



## 2022 ANNUAL REPORT

# CARLTON COUNTY SOIL & WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICT



Cover Crop Field in Carlton County

*Assisting landowners in protecting and enhancing the natural resources of Carlton County. est. 1961*

**UNLOCK**  
YOUR LAND'S POTENTIAL



# Unlocking the Land's Potential

by your local Soil and Water Conservation District

## Executive Summary

By Brad Matlack, SWCD Manager

2022 was another fantastic year for soil and water conservation with private land users throughout Carlton County. Some outcomes and results highlighted in this report were not even envisioned at the end of 2021. Others reports are updates on our core programs and initiatives. Whichever the case, the SWCD assisted land users to implement some very impactful projects that protect and enhance the natural resources we all love here in Carlton County. Check out the project summary pages that tally numbers and results of projects and programs, and the 2022 map of projects.

One new project in 2022 involved hosting a Climate Impact Corp member in our SWCD. AmeriCorps members serving in Climate Impact Corps use evidence-based strategies to help communities mitigate and adapt to climate change. River Bennett served at the SWCD with a mission to help communities mitigate and prepare for climate change by preserving and increasing tree canopy. Read more in the AMPACT page.

2022 saw the retirement of Kelly Smith after serving residents of Carlton County and the SWCD for 26 years. I wish I knew the number of landowners Kelly talked with about conservation in those 26 years. Kelly's Legacy lives on in the many projects he helped people implement but the one I think of often is the row of disease resistant Elm trees he helped the City of Carlton plant along South Avenue in Carlton on the Munger Trailhead park property.

2022 also saw the departure of two other SWCD staff members. Sam Horner was a conservation Technician who helped get the FireWise Assessment program off the ground. Sam moved on to other things in late November. And in December, 10 year veteran Jacob Granfors of the conservation easement world left to take a higher position in Pheasants Forever.

The SWCD did gain a staff in 2022. Kaysie Maleski was hired jointly with the Aitkin SWCD as the new SWCD Forestry Technician. Kaysie has been writing some great Forest Stewardship Plans already in 2022 and we look forward to her being a great resource for forestry landowners in coming years.

On the SWCD Board side, after serving 4 years, board member Rick Dalen from district 5 resigned to focus on various aspects of the growing business at Northern Harvest Farms. Appointed to fill that board vacancy was Bruce Heikes from west of Holyoke.

The Carlton SWCD thanks all the landowners and homeowners who engaged with us in 2022. Without your commitment to conservation where you live, our programs would go unused, and our great soil and water resources in Carlton County wouldn't continue to be as great as we have come to expect!



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The SWCD returned to an in person Conservation Awards program in 2023. The celebration was held in Mahtowa in the pavilion at TJ's.

## 2022 Conservation Partner

NE Minnesota Beekeeper's Association (NEMBA) was recognized as our 2022 Outstanding Conservation Partner of the Year for their work in educating the public about pollinator issues and for having members partner with the Carlton SWCD to plant pollinator gardens across several properties.

Accepting are active local members on behalf of the 170 members in NEMBA.



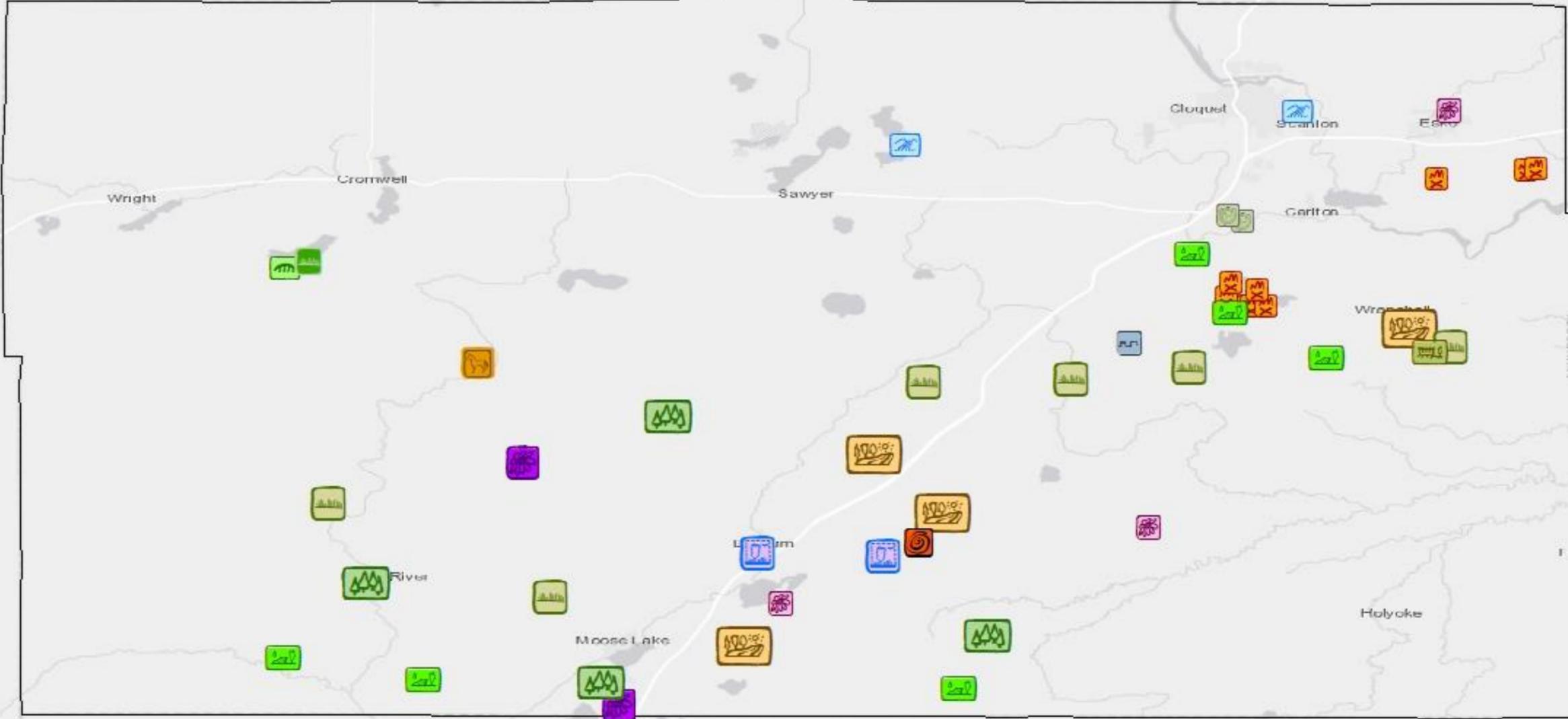
## 2022 Outstanding Conservationist

Ann Gustafson and the rest of the cast at Leaning Barn Farms were a worthy recipient of the 2022 Outstanding Conservationist. Ann and her husband, Chris bought the old farmland, now known as Leaning Barn Farm, located just a few miles northeast of Carlton, in 2011. Their family, including Ann's parents Ken & Ruth, started UPick Blueberries (sometimes raspberries) at the farm. It has grown to include Christmas trees and vegetables that are also sold at local farmers markets. Leaning Barn Farm is certified through the MN Agriculture Water Quality Certification Program. Showing their commitment to preventing erosion, crop management, pollinator habitat, integrated pest management, and wildlife practices on their farm. They are also Minnesota Grown certified.

Ann and Chris were also selected to represent the NE MN region as the Area's Outstanding Conservationist at the annual December meeting of the Minnesota Association of Soil and Water Conservation Districts held in Bloomington. Congratulations Leaning Barn Farm!



# 2023 SWCD Projects Implemented Map



- |   |  |  |
|---|--|--|
|  Conservation Cover        |  Prescribed Grazing           |  Invasive Plant Control             |
|  Cover Crop                |  Shoreline Protection         |  MN Ag Water Quality Certified Farm |
|  Well Decommissioning      |  Rain Garden                  |  Woodland Stewardship Plan          |
|  Riparian Herbaceous Cover |  Billion Rental - Cover Crops |  Pollinator Pocket                  |
|  Livestock Pipeline        |  Firewise Assessment          |  Pollinator Meadow                  |
|   |  Great Plains Drill Rental    |  |

The Carlton SWCD has a data base that manages all the various technical aspects of doing conservation work with private landowners. Outreach and engagement, planning and implementing conservation practices, and the impact those projects have on the high quality soil and water resources of Carlton County. Here are some numbers from 2022 projects.

Landowner Engagement	Conservation Planning		Practices Implemented			Environmental Impacts
Landowners in Outreach Campaigns <b>12,210</b>	Woodland Plans <b>6</b>	Acres <b>389</b>	Forestry Practices <b>6</b>	Urban Practices <b>17</b>		Soil Loss Saved - tons <b>10,606</b>
New Landowners <b>178</b>	Farm Plans <b>6</b>	Acres <b>251</b>	Ag Practices <b>43</b>	Cover Crop Acres <b>295</b>	Soil Heath acres <b>1,726</b>	Phosphorous (P) saved - pounds <b>10,362</b>
Conservation Practices Started <b>116</b>	FireWise Assements <b>12</b>	Assesment Acres <b>9.9</b>	Seeder Rentals <b>28</b>	Seeder Acres <b>598</b>		Suspended Solids Saved - pounds <b>772</b>
	FireWise Mitigation <b>4</b>	Mitigation Acres <b>1.9</b>	Pollinator Practices <b>42</b>	Habitat in Acres <b>122.3</b>	Invasive Acres Treat... <b>89.5</b>	Habitat Protected/Created/Restored - acres <b>223</b>

These numbers represent a body of work from policy direction at the SWCD board level, to planning many outreach events, mailings and workshops to help residents understand our programs, to countless hours of our technical staff to work with landowners, contractors, and partners to complete these practices. These practices are implemented across all land uses in the county from the agricultural fields to the tall tree forests, to the edge of the parking lots in the cities of Carlton County. Conservation is happening throughout the county, on big acreages and city lots, with big price tags or for \$10 to rent tools to control buckthorn. And the team of conservation professionals at the Carlton SWCD are incorporating new tools for landowners to use like expanding use of conservation easements and using biochar kilns to turn waste brush into a valuable soil amendment. Come see what we can do for you and see why we say.....





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## 2022 Seeder Equipment Rental Program

Carlton SWCD continues to offer a Great Plains no-till drill and Brillion Sure Stand Seeder for rental to farmers within 60 miles of Carlton. The most popular use for the no-till drill continues to be interseeding hay fields to add new species and improve forage production. The brillion was used to establish several new fields when tillage is used. One highlight was using the brillion to seed down 70 acres of former row crop field to perennial hay. This conservation practice utilized the rental program while also partnering with MN Ag Water Quality Program (MAWQCP) to cost-share for the farmer's seed costs and field work labor. It has been helpful for the SWCD to manage both programs to make the process easy for the landowner to maximize conservation efforts and financial assistance. Another new practice for the rental program included using the no-till drill to seed sorghum-sudangrass on fields that were "prevent plant" acres that had been planned for corn in spring 2022. Some areas in southern Carlton/northern Pine County had a wet period in spring that prevented farmers from planting their corn crop. MAWQCP also provided cost-share for this cover crop practice to several farmers, and thanks to Federated Coops in Moose Lake for helping spread the word to affected farmers. Again in fall of 2022, many farmers rented the no-till drill to seed winter rye cover crops after their corn silage was chopped. Here again, MAWQCP provided financial assistance for these acres. Other than one major breakdown with the brillion, both implements performed well for **600 acres in 2022!** The SWCD is considering some upgrades to the equipment in years to come to better serve our cooperator farmers.



<b>Acres</b>	<b>597.5</b>
<b>Sediment Reduction (Ton/yr)</b>	<b>86.2</b>
<b>Soil Saved (Ton/yr)</b>	<b>443.31</b>
<b>Phosphorus Reduction (Lbs/yr)</b>	<b>196.92</b>



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## Community Forestry Initiative

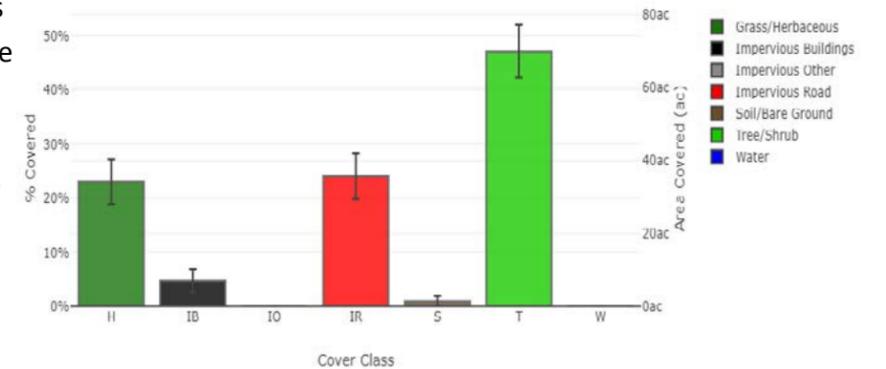
### Program Details:

In August, 2022, the Carlton SWCD partnered with AmeriCorps to host a Community Forestry Corps member. This partnership hired River Bennett to the SWCD to expand our urban conservation program into urban forestry. River is doing tree inventories for municipalities in Carlton County, analyzing tree canopy in sub neighborhoods, and is a MN Certified Tree Inspector that can assist urban homeowners with tree disease and pest identification. Before winter hit, several cities received tree inventories with canopy analysis and more cities have expressed interest for the upcoming field season. River also did some tree pruning for structural or health reasons on public and private property, and increased public invasive species awareness and management through buckthorn removal and reporting observations of EAB.

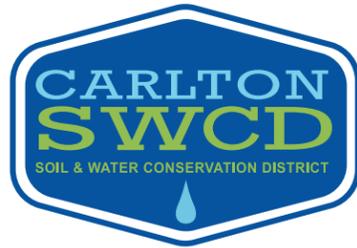
### Partners!

- City of Cloquet
- City of Scanlon
- Thomson Township
- Cloquet Public Library
- Carlton Area Library
- Moose Lake Library
- And others

Here is an example of a canopy analysis showing a tree component that is above the goal of 40%. (light green bar) This analysis provides an objective method to determine prioritize zones for future tree plantings. Estimates can also be made of pollutants removed from the air and the amount of money saved on stormwater runoff



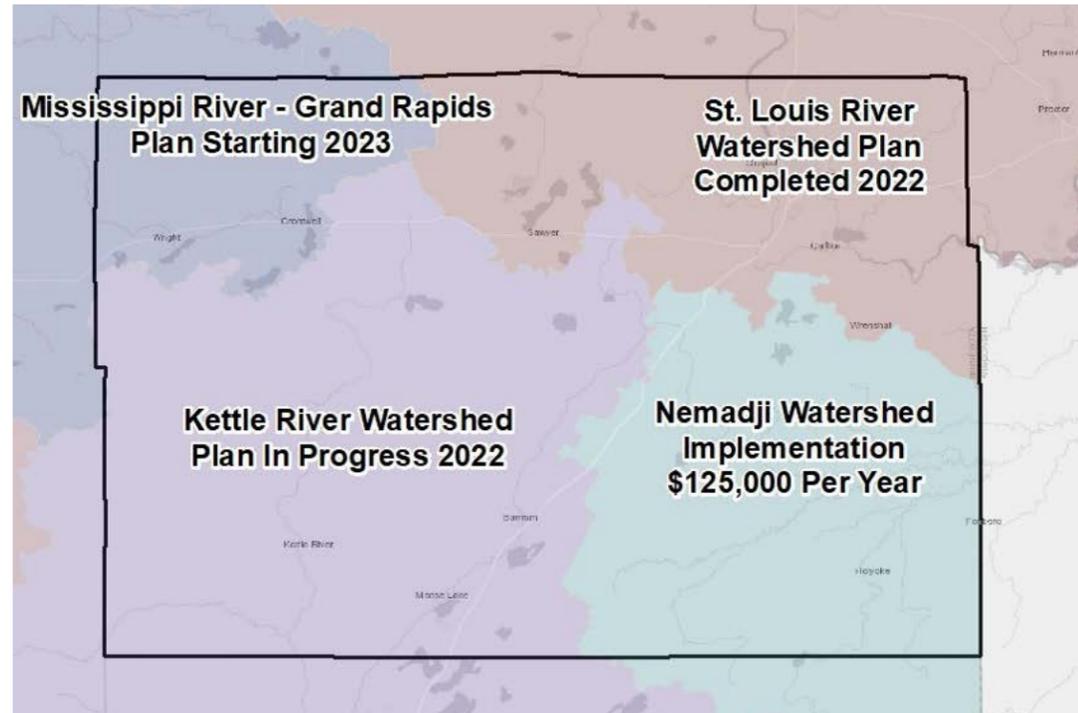
First Year's Accomplishments		Benefits of Urban and Community Forestry	
3 comprehensive city tree inventories completed	6 emerald ash borer informational sessions hosted	Removes toxic pollutants from the air	Increases health and practical benefits of urban trees
Several instances of buckthorn removed	1 Public education podcast episode released	Reduces stormwater runoff	Reduces energy use costs for landowners
3 program fact sheets published	Dozens of trees pruned	Reduces negative impacts of invasive species	Increases carbon sequestration



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## 2022 WATER PLANNING STATUS



### Water Planning History in MN

Since its enactment in 1985, the Comprehensive Local Water Management Act has standardized water resource planning in counties throughout MN. Statute 103B allows counties to develop and implement comprehensive local water management plans (county water plans).

In 2015 the legislature revised 103B to include 103B.801 Comprehensive Watershed Management Planning Program. This developed a process to shift local water management planning from a county boundary to a watershed boundary known as One Watershed One Plan or 1W1P.

### Carlton County

In 2016 the SWCD accepted delegation as the water planning entity for Carlton County. The map above provides a status of each of Carlton County's 4 Major Watersheds in the 1W1P process. Assistant Manager for Water Resources Melanie Bomier, is the primary SWCD staff leading the Carlton County water planning effort. Carlton County Environmental Services is also very engaged in this work.



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### FireWise Program

**Description:** The Minnesota Firewise Program was launched in Carlton County in July 2021. The program aims to help landowners identify strategies to help increase their wildfire resiliency around their home and on their property. The process includes working with landowners to provide an on-site Residential Hazard Assessment for their property and to then follow up with a plan to guide the landowner towards implementing measures to increase the reliance of their home site in the event of a wild fire.



- Primary Program Goal:** Homeowner Awareness
- Secondary Program Goal:** Reduce wildfire Fuels through homeowner mitigation activities.

*(at left: Contractor chips a pile of fuel wood collected from homeowner mitigation activities into mulch for their use.)*

Phase 1 Accomplishments		Benefits of Firewise Evaluations	
120 homeowners around Chub Lake offered Assessment Assistance		Reduced Wildfire Risk for the Community	Increased Wildfire Resiliency for Homes
18 Firewise Evaluations Completed on 16 ac.	18 Mitigation Plans Delivered to Landowners	Reduced Fuel Loads and Ladder Fuels	Low Cost Mitigation Measures are Identified
4 Landowners Did Mitigation Measures	74 cu. yds. of Fire Fuels Removed & Chipped	Increased Accessibility for Emergency Crews	Increased Awareness about Wildfires

### Firewise Partners

CC Land Department, CC Emergency Management, CC Board, Carlton FD, MN DNR, Dovetail Partners, Chub Lake Association, FDL Firewise Coordinator, 3 local fire Dpts., 2 Townships



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## The Carlton SWCD Team

The Carlton SWCD Board meets monthly on the second Monday of the month. Board members are:

- District 1 - Barb Dahl, Treasurer
- District 2 - Tim Michaelson, Vice Chair
- District 3 - Bob Fox, Chair
- District 4 - Bruce Heikes, PR Officer
- District 5 - Kim Samuelson, Secretary

The Carlton SWCD has an experienced staff of professionals waiting to provide technical assistance to landowners no matter where they are in the county.

- Alyssa Bloss, Conservation Specialist
- Ryan Clark, Ag Specialist
- Melanie Bomier, Assistant Manager for Water Resources
- Kaysie Maleski, Forestry Technician
- River Bennett, AMPACT Core Member in Urban Forestry
- Julie Radovich, Office Administrator
- Brad Matlack, SWCD Manager

Find us at 803 3rd. St. in Carlton. Our office is open to the public. For an appointment, call 218-384-3891.

Also find us on the web at [CarltonSWCD.org](http://CarltonSWCD.org)

On Facebook at [CarltonSWCD](https://www.facebook.com/CarltonSWCD)

And on YouTube at [@carltonswcd](https://www.youtube.com/@carltonswcd)

