

# 2023 Year in Review



**WADENA**  
Soil & Water  
Conservation District

## Forestry

### ONLINE TREE STORE

Our Tree Store opens each year on January 1st! See real time availability and pay with a credit card on our online store. Check out our website for more details.



#### **Forest Stewardship Planning Assistance**

Our office has a certified plan writer to develop forest management plans on privately owned forest land in Wadena, Todd, and Otter Tail counties. These 10-year plans help landowners manage their forests for multiple purposes in order to benefit both the landowners' goals and the environment. It is a fee based program depending on the amount of acres you wish to have in the plan. This fee includes not only the plan, but also a walk through of your property with our plan writer, answers to your forestry questions and a binder including information on managing your property with best practices tied to your property vision and goals. In 2023, our plan writer created 11 plans for 819 acres. This year 10 plans were written in Wadena County and 1 in East Otter Tail (EOT).



#### **Tree Sales and Planting**

It was another great year for our tree sales! In 2023, we sold 52,685 trees between East Otter Tail and Wadena Counties. We planted 23,000 trees for 14 landowners, and laid 1,100 feet of weed matting. We also sold 300+ acres of Native grass seed and planted 344 acres of Native Prairie for 13 landowners. Our drill was rented out to 40 landowners who seeded 861 acres to native grasses or other perennial covers.

# Agriculture

## Cover Crops

2023 was windy, and we saw a lot of dirt being blown off empty fields. This past year we saw more producers implementing cover crops, which helps reduce blowing soils. Overall cover crops did well, especially under irrigation, and provided many benefits to producers. The most popular mixes had rye or oats as a base, with turnips, radishes, and crimson clover to get soil health benefits. Cover crops that are planted in the fall should help reduce blowing soils this spring!

Between East Otter Tail and Wadena counties, we provided funding for cover crops on close to 640 acres with 6 producers. We expect our funded acres to be increased in 2024, with new funding opportunities and several interested producers.

## Minnesota Agricultural Water Quality Certification Program

In 2023, the Total Certified Farming Operations in the North Central Area was 131, including Twin Rivers Seed Farm in Wadena County. Wadena County currently has 14 certified farming operations and there are 40 in East Otter Tail. The MAWQCP is a voluntary program that recognizes agricultural producers who take the lead in implementing conservation practices that protect our water.



## Irrigation Scheduling Program

2023 had very late planting due to a late spring. Once crops got in the ground, things took off. Rain was very spotty throughout the counties, but fall was generally dry which made for good harvesting weather. It was an above average year for irrigation amounts.

Overall, we worked with 34 producers in 77 fields of corn, soybeans, kidney beans, barley, and alfalfa.



## Irrigation Technology

We wrapped up our Irrigation Tech Grant that was through Clean Water Funds and Federal RCPP funds. We were able to work with 14 producers to install variable rate technology, soil moisture sensors, and upgrade pivot uniformity on over 2,000 acres in East Otter Tail and Wadena counties. Central Lakes College hosted an Irrigation training supported through the RCPP Grant to provide advanced information for Irrigation related technology and Irrigation Water Management for SWCD and NRCS technical staff.



# Aquatic Invasive Species, Ag Inspector & Feedlots

## Aquatic Invasive Species

Inspectors were stationed at Blueberry, Spirit, Stocking, and Lower Twin Lake accesses from May through September to conduct watercraft inspections to help stop the spread of aquatic invasive species. Inspections typically take 5-10 minutes, consist of survey questions, and help educate anglers and recreationists on where and how to Clean, Drain, and Dry their water-related equipment. These actions are essential in removing plants and vegetation to help ensure spreading invasives are not transported to other waterbodies within Minnesota. Overall, a total of 1116 inspections were performed between the 4 public accesses with 6.36% of inspections finding and removing a plant or animal species. For more information on our inspection season, a detailed summary report based on survey responses can be found on our website.



## County Ag Inspector

In Wadena County, we offer Pesticide Applicator Testing through the Minnesota Department of Ag (MDA). To Schedule an Appointment, please call 218-632-4201.

The Minnesota Noxious Weed Law requires land owners to control and eradicate Noxious, Restricted and Prohibited Weeds. There are 9 known species of Noxious weeds in Wadena County. For more information on Noxious Weeds, please visit the MDA Noxious Weed List.

*Pictured Above is Leafy Spurge, A Noxious Weed in MN.*

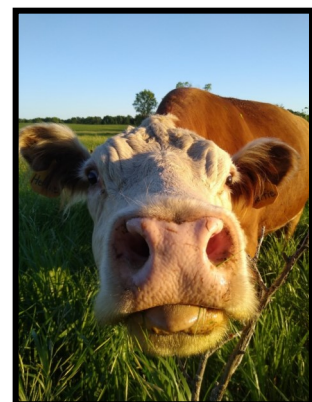


## Feedlots

In 2023, we worked with a producer on increasing the size of their operation. We completed our required 7% of Wadena County feedlot inspections.

As a reminder, every feedlot in Wadena County is required to be registered by the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency.

Registration forms, as well as manure test kits, are always available in our office.





# Education & Federal Partner Updates

## 2023 Wadena Outstanding Conservationist

This year Central Lakes College Ag & Energy Center was selected as our 2023 SWCD Outstanding Conservationist. They have adapted conservation tillage practices, cover crops, Irrigation water management and fertilizer management programs. It is a perfect educational site for demonstrating these conservation practices for landowners.



## Education & Outreach

In 2023, Conservation Days were held at Old Wadena in October. There was 338 students and 30 staff from 5 Wadena County schools who attended. We had 8 different sessions with 10 presenters on topics including forestry, history, nature, soils, trapping, wildlife and water quality.

## **NRCS** Natural Resources Conservation Service

*"Helping People Help the Land"*

### Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP)

EQIP is designed to assist farmers and ranchers with installation of conservation fixes on their land; working to stop wind and water erosion and provide needed habitat improvements vital for soil and water conservation on the landscape.

7 New Contracts were enrolled in 2021 treating **867 acres** and 5 RCPP IPPGW 2365 Irrigation contracts treating **686 acres**. Some of the practices installed last season include; Irrigation Conversion including Variable Rate, Prescribed Grazing Management and Infrastructure, Grass and Forb Plantings, Cover Crops, and Pollinator Plantings.



District Conservationist Ivan Reinke (left), and District Conservationist Team Lead Joshua Hanson

### Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP)

This program helps ag and forest producers maintain and adopt conservation activities addressing the priority resource concerns on their land.

Wadena County has: 2 Nonindustrial Private Forest (NIPF) and 1 Ag Contracts that were **NEW** in 2023 treating **540 acres**.



(Right and above) Multi-species Cover Crop displaying root growth and erosion control in irrigated cropland. (Left) Low Pressure sprinkler renovation for water efficiency improvements.



# SWCD Updates

## REDEYE ONE WATERSHED, ONE PLAN

The Redeye River 1W1P is in year three of implementing projects on the ground to improve our water quality. The Redeye Implementation Team is moving in the right direction towards our long-term watershed goals. Currently, watershed cost-share funds have completed five forest stewardship plans and two windbreaks in Wadena County. These practices provided water pollution reduction in the Redeye watershed.

This was accomplished by SWCDs partnering together to provide information to landowners about potential projects in the Redeye River watershed.



## NEW STAFF



Nicole is our Watershed Planner & Coordinator in the East Otter Tail SWCD Office. She works with West/East Otter Tail and Wadena SWCD's on local watershed plans. She obtained a degree at University of Wisconsin - Stevens Point and has a background in watershed planning. In her spare time, Nicole loves riding her horses, spending time with family, and fishing with her husband.

Olivia Olson works as the University of Minnesota Extension Educator for Otter Tail County, and is joining the Otter Tail and Wadena SWCDs to assist with watershed management and education. She holds a degree in Sustainable Food Systems and Global Studies from the University of Minnesota, and has been working to build more sustainable and resilient food systems in both the states of Minnesota and Virginia. In her free time, she enjoys being outdoors, growing food, and spending time with friends and family.



Savanna Anderson is a District Technician in the Wadena SWCD office, assisting with the Wetland Conservation Act and Feedlot programs. She grew up in Henning, MN on a crop and cattle farm and has a degree in Agronomy and Agricultural Business from the University of Minnesota Crookston. In her spare time, Savanna likes to spend time with her family, garden, and spend time with her farm animals.

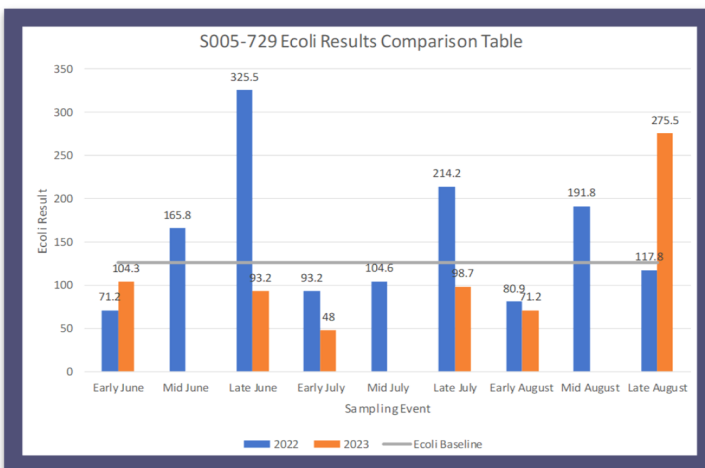


## **Redeye River Watershed Surface Water Assessment Grant (SWAG)**

In order to determine the water quality and health of the Redeye River Watershed, we started collecting water samples from eight sites on the Redeye, Leaf, and Wing Rivers in EOT and Wadena counties in 2022.

The main concerns in this watershed are low dissolved oxygen, excess sediment, increased drainage and flow alterations, and high bacteria levels. Collecting this info will help guide and target areas for implementing best management practices in the future.

In 2023, E. coli levels remained fairly constant through August, then receded to drought conditions through the fall. For most sites, E. coli tended to spike in late June, and spike again in late August. The graph to the right shows E. coli fluctuations at one site on the Redeye River compared to last years levels.



## **AgBMP Loan Program**

The Agriculture Best Management Practice Loan Program provides low-interest loans to producers and rural landowners who are wanting to prevent or reduce runoff from their property. In 2023, we approved 1 loan for a total of \$4,850.00. This was for a new septic system.

If you are interested in receiving an AgBMP loan, contact our office!

## **Wetland Conservation Act (WCA)**

The Wetland Conservation Act is a law enacted in 1991 that strives to protect and restore Minnesota's wetlands. It regulates draining, filling, and some excavations that take place in wetlands across the state. If you are planning some dirt work and think it may impact a wetland, call us!

In 2023, we helped 35 landowners with their work around wetlands.



# MORE UPDATES...

**m** BOARD OF WATER  
AND SOIL RESOURCES

**m** DEPARTMENT OF  
NATURAL RESOURCES

## LCCMR: Watershed and Forest Restoration Project

This project is providing funding to expand tree planting and forest land protection in the Long Prairie and Redeye watersheds. This is a pilot project in cooperation with DNR Forestry and the Board of Water and Soil Resources ending in 2025.

Landowners eligible must be enrolled in a 20 or 50 year Sustainable Forest Incentive Act Covenant or in a Conservation Easement. These landowners would be eligible for tree plantings and forest stewardship plan cost share.

For more information on the program contact our office.



## **LCCMR Results For 2023**

- 76 Letters Mailed To Eligible Landowners
- 11 Forest Stewardship Plans
- 2 Tree Plantings Planned for 2024



## **Oak/Bluff Creek Results for 2023**

- 1200 Letters Mailed to Eligible Landowners
- 5 Site Visits
- 2 Scholarships For Producers to Attend Livestock Grazing Workshops

## **Oak/Bluff Creek Small Watershed Program**

Funding is currently available for landowners who are located in the Oak/Bluff Creek watersheds. Both creeks are impaired for E. coli bacteria, and funds will be used to help landowners install conservation practices in Oak and Bluff Creeks subwatersheds. This project is in cooperation with the Pollution Control Agency and ends in 2026.

Eligible bacteria management projects include: managing livestock waste through proper storage and application; prescribed grazing and fencing for pasture management; exclusion of livestock from surface waters; alternative water systems; controls to stabilize and protect creek banks; enhancements of riparian buffers; and practices that improve soil health.

Cost-share assistance is currently available for eligible practices.

**m** MINNESOTA POLLUTION  
CONTROL AGENCY

## Our Staff:

District Manager: Darren Newville

Asst Mgr, Forestry and Water Resource Tech:

Anne Oldakowski

District Technician: Alyson Levig

District Technician: Savanna Anderson

Administrative Secretary: Chantal Tougas

Water Planner/Watershed Coordinator: Nicole Lundeen



**Ken Berg**  
Secretary



**Brett Dailey**  
Treasurer



**Jerry Kern**  
Public Relations

## Wadena SWCD Supervisors

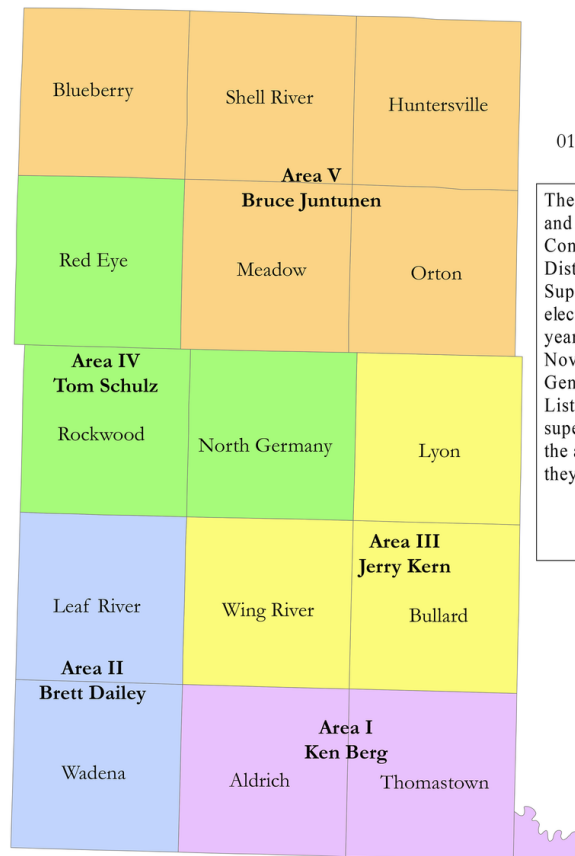


**Tom Schulz**  
Vice Chairman



**Bruce Juntunen**  
Board Chairman

## Wadena SWCD Board of Supervisor Areas



01/01/2023

The Wadena Soil and Water Conservation District Board of Supervisors are elected for a 4 year term at the November General Election. Listed are the supervisors and the area which they represent.



Wadena SWCD Board Meetings are open to the public and held every 3rd Monday of the month at 7:30am. Check out our website for more information.

## Our Mission

*The Wadena Soil and Water Conservation District seeks to achieve and maintain the highest quality and quantity of natural resources possible through wise stewardship for now and the future within the limits of human and financial means available.*



**WADENA**  
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Conservation District

Wadena SWCD

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

