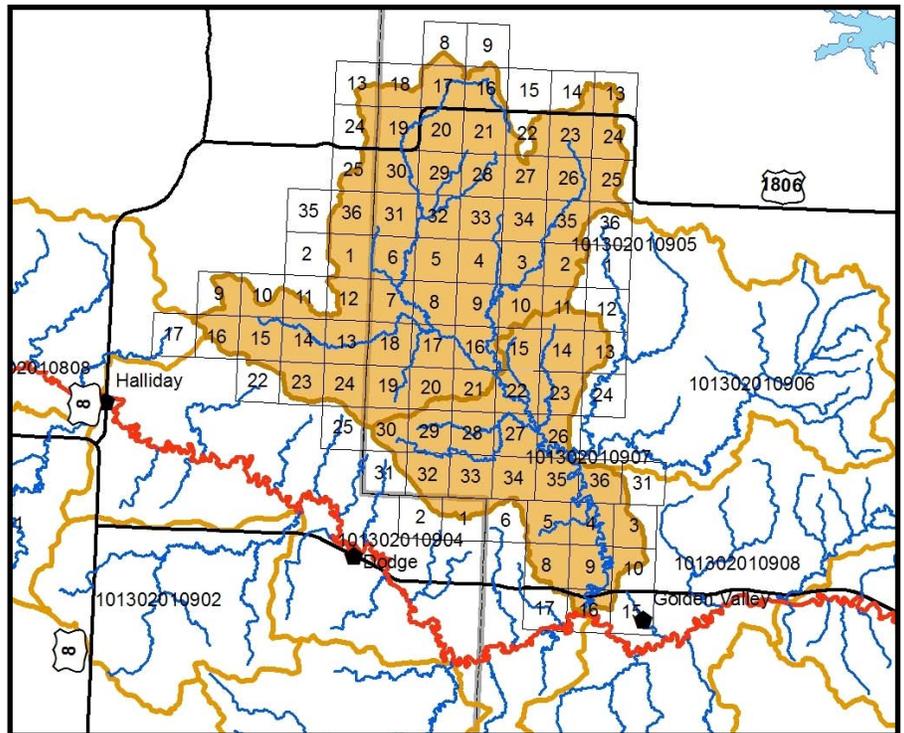


National Water Quality Initiative, NWQI

NWQI is once again open for applications. This program was established in 2012 as a joint initiative with the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) as a way to address sources of water pollution including nutrients, sediment, pesticides, and pathogens related to agricultural production. If you operate or are a land owner in the Goodman Creek Watershed, you are eligible to apply for cost share for best management practices (BMP's) that will improve water quality. The primary resource concern for the Goodman Creek Watershed is water quality degradation.



From 2012 through 2014, there has been \$200,000 of BMPs contracted in the Goodman Creek Watershed to improve water quality. These BMP's have included

portable windbreaks, cover crops, fence, pipeline, tanks, wells, grassed waterways, and filter strips. The first signup deadline for NWQI is March 20, 2015 with a second application period ending May 15, 2015.

For information about the program or to get an application stop in to the Beulah Field Office. To be eligible for the first batching period an application must be signed by **March 20, 2015**.

NWQI Meeting Dodge City Hall

March 4, 2015 10:00 AM Mountain Time

NRCS & District Staff will present on cost share opportunities available through NWQI. Information on the Spring Creek Watershed Project, Pheasants Forever, and NRCS Programs - CSP, EQIP, WRB will also be available. Lunch will be provided, please RSVP before Monday, March 2, 2015 to 701-873-2101 ext 3.

Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) Honey Bee Pollinator Effort Applications due March 20, 2015

Quality honey bee forage has declined in certain midwest states, which has created a problem for this pollinator's survival. In an attempt to increase the strength of honey bee hives and reduce their winter mortality, the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) proposes to increase availability and access to nutritious bee forage in North Dakota, South Dakota, Wisconsin, Michigan, and Minnesota.

NRCS is committing technical and financial assistance through EQIP and other appropriate programs in 2015 to support landowners who participate in a multi-year effort to plant pollen and nectar rich flowers for bees. These floral forage habitats will benefit hive nutritional health as part of an overall effort to increase the health of honey bees. Feral honey bees and other pollinators will also benefit from the establishment of plant forage habitats high in nectar and pollen.

Importance of Ground Preparation for a Successful Tree Planting

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, working it to a 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, the producer should keep the site free of weeds and grass so the young trees have a better chance of survival.



Tree Row Mowing & Tilling



The Mercer County Soil Conservation District has expanded its services to Mercer County residents. If you are interested in having your tree rows mowed or tilled, please contact the District Office.



Plantskydd Deer Repellent & Tree Tubes Available at the District Office

Applications for Conservation Stewardship Program due February 27, 2015

The Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) is currently taking applications for the 2015 Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP). CSP 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 2015 CSP consideration is February 27, 2015.



Wildlife Habitat Programs Available!

Justin Edwards, Pheasants Forever Farm Bill Biologist

There are still acres available through the CP-38E Pheasant SAFE Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) provided by the United States Department of Agriculture. CP-38E targets the southwestern part of North Dakota. The goal of this program is to increase both quantity and quality of habitat in our major pheasant population areas in ND.



Portions of fields that may be too difficult to farm for various reasons such as: too wet, too small to get equipment into, or produce poor yields, are examples of excellent locations to convert into wildlife habitat. If these areas are adjacent to existing habitat that is even better!

There are several incentives and payments to help landowners establish habitat on their land in addition to average county soil rental rate. First, there is 50% cost share for establishment costs (soil prep, grass seed, and planting costs). Second, there is an additional practice incentive payment (PIP) of 40% for establishment costs to supplement the 50% cost share. Thirdly, there is a one-time up front sign up incentive payment (SIP) on newly enrolled grass at \$10 per acre per year up to ten years.

Another option that can be done to help supplement the costs of establishment and provide a little extra rental payment, is to sign up for the North Dakota Game and Fish Private Lands Open to Sportsman (PLOTS) program. When coupled with CRP, the PLOTS program will provide an access payment of \$6 per acre per year (in one up-front lump sum) and will pay the remainder of the establishment costs (up to 100%).

If you are interested, contact your local FSA office or Justin Edwards- Pheasants Forever Farm Bill Biologist.

USDA announces \$4 million in financial assistance available to eligible producers through the Water Bank Program

BISMARCK, ND, February 10, 2015 – U.S. Department of Agriculture's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) State Conservationist Mary Podoll announced that \$4 million in financial assistance will be available to help eligible landowners and operators in three states voluntarily enhance wildlife habitat for migratory birds and other wildlife. The selected states—Minnesota, North Dakota, and South Dakota—will begin to accept applications on February 13, 2015.

The newly funded Water Bank Program (WBP) provides landowners and operators with an alternative use for their flooded or frequently flooded lands, such as quality wildlife habitat for priority migratory bird species. Eligible land for this year's WBP included flooded agricultural land, flooded hay, pasture or rangeland, and flooded private forestland.

Landowners and operators can sign new 10-year rental agreements to protect wetlands and provide wildlife habitat. Landowners receive annual payments for conserving and protecting wetlands and adjacent lands from adverse land uses and activities, such as drainage, that would destroy the wetland characteristics of those lands.

The sign-up will be held February 13 to February 27, 2015. Please contact your local NRCS service center for more information.



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 **April 1, 2015**. Applications are available at Mercer County SCD office or by calling 873-2101 ext 3.

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

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Return Service Requested

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



Stockmanship & Stewardship Workshop

July 10, 2015
Mercer County Fairgrounds

Curt Pate will be presenting a live cattle handling demonstration that will focus on animal behavior, sustainability and handling livestock in an effective manner.

FOR SALE ON BIDS

2005 Honda Rancher 4X4 ES

Bids will be accepted until April 1, 2015. The MCSCD reserves the right to reject any bid. For information or to view the ATV, contact the district office at 701-873-2101 ext 3.

