

Richland County

SOIL CONSERVATION DISTRICT

SUMMER 2026

~From the Desk of the District Conservationist, Jon Quast~

250 Years of Stewardship: A Conservation Journey for America's Semiquincentennial

As the United States celebrates its 250th birthday in 2026, it's an ideal time to reflect on one of the nation's greatest yet often understated achievements: the long and evolving commitment to conserving natural resources. From the earliest stewardship of Indigenous peoples to today's landscape-scale conservation initiatives, America's conservation story is one of innovation, collaboration, and resilience.

Foundations: Indigenous Stewardship & Early American Perspectives

Long before the signing of the Declaration of Independence, Indigenous peoples across North America practiced sustainable land management—using fire to shape ecosystems, cultivating biodiversity, and managing wildlife with deep cultural understanding. Their relationship with the land created a baseline of ecological balance that settlers later encountered but did not immediately understand.

In the young United States, the 18th and early 19th centuries were largely marked by expansion and resource use. Forests fell quickly to settlement, rivers powered industry, and wildlife was abundant enough to seem inexhaustible. Yet by the mid-1800s, leaders, writers, artists, and scientists began sounding the alarm. Thinkers like George Perkins Marsh, whose 1864 book *Man and Nature* is often considered foundational to conservation, warned that America's prosperity depended on protecting soil, water, and forests.

A Turning Point: The Birth of the Conservation Movement

The roots of formal conservation took shape in the late 19th century. Public awe over places like Yosemite and Yellowstone helped inspire Congress to begin preserving uniquely American landscapes. The creation of Yellowstone National Park in 1872, followed by Yosemite's protection, marked a world-changing idea: some lands should be preserved for public benefit forever.

During the early 1900s, Presidents such as Theodore Roosevelt transformed conservation from an ideal into national policy. Roosevelt, working with leaders like forester Gifford Pinchot and naturalist John Muir, set aside millions of acres as national forests, parks, and wildlife refuges. Their vision—balancing use with protection—ushered in the North American Model of Wildlife Conservation, which treats wildlife as a public trust and relies on science based management.

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The 20th Century: Expanding Scope and New Challenges

With the nation's growth came new environmental pressures—industrialization, pollution, species decline, and soil erosion. The Dust Bowl of the 1930s was a seismic reminder that natural resources must be cared for intentionally. In response, the government created programs such as the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) and, in 1935, the Soil Conservation Service, now known as the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS).

Post World War II America saw rapid development, prompting the establishment and expansion of national parks, wildlife refuges, and modern environmental laws. By the 1970s, the conservation movement evolved into a broader environmental movement, producing cornerstone legislation such as the Clean Water Act, Endangered Species Act, and the establishment of the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). Conservation was no longer only about preserving land—it now included clean air, healthy water, endangered species protection, and restoration of damaged ecosystems.

Recent Decades: Collaboration, Science, and Sustainability

Over the last 50 years, conservation has expanded even further. Landowners, scientists, conservation districts, states, tribes, and federal agencies increasingly work together to improve soil health, restore wetlands, enhance wildlife habitat, and support working lands. Conservation shifted toward a model that blends voluntary, incentive based partnerships—a hallmark of modern NRCS programs.

This collaborative approach recognizes that private landowners are key stewards of America's natural resources, especially in agricultural landscapes. Advances in technology—such as GIS mapping, satellite monitoring, and precision agriculture—now support data driven conservation planning at scales unimaginable a century ago.

Looking Ahead: Conservation for the Next 250 Years

As America enters its Semiquincentennial, the conservation challenges are different but no less urgent. Climate variability, water scarcity, biodiversity loss, and land use pressures call for adaptive, science based solutions rooted in cooperation. Fortunately, the nation's conservation legacy provides a strong foundation.

What began with Indigenous stewardship and early preservation efforts has grown into a diverse, nationwide conservation community. Farmers improving soil health, ranchers enhancing grasslands, partners restoring wetlands, and volunteers supporting wildlife habitats—all carry the torch of conservation forward.

America's 250th birthday is more than a historical milestone. It's an opportunity to celebrate and recommit to caring for the land, water, and wildlife that sustain us. The past 250 years show what's possible when a nation chooses stewardship. The next 250 years will depend on us continuing—and expanding—that commitment.

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Notes from the Tree Cooler

by Keith Kinneberg

We hope everyone has enjoyed a healthy and productive spring season in 2026. Overall, crop conditions are favorable thanks to timely rainfall across most regions, though additional rain would be beneficial in certain areas of the county. The tree planting process proceeded efficiently, despite some wet spots; both planting and fabric installation were completed smoothly. With the support of our dedicated team, all tasks were finished ahead of the June 1st deadline.

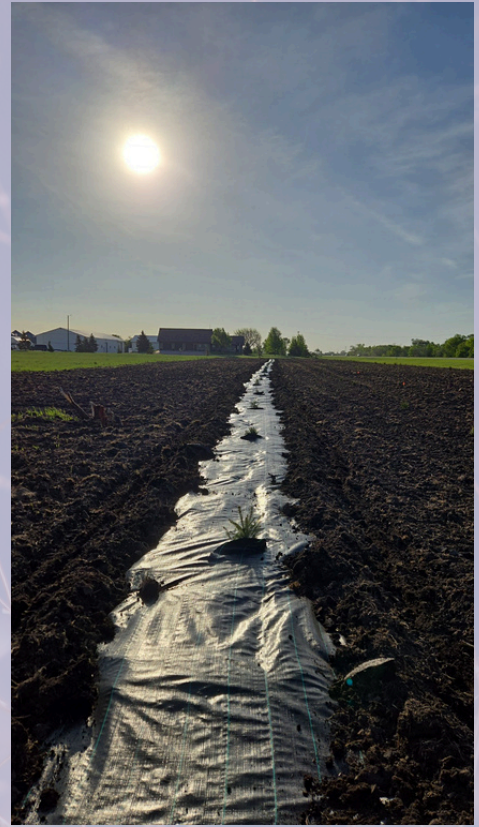
Landowners who have received tree plantings are reminded to provide adequate care through watering and weeding. Proper maintenance ensures optimal growth and minimizes stress caused by water shortages or weed competition. A survival check will be conducted in September to assess progress and determine any necessary replacements for next spring; please note that replacement costs are the responsibility of the landowner.

Those interested in utilizing the district's machine planting service for spring 2027 are encouraged to contact us promptly so that we may develop a planting plan and secure your place on the list. Handplant orders will be accepted beginning in November, and it is advisable to place orders early rather than waiting for the year-end sale.

We offer additional services; for more information, visit richlandscd.com or reach out by phone. If we are unable to assist directly, we may be able to refer you to another provider. We wish you a safe and pleasant summer and look forward to serving you in the future.



Tree Planting 2026



Thank you
Keith & Tree Crew

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.

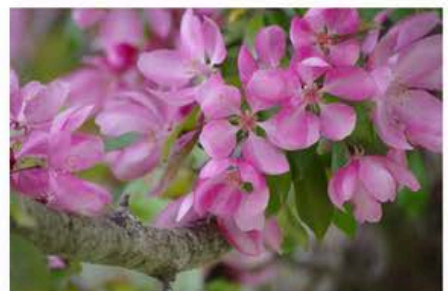
* The District can get the seed through Agassiz Seed, this is recommended, but not required. If you wish to buy the seed or plants, then we will need copies of receipts and will have an approved list of vendors.

This is a cost-share program. That means that Richland Soil Conservation District will cover up to \$250 per "small site", which are 8 square feet—1,000 square feet. \$500 per "medium" site that is less than an acre. \$1,000 per "large" site, that is greater than an acre. Receipts and seed tags will be required for payment, along with pictures of the process and finished planting.

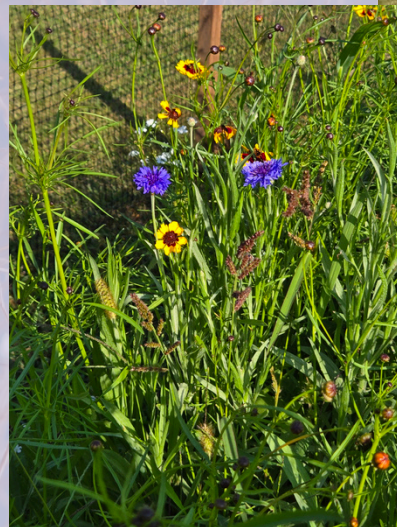
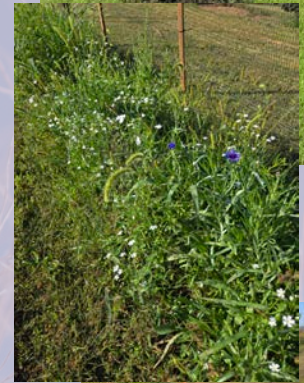
Cost share is available for site preparation, seed or tree costs at 60% of actual cost. One payment at approved project completion.

*Any unique proposals will be considered by the Richland SCD Board on an individual basis.

Example: Community Projects*



Completed Pollinator Plantings



2026 Ladies Ag Night: Water for the Next Generation

The 2026 Ladies Ag Night, held on April 9 at the Wahpeton Community Center, brought together 178 fun-loving attendees for an evening of education, entertainment, and community connection. This year's theme, Water for the Next Generation, highlighted the essential role of groundwater conservation across our region. With runoff capable of carrying soil and chemicals into waterways, the message of protecting water resources resonated strongly with participants.

Keynote speaker Gary Goreham of Maple Hills Orchard in northern Minnesota shared practical insights on conservation and sustainable farming. Drawing from his family's experience growing apples, grapes, raspberries, and honey, Goreham emphasized the importance of soil health, biodiversity, and long-term care of natural resources. Attendees left with fresh ideas for implementing conservation practices at home and in their communities.

Following the educational portion of the evening, guests enjoyed a lively performance by The Looney Lutherans, who blended humor, music, and audience participation for a memorable close to the event. With great food, engaging speakers, and plenty of laughter, the 2026 Ladies Ag Night successfully celebrated both agriculture and the people who help sustain it.



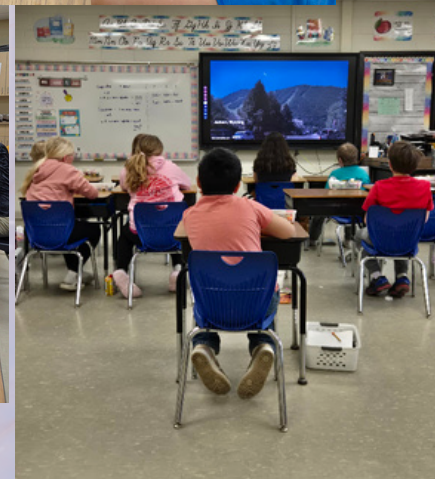
Elementary Educational Outreach: Spring Semester 2026

Engaging Young Minds for a Brighter Future

The Spring Semester of 2026 marked a vibrant period of Elementary Educational Outreach, with dedicated efforts to inspire and support students at local elementary schools. Our team, made up of Richland Soil Conservation District (SCD) and Richland County Extension, collaborated with educators and seed sponsors (Agassiz Seed & Supply) to design engaging lessons and hands-on activities that encouraged curiosity and fostered a love of learning among young students.

Throughout the semester, Billie Jo (Richland SCD District Clerk) and Lacy (Richland County Extension Agent) visited classrooms to introduce and investigate the importance of light to plants by creating a desktop greenhouse investigation and exploring the process of photosynthesis. The students were able to grow a wildflower seed mix and connect classroom lessons to real-world applications, students gained valuable insights and developed critical thinking skills.

Looking ahead, plans are underway to continue our elementary outreach efforts, ensuring that even more students can experience the joy of discovery and the power of learning. The Spring Semester of 2026 underscores the significant impact that educational outreach can have and highlights the value of supporting early learning opportunities.



Antelope Creek Watershed News



Who wants to talk about **cover crops**. Is there a field that seems to give you trouble with erosion each year? Wind or water erosion can be addressed with cover crops while improving your soil health as well. While prevent plant acres are probably at a minimum this year, there still is an opportunity if you happen to have acres that need extra protection. Cover crops are a great way to protect the soil going into fall and use up some of the excess moisture, so you are ready for next season. Cover crops planted on either prevent plant (PP) acres, after wheat, beans or after pre-lift sugar beets have been harvested. Cover crops are another great way to extend the grazing time for your cows as well...they can either be interseeded or flown on by an airplane. The cover will start to grow and once the leaves drop off the corn, the turnips, radish and rye will take off again. You have control over the mix, if you want to keep it simple or want a more complex mixture that is up to you. Our cost share is 60% of the mix, so if you are interested or have questions give me a call.

The District is currently wrapping up the EPA 319 Phase VI grant and we have started drawing from our 319 Phase VII grant that was secured in late 2025. It has been a busy season so far, lots of septic system inquires, well decommissionings, well and tanks for livestock and cover crop inquires are just starting to roll in.

Red River Basin Wildlife & Water Quality Enhancement Pilot Program -The District also has a limited number of acres that can be enrolled in to a program that will pay you to convert cropland into grass for a 5 year period, this program can be used for field edges that are not productive, areas that you continue to put inputs in but rarely get a crop to harvest. This program pays you 60% of the NASS rental rate for Richland County (\$161.70) which would be \$97.02 per acre. As I said, this is limited number of acres so it is first come first serve as this will be the last year this program is available.

If you have any questions on either of these programs, please call Jennifer Klostreich at 701-642-5997 ext. 3.



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