

# NRCS Report – 2009 Changes and Updates

By Shantel Lozinski

USDA-NRCS

Spring brought lots of drainage requests through the office as well as more applications for USDA programs. We continue working through quarterly audits on program contracts to ensure contract and payment accuracy. 2009 allowed many outreach opportunities including the fifth-grade field days, Chippewa River bus tour and the Women's field day.

The Environmental Quality Incentive Program (EQIP) local work group met in November to determine the priorities for the 2009 sign up, which took place in June. The two main priorities that were determined were soil erosion and water quality. EQIP applications with structural practices or applications that were in the Shakopee Creek and Lines Creek were given a higher priority. We continue to have a lot of interest in both nutrient and pest management through the EQIP pro-

gram. EQIP tillage checks were completed the first part of June with payments made shortly thereafter. We also had another opportunity to take applications for the RIM/WRP program. This is a partnering program between RIM and WRP to provide a permanent easement program to help restore wetlands. The program aims to restore wetlands to their natural condition and plant back to native grasses. Payment rates are by township and city.

We have also had a string of wetland violations this year. I would like to take this opportunity to clarify a few things. The swamp buster provisions of the 1985 Farm Bill are still in place. There is wetland policy in place for both individuals who are in the FSA Farm Program and those who are not. If you are in the FSA Farm Program and you have projects planned to include land leveling, tiling, filling, dredging, land clearing, excavation or any tree and stump removal it's best to fill out a 1026 form at the Farm Service Agency (FSA) office. When you fill

out this form you will receive a letter from NRCS on whether your proposed project will or will not affect any wetlands on property you own or operate. Plan ahead, most 1026 requests can be serviced in a few days but some can take up to 30 days. When you come into the FSA office to complete a 1026 form you will also have the opportunity to fill out a form for WCA. WCA is the state wetland policy, here in Chippewa County Tom Warner with the SWCD services these requests.

This may be a surprise to you, but not all land has a wetland determination. When the original wetland determinations were completed they were only done on land that was in crop production. So this means land that was not in crop production in the early 80s does not have a wetland determination completed on it unless you have requested one. Land in this category would include farm sites, groves, and pasture. If you run into this situation the owner of the property would need to complete an 038 form, request for a certified wetland determination.

## Reinvest In Minnesota (RIM) / Wetland Reserve Program (WRP)

By Shantel Lozinski, NRCS DISTRICT CONSERVATIONIST

The Minnesota Board of Water and Soil Resources (BWSR) and the Minnesota USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) will be taking applications again in 2010 for the Reinvest In Minnesota (RIM) / Wetlands Reserve Program (WRP) partnership. By combining these two programs we can offer competitive payment rates to landowners for the purpose of restoring wetlands in high-priority areas.

NRCS will be acquiring a 30-year WRP easement, BWSR, through the RIM program, will be acquiring a perpetual easement. The landowner will receive a combined payment from both programs. The combined payments are as follows for the townships/cities in Chippewa County. (Posted rates are per acre and from 2009, 2010 rates could change.)

	<b>Cropland</b>	<b>Non Cropland</b>
Big Bend Township	\$3,341.25	\$1,732.50
Clara City City	\$4,051.35	\$2,100.70
Crate Township	\$3,969.00	\$2,058.00
Grace Township	\$3,647.70	\$1,891.40
Granite Falls City	\$3,312.90	\$1,717.80
Granite Falls Township	\$3,705.75	\$1,921.50
Havelock Township	\$3,258.90	\$1,689.80
Kragero Township	\$3,048.30	\$1,580.60
Leenthrop Township	\$3,584.25	\$1,858.50
Lone Tree Township	\$4,216.05	\$2,186.10
Louriston Township	\$3,811.05	\$1,976.10
Mandt Township	\$3,549.15	\$1,840.30
Maynard City	\$4,352.40	\$2,256.80
Milan City	\$3,153.60	\$1,635.20
Montevideo City	\$6,777.00	\$3,514.00
Rheiderland Township	\$4,145.85	\$2,149.70
Rosewood Township	\$3,287.25	\$1,704.50
Sparta Township	\$3,654.45	\$1,894.90
Stoneham Township	\$4,198.50	\$2,177.00
Tunsberg Township	\$3,531.60	\$1,831.20
Watson City	\$4,016.25	\$2,082.50
Woods Township	\$4,272.75	\$2,215.50

All applications will be reviewed locally by the District Conservationist and a member of the SWCD before being submitted for consideration by the BWSR/NRCS RIM/WRP selection committee. The scoring system provides a higher score for those applications that restore the most wetlands and uplands in priority migratory species habitat areas of the state that have had a large amount of their wetlands drained or altered.

Currently to be eligible for RIM/WRP you have to have owned the land for seven years, be in compliance with conservation compliance (HEL/WC) and Adjusted Gross Income (AGI). Sites must have areas that are capable of physically restoring hydrology, meaning removing, blocking, or otherwise rendering inoperable the existing on-site drainage system. For more information contact your local Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD) and Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) office at 1-320-269-2139.

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## Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP)

The Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP) is a voluntary conservation program that encourages producers to address resource concerns in a comprehensive manner by undertaking additional conservation activities. Through CSP, NRCS will provide financial and technical assistance to eligible producers to conserve and enhance soil, water, air and related natural resources on their land. The entire agriculture operation must be enrolled and must include all agriculture land that will be under the applicants control for the term of the proposed contract. Is CSP right for you? Are you

willing to commit time to inventory and document your conservation activities and production system to determine eligibility and ranking? Do you have records of your farming activities and are you willing to continue maintaining records? Are you ready to enter into a 5 year contract requiring you to apply additional conservation activities and improve, maintain, and manage existing conservation activities. If you answered "yes" to these questions CSP may be right for you. To learn more about this program as well as others please visit our website at <http://www.mn.nrcs.usda.gov/>.

## Swamp Buster Provisions of the '85 Farm Bill

Many things have changed in the last 24 years, but the swamp buster provisions of the 1985 Farm Bill are still the same. When planning tile drainage it is recommended that you complete a 1026 form at the Farm Service Agency (FSA) office. This allows your project to be evaluated and recommendations to be made as to how to best stay in compliance with Farm Program provisions. Please plan ahead. Most requests can be serviced in a few days, but depending on what the situation is it could take up to 30 days. An example of when it may take more time is when you are planning to do work in an area that has never had a wetland determination done on it. Areas like this would include most wooded areas and old pasture land. We can't make recommendations on land that doesn't have a wetland determination completed on it. At this point we would need to complete what is called a CPA-38 form or certified wetland determination. This allows us to complete a determination for you on a field basis. This is done by doing a completed slide review from 1984-present looking only at normal rainfall years, not the wet years or the dry. If an area shows up in most normal years a site visit will also be done to verify it is a wetland.

One thing to keep in mind, removing trees from a wetland and making it capa-

ble of being cropped is a violation. That is why it is important to have your projects checked out beforehand by filling out a 1026 form at FSA so you know what is on your land as far as wetlands and what is allowed. Non-compliance with the above provision could result in the suspension of all Farm Program Benefits including payments through EQIP and CRP. For any project that will include land leveling, tiling, filling, dredging, land clearing, excavation or any tree and stump removal it is best to fill out the 1026 form at FSA so the proposed project can be looked at to ensure Farm Program compliance. When you come in and fill out a 1026 form you will receive a written response from NRCS on whether your proposed project will or will not convert a wetland. At the time you are in to fill out a 1026 form at FSA there is also an application for the Wetland Conservation Act (WCA), which are the state wetland rules. Once the proposal is looked at you will also receive a written response from Tom Warner (SWCD) for WCA. Do not start any project until you receive written responses from BOTH NRCS and Tom, the WCA representative. There are situations that may be all right for one but not the other. Please don't risk it, take the time to fill out the appropriate paperwork.