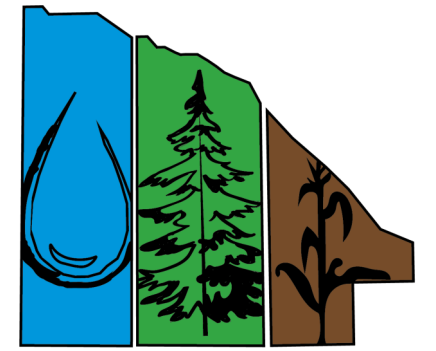


**Lac qui Parle
Soil and Water
Conservation District**



2020 Annual Report



Our mission is to provide conservation opportunities for landowners of Lac qui Parle County through creative stewardship, protection programs and utilization of the resources to foster soil and water quality improvement in the community.

The Lac qui Parle Soil Conservation District received its charter from the State of Minnesota April 19, 1950. At that time it was made up of 4 Townships in the southeastern part of the County and shared an office and a U.S.D.A. employee (District Conservationist) with the Yellow Medicine Soil Conservation District in Clarkfield. Both Districts grew to include all Townships and Cities within their respective Counties and the office split, the Yellow Medicine District remaining in Clarkfield and the Lac qui Parle District opening in Madison with a U.S.D.A. District Conservationist in each office.

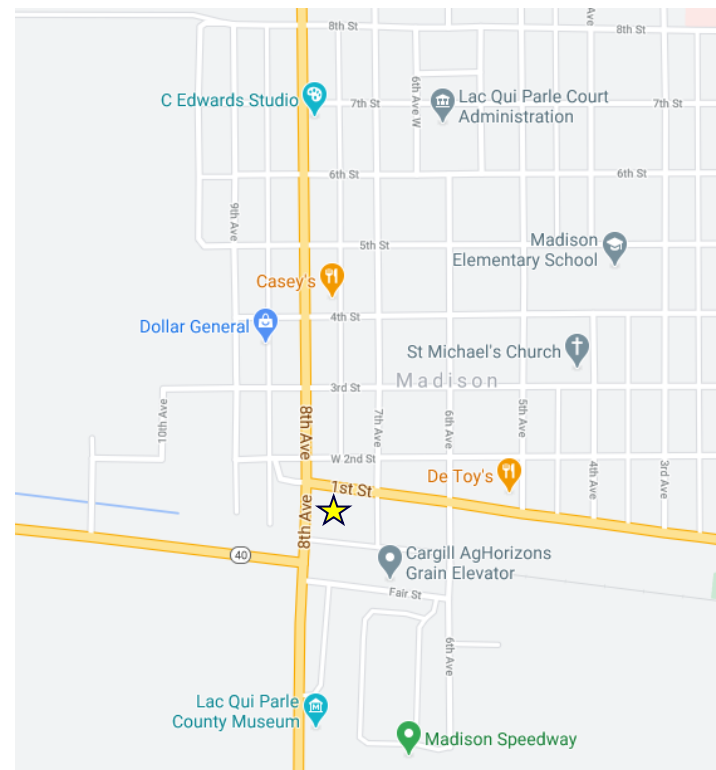
Agency names change, personnel changes and programs change but the underlying purpose of helping landowners manage private land and helping local units of government manage public lands by planning and installing practices to protect natural resources continues. Staff provides education, technical assistance and channels financial assistance to individuals, the County, cities and townships.

The SWCD continues to cooperate with the United State Department of Agriculture's Natural Resources Conservation Service under a Memorandum of Understanding whereby full-time technical assistance and administration is furnished to the SWCD by the NRCS Field Staff in Madison and additional staff located in the area and state offices. The Lac qui Parle SWCD is co-located in the USDA Ag Service Center with the NRCS and Farm Service Agency at 122 8th Ave South, Suite 1, Madison, Minnesota.

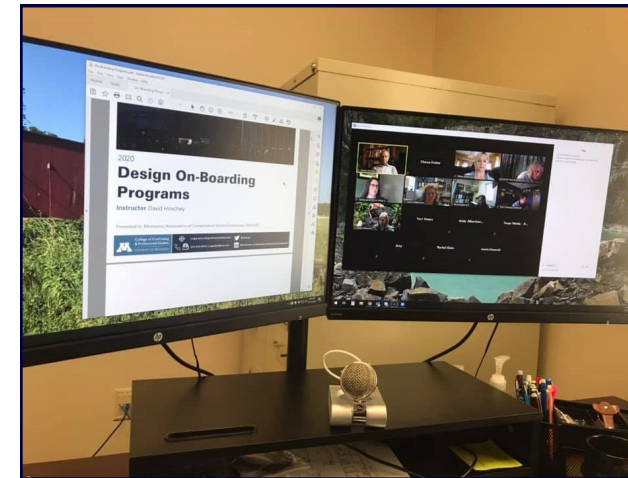


**Lac qui Parle
Soil & Water
Conservation
District**

122 8th Ave South, Suite 1
Madison, MN 56256
Phone: (320) 598-7321 ext. 3
Web: www.lacquiparleswcd.org



Life goes virtual in 2020



2020 brought many changes for how districts across the state operating. Lac qui Parle was no different. In 2020, the SWCD Board held virtual meetings for seven of the monthly board meetings. No meeting was held in April, but a special meeting was held in late March to approve a telework policy. Thanks to the county and COVID relief funds, the district was able to purchase iPads for all board members to use to connect with the Board meetings.

The Environmental Fair is typically held in September bringing together nearly 2,000 fifth graders from across southwest Minnesota. Due to COVID and restrictions on group gathering sizes the event was cancelled for 2020. Other educational opportunities went virtual. District staff were able to participate in online trainings, conferences, and field days.

Tree and Grass Program Update

The weather in 2020 cooperated and allowed the SWCD to exceed goals for tree and grass planting. District technicians were busy assisting landowners with CRP and buffer establishment in the spring and fall. With nearly perfect planting conditions, the District was able to seed 762 acres of native grasses and forbes. In addition to the grass seedings, the SWCD helped landowners install trees to establish windbreaks and shelterbelts around the county. Nearly 1,500 hours of staff time were dedicated to this program and helping landowners with habitat installation.



Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program

We had two successful CREP applications in 2020. The total acres for both contracts came to 158.46 acres. Both contracts were wetland restorations, one in the floodplain and one outside the floodplain. These restorations will help to meet water plan goals for reducing nutrient run off and establishing perennial cover.

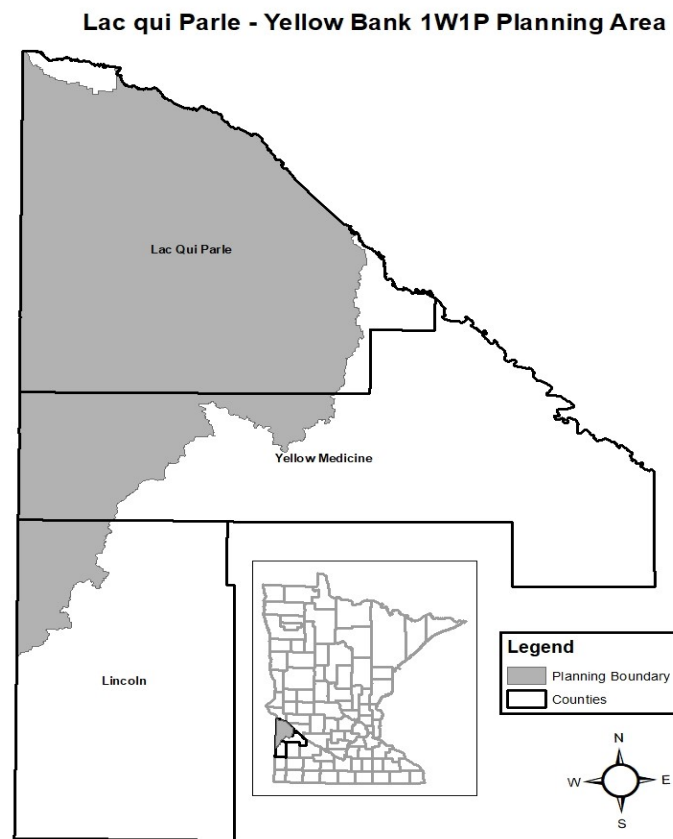
The CP23 acres were a re-enrollment of expiring CRP and was previously restored, however BWSR engineering staff determined the existing ditch plug was in poor condition and would need to be removed and replaced. The upland acres of this contract do need some inter-seeding to be done to add forb diversity to the site.

The CP23A acres are new land but did include some existing CRP filter strips. This project is much larger and will involve multiple ditch plugs. Both projects are planned to be seeded in the spring, and restoration construction will take place as the contracts move forward.

Lac qui Parle moves ahead with One Watershed One Plan

The Lac qui Parle—Yellow Bank Partnership was

The SWCD received approval from BWSR to waive the County Water Plan Amendment and was awarded the 2020 planning grant for the Lac qui Parle—Yellow Bank One Watershed, One Plan. The planning team from the eight partner agencies will begin planning in early 2021. This plan covers 97% of the county and will replace the Local Water Management Plan for the SWCD. Lac qui Parle SWCD will be the project lead and responsible for the administrative aspects of the planning effort.



2020 Buffer Enforcement Update

Lac qui Parle County is 97% compliant as of December 31, 2020.

Buffer seedings have really slowed down in 2020 with the overwhelming majority of parceling becoming compliant. Through cooperation with the Lac qui Parle—Yellow Bank Watershed District, we have been able to gain 97% compliance. This year we seeded buffers for 20 landowners and assisted many more with mapping, seed orders and technical assistance. This year we also completed monitoring through aerial imagery all over the county thanks to the new flyover in May of 2020. We



focused our on the ground inspection efforts on 7 townships, (Lake shore, Hantho, Madison, Cerro Gordo, Lac qui Parle, Walter and Riverside) with random spot checks throughout the southern half of the county, primarily Ten Mile Lake, Maxwell and Freeland. We hope that compliance will continue to rise as we proceed to monitor and enforce the Buffer law. In 2021, the District plans to continue reminding the public about best management practices and benefits of buffers through newspaper articles and radio ads.

Aquatic Invasive Species

2020 was a slow year for education events, but that didn't stop the staff from attending three fishing tournaments and continuing the 4H aquatic robotics program. The robotics program was transformed into an "Aquatic Investigators Club" and shifted their focus to include native species. This can help in identification and a stronger understanding of ecosystems and their disrupters (AIS). We engaged a few new students through the program, and they helped build two new robots to help search out native and invasive species props in our school pool. Right before Covid hit, we also participated in the 3rd year of Ag in the Classroom in Granite Falls where we engaged a few hundred students over two days on everything AIS related.

This year Marsh lake had a large multiyear project completed that installed a water control structure, fish passage and fish spawning area. As part of its completion, monitoring has to take place for the next few years, with a portion of monitoring focusing on AIS. Partnering with DNR fisheries we monitored the lake from April-October to record water levels, clarity, evidence of AIS, and wind speed. One of the goals is to determine if large numbers of Carp, or wind and lack of vegetation is causing the turbidity of the lake. Besides taking the wind readings and turbidity samples, we also seined and electroshocked alongside DNR staff to see what species were present and compare the numbers of natives to invasive carp. Through this data we can help determine if carp control would be necessary and/or effective. Interpretive signs will be installed in 2021 at the parks and at popular access points within the county to take a more informative approach on AIS ID and prevention.



AgBMP Loan Program

In 2020, Lac qui Parle SWCD approved \$145,000 in loan funds.

The AgBMP Loan Program provides low-interest loans to farmers and rural landowners for the purpose of water quality improvement projects. Eligible projects may include septic system upgrades, conservation farm equipment, manure handling equipment, and engineered water quality improvement practices. The SWCD administers the program locally in partnership with the Minnesota Department of Agriculture and local lenders. In 2019, the SWCD authorized more than \$145,000 in loan funds.

What have we done together?

This list falls well short of depicting all of the accomplishments of the SWCD in the past year. There are countless accomplishments each day through ongoing activities and initiatives including, but not limited to:

- ◆ Attendance and participation in One Watershed, One Plan for the Lac qui Parle and Yellow Medicine
- ◆ Providing cost-share for on the ground practices
- ◆ Coordination of education events for communities and schools
- ◆ Representation of the district and state in the Conservation Partnership
- ◆ Ongoing technical support for the Minnesota Buffer Law
- ◆ Continued tree and grass planting programs
- ◆ Provided financial assistance to residents for drinking water protection programs



Board of Supervisors

- Chair:** Mike Croatt
- Vice President:** Rosemary Weber
- Secretary:** Daryl Schutte
- Treasurer:** Ed Radermacher
- PR & I:** Amy Bacigalupo

SWCD Staff

- District Manager:** Chessa Frahm
- Program Assistant:** Sheri Laechelt
- Resource Specialist:** Rhyann Schicker
- Resource Specialist:** Quintin Peterson

Partnership Staff

- Pheasants Forever:** Sara Reagan
- NRCS:** Burton Hendrickson



Board Spotlight

2020 was a year of change including the retirement of long time board member, Ed Radermacher. Ed was elected to the board in 1994 and served with passion for 26 years. His dedication to the advancement of the SWCD is appreciated.



2020 Financial Summary

	2020	2019
Income	613,232	492,080
Expense	492,184	493,651
Net income	121,048	-\$1,571

The SWCD's elected officials considered many factors when setting the fiscal-year 2020 budget. Some of the economic factors taken into account for the 2020 budget included: sales of trees and tree mats, state funding (new grants: local capacity, buffer, water quality certification grant, etc.), federal funding and the county allocation. Expense factors include expenses, employee salary increases, and health insurance benefits offered to the employees.

The actual expenditures were \$40,572 more than the final budgeted amounts. Revenues were \$160,620 more than budgeted. Fluctuations are expected based on the needs of the consumers and availability of grants. Projects also depend on the weather. 2020 financials are subject to audit.

Lac qui Parle Soil and Water Conservation District								
2020 Budget								
	2019 Budget (revised)	2019 Actuals (12/31/2019)	2020 Budget	Fund Source				
				County Support	Local Funds ¹	BWSR ²	DNR ³	Other Grants ⁴
Total Revenue			\$ 451,612	\$ 121,745	\$ 65,000	\$ 219,945	\$ 44,922	\$ -
Expenses								
Personal Services								
Supervisor Compensation	\$ 5,000	\$ 3,975	\$ 5,000	\$ 5,000				
Payroll Expenses	\$ 283,684	\$ 254,536	\$ 280,142	\$ 104,295		\$ 140,847	\$ 35,000	
Operational Expenses								
Capital Outlay - Equipment	\$ 28,000	\$ 12,375						
Dues/Contributions	\$ 4,000	\$ 5,034	\$ 6,000.00			\$ 6,000		
Education/Outreach	\$ 11,000	\$ 1,200	\$ 6,000.00			\$ 2,200	\$ 3,800	
Training Expenses	\$ 14,512	\$ 7,838	\$ 13,211.00			\$ 12,104	\$ 1,107	
Insurance	\$ 10,000	\$ 6,152	\$ 7,000.00			\$ 5,800	\$ 1,200	
Office Maintenance	\$ 2,800	\$ 2,630	\$ 3,500.00			\$ 2,600	\$ 900	
Office Supplies	\$ 3,585	\$ 1,122	\$ 2,000.00			\$ 1,600	\$ 400	
Professional Services (Audit, IT, C	\$ 6,700	\$ 4,263	\$ 5,000.00			\$ 4,900	\$ 100	
Rent	\$ 16,800	\$ 16,690	\$ 16,690.00	\$ 8,105		\$ 7,845	\$ 740	
Supervisor Mileage	\$ 2,000	\$ 978	\$ 1,500.00			\$ 1,350	\$ 150	
Telephone/Internet/Postage	\$ 2,900	\$ 2,766	\$ 3,000.00			\$ 2,800	\$ 200	
Utilities	\$ 1,500	\$ 944	\$ 1,200.00			\$ 1,075	\$ 125	
TSA	\$ 3,811	\$ 6,650	\$ 4,500.00			\$ 4,500		
Cost-Share	\$ 28,116	\$ 8,539	\$ 23,869.00	\$ 4,345		\$ 19,524		
Tree and Grass Program ⁵	\$ 54,176	\$ 71,000.00	\$ 65,000.00		\$ 65,000			
Vehicle Gas/Maintenance	\$ 8,000	\$ 6,116	\$ 8,000.00			\$ 6,800	\$ 1,200	
Total Expenses			\$ 451,612	\$ 121,745	\$ 65,000	\$ 219,945	\$ 44,922	\$ -
				451,612				