

# Conservation News

**SOIL CONSERVATION DISTRICT** Volume 34 No 1 1400 Hwy 49 N #102, Beulah, ND 58523 January 2014

## The Environmental Quality Incentive Program (EQIP) Applications Accepted

NRCS is accepting applications to help North Dakota producers implement conservation practices through the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP), the agency's largest Farm Bill conservation program.

**Cost Share Is Available For:**

- Cross Fencing, Pipelines, Tanks
- Tree Renovations & Establishment
- No Till
- Cover Crops
- Critical Area Plantings
- Range Plantings
- Well Decommissioning and much more!

Mercer County will be participating in the following National funding pools: General, On-Farm Energy, Organic, Water Quality Initiative, Irrigation, Forestry, AFO, Drain Water Management.



## Great Plains Agricultural Focus Groups

Researchers from Iowa State University invite farmers to share your opinions on the use of trees in agricultural operations and decision-making on "marginal" farmland. We will be conducting a series of focus groups with farmers in four Great Plains states (KS, NE, SD, ND) in February and March as part of an ongoing research project exploring land use decision-making and agroforestry opportunities in the region.



This project examines opportunities for farmers to diversify income and enhance environmental quality by producing biomass from agroforestry practices. Understanding what farmers think about land-use and how farm decisions are made is important to research. During the focus groups, we will explore farmer perceptions regarding agroforestry, environmental quality, biomass and biofuels.

Share your opinions with researchers and other farmers from your state during a two-hour session. Receive \$100 in compensation for your time. Specific date and location will be finalized depending upon the availability of participants. Participation is voluntary and participants are under no obligation

For information, or to sign-up:  
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This project is funded by a USDA-SARE Grant through Iowa State University in collaboration with the USDA National Laboratory for Agriculture and the Environment, the USDA National Soil Survey Center, and the University of Nebraska-Lincoln.



## “Conservation in Action”

Featuring The Swenson Martin Horse & Cattle Co.

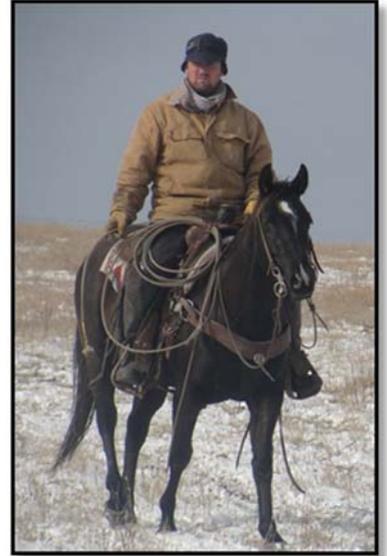
Submitted by Carlee Elke, NRCS Soil Conservationist

Trent Martin, Beulah, ND, is a man of many trades. Prior to ranching full time, Trent was the Watershed Coordinator for the Mercer County Soil Conservation District and now implements his conservation knowledge into The Swenson Martin Horse & Cattle Co. The cow/calf and yearling operation is located around the Knife River breaks and inhabits the beautiful native rangeland of Mercer County. The ranch strives to raise, ride, and train horses that have a good ranch foundation and ensures this by using the horses for daily ranch activities. Trent’s conservation objective through the Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP) is to ensure that the operation is productive and sustainable with a holistic approach for future generations.

The Natural Resources Conservation Service’s (NRCS) CSP program is an important Farm Bill conservation program, helping established conservation stewards take their natural resource management to the next level. This is done by improving their agricultural production and providing valuable conservation benefits such as cleaner and more abundant water, as well as healthier soils and better wildlife habitat. In CSP, operators install conservation enhancements to make positive changes in soil quality, soil erosion, water quality, water quantity, air quality, plant resources, animal resources and energy. NRCS uses a conservation measurement tool to attain a score for each application’s environmental stewardship level and enhancement activities selected. This score is unique to each application and producers are eligible for annual payments up to \$40,000/year for five years.

Through CSP, the Swenson Martin Horse & Cattle Co. is going the extra mile to conserve our natural resources. The operation has implemented conservation enhancements such as monitoring key grazing areas to improve grazing management, rotation of supplement and feeding areas, harvesting hay in a manner that allows wildlife to flush and escape, and modifying watering facilities for wildlife escape. The most noticeable differences have come from the installation of wildlife escape ramps in tanks and the rotation and tactical placement of salt and mineral for buck brush management.

Thank you to Trent Martin for his willingness to be featured in “Conservation in Action.” It was a pleasure working with him on his CSP contract and the Beulah Field Office looks forward to addressing any future resource concerns that the Swenson Martin Horse & Cattle Co. may have.



**Trent Martin, CSP participant, moving a herd of livestock to improve grazing management.**

## Applications for Conservation Stewardship Program due February 7, 2014

The Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) is currently taking applications for the 2014 Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP). The CSP program is a voluntary program for farm and ranch operators who are currently operating their land at a high level of conservation stewardship and are interested in completing additional enhancements to further increase their stewardship. In previous CSP signups, producers were eligible for payments up to \$40,000/year for five years. The application deadline for 2014 CSP consideration is February 7, 2014.

## NEW Farm Bill Biologist



Justin banding Piping Plovers

Hello, my name is Justin Edwards. I am the new Farm Bill Biologist for Pheasants Forever. I will be working out of the Mandan NRCS field office covering Morton, Mercer and Oliver counties.

Originally from Imlay City, Michigan, I graduated from Lake Superior State University in 2009 with a BS in Wildlife Management. I have worked with United States Geological Survey in Central Nebraska and was an Environmental Scientist at The Nebraska Game and Parks Commission. I also was a Biological Science Technician with Northern Prairie Wildlife Research Center. I have volunteered at Audubon National Wildlife Refuge and banded ducks with Ducks Unlimited at Audubon.

As an avid outdoorsman, I love what nature has to offer. I look forward to meeting and working with you. I will provide technical assistance for landowners trying to create more habitat and will work one on one with you to develop conservation plans. Feel free to stop in the office anytime.

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## The Earth Needs You - Join Our Team!

The Earth Team is the volunteer workforce of the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS). Earth Team volunteers are an integral part of the conservation partnership and each member takes pride in the fact that they maintain and improve our natural resources and environment on private lands. When you volunteer you may assist with improving wildlife habitat, providing conservation education to adults and students, community outreach, and many more interesting opportunities. Anyone 14 years of age or older and interested in conserving our precious natural resources can be an Earth Team volunteer. Please contact the Beulah NRCS Field Office at (701) 873-2101 Ext. 3 for more information.

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## Scholarships Available

The MCSCD is offering two \$500 scholarships. These are open to high school seniors and college students who are residents of Mercer County and pursuing a career in agricultural, environmental, natural resources management or a related field at a two or four year university in North Dakota. The first scholarship is co-sponsored with the Mercer County Water Resource Board and is offered to express the importance of Water Quality. The second scholarship is offered to express the importance of noxious weed control. The application deadline is **March 7**.

Applications are available at Mercer County SCD office or by calling 873-2101 ext 3.

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## Coloring Contest

We are looking forward to spring and want to brighten up our office! In this newsletter you will find a coloring sheet. Please have your children or grandchildren color the tree, write their name on the back and send it back to us. All entries will receive a MCSCD pencil.

Plantskydd Deer Repellent & Tree Tubes Available!

Stop in the office or call 873-2101 ext 3 to get your repellent or tubes now!

Mercer County SCD  
1400 Hwy 49 N # 102  
Beulah, ND 58523  
Phone 873-2101

Non profit  
U.S. Postage  
PAID  
Beulah, ND  
Permit # 75

Return Service Requested

District programs are available to all people, regardless of race, religion, sex, national origin, age, handicap or marital status.



We have reached 100 Likes!  
February 14 we will randomly draw for a free T-shirt and tree. Spread the word.

## Spring Creek Watershed Cost Share Available

Cost Share is available for a variety of conservation practices in the Spring Creek Watershed, with a focus on riparian areas. Many practices are available for cost share: fence, pipelines, water tanks, shelter belts and renovations, grass and hayland plantings, buffers, cover crops and many more. There is no application deadline to sign-up. Just stop by and discuss your plans with us. We would be happy to help! Everyone is welcome to apply; large & small operations!! Cost share expires November 2015.

Spring Creek Watershed extends into Dunn County.  
If you have land in Dunn and are interested,  
you can stop by either office.

If you are watering your livestock out of a  
creek and would like to change, we have cost  
share available.

## Importance of Ground Preparation

A beautiful planting with tall lush trees is everyone's goal when planting trees. Trees are a lot of work but the benefits are enormous. From blocking snow, reducing soil erosion, beautification, farmstead protection, livestock protection, reducing heating and cooling costs for the farmstead, food and shelter for wildlife, the list is endless. The first critical step for any tree planting is ground preparation. If you are planting trees this next spring and your site is sod it should have been mowed, sprayed, and worked up at least once by now. Breaking up the sod clumps, gaining the depth of 6 to 8 inches, removing rocks and controlling the weeds/grass is crucial when striving for excellent tree survival. If trees were renovated, the producer should have cleaned the site of limbs, roots and rocks, sprayed for weeds and grass, and kept the site disked to control weeds. Come spring a light disking should be done and it will be ready to plant. After planting it is up to the producer to keep the trees free of weeds and grass so fabric can be laid. After the fabric is laid it is up to the producer to keep between the trees free of weeds and grass so the young trees have a much better chance of survival.