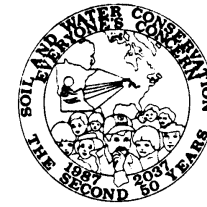


Nicollet Soil & Water Conservation District
501 7th Street, PO Box 457
Nicollet, MN 56074
507-232-2550

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Nicollet SWCD

2023

August

COVER CROPS



Why plant cover crops?

Increase profitability: Cover crops are most likely to be profitable if you harvest covers as forage and/or reduce tillage as part of the cover crop system.

Reduce crop inputs: Many cover crop growers do reduce fertilizer or herbicide inputs, but this usually takes 3-5 years. Use check strips to be confident you can reduce inputs without reducing profits.

Resilience to extreme weather: Resilience means less loss in bad weather years. Keeping the soil covered can reduce flooding impacts and retain moisture to prevent drought impacts.

Reduce nitrogen loss: Cover crops scavenge nitrogen when cash crops aren't growing. For example, cereal rye reduced soil N down to 60 cm by 13% to 84%.

Increase forage use: If you plan for sufficient biomass, using cover crops for forage gives you a second crop of high-quality livestock feed. Covers can be grazed or harvested.

Support pollinators: Cover crops like pennycress and winter canola provide pollinator resources if they're allowed to flower. High cumulative nectar production provides food resources to pollinators in early spring.

Weed control: Sufficient residue, especially from a winter-hardy grass like cereal rye, will shade out weed emergence during the growing season.

Pest control: Choose cover crops from different functional groups to break cycles of pests and disease. Pay attention to which cover crop species are hosts to or resistant to crop pests.

Soil erosion control: Any cover crop growth will protect the soil surface from rain and wind. Roots hold the soil in place and improve structure.

Improve water management: Large roots create macropores in the soil, increasing infiltration, while small roots improve structure and increase water holding capacity. Larger stands will take up more water, so if your concern is spring droughtiness, consider terminating earlier in spring.

Improve trafficability: Because of the improved water management, cover crop producers report longer windows for spring and fall field work without rutting or compaction.

Increased organic matter: Cover crop residue breaks down and adds organic matter, which improves soil fertility. Total SOM may take years for measurable increase.

Do you have questions about cover crops? Give Blake a call at the Nicollet SWCD or email him at Blake.honetschlager@nicolletswcd. We acknowledge the **University of Minnesota Extension** for this information.

The Nicollet Soil and Water Conservation District

501 7th Street
PO Box 457
Nicollet, MN 56074
Phone: (507) 232-2550

District Board

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Don Hermanson, Vice Chair
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Administrative Assistant

Office Hours:

Monday-Friday
8:00am-4:30pm

Please call ahead to schedule an appointment.

Natural Resource Conservation Service

Phone: (507) 237-5435 ext. 3

Reyna Chavez
District Conservationist

Jacob Stich
CST Lead

APPLY FOR LAWNS TO LEGUMES ASSISTANCE



Minnesota residents are eligible to apply for Lawns to Legumes cost-share funding of up to \$400 to create pollinator habitat in their yards. Applications will be chosen through a randomized drawing, though priority will be given to projects within higher priority areas and to equitable geographic distribution.

The application deadline for the Spring 2024 Lawns to Legumes Individual Support program is November 30. Grant recipients will be notified in mid-December. Any applications submitted on August 22, 2022 or later that were not previously awarded a grant will remain in consideration for Spring 2024 funding, and do not need to be resubmitted.

*Please note that applying for Lawns to Legumes cost-share funding does not guarantee you will receive funding. If your application is awarded funding, it will be in the form of reimbursement. We will work with awardees unable to afford the upfront cost of a project to find a way to still participate in the program.

Lawns to Legumes provides many free helpful resources on creating pollinator habitat. You can check our **Lawns to Legumes page** and the **Minnesota Board of Water and Soil Resources website**. You will find information on projects like pocket gardens, pollinator lawns, and meadows and planting trees and shrubs for pollinators, how to design your project, and more.

Lawns to Legumes comes through the Minnesota Board of Water and Soil Resources. Blue Thumb is BWSR's partner for the individual support part of the program.

This newsletter is published by the Nicollet Soil and Water Conservation District, 501 7th St., Nicollet, MN 56074 and USDA NRCS, 112 5th St, Gaylord, MN 55334. For more information regarding this newsletter, contact (507) 232-2550. **USDA is an equal opportunity provider, employer, and lender.**

Board Meetings are held the first Wednesday of each month at 8:30 a.m. Agenda posted on the website one week prior.



Online version available @ www.nicolletswcd.org
Email info@nicolletswcd.org for updates
"Like us" on the Nicollet Soil & Water Facebook page!

A NEW FACE

The Lower Minnesota River West Watershed has a new face. Tara O'Brien joined the Sibley SWCD on June 5th as the new Conservation Technician. She will also be assisting Nicollet SWCD and McLeod SWCD with education and outreach programs made possible through Watershed Based Implementation Funding (WBIF). She is a recent graduate from Minnesota State University, Mankato with a degree in Recreation, Parks, and Leisure Services with a double emphasis in Resource Management and Leisure Planning and Management. In collaboration with LMRW Watershed partners, Tara hopes to spread awareness on best management practices and the resources available through education and outreach programs on soil health, water quality, and aquatic invasive species.



WELCOME SAMANTHA



Hello, everyone! My name is Sam Schoenbauer and I am the Agriculture Production Systems Extension Educator in Nicollet and Sibley Counties. The University of Minnesota Extension brings Minnesotans together to build a better future through University science-based knowledge, expertise and training.

Extension strengthens Minnesota's food and agriculture, promotes responsible lawn and garden practices, protects natural resources including soil, water and woodlands and supports community leadership, economic development and tourism.

I have a passion for agriculture education and helping individuals understand different concepts by keeping them up to date on the latest and relevant agriculture news. My role is to educate consumers, producers and the general public about agricultural topics relevant to this community including livestock, crops, horticulture and natural resources. Various workshops and programs are hosted throughout the year to fit the needs of individuals in the area. Tree care, land rent, private pesticide application and field days are just a few examples of the workshops and events that have taken place.

If you would like to stay up to date on local agriculture news, contact Sam to be added to the monthly email newsletter, Nicollet and Sibley County Ag News. Feel free to reach out to her with any questions! The Nicollet County Extension office is located at the Nicollet County Government Center in St. Peter. Sam can be contacted via email at sschoenb@umn.edu. For more information on Extension, visit www.extension.umn.edu.

Easement Enhancement for Bees and Insects

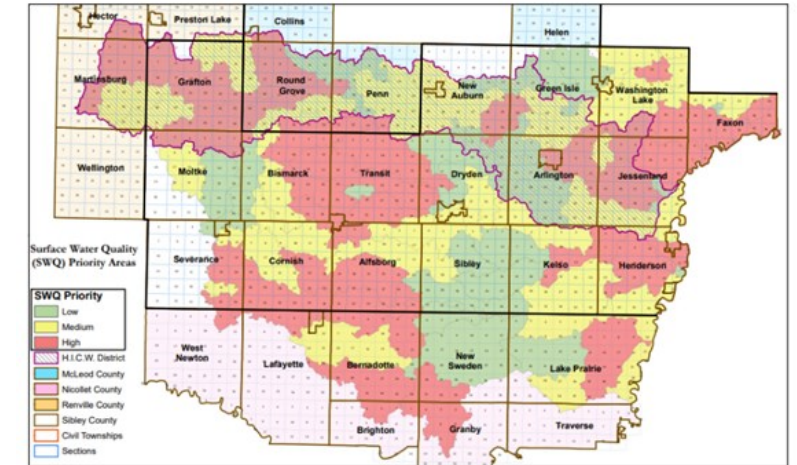
Convert low diversity habitat to high diversity habitat




Open to all permanently protected lands, IE: RIM, USFS, WRP, etc..

WATERSHED BASED IMPLEMENTATION FUNDING OFFERS NEW POSSIBILITIES

Thanks to the Clean Water Land and Legacy Amendment, a new cost share program is being offered across the state. Watershed Based Implementation Funding (WBIF) is giving local government units the opportunity to collaborate on water quality improvement projects based on the highest priority needs within an approved Comprehensive Watershed Management Plan (CWMP). Programs developed under the One Watershed One Plan (1W1P) are being used to assure actions are prioritized, targeted and measurable. The Board of Water and Soil Resources (BWSR) are using WBIF to accelerate water management outcomes so that implementation efforts are consistent and efficient. This is important because it allows for both local water management authorities and the state to reach their clean water goals of implementing projects that protect, enhance, and restore surface water quality in lakes, rivers, and streams; protect groundwater from degradation; and protect drinking water sources. It also benefits landowners/land-occupiers by supporting sustainable agricultural practices.



Partners within the Lower Minnesota River West Watershed (LMRW) include McLeod, Nicollet, and Sibley SWCD's and Counties, and also the High Island Creek Watershed District. Together, they received a 1W1P planning grant from BWSR. In April, LMRW Watershed received their first WBIF grant to implement the Comprehensive Watershed Management Plan (CWMP) allowing LMRW partners to collaborate with local landowners/land-occupiers on the implementation of best management practices (BMP's). There is funding for structural practices and incentives for non-structural practices. Structural practices will be cost shared at an unprecedented 90%. This category includes, but is not limited to, practices like water and sediment control basins, grade stabilization structures, terraces, and grassed waterways. Incentives for non-structural practices vary depending on the chosen practice. Examples of non-structural practices include cover crops, conservation cover, conservation crop rotation, and no-till/strip till. A unique funding opportunity using WBIF is drainage water management. This will offer folks cost share towards a drainage water management plan, the structure(s) used in implementing the plan, and 3 years worth of payments for management of the drainage water management system. Due to the elevated cost share rates with WBIF, approval for a project will be determined using scoring thresholds to make sure funding is used within the priority areas.

Cost Share for Cover Crops

	Single Species	Multi-Species
One Year	\$35/ac.	\$45/ac.
Two Year	\$40/ac.	\$50/ac.
Three Year	\$45/ac.	\$55/ac.

To learn more about Watershed-Based Implementation Funding and how we can help you make a difference, stop into the Nicollet SWCD office located at 501 7th Street in Nicollet or call 507-232-2550.

Watch for the 2024 Tree Order Form

in our January Newsletter