

# Conservation News



January 2011, Issue 1

www.popeswcd.org

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## NITROGEN TRIALS TO BEGIN AT ROSHOLT RESEARCH FARM

A new partnership has begun! Pope & Stearns Soil and Water Conservation Districts, Prairie Lakes Co-op, the University of MN (U of MN) and the MN Department of Ag (MDA) will begin in 2011 Nitrogen Trails, at the Herman Rosholt Research Farm in Westport.

According to MDA fertilizer management unit supervisor, Bruce Montgomery, current U of MN nitrogen recommendations, in coarse textured, low -organic matter soils, are too low to maximize production. "There are concerns from both the production point of view, and water quality implications when developing recommendations" Montgomery said.

Goals for the new trials will be to investigate the optimal nitrogen rate range and the water quality impacts associated with that range. A wide range of nitrogen rates will be applied to three different crop scenarios. The crop scenarios that will be studied in 2011 will

be corn following corn, corn following soybeans, and soybeans following corn. As water infiltration makes its way from the surface to below the root zone, strategically placed suction-tube lysimeters will collect the water. Water samples will be gathered from all of the test plots weekly and tested for nitrogen levels.

In addition to the lysimeter data, researchers will be using high tech in-field chlorophyll meters that provide real-time feedback as in-season nitrogen sensors.

The project partnership is expected to last for four to five years, and hopefully more. A similar project is currently underway in Dakota County. The U of MN will be able to gather information from the two different climatic areas and hopefully find similarities in yield response data.

Many of the lysimeters were installed this fall at Rosholt. The goal is to have entire project set up and ready to go by May 1, 2011. Field Days will be held at the site sometime next year. Watch for upcoming information!



## NRCS SIGNUPS TO GET UNDERWAY

NRCS has a few ranking periods currently open for its programs.

First, The Conservation Stewardship Program or CSP has an open ranking period until January 21. CSP offers payments to producers who maintain a high level of conservation on their land and who agree to adopt higher levels of stewardship. Eligible lands include cropland, pastureland, rangeland and non-industrial forestland.

Second, the Environmental Quality Incentive Program or EQIP will soon have an open signup period, we expect it to be January — February. EQIP provides technical assistance, cost share payments, and incentive payments to assist crop, livestock, and other agricultural producers with environmental and conservation improvements to their operations.

Third, the Wildlife Quality Incentive Program or

WHIP will have a signup period most likely the same time as EQIP. WHIP provides technical assistance and cost share payments to establish and improve fish and wildlife habitat. It is a voluntary program for people who want to develop or improve fish and wildlife habitat on their lands.

The fourth and final signup, will be the Wetlands Reserve Program or WRP. Information on signup dates and deadlines still has to be released. Stay tuned! WRP is a voluntary program offering landowners the opportunity to protect, restore, and enhance wetlands on their property. The USDA NRCS provides technical and financial support to help landowners. This is a permanent easement program.

On a final note, there can always be second or special signups for these programs, so keep your ears and eyes open for additional signup information, dates and deadlines.

## GOLDEN RULES FOR GREAT FOOD PLOTS FOR WILDLIFE

Many people stop by the office and inquire about food plots, the following article is from the NRCS Wildlife Habitat Management Institute. It gives some good information about planting a successful food plot.



If you have harsh winters and want to help wildlife through them, food plots can help. However, there are a few key rules you should follow in planning and planting the plots to attract and aid your favorite wildlife species.

### Plant Food Plots Near Escape Cover

Food plots will tend to concentrate wildlife--both the species you want and the species you do not want. If you are planting the plot so you can find a covey of quail or pheasants, you can bet that fox and other predators will also be looking in the prime feeding area for them. So escape cover needs to be close so that the food plot is not a

### Wildlife Ways

#### Did you know....

It's a myth that raccoons dip food in water to wash it or clean it before eating. The purpose is to moisten the food before eating.

cruel trap for your favorite species.

### Several Small Food Plots are Better Than One Larger One

You'll get more diversity of species with more locations, and the escape cover will be closer to feeding wildlife. However, larger food plots may be needed if you have heavy deer populations that wipe out the food supply before the winter is over. You want your food supply to be available to your favorite species all winter.

### Guard Against Soil Erosion

Steeply sloping soils plowed or disked for planting are exposed to water and wind, and will erode if precautions are not taken. Visit with NRCS to be sure the land is protected against erosion.

### Plant Food to Attract and Support the Wildlife Species You Want

Along with other recommendations, the NRCS office has information on the best foods to offer various wildlife species. The three common types of food plots are annual grain plots; green browse plots, and fallow areas. Corn, grain sorghum and forage sorghum are favorite grain plots for pheasants and quail. Green browse plots with pure stands of high-protein legumes and grasses are used by quail, pheasants, turkeys, songbirds and others. Winter wheat, rye, millets and buckwheat are favorites of migrating waterfowl. Fallow plots are disked or otherwise disturbed croplands that are tilled but not planted, that encourage new annuals and weeds to grow that are essential to young quail, turkey and many songbirds. NRCS technical guides, available on the internet, suggest favored food sources.

For more information, stop at our office at 1680 Franklin Street N, in Glenwood, or visit the NRCS Wildlife Habitat Management Institute's website at [www.whmi.nrcs.usda.gov](http://www.whmi.nrcs.usda.gov) or the NRCS home web site at [www.nrcs.usda.gov](http://www.nrcs.usda.gov).

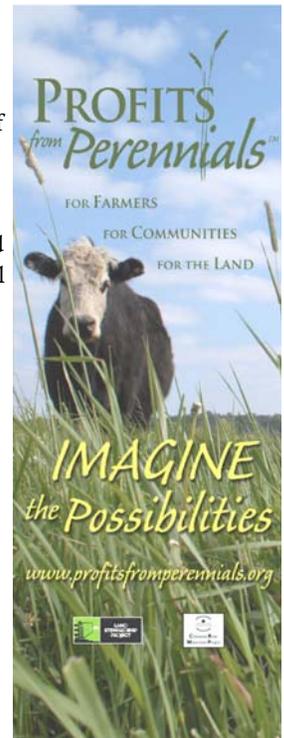
## CHIPPEWA RIVER 10% PROJECT

On September 30 the Chippewa River Watershed Project held an event in conjunction with the Land Stewardship Project to promote local food, local communities and diversified farming.

The Chippewa 10% project is promoting the fact that "producing positive impacts in a watershed like the Chippewa can happen without remaking the entire region's landscape. Scientific studies and on the farm experience suggest that just a 10% increase in the amount of land farmed utilizing diverse crop rotations, grasses and other perennial plant systems can be enough to meaningfully improve the safety of the water, reduce flood potential, restore

wildlife habitat and stimulate a thriving local and regional foods economy."

The event talked about promoting the use of local foods in our schools and institutions. They talked about how one of the partners of the 10% project, the University of MN Morris, plans to have up to half of its cafeteria food from local sources by 2013. The goal is that if they provide healthier food to the campus body, students and faculty will eat healthier and bring those healthy habits home, which in turn lead to healthier communities.



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The Land stewardship project talked about having local community support for family farms. They also talked about creating opportunities for those farms and how using local food can help benefit both the farmers and the communities.

Guests were provided with a local grown meal and a biomass demonstration. For more information on the project visit: [www.chippewa10.org](http://www.chippewa10.org).



## POPE SWCD 2010 ANNUAL REPORT

Pope County Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD) will complete an annual report and summary of the District's 2010 conservation operations and accomplishments.

The report covers the beginning of the district and continues with specific details about programs and events that occurred in 2010.

The report will be available in its entirety on the SWCD website, [www.popeswcd.org](http://www.popeswcd.org), on or before March 15, 2011.

If you have questions about this report or any of the SWCD programs and partnerships please contact the SWCD office at 320-634-5327.

## IRRIGATION UPGRADES & SERVICES AVAILABLE

Did you know properly Irrigating your crops could save you money? Did you know NRCS can help cost share to convert to a low pressure system on an existing pivot?

Its true! According to the US Geological Survey a low pressure system can increase "irrigation efficiency from about 60 percent (traditional spray irrigation) to over 90 percent. Plus, less electricity is needed."

NRCS can help you convert to low pressure irrigation system. We also cost share on Irrigation Water Management.

If you want to convert your irrigator contact NRCS but **be warned**, you will have to complete 3 years of Irrigation Water Management to successfully complete the



EQIP Agreement for a conversion to low pressure system.

If you need assistance with water management; contact us we can get you the necessary paperwork to get started. If you need more assistance, Pope SWCD offers a water management service for a nominal fee.

Come on, with high input costs who wouldn't want to save some money? Better yet you conserve some water in the process.

## PLANT CORNER: CURLYCUP GUMWEED



© Al Schneider  
Photo By: Al Schneider @ USDA-NRCS  
PLANTS Database

While out and about this past growing season it was noticed that this weed is becoming prevalent in our area, Curlycup Gumweed. So here is some brief info on it.

Curlycup Gumweed is a member of the aster or sunflower family. It has a sunflower like yellow flower, that is about an inch in diameter. It is easily identifiable by the sticky substance on the curved bracts beneath the flower head. Its this sticky substance that gives its alias of Rosinweed.

Curlycup Gumweed is often found in pastures, range areas, roadsides, and bare areas. It is highly resistant to drought and increases during periods of drought. It is not a desirable forage by either domestic animals or by wildlife.

The plant is 1 to 3 feet tall, it has a deep tap root which is what makes this plant so drought tolerant. It can be controlled by using broadleaf herbicides. Apply in the early spring when new growth and seedlings are fully emerged.

According to the USGS Northern Prairie Wildlife Research Center, "Cattlemen consider Curlycup Gumweed noxious because it increases greatly in abundance on native pastures that are heavily grazed; the plant also invades seeded pastures. Resin from the plant has a long history of use in home remedies." It was used for treating a variety of ailments, one of those being whooping cough.

## ORDER TREES & DESIGN TREE SHELTERS

There is still plenty of time to order trees for spring planting. Stop by Pope SWCD for assistance in ordering your trees.

Need a shelterbelt, stop by and we can help you design and install one. You may even be eligible for cost share through CRP. Stop by and check into it!

We can also help you with planning a living snow fence! The goal of a snow fence is to protect a road or driveway from drifting snow. There may also be assistance for this through CRP. For more info stop by our office.

Pope SWCD is located at 1680 Franklin Street N, near John Deere at the top of the hill. Ask for Kelly! Interested in a CRP shelterbelt talk to Melissa or Matt!



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## 2010 POPE SWCD OUTSTANDING CONSERVATIONIST



Pope SWCD is pleased to announce the 2010 Outstanding Conservationist's Luverne and Mary Jo Forbord from Starbuck. Their 480 acre farm includes 315 acres of certified organic pasture which include portions of restored native prairie. 54 acres of their farm is planted in alternative crops. They raise low line Angus beef cattle which they market as grass fed beef to local and international markets. In 2008, the Jorran Forbord Memorial Orchard began. This project started as a field windbreak and has expanded to include berries, apricots and apple tree research project that will develop organic, disease resistant, winter hardy apples. The Forbords work closely with Pope SWCD, NRCS, University of Minnesota Research facility, Minnesota Sustainable Farming Association, Rural Advantage and their community to promote sustainable agriculture in central Minnesota at their Prairie Horizon farm.



## NOTES FROM THE FEEDLOT OFFICE

The Pope County feedlot

program will continue to work with producers on all aspects of their feedlot operations including permitting, expansion, compliance, cost share and any other assistance that is needed.

2010 was a busy year! Pope County had several producers that upgraded their operations. A couple of new dairy barns were built and with that came Pope County's first look at robotic milking. A few other feedlot projects were started in the county this past year also.

NRCS was able to assist with some of the projects of the past year utilizing money from the Environmental Qualities Incentive Program (EQIP). EQIP helps landowners by providing cost share to install practices that address environmental resource concerns.

High land values may be limiting operators from expanding their cropland operation. Some operators are looking at expanding their animal enterprises for long term income. This may be why we are seeing dairy expansions that are under 200 animals. Still small by industry standards but good for Pope County, regardless.

For 2011 we will continue to assist with improvements to operations and compliance issues. We hope to finish up some projects that were started in 2010 and review some new, proposed, projects for 2011. We also plan to review some relocation and expansion ideas.

If you need assistance implementing a new project it's never too early to contact the feedlot office. It takes time and planning to assemble a cost share package that can work for you, the producer.

NRCS can provide some assistance, as mentioned earlier, but other agencies can also provide assistance including Pope SWCD and the Chippewa River Watershed Project. If the process is started early enough there may be opportunity to receive up to 75% cost share.

There is a lot of free technical services available to evaluate and design feedlot improvements. This is also a good time to look at expansions and to discuss county and state permitting requirements. Producers who would like to see the results of some of the past projects can contact the feedlot office and set up an appointment.

In closing, the future looks to be busy as we try to assist producers to keep up with and stay in compliance with the rules.

## MANURE STOCKPILING

This is a subject that has been covered in previous articles and we would like to relay to producers that *the feedlot office is here to assist with stockpiling plans.*

Temporary stockpiles are a good feedlot management tool as it keeps lots cleaned up and gets it out to where it will soon be applied. It is important to locate stockpiles with several things in mind.

- 1) Keep stockpiles away from residences and this will avoid complaints from nearby land-owners.
- 2) Place stockpiles where rainfall will not cause discharge to any surface water, ditch or tile inlet. This leads to #3.
- 3) Stay at least 300 feet from any water feature including road ditches that flow to a water feature.

If there are any questions on where to locate stockpiles contact the feedlot office. The feedlot office is available to help select sites, approved sites will be defended by the feedlot program, should complaints arise.

Several times in the past year stockpiles had to be relocated. Avoid extra work and contact us first.

According to the MN 7020, feedlot rules are to manage manure and keep water clean. So remember, a stockpile is a good temporary storage when sited properly.



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## COMMUNITY SUPPORTED AGRICULTURE (CSA) WHAT ARE THEY?

Have you heard the term CSA, lately? Did you wonder what it stood for or what it was? It seems like the latest catchphrase but it is so much more than that.

### What is a CSA?

CSA or Community Supported Agriculture is locally grown food that is promoted and sold locally. Connecting local farmers to local customers. Most often the food grown at these farms is considered organic but check with your local CSA for more information.

### How Do CSA's Work?

Customers purchase a share in the farm. By purchasing this share, they share in the risk of the farm but they also share in the rewards and the rewards are delicious, locally grown fruits and vegetables delivered to your door weekly. The farmer benefits from this relationship by sharing in the risk but also by having a guaranteed market for his/her food. This gives the farmer the opportunity to compete with larger markets.

### Why CSA's?

In the words of the USDA, "Know your Farmer, Know your Food," this means that by getting to know your local farmer you also know how your food is grown. Your food is picked fresh, within a day of delivery. You know exactly how long it is out of the garden. Not something you get to know at the supermarket. Finally, it supports the local economy.

We hope this gives you more insight on CSA's. We thought they tie in nicely with Chippewa River's 10% project and the USDA's Know Your Farmer, Know Your Food (watch for an article in the spring newsletter about this).

## POPE SWCD RECEIVES COUNTY ALLOCATION

The Pope County Commissioners met December 28th to review Pope County 2011 budget and allocation requests. Pope SWCD requested an allocation from the County to cover the cost of one office staff position and office operations that are not covered by grants or program administration. The Commissioners showed their support by approving an allocation of \$69,000.00 for the 2011 fiscal year. This is the same amount as 2010.

In the past 9 years alone, programs administered by Pope SWCD brought over \$2.3 million to landowners in Pope County to install conservation practices. Matching Federal programs during the same period added \$2.6 million for Pope County.

Plans for 2011 and beyond include continuing existing conservation programs, expanding partnerships to expand conservation activities, and actively seek new programs that will provide new funding sources.

Pope SWCD extends its sincerest Thank You to the Pope County Commissioners for their continued support.

## CONSERVATION RESERVE PROGRAM, 25 YEARS



WASHINGTON, Dec. 23, 2010 — Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack today announced the 25th anniversary of the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) which has protected our nation's natural resources since the signing of the historic Food Security Act of 1985. The act provided for the establishment of CRP and for the protection of highly erodible land.

"CRP has a 25-year legacy of successfully protecting the nation's natural resources through voluntary participation," said Vilsack. "Although it was designed to address soil erosion, CRP has become one of the standouts in the USDA arsenal of conservation programs by continuing to provide significant economic and environmental benefits beyond its original intent."

CRP was introduced at a time when soil erosion exceeded more than 3 billion tons per year, wetlands were being drained, water quality was deteriorating and wildlife populations were under stress due to the loss of habitat. CRP provided solutions to all of these problems. Since its inception, the program has helped reduce soil erosion by 622 million tons, provided natural habitats for wildlife, restored more than 2 million acres of wetlands and removed millions of tons of carbon dioxide from the air.

CRP, which is administered by the Farm Service Agency (FSA), is a voluntary program that encourages agricultural landowners to convert highly erodible cropland or other environmentally sensitive acreage to vegetative cover. Landowners receive annual rental payments and cost-share assistance to establish long-term conservation practices on eligible farmland. To date, the total national CRP stands at 31.3 million acres enrolled in nearly 738,000 contracts.

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*Winter either  
bites with its  
teeth or  
lashes with  
its tail.*

~Proverb

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### IMPORTANT DATES

- January** 1 New Years Office Closed  
17 MLK Day Office Closed
- February** 21 Presidents Day Office Closed
- March** 15 SWCD Annual Report Available
- Board Meetings are held the third Tuesday of each month.**
- The public is welcome to join us.**



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