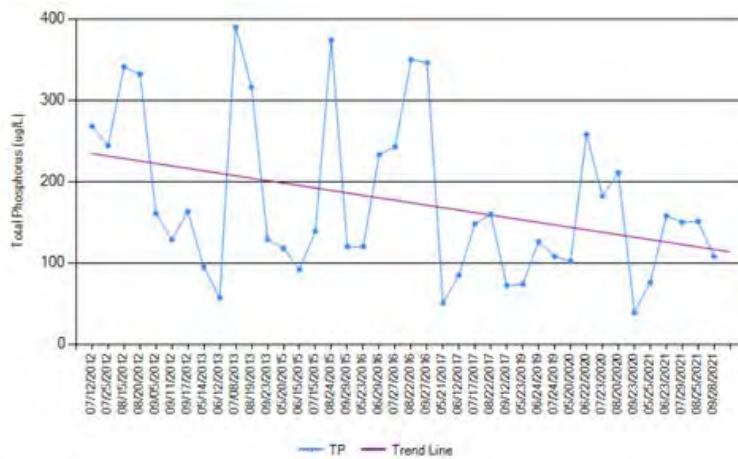
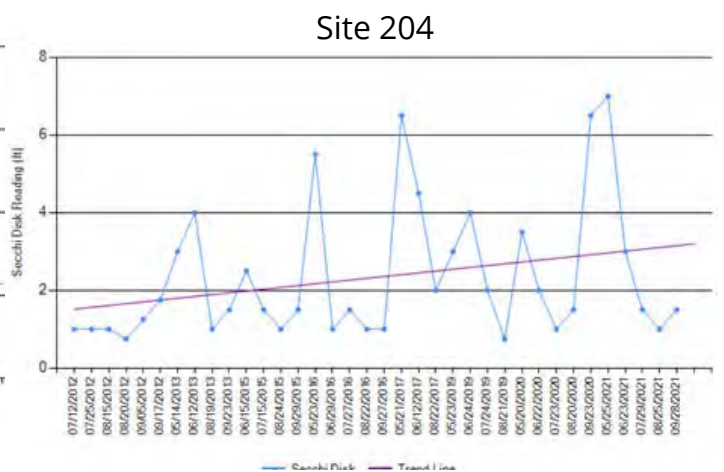
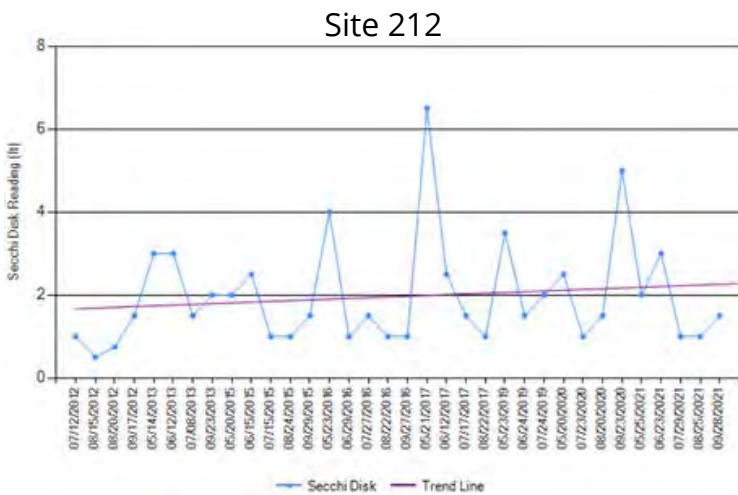


Little Rock Creek- Benton County

Little Rock Watershed Little Rock Lake Monitoring

The Little Rock Lake Association has been monitoring water quality of Little Rock Lake since 2012. Secchi depth water clarity measurements, phosphorus, and Chlorophyll-a are taken monthly at three different sites. The monitoring data continues to show that work completed in the Little Rock Lake Watershed is leading to positive water quality impacts in Little Rock Lake.

Some monitoring graphs and data below for two sites in 2021.



Little Rock Lake Drawdown Project 2021 Update

2021 water quality data is slowly showing improvements to water quality. Phosphorus levels are decreasing and Secchi depth (water clarity) is increasing. Algae is still present in the lake, however, it is not the same toxic algae that was present before the drawdown.

Microcystin algae before the drawdown was 100 times more than normal but post drawdown it is now within normal levels (though still high). MN DNR did a vegetation survey in 2021 and it showed native species diversity and quantity is increasing. There's more native vegetation in the water and on the shoreline in 2021!



Little Rock Lake- Benton County



Little Rock Lake Drawdown Project 2021 Update



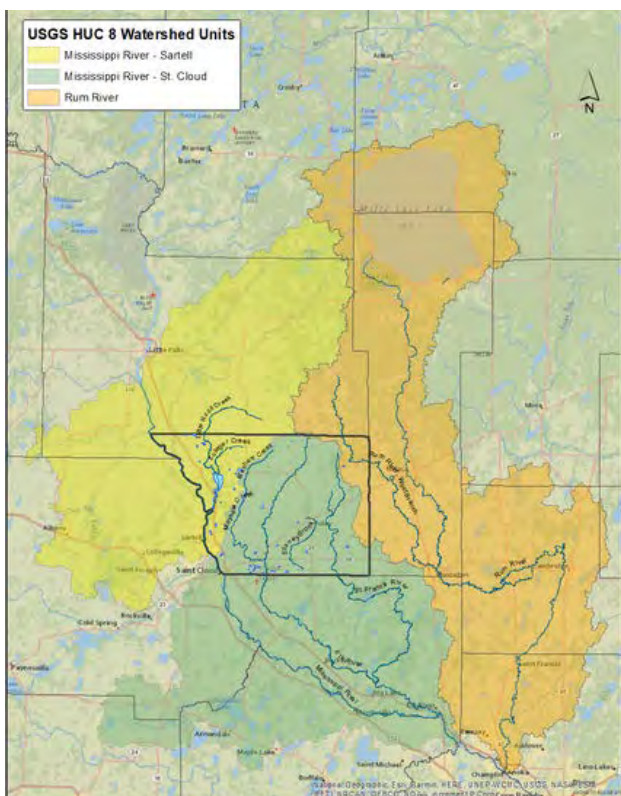
One Watershed One Plan Program

BWSR is allocated funds from the Clean Water Fund (CWF) for the acceleration of implementation for One Watershed, One Plan Program.



Water resource management has started to shift to management based on watershed boundaries rather than county boundaries. The One Watershed One Plan (1W1P) program emphasizes forming stronger partnerships between local governments and upstream and downstream neighbors in order to develop a more prioritized, targeted and measurable implementation plan.

These comprehensive watershed management plans address water quality and quantity, groundwater, drinking water, habitat, recreation, and other issues. Once the comprehensive water management plans are completed, each watershed will be provided funding by the state to implement the highest priority projects.



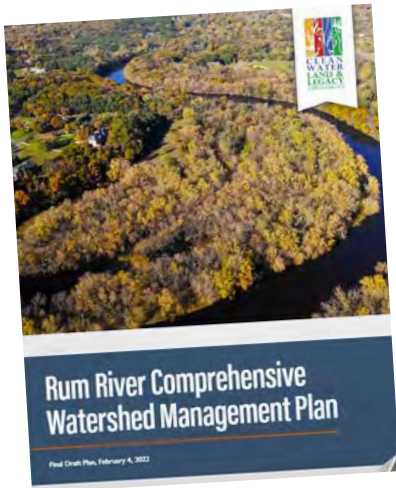
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WATERSHEDS IN BENTON COUNTY

2

WATERSHED PLANS IN PROGRESS AS OF 2021 IN BENTON COUNTY

One Watershed One Plan Program Rum River Watershed



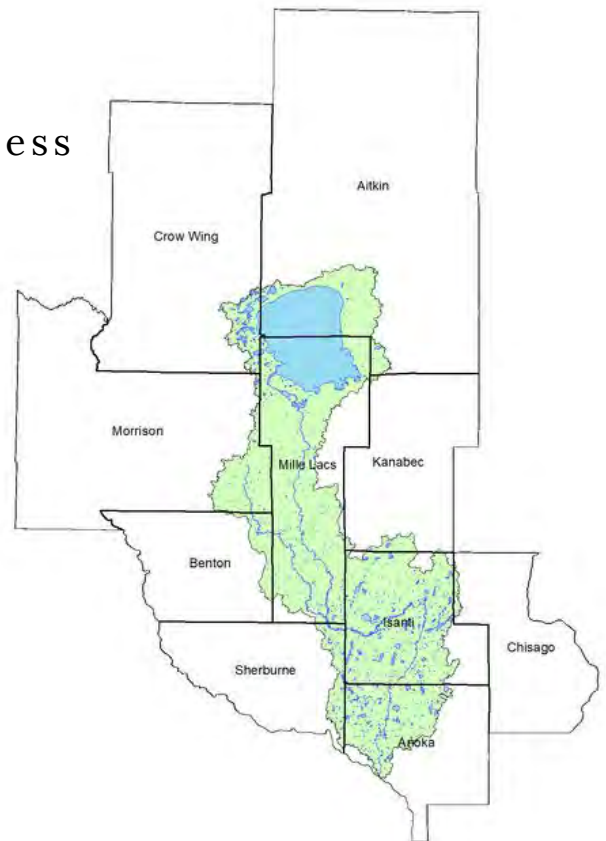
The Rum River Watershed boundary covers 1,013,760 acres of the Upper Mississippi River Basin in central Minnesota, stretching from Mille Lacs Lake in the north to the confluence with the Mississippi River in the city of Anoka.

The Rum River 1W1P planning process began in late 2018 and continued throughout 2021.

The plan is scheduled to be completed in 2022 with implementation starting shortly after receiving funding .

Rum River One Watershed One Plan

<https://www.millelacsswcd.org/rum-river-one-watershed-one-plan/>



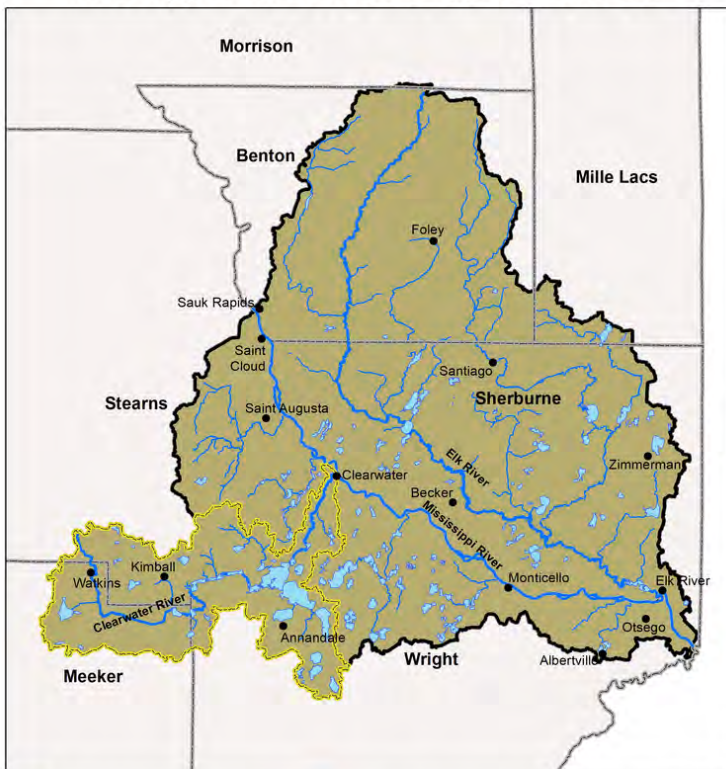
West Branch Rum River- Benton County



One Watershed One Plan Program Mississippi River St. Cloud Watershed (MRSC)

In 2021, The Mississippi River St. Cloud Watershed partnership was established to submit an application to BWSR for One watershed One Plan planning grant. This watershed lies in a large area of Benton County and will be a significant piece of our water planning.

Mississippi-Saint Cloud One Watershed One Plan



The partnership received funding to start planning in 2021. Planning process will take place through 2022-2023.

Total watershed area is 717,378 and includes Benton County, Clearwater River WD, Meeker County, Mille Lacs County, Morrison County, Stearns County, Sherburne County, Wright County.



Rum River Reinvest in Minnesota (RIM) West Branch Rum River

In 2021 the Minnesota legislature approved an additional \$2.5M for Reinvest in Minnesota (RIM) to make permanent easements an option for willing landowners within the nine-county watershed, which includes Benton County.

The first \$3M of easement funding was committed to just over 3,000 acres in about a year, leaving over 1,100 acres on a waiting list. The second round of funding aims to protect at least 1,750 acres.

Soil and water conservation districts and partners like The Nature Conservancy and Pheasants Forever promote the RIM easement program to the most ecologically valuable lands.

6.35 MILES

OF SHORELINE PROTECTED IN BENTON COUNTY

513 TOTAL ACRES

PROTECTED IN BENTON COUNTY

8 TOTAL EASEMENTS

IN BENTON COUNTY



West Branch Rum River- Benton County

Minnesota Agriculture Water Quality Certification (MAWQCP)

A voluntary program for farmers and landowners that protects Minnesota's water resources. MAWQCP recognizes producers for their work in protecting water quality. It puts farmers in touch with local conservation district experts to identify and mitigate any risks their farm poses to water quality.

Once certified, each farm is deemed in compliance with water quality laws and regulations for 10 years. Farmers can use their certification status to promote and market their operations as protective of water quality.

9,562

ACRES CERTIFIED IN BENTON COUNTY SINCE PROGRAM INCEPTION

13

FARM CERTIFIED IN BENTON COUNTY SINCE PROJECT INCEPTION

Highlights of 2021

- 1 Farm certified with a total of 904 acres
- 3 farm assessments in progress
- West Central Area (our area) is at 251 farms certified on 176,831 acres of the 800,915 acres Statewide.

Minnesota Agricultural Water Quality Certification Program



Minnesota Agriculture Water Quality Certification (MAWQC): Project Highlight

Farmers aid in water quality certification 1M-acre goal

Kaschmitters recognized for stewardship

BY JESSICA HOHEISEL
Benton Soil and Water Conservation District

FOLEY – Two brothers – Brian and Glen Kaschmitter – have raised crops, hogs and beef with their families and have been in the agricultural industry their entire lives. Over this time, their commitment to the environment and their farm operation has shined.

Brian and Glen farm just over 900 acres of corn and soybean in rotation with alfalfa in rural Sauk Rapids. They pasture 50 cow-calf pairs and 45 finishing steers of beef cattle. The Kaschmitters recently retired their farrowing hog operation but continue to custom raise finishing hogs.

While going through the farm assessment to become certified through the Minnesota Agriculture Water Quality Certification Program, many practices earned



PHOTO SUBMITTED

Brothers Brian (left) and Glen Kaschmitter stand with Jessica Hoheisel, Benton Soil and Water Conservation District technician, and their Minnesota Ag Water Quality Certification program signs in rural Sauk Rapids. The Kaschmitter farm is newly-certified in the program, contributing to the state's 1-million-acre goal.

advanced credit. Some of those practices included doing manure spreader calibrations and nutrient management test plots with Benton Soil and Water Conservation District.

The Kaschmitters also have completed irrigation pivot uniformity testing through the Natural Conservation Resources Services office along with in-season plant tissue testing with soil and manure testing. These practices encourage well-informed decision-making when it comes to their nutrient and irrigation water management.

Maintaining water quality and healthy soils did not start with this program. No-till is uti-

lized on over 180 acres of their farm, and they have seen the organic matter increase over the years. Brian and Glen also have maintained a terrace, installed and maintained perennial grass filter strips, and have maintained wetlands and naturally vegetated areas along with field wind-breaks.

The Kaschmitters are dedicated to continuing their hard work through the MAWQCP and are certified through the program. This certification gives the Kaschmitters the regulatory certainty that they are compliant with any new water laws over a 10-year period and recognition for demon-

strating good conservation stewardship practices. The MAWQCP also provides opportunities for additional technical assistance with enacting additional water quality practices on their farm.

Minnesota has a 1-million-acre goal, and Brian and Glen are now recognized through this stewardship process as a farm family helping Minnesotans protect our lakes, rivers and all water features.

If you are interested in the Minnesota Ag Water Quality Certification Program, contact the Benton SWCD at 320-968-5300, ext. 3 or visit the office at 14 Second Ave. W., Foley.



National Association of Conservation Districts Technical Assistance (TA) Grant

2



Benton SWCD was awarded funding again from the National Association of Conservation Districts (NACD) Technical Assistance Grant.

We use these funds to focus on Conservation Operations Technical Assistance (COTA) Planning.

Farmers and agricultural landowners in Benton County have shown a very high interest in conservation, especially over the last several years. Benton SWCD technicians are able to conduct one on one consultations and planning with these landowners through this grant.

NACD Highlights for 2020-2021

- 50 landowners assisted
- 27 Conservation Plans
- 37 EQIP contracts assisted
 - 10 designs
 - 2 funded contracts
 - 1 installed contract
 - 1 certified practice
 - one historically underserved producer with 332.3 acres

2781.5 TOTAL ACRES

BENEFITTED IN BENTON COUNTY 2020-2021

\$55,000

AWARDED TO BENTON SWCD FOR 2021-2022



Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP)

EQIP provides federal funds to address local resource concerns. It provides financial assistance, either to off-set the cost of implementation or as an incentive, to assist crop, livestock, and other operations.

\$1.03M

IN CONTRACTS IN 2021

8

CONTRACTS IN BENTON
COUNTY FOR 2021

EQIP Highlights of 2021

- 620 acres of nutrient management practices
- 1 well sealing
- 4 slacking slab projects
- 302 ft. of windbreaks installed
- 22 acres of pasture seeding
- 1 stream crossing project
- 1 seasonal high tunnel project



Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP): Project Highlight

A landowner installed an ag-waste storage system using the EQIP program in 2021.

The project consists of a waste storage pond, stacking slab, and closure of an existing non-compliant waste storage pond. The new storage pond has a High Density Polyethylene (HDPE) liner and is 12' deep x 246' wide x 356' long. It will hold 5.2 million gallons and provide 14 months of storage.

The stacking slab will be 60' x 80' and will provide 6 months of storage. Runoff from the stacking slab will be collected and drain to the storage pond.

122 LBS

NITROGEN POLLUTION REDUCED
PER YEAR

41 LBS

PHOSPHOROUS POLLUTION
REDUCED PER YEAR



Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) and The Continuous Conservation Reserve Program (CCRP)

CRP aims to re-establish valuable land cover to help improve water quality, prevent soil erosion and reduce loss of wildlife habitat. It's become one of the largest private-lands conservation programs in the U.S.

10

CRP CONTRACTS IN BENTON COUNTY IN 2021

137.82

ACRES ENROLLED IN CRP 2021

\$191,264

PAID TO LANDOWNERS IN CRP IN 2021

CCRP is a voluntary program that focuses on using grasses and trees to protect and improve soil, air, water, and enhance fish and wildlife habitat using various conservation practices.

114.67

ACRES ENROLLED IN CCRP 2021

16

CCRP CONTRACTS IN BENTON COUNTY IN 2021



CRP- Benton County

Groundwater Research: Project Highlight

In 2021, a farm near Rice, MN is coming up on a decade of groundwater nitrate research. This study looks at the amounts of nitrates found in the groundwater, which can come from the nitrogen management above ground but also naturally within the soils.

12 lysimeters were installed (which are in the ground and collect the water) in partnership with the Schlichting Family Farms, Minnesota Department of Agriculture, and us! Recently the Schlichting Family agreed to expand to a total of 17 lysimeters!



Pharmaceutical Waste Collection Program

Minnesota Pollution Control Agency provides Benton County with funds from SCORE (Select Committee on Recycling and the Environment). Benton SWCD in partnership with Benton County Sheriff's Office, Sauk Rapids Police Department, and City of Rice Police Department started a pharmaceutical waste collection program to utilize some of these funds.

This program is designed to accept unused medication from citizens and prevent pharmaceutical pollution in our water.

The pharmaceutical disposal boxes are located at Benton County Sheriff's Office in Foley, Sauk Rapids Police Department located in the City of Sauk Rapids Government Center, and Rice City Hall/Police Department.

1,400 LBS

OF PHARMACEUTICALS DISPOSED IN
2021



Clean Water Fund Well Sealing Program

This program is funded under the Clean Water Fund. The goal is to seal unused, abandoned wells in Benton County to protect groundwater quality, human health, and safety.

An unused well is an open access point straight to our groundwater, allowing surface water runoff, contaminated water, pollutants, or any waste material a direct link to our drinking water sources. This threatens the quality and safety of everyone's water – neighbor's water, your water, and even surrounding water.

Additional funding coming in 2022.

6 WELLS

SEALED IN 2021



Clean Water Fund Septic System Upgrade Program

The MPCA offer grants to counties for SSTS programs and to assist low-income homeowners with needed SSTS upgrades. The SSTS base grant is \$18,600 per county for counties that administer the SSTS program.

In 2021, there was a total of \$1.5 million available to counties. Funds distributed to counties through the Board of Water and Soil Resources (BWSR) Natural Resources Block Grants (NRBG).

Additional funding coming in 2022.

\$26,796

AWARDED TO BENTON
COUNTY IN 2019 TO 2022.

2 SEPTIC SYSTEMS

FIXED IN 2021



Looking Ahead to 2022

Benton County community's greatest need includes professional advice for water quality BMPs that target reducing excess nutrients and soil erosion. Benton SWCD will continue to assist landowners with conservation planning for various water quality projects in 2022.

Benton SWCD will continue to assist landowners and others with designing and implementing conservation practices including – erosion control practice, storm water management, wetland restoration or protection plans, conservation easements, Comprehensive Nutrient Management Plans for livestock operators, grazing management plans, implementing cover crops, animal waste storage facilities, and more. These activities will help keep excess nutrients and soil out of our lakes, streams, and groundwater.

We will continue working with landowners to implement best management practices and install projects in Little Rock Lake Watershed to improve water quality in Little Rock Lake and surrounding waterbodies, as well as continuing our work in Elk River Watershed to improve water quality in Mayhew Lake and Big Elk Lake. We look forward to our One Watershed One Plan partnerships and future watershed activities.

Benton SWCD will continue efforts in education and outreach to the community to increase public input and community involvement in protecting and enhancing our natural resources.

Thank you!

Benton Soil and Water Conservation District

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