

MISSION STATEMENT

OF

EAST OTTER TAIL

SOIL AND WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICT

It shall be the mission of the Soil and Water Conservation District to conserve and protect our soil and water resources that were placed into our trust.

Our quality of life and our environment depends on the partnership between our Board of Supervisors, its employees, and a willingness of land users to commit to good land use practices and management skills.

It is the District's responsibility to provide trained, competent technicians and office staff to disseminate information and provide technical assistance to all land users applying conservation practices and measures to their land.

And it is the responsibility of the District employees to achieve the mission of this District by dedicating their services, talents, and skills in meeting the goals and objectives set forth in our "Long Range" and "Annual Plan of Work" and to remain flexible to change.

The East Otter Tail Soil and Water Conservation District is committed to the policy that all persons shall have equal access to its programs, facilities, and employment without regard to race, color, creed, religion, national origin, sex, age, marital status, public assistance status, veteran status or sexual orientation.

**ORGANIZATIONAL VALUES OF THE
EAST OTTER TAIL SOIL AND WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICT**

*The quality of life and environment in the
East Otter Tail Soil and Water Conservation District
depends upon a partnership among citizens,
elected officials, and employees.*

*Each one of us in the District
is striving for success.
We are what makes the difference between a good
organization and an excellent one.*

As such, we have agreed upon the following as our organizational values:

We value open, accessible government. A government cannot be dishonest if its actions are taken openly, and honest government is our first responsibility. Openness encourages competence because it subjects our actions to public scrutiny.

We value fiscal responsibility. Careful management of our financial resources demonstrates our respect for the citizens whose taxes support our organization. Fiscal responsibility recognizes that most problems cannot be solved by money alone, and therefore demands a fresh approach and creativity in addressing issues.

We value a spirit of professionalism. We believe that successful completion of the task is more important than who gets the credit. A professional attitude dictates a dispassionate analysis of issues, free of personal biases, and with a commitment to the organization and the community.

We value humane organization. We believe that our work should be a source of enjoyment and satisfaction. We place great emphasis upon the personal qualities that contribute to that environment, informality, humility, energy, and independence of thought, a ready sense of humor and caring attitude.

We value organizational self sufficiency. To insure the continuity of District services and programs, and to foster innovation in the development of those services and programs, we encourage the use of local resources to meet local needs.

*We are Proud of the
East Otter Tail Soil and Water Conservation District,
It's Employees and the Citizens We Service*

The District will Implement Equal Employment Opportunity and Civil Rights Responsibilities Resulting in Strong Working Relationships with Agencies, Units of Government and Organizations.

Objectives:

- ❖ Document corrections of disparities in the civil rights case file.
- ❖ Review Memorandum of Understanding between the Natural Resources Conservation Service and the EOT SWCD including CR, EEO and Drug Free Workplace provisions. Review will be documented.
- ❖ Include nondiscrimination statements in all information released to the public.
- ❖ Review policies and encourage equal representation of minorities, women, and handicapped on local program boards, councils, and committees.
- ❖ Maintain the civil rights case file.
- ❖ Review handicapped accessibility to office including parking space requirement. Discrepancies to be reported to the Area Conservationist and the SWCD Board.

I. INTRODUCTION AND PURPOSE

The purpose of the “Annual Plan of Work” is to guide the actions of East Otter Tail Soil and Water Conservation District for the period of January 1, 2015 through December 31, 2015. Each concern can be measured by performance and action when reviewed by the Board of Supervisors and staff on a quarterly basis. The District is to provide an organized approach to solving or reducing soil erosion, water resource protection, development of wildlife habitat, and the improvement of forest and pasture lands.

The District is governed by an elected Board of Supervisors which consists of five members from designated election areas located in East Otter Tail County. The Board of Supervisors meets on a regular basis, meeting on each third Wednesday of the month for decision making and the implementation of its programs. The District Board of Supervisors for the calendar year are:

Chairperson	Lyle Dittmann	New York Mills
Vice Chairperson	Steve Inwards	Parkers Prairie
Secretary	Dennis Reynolds	Richville
Treasurer	Marion Gill	Perham
Public Relations	Terry Greenwaldt	Henning

The District staff consists of one full time District Manager (Darren Newville), one full time Administrative Secretary (Chantal Tougas), one full time Farm Bill/District Technician (Mitchell Ness), one full time Shoreland Specialist (Gabe Dretsch), one full time District Technician/County Ag Inspector (Aimee Zimmermann), One full time Irrigation/Nutrient Management Technician (Aaron Salo), one part time Irrigation Specialist (Arnold Rethemeier), and one part time Administrative Assistant (Katelyn

Haarstick). The District may also be hiring another full time temporary Buffer Technician in 2015. Up to two temporary part time District Aides have also traditionally been hired each spring to help in the District's tree planting program, tree fabric matting program, and to assist in the native grass programs. The District will also host a Conservation Corp of Minnesota apprentice in the summer of 2015.

The Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) also provides the District with a full time District Conservationist (Bruce Becker), a full time Soil Conservationist (Ryan Antholz), and a full time Soil Conservation Technician (Troy Baumgart).

In 2015 the District will be administering several state grants and programs, these include but are not limited to the State Cost Share Program, Conservation Delivery Grant Program, Farm Bill Assistance Grant, Clean Water Assistance Grant Program, Community Partners Grant Program, Observation Well Monitoring, Reinvest in Minnesota (RIM), Permanent Wetland Preserve Program (PWP), the Minnesota Wetland Conservation Act (WCA), and the Agricultural Best Management Practices Loan Program.

The District has entered in to a Joint Powers Agreement with the Minnesota Department of Agriculture (MDA) to provide assistance and funding on groundwater issues specifically related to nitrates. This agreement includes several irrigation initiatives and the Adaptive Nitrate Management program using guided basal stalk testing on corn, and to conduct a one time private well nitrate-nitrogen sampling program for 32 townships in Otter Tail County.

The District will also received a DNR Shoreland Habitat Grant that will be used to fund projects in 2015. This will be used to provide cost-share for shoreland buffer projects that meet the criteria for the grant.

The District is also working in conjunction with the County and the West Otter Tail (WOT) SWCD to implement the Otter Tail County Comprehensive Local Water Management Plan.

The District is also working with the WOT SWCD to to promote and implement the County Shoreland Buffer Ordinance. The Otter Tail County Board of Commissioners have provided financial support for this project and the WOT SWCD submitted a CWF grant to provide additional funds to accelerate the project.

The Otter Tail County SWCD's will also be acting as the County Agricultural Inspectors. This provides us with a unique opportunity to interact with the Township Supervisors and help them to understand their role in the Noxious Weed Law.

The District has also entered into a contract for services with the Wadena SWCD to provide a District Manager and Bookkeeper.

The District also assists the Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) and the Farm Service Agency (FSA) in promoting and implementing USDA's conservation provisions of the farm bill including but not limited to the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP), the Continuous Conservation Reserve Program (CCRP), Environmental Quality Incentive Program (EQIP), Agricultural Conservation Easement Program (ACEP), and the Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP).

II. OBJECTIVES AND ACTION ITEMS

I. SURFACE WATER QUALITY

To improve the water quality of surface waters in East Otter Tail County by reducing or minimizing the amount and extent of contaminants entering surface waters.

- A. Coordinate with WOT SWCD and the County on the County Buffer Initiative to identify and contact and work with landowners who are not in compliance with the 50' shoreland buffer ordinance to bring them into compliance.
- B. Promote the use of riparian buffers and filter strips
- C. Provide technical assistance to shoreland owners on water quality projects
- D. Promote the use of ag BMP's such as conservation tillage, nutrient management, and manure management
- E. Promote the use of the Community Partners Grants
- F. Promote the use of the DNR Shoreland Habitat Grant
- G. Promote and provide assistance to the adaptive nitrogen management program that offers guided basal corn stalk nitrate testing for producers through an agreement the District has with the MDA
- H. Promote Nitrogen field trials in conjunction with the adaptive nitrogen management program
- I. Promote the use of urban BMP's such as lakescaping, rain gardens and proper lawn fertilizer rates and provide technical assistance to interested landowners
- J. Work with area Lake Associations or other groups to promote projects through the Conservation Partners Grant Program
- K. Cooperate with Otter Tail County COLA and Lake Associations with educational efforts and projects that improve water quality
- L. Promote livestock exclusion from sensitive surface water areas and provide technical assistance to interested producers along with financial assistance when available to projects that meet eligibility criteria
- M. Assist with feedlot runoff projects and provide technical assistance to interested producers along with financial assistance when available to projects that meet eligibility criteria
- N. Investigate opportunities for monitoring various water bodies and assist with the monitoring efforts being conducted by MPCA, RMB labs and the Otter Tail County COLA.
- O. Continue to provide assistance and conduct civic engagement exercises with the 60 lake associations or groups that have completed lake assessments

- P. Promote Citizen Lake and Stream monitoring programs
- Q. Promote erosion control practices, and storm water management plans on construction sites through the National Pollution Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) permit process
- R. Continue to provide financial assistance for ISTS through the Ag BMP loan program
- S. Provide Technical Assistance with the Wetland Conservation Act
- T. Administer and Implement the County Comprehensive Water Plan
- U. Educate the public about surface water quality issues and efforts to protect it
- V. Assist with high water issues in various areas in the County when requested

II. GROUND WATER QUALITY AND QUANTITY

To improve and protect the quality and quantity of groundwater resources in East Otter Tail County by minimizing or reducing the amount and extent of contaminants entering the groundwater resources, and ensuring that there will be a stable and adequate source of useable water for municipal, industrial and agricultural purposes.

- A. Promote the use of the District's Irrigation Scheduler program
- B. Develop and host the Ag Weather Network website to share the Evapotranspiration (ET) information calculated from the 11 weather stations in the network for all of the various common crops grown in the area.
- C. Promote the EQIP program to convert irrigation systems to low pressure and provide financial assistance to producers to use the Districts Irrigation Scheduler Program
- D. Continue to sponsor Nitrate testing clinics
- E. Continue to assist MDA with the Sand Plain Monitoring plan and disseminate information collected from the study
- F. Develop and hold an Irrigation Education Clinic in conjunction with the Minnesota Dept of Ag.
- G. Coordinate the Township Private Well Nitrate-Nitrogen Monitoring Project in Otter Tail County
- H. Provide cost-share for priority well sealing projects
- I. Continue to cooperate with the DNR ObWell Program
- J. Promote the use of nutrient management plans and provide technical assistance to producers to develop nutrient management plans
- K. Promote and provide assistance to the adaptive nitrogen management program that offers basal corn stalk nitrate testing for producers through an agreement the District has with the MDA
- L. Promote BMPs for pesticide use
- M. Work with municipalities on Wellhead Protection Plans as requested and continue to serve as Technical Advisor to the Perham Wellhead Protection Committee
- N. Promote conservation programs such as RIM and CRP in all wellhead protection areas
- O. Administer and implement the County Comprehensive Water Plan

- P. Stay abreast of any proposals that could potentially adversely affect the quantity of the groundwater available
- Q. Educate the public about groundwater quality and quantity issues and efforts to protect it

III. DEVELOPMENT PRESSURE

To protect the natural resource of Otter Tail County by reducing or minimizing the impacts of ongoing and future development within the county.

- A. Promote the use of the DNR Shoreland Habitat Grant
- B. Promote the use of the Community Partners Grants
- C. Continue to work with the 60 lake associations that have completed lake assessment to educate and engage them about the data in the assessment and how they can use it to protect the water quality of their lakes
- D. Continue to provide assistance to lakeshore property owners on erosion issues and promote the use of lakescaping and storm water runoff control
- E. Maintain up to date knowledge of Otter Tail County's shoreland management ordinance and direct landowners to the Land and Resource Management Office when permits are needed for proposed projects
- F. Continue to provide support for lake associations completing the Healthy Lakes and Rivers Program
- G. Provide technical assistance to the County for the review of plat applications
- H. Promote the use of stormwater BMPs including rain gardens, stormwater retention ponds and other acceptable practices
- I. Provide technical assistance to the County and individual landowners with the Wetland Conservation Act
- J. Promote erosion control practices, and storm water management plans on construction sites through the National Pollution Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) permit process
- K. Educate the public about development pressure issues
- L. Work with the Otter Tail County Commissioners and staff members on any proposal for county wide land use planning

IV. SOIL EROSION

Promote best management practices that reduce soil losses through wind and water erosion to below 2T.

- A. Provide technical assistance to landowners on the design, layout and installation of wind erosion conservation practices such as windbreaks, shelterbelts, living snowfences. Provide financial assistance when available to projects that meet eligibility criteria

- B. Promote the use of and provide technical assistance on conservation tillage practices, and provide financial assistance when available to projects that meet eligibility criteria
- C. Promote the use of cover crops and provide technical assistance
- D. Promote the use of crop rotations that prevent or reduce soil loss
- E. Provide technical assistance for native prairie plantings
- F. Promote the use of Shoreland BMPs in shoreland areas sensitive to erosion
- G. Promote erosion control practices, and storm water management plans on construction sites through the National Pollution Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) permit process
- H. Educate the public about soil erosion and efforts to control it

V. WILDLIFE HABITAT/FORESTRY

To protect and preserve wildlife habitat including prairie, forested and wetland habitats from conversion to cropland and urban development, and promote the re-establishment of these wildlife habitats.

- A. Provide technical assistance to landowners interested in wildlife habitat tree and shrub plantings or forestry practices, along with financial assistance if available to projects that meet eligibility criteria
- B. In cooperation with the Minnesota Forest Resource Council (MFRC) and the Wadena SWCD the EOT SWCD will be working on a project promoting active management of the high quality hardwood stands located in Otter Tail and Wadena Counties. This project is funded partially through a US Forest Service Grant
- C. Promote the District's conservation tree program and services
- D. Provide technical assistance to landowners interested in wildlife habitat grass and forb plantings, along with financial assistance if the project and landowner meet eligibility criteria
- E. Promote the District's seeding program and services
- F. Promote conservation programs such as RIM, CRP, CCRP, ACEP, and EQIP that assist with wildlife habitat preservation, renovation and development
- G. Provide technical assistance with the Wetland Conservation Act
- H. Provide technical assistance with wetland restoration projects to interested landowners, along with financial assistance if available to projects that meet eligibility criteria
- I. Continue to work with other resource agencies to partner and collaborate on wildlife habitat projects
- J. Educate the public on wildlife habitat issues and protection and enhancement efforts
- K. Implement the County Ag Inspector program and work with Township Boards on the noxious weed program
- L.

VI. SUSTAINABLE AGRICULTURE

To assist agricultural producers in maintaining productivity through the use of conservation practices that protect and preserve our natural resources, and maintain a sustainable agricultural base in the county.

- A. Promote conservation practices that sustain soil productivity
- B. Assist NRCS with the Soil Health Initiative
- C. Promote alternative crops as technology develops and new markets emerge
- D. Maintain knowledge of new legislation or programs that benefit local producers and disseminate information to local producers.
- E. Promote rotational grazing practices and provide technical assistance and financial assistance when available to projects that meet eligibility criteria
- F. Assist with feedlot runoff projects and provide technical assistance to interested producers and financial assistance if available to projects and producers that meet eligibility criteria.
- G. Educate the public about agricultural issues
- H. Keep informed on Bio Mass information and technology on how it may impact local producers
- I. Investigate staffing a nutrient management/pest management specialist to work with producers to develop and implement nutrient management and pest management plans.

VII. EDUCATION/PROMOTION

Promote soil and water conservation through an effective information and education program to the residents, seasonal property owners, schools, and elected officials in Otter Tail County

- A. Support local ag in the classroom programs
- B. Support Conservation Days
- C. Support the Nitrate testing clinics and programs at local schools
- D. Support the regional Envirothon
- E. Develop and maintain an email newsletter
- F. Provide presentations to area groups as requested
- G. Educate the public on the District's programs and services
- H. Educate the public on other state and federal programs that may provide technical and financial assistance
- I. Maintain District web page and keep it up to date

VIII. FUNDING/PARTNERING/ADMINISTRATION

Provide assistance to the public through the most efficient use of public funds and administration of programs, and maintain and develop a strong working relationship with other resource agencies.

- A. Continue to work to gain better sources of stable funding
- B. Maintain the Agreement for Services with the Wadena SWCD for District Manager and Bookkeeping services.
- C. Research possible grant opportunities to assist with funding projects and specialized staff positions as they relate to the District's priorities
- D. Maintain and improve working relationships with NRCS and FSA
- E. Maintain and improve working relationships with County Commissioners and County Departments
- F. Maintain and improve working relationships with other state and federal resource agencies
- G. Continue to work with the Otter Tail River Watershed Team on joint projects such as the Native Buffer Cost-share Pooling Agreement
- H. Administer programs in a manner that efficiently uses the Districts resources

IX. STATE COST SHARE PROGRAM REQUIREMENTS

The Erosion, Sediment Control, and Water Quality Cost-Share Program (C-S Program) provides funds to Soil and Water Conservation Districts through the Board of Soil and Water Resources (BWSR) to cost-share on priority projects. The SWCD Board of Supervisors are given the authority to decide which resource problems within their jurisdiction are most deserving of financial assistance, as well as the amount of assistance. Guidelines set by BWSR state that SWCD's may cost share with land occupiers at the maximum rate of 75 percent of the eligible cost of a project. In 2015 the East Otter Tail SWCD was awarded \$15,954 to be used through this program, of that 20% (\$3,190) may be used to cover for technical and administrative assistance provided by the District. The following shows the estimated need for these dollars.

1) HIGH PRIORITY EROSION

On areas where erosion from wind or water is occurring on Class I-IV soils equal to or in excess of 2 x T tons per acre per year or is occurring on any area that exhibits active gully erosion.

1) Funds needed:

a) Critical Area Stabilization: 3 acres @ \$550/acre = \$1,650 total; 75% of \$1,650 = \$1,237.50 total cost share

b) Field Windbreaks: 20 acres x \$550 per acre = \$11,000 total; 75%

of \$11,000 = \$8,250 total cost share

2) HIGH PRIORITY SEDIMENTATION

Areas within 300 feet of a water course or 1,000 feet of a water basin or wetland where the water erosion rate exceeds three tons per acre per year, or areas where the District can show that sediment delivery occurs from a watershed or direct conveyance structure such as a storm sewer or paved outlet channel discharging to these waters.

1) Funds needed:

- a) Stream bank, Lake shore, and Roadside Stabilization: 15 landowners @ \$65 per foot x 250 ft = \$243,750 total; 75% of \$243,750 = \$182,812
- b) Riparian Buffer Strips: 4 landowners @ \$550 acre x 8 acres = \$4,400 total; 75% of \$4,400 = \$3,300
- c) Sediment Retention, Erosion or Water Control Structures: 10 landowners @ \$3,000/project = \$30,000 total; 75% of \$30,000 = \$22,500
- d) Critical Area Stabilization: 5 acres @ \$550 acre = \$2,750 total; 75% of \$2,750 = \$2,062

3) HIGH PRIORITY FEEDLOTS

Feedlots where the pollution potential rating from the feedlot is greater than or equal to one.

1) Funds needed:

- a) Waste Storage Ponds and Structures: 1 Systems @ \$60,000 = \$60,000 total; 75% cost-share is = \$45,000
- b) Diversions: 1 landowner @ \$6/ft x 300 ft. = \$1,800 total; 75% cost share is = \$1,350

4) SPECIAL PROJECTS/GRANTS

Conservation Delivery Grant Program

This grant is used for technical/administrative services incurred by the District to carry out their conservation programs. It is also used for the educational and promotional programs of the District. For fiscal year 2015 the amount granted to the District was \$18,986.00. An additional 20% of cost-share funds (\$3,190.00) can also be used for technical and administrative services for the amount spent on completed projects. The total amount of technical/administrative services funding for fiscal year 2015 is \$22,176.00.

ReInvest in Minnesota (RIM) Reserve Service Grant

This grant is given to the District for the implementation and application of the RIM Reserve Program. For fiscal year 2015 the District received \$647.00.

Farm Bill Assistance Grant

This grant is given to the District to provide for staff to promote the conservation provisions of the Farm Bill. The purpose of position would be to promote the conservation programs of the Farm Bill – CRP, CCRP, ACEP, CREP, etc. Promotion will be done through direct contact (mailings, phone calls, group presentations, etc), with follow up to determine eligibility, contract processing, conservation planning and monthly reporting. For fiscal year 2015 the District received \$22,500.00.

Community Partners Conservation Program Grant

The District has also been awarded three \$150,000 Community Partners Conservation Program Grants over the last three years. These funds will be granted out to local non-profit groups such as lake associations to fund projects to protect water quality by reducing stormwater runoff. These funds will be utilized to move communities towards a proactive model where local groups identify water resource concerns and implement projects to mitigate those concerns in house without relying on State or local agencies or staff to provide leadership and guidance. This project is being funded through the MDA with funds from the Clean Water Land and Legacy Act.

Central MN Irrigation Outreach & On-Farm Nitrogen Management
MDA Joint Powers Agreement

The District has also entered into a Joint Powers Agreement with the Minnesota Department of Agriculture (MDA) to improve the efficiency of irrigation water and agricultural nitrogen use to protect and improve the quality of groundwater in five counties in Central Minnesota. Funding provided from the MDA will be used for irrigation outreach and support in the project area, and will provide area producers with tools and support to closely evaluate the nitrogen use efficiency on their own farm to find opportunities for improvement. This project is being funded through the MDA with funds from the Clean Water Land and Legacy Act.

Otter Tail County Targeted Township Nitrate-Nitrogen Sampling Program

The District has also entered into a second Joint Powers Agreement with the Minnesota Department of Agriculture (MDA) project is to characterize current nitrate conditions in groundwater from private wells on a township scale. The 32 Townships that will be targeted for nitrate sampling have greater than 30% of the land area identified as having vulnerable geology and have at least 20% of the land area in row crop production. The EOT SWCD will be working with RMB Environment Labs, Detroit Lakes, to send out sampling kits to nearly 14,000 households in these townships. Each household identified will receive an initial letter explaining the program and informing them to watch for the sampling kit in the next few weeks. A week or so later a sampling kit with instructions will be mailed out. This project is being funded through the MDA with funds from the Clean Water Land and Legacy Act.

The Otter Tail County Buffer Initiative

The Otter Tail County Buffer Initiative was developed to address the resource concern for Agricultural Use Standards, as outlined in Otter Tail County's Shoreland Management Ordinance and Minnesota Shoreland Management Rules for shoreland areas along public waters. The Agricultural Use Standards states that 50 feet of permanent vegetation must be maintained along all public waters. Through the awarded Clean Water Fund grant, the EOT SWCD, WOT SWCD and Otter Tail County will accelerate the inventory of public waters and identify compliance with Shoreland Management Ordinance. This initiative aims to educate landowners and provide conservation programs to move in the direction of 100% compliance.