Agenda

- Conservation Connections: Project overview
- Introductions: NRCS staff & Farmer Connectors
- NRCS overview
- Program & resource basics
- Farmers share NRCS experiences
- Upcoming Events
- Questions and Conversations with NRCS Staff
Conservation Connections
Historically Underserved Farmers

- **Beginning Farmer and Rancher**
  - Not operated a farm/ranch for more than 10 years

- **Limited Resource Farmer**
  - With direct or indirect gross farm sales not more than the current indexed value in each of the previous two years, and
  - Who has a total household income at or below the national poverty level for a family of four, or less than 50 percent of county median household income in each of the previous two years.

- **Socially Disadvantaged**
  - American Indians or Alaskan Natives
  - Asians
  - Blacks or African Americans
  - Native Hawaiians or other Pacific Islanders
  - Hispanics

- **Veteran**
Introductions:
NRCS Agency Staff & Farmer Connectors

Moses Momanyi
Brett Olson
Sarah Lindblom
Noreen Thomas
Kathy Zeman
Dan Zimmerli
John Beaton
The Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) is the primary federal agency authorized to work on private lands to help landowners protect their soil, water and other natural resources.

- Technical agency of USDA
- Voluntary technical and financial assistance for farmers and landowners
An Agency Established in 1933

In 1933, the Soil Erosion Service (SES) was established to fight soil and wind erosion, dust storms, and loss of cropland. In September 1935, the name was changed to the Soil Conservation Service (SCS), and later became the Natural Resources Conservation Service in 1994.

Dr. Hugh Hammond Bennett, “father of Soil Conservation” and first Chief of SCS is pictured below with Herbert A. Flueck, Minnesota’s first State Conservationist for NRCS.
NRCS and USDA

In 1935, the Soil Conservation Service became an agency of USDA to work with farmers on new ways to farm that would save the soil.

Civilian Conservation Corps camp in Coon Valley, Wisconsin
USDA Organization Chart

USDA is an equal opportunity provider, employer, and lender.

UPDATED 10/01/20: This organization chart displays the names of USDA offices, agencies, and mission areas. Each office, agency, and mission area is placed within a cell connected by lines to show the structure and hierarchy (Under Secretary, Deputy Secretary, or Secretary) for which they fall under. An HTML version that lists USDA Agencies and Offices and USDA Mission Areas is also available on usda.gov. The Secretary's Memorandum 1976-031 was signed August 12, 2019, effectuating a change to Rural Development.
Chief (acting)  
Kevin Norton

Associate Chief  
(acting)  
Ron Alvarado

Regional Conservationist  
(Central)  
Salvador Salinas

State Conservationist  
Minnesota  
Troy Daniell
NRCS MN

Glencoe Customer Service Team

Servicing McLeod, Meeker, Nicollet, & Sibley Counties

State Conservationist

Assistant State Conservationist-Field Operations

Customer Service Team Lead

Soil Conservationist

Soil Conservation Technician

TROY DANIELL

STEVEN COLE

JACOB STICH

nrcs.usda.gov/
Farm Bill Legislation

Basis for most USDA and NRCS conservation programs and policies.

Current Farm Bill
Enacted on December 20, 2018
Projected 10 Year Farm Bill Spending in Billions

- Title I: Commodity Programs
- Title XI: Crop Insurance Subsidies
- Title II: Conservation Programs
- Title IV: Nutrition
- Everything Else: $6.7B

Total: $663.8 billion

- $64.6 billion
- $77.9 billion
- $59.7 billion
# FY2020 Annual Report - MN

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PROGRAM</th>
<th>CSP GCI</th>
<th>ACEP WRE Closed</th>
<th>RCPP EQIP</th>
<th>RCPP CSP</th>
<th>CSP</th>
<th>EQIP</th>
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<td>5</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>223</td>
<td>611</td>
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<tr>
<td>ACRES ENROLLED</td>
<td>1,076</td>
<td>486.9</td>
<td>5,010.5</td>
<td>45,445.7</td>
<td>190,558.40</td>
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<td>$ OBLIGATED</td>
<td>$96,905.00</td>
<td>$1,612,672.66</td>
<td>$1,545,756.77</td>
<td>$6,636,803.00</td>
<td>$22,605,385.10</td>
<td>$27,543,383.76</td>
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NRCS Mission & Vision Statement

**Our Mission:** We deliver conservation solutions so agricultural producers can protect natural resources and feed a growing world.

**Our Vision:** A world of clean and abundant water, healthy soils, resilient landscapes, and thriving agricultural communities through voluntary conservation.
NRCS

Priorities

- Implement and deliver the 2018 Farm Bill to our nation’s farmers, ranchers, and private forests landowners.

- Streamline our processes and program delivery to best serve our customers.

- Better understand our customer needs and improve overall customer service.

- Increase internal mentoring, training opportunities, and experiences that collectively involve staff, customers and partners.

- Expand focused outreach efforts to increase agency awareness among populations of Young, Beginning, Small, Veteran and Historically Underserved Farmers and Ranchers.

- Elevate the importance of soil health across our agency’s outreach and communication efforts to further enhance and promote the delivery of soil health principles to staff, customers and partners.
Soil health matters because:

1. Healthy soils are high-performing, productive soils.
2. Healthy soils can reduce production costs and improve profits.
3. Healthy soils protect natural resources on and off the farm.
4. Franklin Roosevelt’s statement, “The nation that destroys its soil destroys itself,” is as true today as it was 75 years ago.
5. Healthy soils can reduce nutrient loading and sediment runoff, increase efficiencies, and improve pollinator and wildlife habitat.
The Five Principles Of Soil Health

1. **SOIL COVER:** *Keep plant residues on the soil surface.* Look down, what percentage of your soil is protected by residue? Erosion needs to be minimized before you can start building soil health.

2. **LIMITED DISTURBANCE:** *Minimize tillage as much as possible.* You will start building soil aggregates, pore spaces, soil biology, and organic matter.

3. **LIVING ROOTS:** *Keep plants growing throughout the year to feed the soil.* Cover crops can add carbon to the soil, providing a great food source for micro-organisms. Start small to find the best fit for your operation.

4. **DIVERSITY:** *Try to mimic nature.* Use cool and warm season grasses and broad leaf plants as much as possible, with three or more crops and cover crops in rotation. Grassland and cropland plant diversity increases soil and animal health.

5. **INTEGRATING LIVESTOCK:** Fall/winter grazing of cover crops and crop residue increases livestock’s plane of nutrition at a time when pasture forage quality can be low, increases the soil biological activity on cropland, and improves nutrient cycling. Proper grassland management improves soil health.
First Step:
Connect with your local NRCS office

- Phone call or email to office
- Anyone can help you
- Site visit and walk your land
Program and Resource Basics

- Financial and Technical Assistance
- Voluntary
- Competitive
- Method of implementing is through contracts
- Primarily on working lands
- Practices must have conservation benefit, not just increased production production
Environmental Quality Incentives Program

- **Overview/Goals**
  - Voluntary program that provides financial and technical assistance to agricultural producers to plan and implement conservation practices that improve soil, water, plant, animal, air and related natural resources on agricultural land and non-industrial private forestland.
EQIP

- Addresses resource concerns on private lands through implementation of conservation practices
  - Technical assistance key

- Program involving the most conservation partners

- During Farm Bill 2018, NRCS MN is averaging over 950 new contracts with an average of $26.8M over the last 2 yrs.
EQIP: Common Activities related to:

- **Energy**
  Energy Efficient Lighting System, Farmstead Energy Improvement & MORE

- **Pollinator & Wildlife Plantings**
  Upland Wildlife Habitat Management, Conservation Cover & MORE

- **Livestock & Grazing**
  Watering Facilities, Prescribed Grazing, Fence, Forage Harvest Management, Forage and Biomass Planting & MORE
EQIP: Common Activities related to:

- Conservation Activity Plans (CAP)
  Energy, Nutrient, Pest, Pollinator, Organic Transition, Grazing, Prescribed Burning & MORE
- Soil Erosion
  Reduced Tillage, Cover Crops, Contour Farming, Structural Erosion Control & MORE
- Water Quality
  Field borders, Filter Strips, Tree Plantings, & MORE
- Soil Health & Plant Health
  Cover Crops, Crop Rotations, Nutrient and Pest Management & MORE
Conservation Stewardship Program

- Rewards existing conservation on and requires additional conservation activities be adopted
  - Includes cropland, pasture, farmstead and forestland

- 5-year contracts with payments for benchmark conditions and practices and enhancements contracted

- 223 contracts covering 190,558 acres enrolled during FY2020
Conservation Stewardship Program

• Program builds upon conservation practices available in EQIP
• Offers practices, enhancements and bundles of enhancements

   Example
   – Practice: Cover Crop
   – Enhancement: Planting deep-rooted cover crop for soil health
   – Bundle: Multiple Enhancements that complement each other.

• Entire Operation Included
• MAWQCP offers producers:
  • Recognition
  • Financial/Technical assistance
  • Regulatory certainty for 10 years
  • Branding/Marketing opportunity
  • Check-up/Validation for growers

• Originally Established with MOU between State of Minnesota, USDA and US-EPA
  • Developed by stakeholder committee
  • Authorizing statute
  • Certification awarded with a 10-year contract
• 978 certified producers
• 687,123 certified acres
  • 1,999 new practices
  • 108,114 tons of soil saved per year
  • 38,081 tons of sediment reduced per year
  • 47,878 pounds of P prevented per year
  • As much as 49% reduction in nitrogen loss

• Endorsements:
  • 23 Soil Health
  • 20 Integrated Pest Management
Access Control
Alternative Drain Tile Intakes (rock, pattern, Agri Drain H2O Quality Intakes/no perforated risers)
Channel Bed Stabilization
Conservation Cover
Constructed Wetland
Contour Buffer Strips
Cover Crop
Critical Area Planting
Denitrifying Bioreactor
Diversions
Drainage Water Management
Feedlot/Wastewater Filter Strip
Fence
Field Border
Filter Strip
Forage and Biomass Planting
Grade Stabilization Structure
Grassed Waterway
Heavy Use Area Protection
Integrated Pest Management
Irrigation System, Sprinkler
Irrigation Water Management
Karst Sinkhole Treatment
Lined Waterway or Outlet
Mulching
Nutrient Management (plan development)
Obstruction Removal
Open Channel
Pipeline
Pond
Prescribed Grazing
Pumping Plant
Residue and Tillage Management - No-Till/ Strip Till/
Direct Seed
Residue and Tillage Management - Ridge Till
Riparian Forest Buffer
Roof Runoff Control (feedlot)
Sediment Basin
Spring Development
Stream Crossing
Streambank and Shoreline Protection
Strip cropping
Structure for Water Control
Subsurface Drain
Terrace
Trails and Walkways
Tree & Shrub Site Preparation
Underground Outlet
Vegetated Subsurface Drain Outlet (Saturated Buffer)
Vegetative Barriers
Waste Storage Facility
Water & Sediment Control Basin
Water Well
Water Well Decommissioning
Watering Facility
Wetland Restoration
Farmer Share: John Beaton
Farmer Share: Noreen Thomas
## Minnesota Cover Crop Design Worksheet

**Note:** Please use this worksheet to assist you in planning your cover crop strategies. The worksheet includes helpful hints and tips for successful cover crop management.

### Cover Crop Objectives
- Improve Soil Conditions
- Reduce Erosion
- Improve Water Quality
- Enhance Soil Fertility
- Increase Crop Yields

### Cover Crop seeding and termination
- **Seeding Method:** Drill
- **Seeding Date:** 3/31
- **Termination Method:** Herbicide

### Fertilizer Application
- **Nitrogen Application:** 20 lbs/acre
- **Phosphorus Application:** 10 lbs/acre
- **Potassium Application:** 20 lbs/acre

### Cover Crop Mixture

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cover Crop Species</th>
<th>Full Name</th>
<th>Rate (lbs/acre)</th>
<th>Total Seed Rate (lbs/acre)</th>
<th>Seeding Date (inches)</th>
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<tbody>
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<td>Red Clover</td>
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<td>25</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>3</td>
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<tr>
<td>White Clover</td>
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<td>20</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>3</td>
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<tr>
<td>Alfalfa</td>
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<td>15</td>
<td>30</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ryegrass</td>
<td></td>
<td>10</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>3</td>
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<tr>
<td>Barley</td>
<td></td>
<td>5</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Estimated PLS seeding rate (based on)
- **Area:** 10 acres
- **Rate of mix:** 10 lb/acre

**Planned seeding depth:** 1.00

**Planned by:** [Signature]
**Date:** [Date]

**Approved by:** [Signature]
**Date:** [Date]
Upcoming Events

February 8-13: SFA Annual Conference
- Economics of Silvopasture
- Agriculture in the Metro
- Farm to Rural Grocery
- Farm Side Hustles
- Many More

March 9-11: Midwest Soil Health Summit
- Gabe Brown: Gab with Gabe
- Sara Keough: Soil Health and Human Health
- Jared Luhman, Sarah Lindblom, Doug Voss & Kent Solberg: Practical Applications for Soil Health
Questions?

Put your email in the chat box if you are would like to have a local connector reach out to you!
NRCS - Helping People Help the Land

Productive Lands, Healthy Environment

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