

CONSERVATION  
CHRONICLES

Winter 2009

The Fillmore SWCD offers:

- Low interest loan dollars
- State cost-share dollars for waterways, terraces, farmstead windbreaks and feedlot fixes
- Up to \$5,000 feedlot cost-share assistance
- Nutrient Management Plans
- Manure Spreader Calibration
- Grazing Management Plans
- Tree Program
- Tax Relief for Wetlands



FILLMORE SOIL & WATER  
CONSERVATION DISTRICT

900 Washington Street NW  
Preston, Minnesota 55965

Phone: 507-765-3878  
Fax: 507-765-4415  
www.fillmoreswcd.org

Dan and Sherry Hanson Named  
2009 Outstanding Conservationists

Dan and Sherry Hanson of Peterson have been chosen as the **2009 Fillmore County Conservationists of the Year**. In addition, the Minnesota Association of Soil and Water Conservation Districts (MASWCD) has named them as one of eight Area Finalists in the 2009 Outstanding Conservationist Award Program. The Hansons will be recognized at the MASWCD's convention set for December 6th-8th at the Duluth Entertainment Convention Center in Duluth. Of the eight finalists, one will be announced as the State's Outstanding Conservationist of the Year at the December 8th luncheon.



Dan & Sherry Hanson shown here with daughter Ellie

Dan started farming in the late 1970's with his father. The Hanson's raise corn, soybeans, and hay on 613 acres and have a 150 head cow-calf operation. They still have 183 acres of contour strips, including 80 acres of hay, that were laid out when Dan's grandfather developed a conservation plan with the Soil Conservation Service in 1944. Over the years, 6,875 feet of terraces and 10 acres of grassed waterways have been installed. Nutrient and pest management, no-till, and planting of thousands of acres of trees on CRP for wildlife and habitat also enhance conservation on their farm. The Hanson's exemplify the land stewardship ethic that SWCDs promote.

**Congratulations Dan & Sherry on your conservation achievements!**



Look For The  
2010  
Tree Order  
Inside

**District Board**

Tim Gossman.....	Chair
Brian Hazel.....	Vice Chair
Pamela Mensink.....	Treasurer
Travis Willford.....	Secretary
Leonard Leutink.....	Supervisor

**The SWCD's role**

*The function of the Soil and Water Conservation District is to take available technical, financial and educational resources, whatever their source, and focus or coordinate them so that they meet the needs of the local land user.*

**District Staff**

Donna Rasmussen	Rick Grooters
Doug Keene	Jeanette Serfling
Dean Thomas	Joe Magee
Anne Koliha	Dawn Bernau
Jason Carlson	

### Carlson Hired as New Conservation Technician

Jason Carlson is Fillmore SWCDs new conservation technician. He has his bachelor's degree in Environmental Science: Policy and Management from the University of Minnesota and has been working in the metro area



for the last several years in water quality related positions. His main focus in Fillmore County will be with helping in designing and implementing conservation practices as well as helping improve water quality in a number of ways. He will be working on a research project along side the Minnesota Department of Agriculture, maintaining several sites around the county which have been designed to analyze cropping practices as well as the benefits of best management practices (BMPs), such as filter strips and water ways, and their impacts on water quality. He will also be collecting water quality samples and taking physical measurements for a total maximum daily load (TMDL) study to help improve the sediment impairment on the Root River. Jason will serve on the local technical evaluation panel for wetland issues in the county. Jason can be reached by calling the office at (507) 765-3878 ext.3.

### Jordan Austin Receives SWCD Scholarship

Jordan Austin of Wykoff has been selected as the Fillmore SWCD college scholarship recipient. The \$500 scholarship is awarded to a returning college sophomore, junior or senior pursuing a degree in Natural Resources, Agriculture or related field and enrolled in the fall semester of classes.



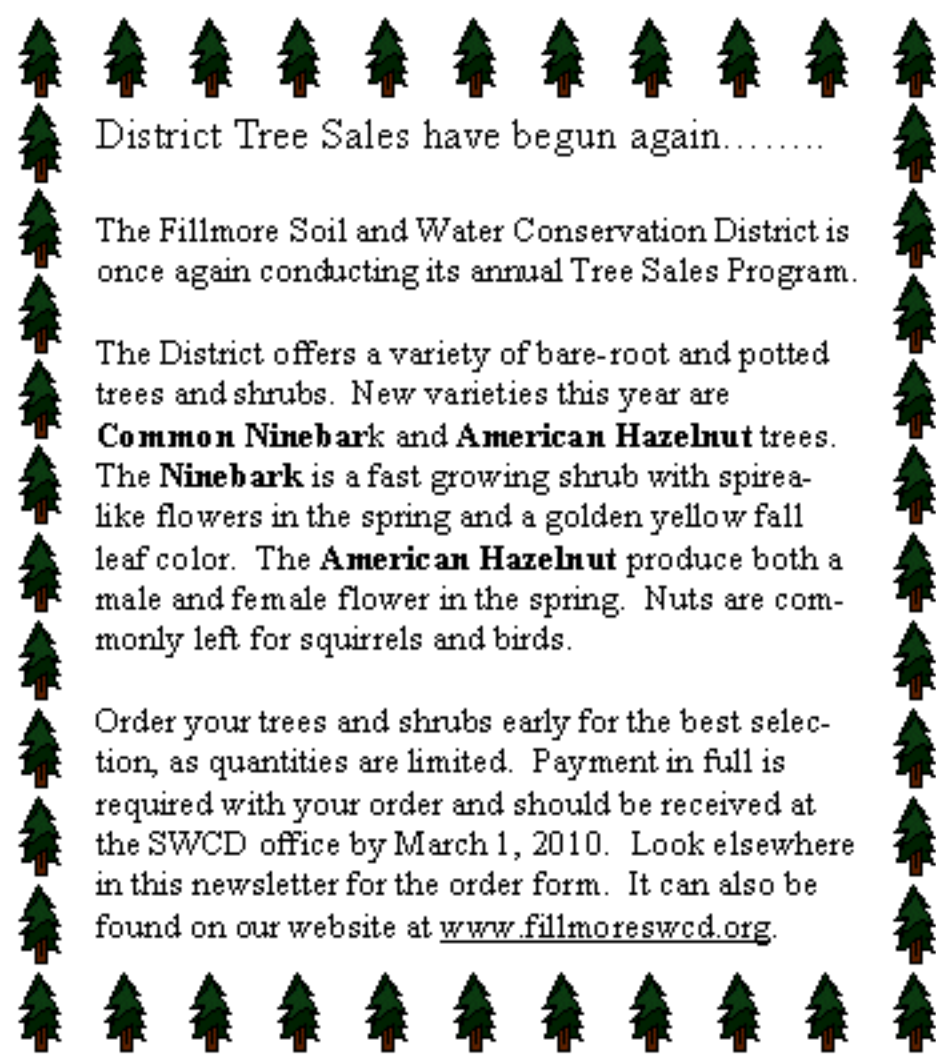
Jordan is attending Southwest Minnesota State University in Marshall, Minnesota, pursuing a degree in Environmental Science. "Educating the public on how to keep our natural resources safe and available for future generations is why I have chosen to go to college and pursue a career in environmental science" stated Austin in his application essay.

Congratulations Jordan and best wishes in your future endeavors!

### Reminder.....

**Livestock Producers...**looking to make improvements to your feedlot site and wondering how to get started? What steps need to be completed? What possible financial assistance is available to make improvements?

Stop in at the SWCD office and speak with Anne Koliha to get started or give her a call at (507) 765-3878 ext. 3.



District Tree Sales have begun again.....

The Fillmore Soil and Water Conservation District is once again conducting its annual Tree Sales Program.

The District offers a variety of bare-root and potted trees and shrubs. New varieties this year are **Common Ninebark** and **American Hazelnut** trees. The **Ninebark** is a fast growing shrub with spirea-like flowers in the spring and a golden yellow fall leaf color. The **American Hazelnut** produce both a male and female flower in the spring. Nuts are commonly left for squirrels and birds.

Order your trees and shrubs early for the best selection, as quantities are limited. Payment in full is required with your order and should be received at the SWCD office by March 1, 2010. Look elsewhere in this newsletter for the order form. It can also be found on our website at [www.fillmoreswcd.org](http://www.fillmoreswcd.org).



CONFERENCE & SUMMIT JANUARY 21 & 22, 2010—RAMADA—EAU CLAIRE, WI  
VALUE ADDED AGRICULTURE 'COLLEGE' JANUARY 20, 2010

## ROAD TO OPPORTUNITIES

*Profiting from Renewable Energy and Regional Food*

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•River County RC&amp;D</li> <li>•Hiawatha Valley RC&amp;D</li> <li>•Wisconsin Local Foods Network</li> </ul>	<p><i>12th Annual</i> <b>Midwest Value Added Agriculture Conference</b></p>	<p><i>4th Annual</i> <b>Wisconsin Local Food Summit</b></p>	<p>Visit <a href="http://www.rivercountryrcd.org">www.rivercountryrcd.org</a> for more information.</p>
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**Bringing together value added producers and advocates of local food systems.**



### Colbenson to Receive MASWCD Teacher Award

**Craig Colbenson**, the vocational agriculture teacher at Rushford-Peterson High School has been awarded the Teacher Award by the Minnesota Association of Soil and Water Conservation Districts (MASWCD). The MASWCD honors a K-12 educator/professional teacher who has created innovative conservation education activities for reaching students.

Craig’s teaching philosophy centers around the idea that our environment and natural resources are the heart and soul of our being, having taught Natural Resources for 34 years in the public school system. As a teacher and farmer, he has learned and experienced the need of protecting our resources with the most powerful tool being education.

Mr. Colbenson offers a Natural Resources and Advanced Natural Resources class to juniors and seniors.

The weekly agenda covers various topics from aquatics to winter survival in Minnesota. Students are required to research each topic and determine the environmental impacts to our natural resources.

During each of the weekly classes, Colbenson gets involvement from former students, community people, organizations, and government agencies. He has found it very rewarding to his students, the community and himself to get outside involvement.

Colbenson has led the Rushford-Peterson Envirothon team to ten first and second place finishes at the Area Level, has won the Minnesota State Envirothon five times and then advanced to the Canon National Envirothon, held at various locations across the county. “These challenges allow students to expand their knowledge and confidence in themselves,” says Colbenson. “I am very proud of their success knowing I have done my best in teaching them.”

The Teacher Award will be presented at the 73rd Annual MASWCD Convention to be held December 6-8 at the Duluth Entertainment Convention Center in Duluth.

**Congratulations, Craig, on your educational efforts with our young people and future conservationists!**



### Filter Strips and Buffer Strips are a Priority in Fillmore County



Having naturally vegetated filter/buffer strips near water bodies serves several purposes. The greatest advantage is the preservation and improvement of our county’s water quality. Naturally vegetated barriers reduce the amount of silt and nutrients entering waterways as well as minimize the impacts from flooding. Permanent vegetation helps stabilize stream banks which reduce the risk that adjacent farm land will wash away when floods occur. County Shoreland Ordinance requires 50 feet of permanently vegetated buffer along all public waters unless the land has an approved conservation plan. These strips also provide safety setbacks for farm machinery and help meet setback requirements for manure and chemical applications while preventing these from polluting our streams.

Filter strip land can generate income by enrolling in the Continuous Conservation Reserve Program (CRP). Payments for 10 and 15 year contracts are available for eligible lands through the Fillmore County USDA Service Center. Call 507-765-3878 today and schedule an appointment to review program options.

**Creating a better environment benefits all of us.**

**Contact the Fillmore SWCD for:**

- ⇒ Tree Planter Rental
- ⇒ Tree Bar Rental or Purchase
- ⇒ Gopher Machine Rental
- ⇒ Fillmore County Plat Books

*Have a safe and Happy Holiday Season!*

### CITY OF RUSHFORD NAMED 2009 COMMUNITY CONSERVATIONIST

The **City of Rushford** has been awarded the **MASWCD/MPCA Community Conservationist Award**. The award will be presented to representatives of the City at the 73rd annual MASWCD Convention scheduled for December 6-8 at the Duluth Entertainment Convention Center in Duluth.

Since the floods of August 2007, while working to solve many difficult flood related problems, the City of Rushford has become a leading advocate for identifying and sealing private wells within well-head protection areas after their experience with this issue following the floods that severely damaged their city and water supply.

When the City of Rushford flooded in 2007, their city water supply became contaminated with bacteria, and it took repeated efforts to decontaminate the system. After some investigation on the part of the city, the source of the bacteria became clear: sewage water backed up into homes during the flood, and then drained into private wells, seeping down into the shallow aquifer. Because some residents were still using sandpoint wells from that aquifer as their primary water supply, the sewage-contaminated water posed significant health risks.



The City took an active approach to addressing the problem, however, contacting the Fillmore SWCD. Special flood relief funding was made available by the State Legislature, and the city not only agreed to work with the SWCD to seal the 300 wells that had been found, it also agreed to handle the well sealing funding for the residents, who were already dealing with the loss of their home and possessions. SWCD board members met with the Rushford City Council about the well-sealing cost-share program and emphasized to the Council the need for enforcing the City's ordinances to assure that the benefits from the well sealing would not be undone by residents installing new wells after the old ones were sealed. After successfully completing the well sealings, the City is now completing inspections on these wells.

And the city hasn't stopped there. To help prevent similar occurrences elsewhere, the City of Rushford has hosted well-sealing demonstrations where representatives from other cities in Southeastern Minnesota were able to learn more about the need for finding and sealing old wells that pose a risk to public water supplies. The City of Rushford staff and contractor have also presented information at several regional and statewide meetings attended by hundreds of city water operators and other water professionals.

**We congratulate the City of Rushford on being named the 2009 Community Conservationist!**






### COST SHARE AVAILABLE FOR MANAGED GRAZING PRACTICES

Producers who want to improve their grazing system can receive cost share funding to help implement practices that are part of a grazing management plan. The Fillmore SWCD has received grant funds for the Root River watershed to cost share 50% of the total cost of practices, such as fencing and watering systems, up to a maximum cost share amount of \$6,000. **These grant funds are limited and are only available until May of 2010**, so requests should be made as soon as possible. Free technical assistance is available from the Root River Grazing Management Specialist if a grazing management plan (also free) is needed or if advice is needed about implementing a plan.

For more information about the cost share program or for technical assistance, contact Dean Thomas, Grazing Specialist, at the Fillmore SWCD office at 507-765-3878, ext. 3 or email [dean.thomas@fillmoreswcd.org](mailto:dean.thomas@fillmoreswcd.org).



**Look for us on the web!**

[www.fillmoreswcd.org](http://www.fillmoreswcd.org)

### PRECIPITATION MONITORING PROGRAM

The Fillmore SWCD would like to thank the following precipitation monitors in Fillmore County:

- |                         |              |
|-------------------------|--------------|
| Minna Hein              | David Wilson |
| Tim Gossman             | Donald Dahl  |
| Lyle Keller             | Roy Cerling  |
| Joe Bezedicek           | Duane Bakke  |
| Clifford R. Johannessen |              |

These volunteers document daily precipitation and send in monthly reports. The information collected is used by our office and the state climatology office to document patterns of precipitation across the country.



We are currently looking for additional volunteers in Sumner, Chatfield, Pilot Mound, Forestville, Norway (Bratsberg), York, Bristol and Newburg (Mabel) townships. Rain gauges and data forms are provided.

If you are interested, please stop by the office or call (507) 765-3878 ext. 3.

### ROOT RIVER CHOSEN TO TAKE PART IN MISSISSIPPI RIVER HEALTHY WATERSHEDS INITIATIVE

Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack announced on November 23<sup>rd</sup> that the Root River is one of 41 watersheds in 12 states, known as Focus Areas, that have been selected to participate in a new initiative to improve water quality and the overall health of the Mississippi River Basin. The selected watersheds cover over 42 million acres, or more than 5 percent of the Basin's land area. The Root River watershed is a little over 1 million acres in size.

The Mississippi River Basin Healthy Watersheds Initiative (MRBI), which was announced on September 24, 2009, will provide approximately \$320 million in USDA financial assistance over the next four years for voluntary projects. MRBI will help producers implement conservation and management practices that prevent, control and trap nutrient runoff from agricultural land.

USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) manages the initiative. Selections were based on the potential for managing nitrogen and phosphorus -- nutrients associated with water quality problems in the Basin -- while maintaining agricultural productivity and benefiting wildlife. To read the full news release about the watershed selection for the initiative, go to <http://www.usda.gov/wps/portal/contentidonly=true&contentid=2009/11/0586.xml>.



### What is Manure Worth Workshop

- A state-wide educational program where livestock and crop producers learn to estimate and maximize the value of their manure.
- The workshop will be interactive and hands-on, giving participants the opportunity to work with data from their own operation. Participants may bring their own lap top computer or one will be provided to use. Each participant will leave with a better understanding of the value of manure in their unique situation and with the tools and skills needed for future assessments.

#### Workshop Agenda

- Explanation of factors that determine manure value.
- Discussion of ways to maximize manure value.
- Demonstration of the "What is Manure Worth?" spreadsheet.
- Hands-on use of the computer spreadsheet or paper worksheet to analyze situations relevant to participants' own operations with assistance from presenters and organizers as needed.
- Each participant receives the spreadsheet and other resources for continued use in their manure management decisions.

#### Meeting Date:

January 26, 2010

**Time:** 9:00am-11:30am

**Place:** Preston, MN Extension Office, Room 108

**Pre Registration Required**

**Limited to 15 People**

**RSVP by January 18, 2010**

Contact: Dawn Bernau

Fillmore SWCD

(507)765-3878 Ext. 3

## Upcoming Nutrient Management Meetings

### Nutrients In Our Environment: Past, Present, and Beyond

A conference sponsored by the Southern Minnesota Nutrient Efficiency Coalition.

**February 18, 2010**

**Verizon Wireless Center - Mankato, MN**

Commercial fertilizer and livestock manure are recognized assets to agricultural operations. They both contain essential plant nutrients which contribute to crop yields when properly applied to soils. Nutrients can be managed efficiently with the latest techniques and technologies, to avoid the potential financial and environmental risks of nitrogen and phosphorus reaching surface and ground water. Learn about research developments and new tools for improving on-farm nutrient efficiency.

#### Agenda

- 8:30-9:15am Registration and Poster Presentations
- 9:15-10:00am Nutrient Use Efficiency and Global Agriculture
- 10:00-10:45am Agriculture and Hypoxia
- 10:45-11:00am Poster Presentations
- 11:00-12:00pm Farmer & Crop Consultant Panel Innovative Nutrient Management
- 12:00-1:20pm Luncheon and Poster Presentations
- 1:20-2:05pm Breakout Session I
  - Corn Belt N Guidelines
  - New N Prediction Technology Tools
  - NMI Results & So. MN Water Monitoring Results
- 2:10-2:55pm Breakout Session II
  - Manure Management—Keeping it in the Root Zone
  - Where the Country Meets the City
  - Phosphorus Management Practices
- 3:00-3:45pm Breakout Session III
  - Wisconsin Discovery Farms
  - New Technologies for Drainage Systems
  - Nitrogen, Sulfur, and Residue Management for Corn-Corn

\*\*CCA Credits Applied For

#### Registration

\$10 per person. Pre registration recommended call 651-201-6141 (space may be limited)

#### For More Information:

Brian Williams  
 Pesticide and Fertilizer Management Division  
 Minnesota Department of Agriculture  
 (651)201-6637  
 brian.c.williams@state.mn.us  
 www.upstreamheroes.org/nutmgmtconf.php

#### Location:

Verizon Wireless Center  
 1 Civic Center Plaza  
 Mankato, MN 56001  
 (507)389-3000



## Root River Turbidity TMDL

### Joe Magee – Water Plan/TMDL Coordinator

Monitoring for year two of the Root River Turbidity TMDL is just wrapping up, and equipment has been removed and winterized until next season. Next year will be the third and final year of monitoring for this project. The 2009 monitoring season was relatively quiet compared to the 2008 monitoring season. The two most significant runoff events were observed during a snowmelt in February and a spring rain in early June. Total Suspended Solids (TSS) values were lower for the most part in 2009 than they were in 2008. These values were based on TSS averages at each monitoring site and only include 2009 data through July 15, 2009. This relationship may change once all the data is entered for 2009.

With the end of the project quickly approaching there is much to be done! We're in the process of developing a contract to help determine where the sediment is coming from. This is performed by a process known as sediment fingerprinting using Beryllium-10 isotope concentrations to determine the sediment source. This method will allow us to determine what percentage of the sediment is coming from the crop fields versus how much is coming from the bluffs, ravines, and in-stream channel erosion. This data will be very useful when it comes time for implementation. Data



entry and analysis will be ongoing throughout the winter, as well as gathering information for the final report. If you have any questions or would like more information on this project, I can be reached at 507-765-3878 x 3.

### Bacteria Testing Now Available

- ⇒ Pick up a sample bottle at the SWCD office
- ⇒ Cost is \$15.00 per sample
- ⇒ Reduced cost for homes with a child under the age of 1 or where a pregnant female resides
- ⇒ Testing parameters include E-coli and Total Coliform bacteria
- ⇒ It is recommended to have your well water tested annually

For more information, contact Joe Magee at (507) 765-3878, ext. 109.



**Newsletter changes...**

In an effort to save paper and cut costs, we are now posting *Conservation Chronicles* to our website at [www.fillmoreswcd.org](http://www.fillmoreswcd.org). We are continuing to collect e-mail addresses from those people wishing to receive notice of future editions of our newsletters in their in-box instead of their mailbox.



If you would like to be added to the e-mail newsletter list, call the SWCD office at (507) 765-3878 ext. 3 or send an e-mail to [jeanette.serfling@fillmoreswcd.org](mailto:jeanette.serfling@fillmoreswcd.org) with "e-mail newsletter" in the subject line. Include the e-mail address you want used and your name and address in the body of your message.

**We will still continue to print a paper copy for those who might not have computer or internet access or just prefer the paper version.**

Thank you for helping us conserve!

**Ag BMP Low Interest Loan**

Loan dollars are available at 3% interest to encourage water quality protection. These funds are to be used for existing water quality problems.



Such eligible practices include:

- improvements to animal waste control facilities
- manure handling equipment
- terraces, grassed waterways, structural erosion control structures
- no-till equipment
- improvements of individual sewage treatment systems
- sealing of unused wells

To start the loan application, bring in a written estimate of the project to be done and fill out an application form at the Fillmore SWCD Office. These funds are limited and are on a first come, first serve basis. For further information or to apply for the loan, contact the Fillmore SWCD Office at 507-765-3878 Extension 3.

Fillmore Soil and Water Conservation District  
900 Washington St. NW  
Preston, MN 55965

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