



CLEARWATER SOIL & WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICT | SUMMER 2025

Clearwater's Conservation Chronicles



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Photo by: Brielle Prokosch



Watch 'em Grow!

First Graders Learn About Planting Trees

First grade classes at Bagley Elementary and Clearbrook-Gonvick Schools had the chance to learn about planting trees while taking home a Black Chokeberry tree of their very own.

First graders learned about what a tree needs to become successful, how pollinators have an impact on trees and the food they produce. They also learned how to take care of their own trees. First graders were able to plant their own tree in a peat pot with potting soil and received informational handouts about their trees, pollinators, and planting steps (along with some snacks, of course!).

Every spring before school lets out, Clearwater SWCD holds our annual Watch 'em Grow educational program for the first graders in Clearwater County.

How are Your Trees Growing?

Did you or your little one attend Clearwater SWCD's Watch 'em Grow program as a first grader years ago?

Did you/they plant the tree?

Did it grow well?

How tall is the tree now?

Clearwater SWCD has been developing the Watch 'em Grow program for Clearwater County's first graders since 2014, and we are so curious to see how your trees are doing! We'd love to see your pictures of your trees planted from our program with you or them or the whole family alongside it. If you'd like a chance to be in our newsletter, please send any pictures and the year planted to our email: ClearwaterSWCD1954@gmail.com.

We're excited to see how they're doing!





Rain Barrels

Helping the Environment One Class at a Time

This spring on April 23rd Clearwater SWCD hosted a Rain Barrel Education class at Bagley's American Legion. Participants were instructed on how a rain barrel works and the environmental benefits of conserving rainwater. Staff explained how to install one on the participants own property and how to maintain rain barrels throughout the year. Each participant was then able to construct their own rain barrel with provided supplies with the help of SWCD staff. The class was successful, and every participant was able to take home their fully constructed rain barrel after the class!

A rain barrel captures water from rooftops and collects it in order to use it for gardening uses. Collecting water runoff from roofs

can reduce the amount of water that can damage lawns and therefore prevent soil erosion. Rain barrels can help entire communities by reducing storm runoff which can accumulate pesticides, fertilizers and pet waste that can harm local natural bodies of water. Natural debris like sticks and leaves can also collect in the runoff and clog storm drains when it heavily rains. With rain barrels you can save money on water bills and conserve water during droughts.

A special thank you to the Bagley America Legion for allowing us to put on this rain barrel class, NRCS for helping, and Corrie Uhler & Shelley Sutton for sending in pictures of their completed rain barrels at home!

Keep an eye out for more community education classes during the year through our website, Facebook and the Farmer's Independent Newspaper.



Water Theme Style!

The hand-built stream table provided fun and educational information that let the kids create and develop their own stream while watching how a river or stream can behave when the water flow changes. A stream table is a tilted container holding sand in which water flows from the top to the bottom (and then getting recirculated back to the top via water pump) creating a small river or stream. With the help of tools or even just their hands kids can move the sand and water around to learn about erosion, deposition, how a stream can meander and even human impact. It was great seeing whole families having fun interacting with the table!

August 5th – August 9th

A Pollinator's Delight!

Free Native Seeds Possible Thanks to USFWS

Do you have a piece of land that you would like to plant native seeds on? The Clearwater SWCD is offering the opportunity to receive free native pollinator seed through a partnership with the US Fish and Wildlife Service. Parcels in Clearwater County between 1 and 10 acres are eligible for this program, and if a contract is signed, the parcel will need to remain managed as a pollinator planting for 10 years. A summarized version of the contract is available on our website if you are interested in learning more.

Last fall we planted two parcels using one of our no-till drills, totaling 6 acres.

This fall we will be planting 4 or 5 parcels for a total of 20-30 acres. Parcels range from 1.5 to 10 acres, with soils from gravelly sand to clay loam. Plantings will have 30-50 species in each seed mix, varying because of soil type and wildlife/pollinator goals.



The goal of this program is to seed at least 50 acres with at least 10 different landowners before the middle of 2028. Clearwater SWCD will be performing the site prep on most of the sites to keep on schedule and ensure a successful planting. If everything goes as planned, we will be looking for a few more landowners to try and finish our goal on time. If this opportunity interests you, give us a call at our office and we can help you make this happen!

10 Years of Soil Health Programming

Chester Powell Looks Back on a Decade of Soil Health

In 2015 Clearwater SWCD purchased their first no-till drill with the goal of providing producers in the county with a supported option of another way to plant their crops. As expected, the adoption of no-till practices was slow and hesitant with many producers having a strong feeling of skepticism.

I was lucky enough to be hired by Clearwater SWCD in September of 2017 as the district technician. I came from a smaller beef farm background but no-till, cover crops, and soil health was all for foreign to me and learning on the job was top priority. With only a couple of cover crop contracts in the fall of 2017 and guidance from existing staff at the district, the groundwork was laid for what was needed to be ready to hit the ground running come planting season 2018. Following a winter of trainings, conversations, research, and the stepping down of other technical staff at the district, spring planting season 2018 showed up ready or not. Being green in the position and learning as I went, I relied heavily on local knowledge and the SWCD board to lower the learning curve on what is required to have a successful planting. With an expected number of hiccups along the way of learning the quirks of a piece of equipment the 2018 planting season ended with 13 contracts for 305 acres completed.



The next two years continued to be a mass of learning experiences with no real increase in the number of contracts or acres. In 2021 with now a solid understanding of soil health practices, an in-depth understanding of no-till equipment, an increase in technical staff at the district and most importantly an ever-growing network of producers in the county, I entered planting season with a much higher level of confidence. The 2021 drought opened the eyes to producers that there has to be a better way to build a more resilient landscape to combat the highly variable weather conditions we have been dealt with annually. That year we had a record number of inquiries on no-till and cover crops about how to keep the soil in place and maintain the little moisture the soil had received during the drought. We ended 2021 with 20 contracts for 1080 acres contracted.

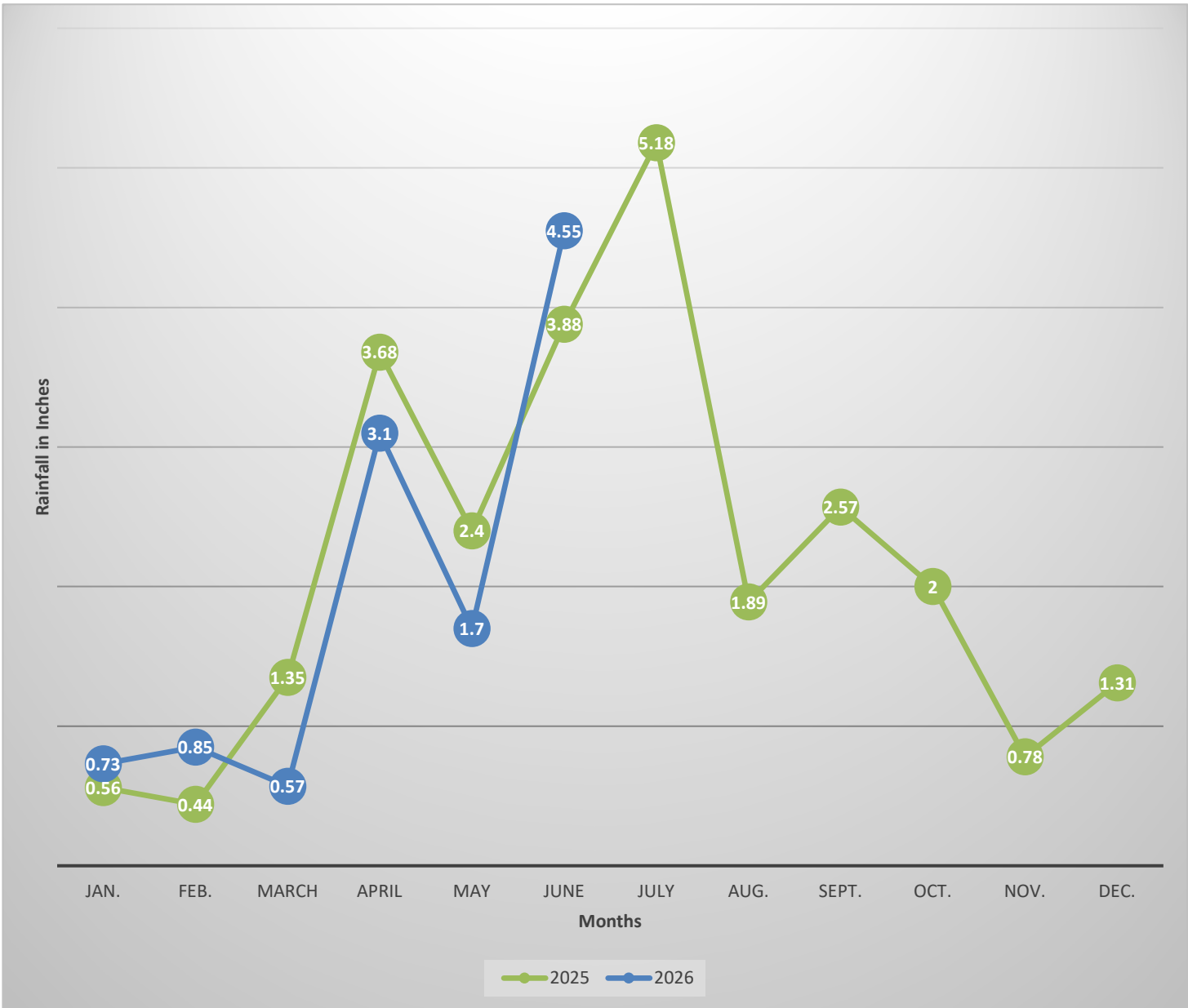
Since then, the momentum has continued with producers seeing the value in soil health practices in their farming operations. In 2025 we completed 60 contracts for over 3800 acres and are on track to have similar numbers in 2026. The district has done our best to keep the momentum going by increasing our equipment offerings from one 10ft no-till drill to now in 2026 renting 4 no-till drills ranging from 10-15 ft. On top of the equipment, since 2021 have two seasoned staff in-house that are here to provide technical assistance to producers on all aspects of soil health practices and no-till equipment. If we do not have the answer, you are looking for, we have built a large network of producers doing all scales of soil health practices so that we can source what you need.

I owe a large amount of thanks to all the producers that have trusted to work with myself and the district to grow our soil health program over the last 10 years and I hope to see the continued adoption of practices as we work to assist producers for years to come.

Clearwater County Rain Gage

A Look at Rainfall for 2026

Clearwater SWCD, along with local volunteers, have been working with the Minnesota Climatology Network to gather rainfall data since 1978. We currently have volunteers collecting rainfall data in Falk, Greenwood, Minerva, Moose Creek, Popple, Itasca, Eddy and Rice townships. If you are in a township that does not have a volunteer and would like to become a part of our rain monitoring volunteers, give the office a call for more information. You can also check the rain gage data online, along with other weather information, at the MN State Climatology website: <https://climateapps.dnr.state.mn.us/> .



✱ Clearwater's Puzzle Page! ✱

This newsletter's event: **Native Flowers Word Find**

How To: Find the **bolded** words in the puzzle! Words can go in any direction. Words can share letters and cross over each other. All words can be found in our pollinator packets!

W	L	M	L	V	N	G	H	G	M	H	V	T	R	A
E	H	O	P	I	P	E	O	Z	M	Y	J	N	E	S
B	B	Y	B	M	O	L	K	I	C	S	X	A	W	T
E	Y	E	B	E	D	F	L	O	U	S	Y	L	O	E
W	E	W	A	E	L	K	E	N	H	O	Z	P	L	R
N	G	E	N	R	V	I	F	U	M	P	T	D	F	S
M	Z	R	S	E	D	L	A	G	Q	L	L	A	E	U
K	O	S	T	O	O	T	N	Z	R	N	L	E	N	S
D	O	C	K	W	R	Z	O	E	Y	J	I	L	O	A
J	H	P	E	V	M	M	V	N	T	T	Y	C	C	N
X	E	R	Y	E	O	O	I	U	G	E	Y	D	G	G
D	E	E	W	K	L	I	M	R	H	U	I	K	G	B
N	J	X	Z	C	Z	I	F	W	P	J	E	T	W	N
I	Z	B	E	R	G	A	M	O	T	B	Q	O	J	E
R	K	G	N	D	C	R	E	D	N	A	X	E	L	A

Find the bolded words:

Alexander (Golden)
Aster (Smooth Blue)
Beardtongue (Foxglove)
Bergamot (Wild)
Cinquefoil (Prairie)

Clover (Purple Prairie)
Coneflower
Goldenrod (Stiff)
Hyssop (Anise)
Leadplant

Lobelia (Great Blue)
Milkvetch (Canda)
Milkweed (Common)
Primrose (Evening)
Sunflower (Maximillian)
Susan (Black-eyed)



CLEARWATER

Soil & Water Conservation District

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POSTAGE



CLEARWATER

Soil & Water Conservation District

Visit Our Website



Mission:

Our mission is simple - to promote the wise use and improvement of our county resources, in order that future generations will inherit an economically viable county that has made wise choices in resource management.

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