

Richland County Soil Conservation District

SUMMER 2025

~From the Desk of the District Conservationist, Jon Quast~ Celebrating 90 Years of Soil Conservation: From Dust Bowl Desperation to Lasting Environmental Stewardship

In the early twentieth century, America's vast farmlands were not only a source of sustenance but also a source of natural life—an abundance gradually undermined by nature itself. Hugh Hamond Bennett, working as a surveyor for the USDA Bureau of Soils, became one of the first to recognize that unregulated soil erosion by wind and water was reducing the land's agricultural potential and imperiling rural livelihoods. In 1928, Bennett's groundbreaking publication, *Soil Erosion: A National Menace*, played a crucial role in raising awareness about the crisis. His impassioned crusade, through both writing and public speaking, influenced Congress to create the nation's first federal soil erosion experiment stations in 1929, marking the beginning of a new era in land stewardship.

The catastrophic events of the early 1930s—the infamous Dust Bowl—brought the erosion crisis into sharp focus. As drought conditions and irresponsible agricultural practices stripped the Great Plains bare, towering dust storms swept across the country. A dramatic storm on May 11, 1934, carried fine soil particles over Washington, D.C. and out to sea. On two separate occasions in March 1935, dust clouds darkened the skies over the capital at the very moment Congress was deliberating a soil conservation law. Seizing this dramatic imagery, Bennett penned editorials and testified before Congress, insisting that only a robust, permanent response could stave off further disaster. His efforts, combined with a national awakening to environmental vulnerability, led to the passage of the Soil Conservation Act on April 27, 1935 and the establishment of the Soil Conservation Service (SCS)—the federal agency now known as the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS).

Nationwide Expansion and New Deal Initiatives

Emboldened by the nation's urgent need to combat soil erosion, the 1930s saw a nationwide expansion of conservation efforts. In September 1933, the Public Works Administration created the Soil Erosion Service (SES) within the Department of the Interior. Across the country, demonstration projects showcased practical soil conservation techniques to skeptical farmers, while labor provided by the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC), the Civil Works Administration (CWA), and the Works Progress Administration (WPA) brought these initiatives to life.

Strides were also made in organizing local action. As early as 1935, USDA managers envisioned extending assistance through democratically organized soil conservation districts. To provide a legal framework for such collaboration, the USDA drafted the Standard State Soil Conservation Districts Law, which President Roosevelt sent to the governors of all states in 1937. A historic milestone was reached on August 4, 1937, when the first soil conservation district was organized in the Brown Creek watershed of North Carolina—a model commemorated by signs and local pride that persists today. These districts have now grown to numbers over 3,000, reflecting a long-standing commitment to community-led land management.



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Watershed Management & Economic Stability in the Mid-Century

A watershed-based approach gained institutional clarity during the 1950s and 1960s. Building on earlier watershed investigations under the Flood Control Act of 1936 and the Flood Control Act of 1944, the Agricultural Appropriations Act of 1953 permitted an additional 63 projects. The watershed planning authority was formally solidified with the passage of the Watershed Protection and Flood Prevention Act (P.L. 84-566) in 1954, empowering the SCS to manage water resources more comprehensively. Since 1944, SCS (now NRCS) has overseen the construction of nearly 11,000 dams across some 2,000 projects, delivering lasting benefits in flood control, water supply management, recreation, and wildlife habitat.

In response to another prolonged drought in the 1950s, Congress launched the Great Plains Conservation Program—which provided targeted financial and technical assistance to Plains states. This program, along with initiatives such as the Soil Bank Program (that paid rental payments for retired cropland and subsidized planting of protective cover crops), not only safeguarded the environment but also contributed to economic stability for farmers.

Rural Development, Environmental Policy, and a Broadening Mission

The 1960s and 1970s ushered in transformative shifts for the SCS as it expanded its mission in response to changing American landscapes. Under administrations from Kennedy to Johnson, the agency's focus widened to address rural development, recreational benefits, and suburban expansion—a necessary evolution as suburban sprawl began to encroach upon traditional farmlands. The formation of the Resource Conservation and Development (RC&D) program in 1962 exemplified this broader scope, enabling SCS to work with larger groups of landowners on long-range economic and conservation planning.

The National Environmental Policy Act (P.L. 91-190) mandated that federal agencies evaluate and document the environmental impacts of their actions. Subsequent laws, including the Federal Water Pollution Control Amendments (P.L. 92-500) of 1972 and the Clean Water Act (P.L. 95-217) of 1977, further expanded the scope of environmental protection. SCS's participation in the Water Bank program promoted the preservation of wetlands, while the National Resources Inventory (authorized by the Rural Development Act of 1972, P.L. 92-419) and the Soil and Water Resources Conservation Act of 1977 (P.L. 95-192) provided the framework for ongoing monitoring of the nation's soil and water resources on non-federal lands.

1980s–1990s: Fiscal Pressures and Innovative Policy Solutions

The 1980s–1990s ushered in a new era defined by both fiscal pressures and innovative policy solutions. The farm crisis of the 1980s exposed vulnerabilities in the agricultural economy and provided the impetus for further conservation innovations. The Food Security Act of 1985 redefined participation in USDA programs by introducing the Sodbuster, Swampbuster, and Highly Erodible Lands provisions, ensuring that sound conservation practices were a prerequisite for federal support. One of the Act's hallmark initiatives, the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP), offered farmers long-term rental payments to retire cropland in favor of establishing sustainable vegetation cover. The widespread adoption of conservation tillage during this period also significantly reduced soil erosion. As part of its evolving mandate, the agency embarked on “restoration” projects that reversed previous alterations of land, channels, and wetlands. In 1994, a major reorganization transformed the SCS into the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), a renaming that reflected not only an expanded mission but also a firm commitment to administering ever-increasing financial assistance and innovative conservation programs.

2000s and Beyond: Adaptive Conservation for a Modern Era

As we moved into the 2000s and beyond, the NRCS has continued to honor the legacy set forth nearly a century ago by Bennett. Today, the agency leverages decades of scientific research and practical expertise across disciplines—agronomy, forestry, engineering, economics, and wildlife biology—to develop tailored conservation plans that serve both landowners' needs and broader environmental goals. NRCS professionals adhere to a conservation philosophy that begins with a meticulous assessment of resources, followed by an evaluation of challenges and opportunities.

The legacy of conservation endures today in the adaptive strategies, community partnerships, and sustainable practices that continue to forge a healthier, more sustainable future for America's rich and varied landscapes.

Contact the Richland County NRCS office by stopping in, by phone: 701-642-5997, ext. 3 or email: jonathan.quast@usda.gov



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Natural Resources Conservation Service
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Pollinator Habitat Application

Name: _____ **Date:** _____

Address: _____

Primary Phone Number: _____

1/4 _____ **Sec** _____ **Twp** _____ **Rng** _____ **Email:** _____

Location of Planting: _____ **Sun Exposure:** _____

Area of Planting (feet): _____

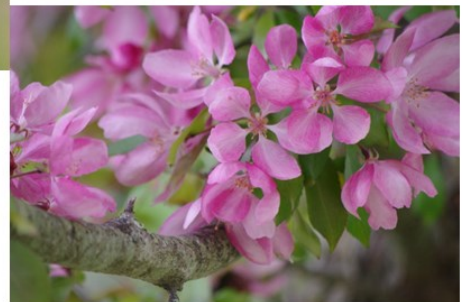
Planting Types

Please choose one of the types of plantings that are covered by this cost-share program.

- _____ **Native Pocket Planting:** small native plant garden including flowers preferred by our state bee.
- _____ **Pollinator Beneficial Trees and/or Shrubs:** Flowering trees and shrubs with quality nectar and pollen for bees in the spring.
- _____ **Pollinator Meadow:** a relatively large expanse of native plants, reminiscent of a prairie remnant.
- _____ **Community Orchard:** community garden made up of pollinator beneficial fruit trees, shrubs, fruits and flowers.

* We can get the seed through Agassiz Seed, at cost for you. This is recommended. If you wish to buy the seed or plants, then we will need copies of receipts and will have an approved list of vendors.

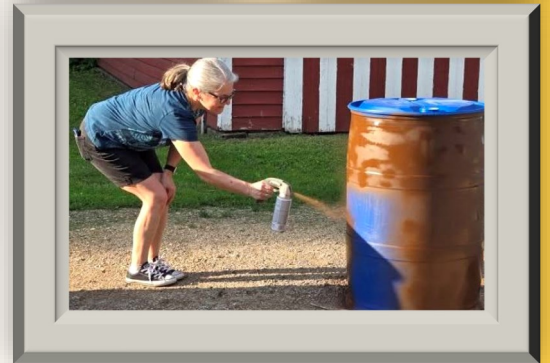
This is a cost-share program. That means that Richland Soil Conservation District will cover up to \$300 per project, using the NDASCD Trust Grant that was received. Receipts and seed tags will be required for payment, along with pictures of the process and finished planting. One payment at approved project completion.



Make & Paint Rain Barrel Workshop

Everyone enjoyed learning about the benefits of rain barrels and had fun creating their designs at this years workshop. We gathered on June 17th and 24th at Crooked Lane Farms of Colfax, ND. Thank you to everyone who attended for a fun-filled workshop. Hope you enjoy using your Rain Barrels!

The event was sponsored by the Richland Soil Conservation District, Wilkin County SWCD, and Crooked Lane Farms.

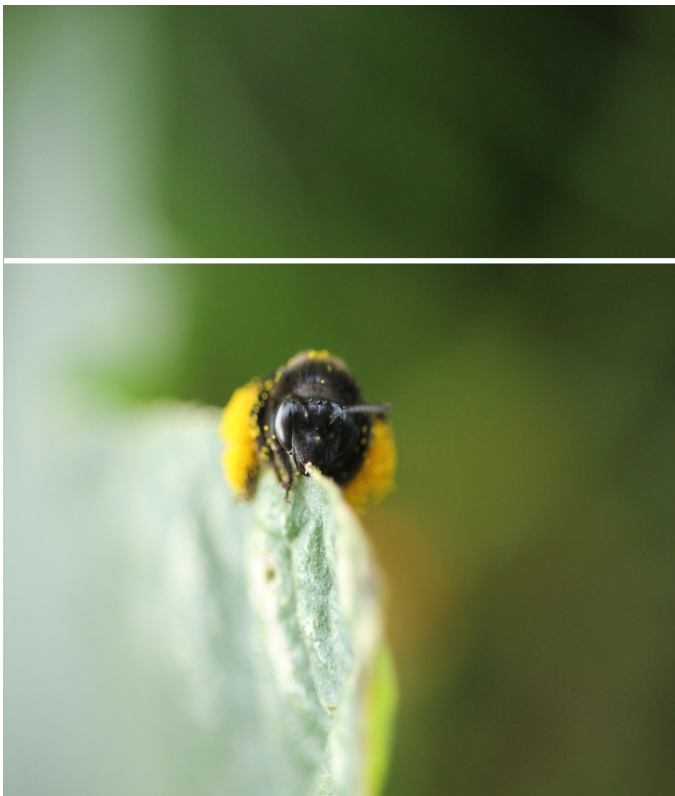


Buzz 'N Wine Night

August 27, 2025 from 6-8 PM

Location: Crooked Lane Farms.

Watch for more information to follow on our Facebook Page and Website: richlandscd.com



2025 Ladies Ag Night ~ “Let’s Get Jazzy for Conservation” was the theme for this year’s Ladies Night. A variety of head bands were worn by the ladies for an evening of information, education and motivation fun.

Ladies Night was started in 1996, in an effort to educate women in Wilkin and Richland counties about conservation programs and services available through both districts with hopes that they would become more involved in conserving their land. Ladies Night has evolved to include all women, urban and rural in its program.

Robbie Daniels, was our Mistress of Ceremonies and did a great job keeping everyone engaged throughout the evening. Our conservation education was presented by BJ Christopher, Bob Wallace Orchards, a third generation family farmer. BJ gave a presentation on Locally Sourced Wine Production! The night’s entertainer, Lizzy, a comedy stage hypnotist, had the audience giggling with her clever hypnosis skills.

Raffle prizes, 50/50 Scratch Off, and the Plinko \$300 raffle helped defray the costs of the program. A \$100 donation was made to the Wahpeton FFA students. The raffle baskets were a wallet and picture, rain barrel, wine basket, garden basket, Tastefully Simple basket, and a lap quilt basket.



Notes from the Tree Cooler by Keith Kinneberg

Welcome to the cooler!!! It has been a very busy spring with tree planting and fabric installation finally wrapping up. In between the rains we were able to get the jobs done. We appreciate the landowners patience as we tried to get things scheduled this year for tree planting. Tree sales went very well this year, and it was good to see a few windbreaks being put back in. I have had a few people call and ask about the needles on their spruce trees turning brown and have referred them to the county extension office. With the lack of snow this winter the most common cause seems to be the sun burn or sun scald. Please keep an eye on your trees this summer as with the wet spring we have had, and cool weather, it can bring on some mold and fungus to the trees.

For those who want to apply for the cost-share program for tree planting next spring (2026), please contact the office so we can get you on the list to contact when any of the programs open their application period. We are hoping to have funding available yet. With the soil erosion problem happening, I strongly encourage you to put at least a row of trees in to slow that wind down. Topsoil is so valuable for you, the landowners, and losing it can be costly down the road. NRCS and SCD want to and are here to help you with conservation concerns. As a reminder we do provide rototilling services and small acreage grass seeding.

Finally, it is never too early to start thinking about handplant orders for next spring. If you want to order, please use the order form that is on our website (richlandscd.com under the services tab). If you want the trees, it is best to order them instead of waiting for the end of the year tree sales. Our office door is always open for you to come in to just visit and say hi. Maybe even get a tree planting plan done or order handplants for next year. Check out our events happening as well as we are doing some amazing educational events. We are hoping to have a raised garden beds system set up soon with different soil types in each bed to show the public how plants grow in the different types of soil, as well as being able to see the biology that happens beneath the ground. A small pollinator garden is also being added. We hope you have a very enjoyable summer and a safe one.



2025 Fourth Annual Photography Contest

Focus on Wildlife in or around Trees and Shrubs during all seasons

This year our photo contest features wildlife with trees and shrubs throughout the seasons. Pictures of wildlife with trees and shrubs from all 4 seasons will be able to be submitted.

You may submit entries to billie.hinders@nd.nacdn.net until **November 28, 2025**.



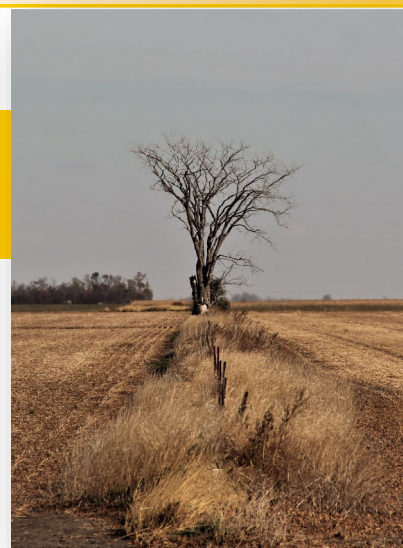
2024 PHOTO CONTEST WINNERS

1st Place– Dianne Kriz– Pines along a split rail fence

2nd Place– Mandy Schroeder Alm– Tree Grouping in ND Sandhills

3rd Place– Dianne Kriz– Lone Tree

4th Place– Mandy Schroeder Alm– Frosted Siberian Crabapple



319 Antelope Creek

Watershed News



What a beautiful spring. We have gotten the needed rain in most places, hopefully the sun does its job now!

I continue to water sample on the Antelope Creek North and South Branch, and the Wild Rice River. These water samples are sent to the North Dakota Department of Environmental Quality (NDDEQ) lab. The results are compiled, and the NDDEQ staff review the samples in the winter months and make any needed changes to my water sampling route if needed. We have had success stories for improving water quality in our watershed in the past, that is what the district strives to do/obtain through installation of water quality improvement practices.

GREAT NEWS on the grant that was submitted at the end of 2024. The Antelope Creek / Wild Rice Corridor phase VII was fully funded. Those funds should be allocated this summer. No worries, the transition to this new grant will be smooth, we have enough funds in phase VI grant to fund projects until the end of the year.

I also have funding for cover crops; this also could include full season cover on prevent plant acres. It is 60% of the cost of the seed. These funds could also be used this fall and be grazed. The funds will be used first come first serve until funds are used up. This funding is through a pilot program with both the NDDEQ and North Dakota Game and Fish.

We continue to work with rural homeowners on projects on their farmstead, such as septic system repair or replacement, well decommissioning, well for livestock and cross fencing. If your septic is not working correctly or was installed improperly years ago this is a great program to help you get it updated. There are a few criteria for this program so call to see if you are eligible.

Jennifer Klostreich 701-642-5997 ext. 3.



New Board Member Introduction

Hi, I'm Brad Toussaint and I became a board member in January 2025. I grew up in Wahpeton ND, and after high school I went to North Dakota State College of Science for Welding Technology and Ag/Farm Management. My wife and I live in Wahpeton with our two kids, Lily (10) and Jamison (7). I farm in southeast Richland County with my dad and brother. Along with farming I have been a member of the Wahpeton Fire Department for 13 years. I'm excited to be a part of the Soil Conservation Board and hope to help keep our soil and water clean for generations to come.



SUMMER 2025 PRICE LIST

Grass Seeding:

\$25.00 an acre— with minimum charge of \$300

Rototilling:

\$75.00 per hour-with minimum charge of \$250 (Tilling will be used for tree planting contracts and grass seeding areas. Will also do large garden areas if time permits. Other uses may be available if approved by Board of Directors.)

Tubes & Stakes: 4 foot (vented style) \$4.50 each, \$6.00 w/stake, \$1.50 for stake

Richland County Soil Conservation District
1725 17th Ave. N.
Wahpeton, ND 58075

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Return Service Requested

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Ways to Find Us:

Website: www.richlandscd.com

Facebook:
<https://www.facebook.com/richlandndscd>

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keith.kinneberg@nd.nacdnet.net
billie.hinders@nd.nacdnet.net

Phone: 701-642-5997 ext. 3

OFFICE STAFF:

Jennifer Klostreich- **Watershed Coordinator/
District Manager**

Keith Kinneberg- **District Technician**

Billie Jo Hinders- **District Clerk**

Jon Quast- **NRCS District Conservationist**

Tanner Tougas- **NRCS Biologist**

Amy Gnoinsky- **NRCS Business Tool
Specialist**

Brock Pearson- **NRCS Soil Conservationist**

Riley Breuer- **NRCS Soil Conservationist**

Jason Nelson- **NRCS Wetland Specialist**

OFFICE HOURS:

8am - 4:30pm Monday- Friday
701-642-5997 Ext. 3

TENTATIVE BOARD MTG SCHEDULE

July 8th

August 12th

September 9th

November 11th