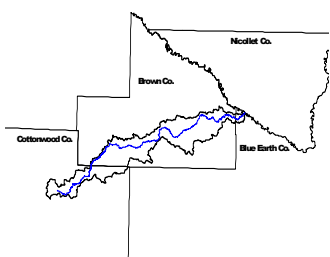


LITTLE COTTONWOOD RIVER WATERSHED PROJECT

\$23 MILLION IN EQIP FUNDING AVAILABLE TO MN AG PRODUCERS

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- LCR Watershed spans three counties and covers 108,000 acres.
- 75% of the watershed is located within Brown County
- 90% of the watershed land use is under cultivation.
- Headwaters of the river start near Jeffers. The river completes its 80 mile journey to the MN River south of Courtland.

The Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) was reauthorized in the latest 2002 Farm Bill. EQIP provides technical assistance, cost-share payments, and incentive payments to assist crop, livestock, and other agricultural producers with environmental and conservation improvements to their operations. Many landowners and farmers are not aware of the many programs that EQIP can assist them with. For instance, did you know that area farmers are eligible to receive up to \$1,000/year for following a nutrient management plan or \$7,500/year for using strip tillage? The insert found

within this newsletter contains more information on popular cost-sharable practices within the county. Don't let this opportunity escape you. Stop in and see your local NRCS or contact the watershed project at 507-934-4140 for more information. The 2004 EQIP sign-up deadline for 2004 is May 22.



A milk house wastewater treatment system was installed as a result of EQIP funding in the Little Cottonwood River Watershed this past fall. With EQIP and funds from the watershed project, 75% of this project was cost-shared to the dairy farmer.

ROAD SHOW FOR WATER TESTING, HEALTH AND CONSERVATION

For the past 16 years Brown, Nicollet, and Cottonwood County Commissioners and Brown Nicollet Environmental Health have sponsored a project called "Township Water Testing." As part of this project rural residents have been offered private well water tests free or at a reduced rate in each township within the county. In May this service will again be offered to County residents along with a variety of other services.

Water Quality

- Free nitrate tests
- Arsenic tests at reduced rates
- Bacteria tests at reduced rates

Landowners

- Cost share and land conservation program information
- Conservation Reserve Program calculation estimates for interested landowners
- Free manure and soil tests to watershed residents for nutrient management (limited basis)
- Low interest loan septic system upgrade information

HEALTH AND CONSERVATION ROAD SHOW...

Air Quality

- Home radon test kits and information

Health

- Free blood pressure screening
- Asbestos information
- Mold information
- Home food safety information
- West Nile Virus information

“Road Show will feature free well water testing to County residents along with many other services.”



There will be two locations and times in each county. Call 507-934-4140 for more information.

Road Show Tour Schedule

Tuesday May 18

Brown County

—Comfrey Comm. Center

10:00 a.m.-2:00 p.m.

—New Ulm Public Health Office

4:00 p.m.-7:00 p.m.

Wed. May 19

Cottonwood County

—Jeffers Legion Hall 10:00

a.m.-2:00 p.m.

—Windom Env. Services Office

4:00 p.m.-7:00 p.m.

Thursday May 20

Nicollet County

—Lafayette Fire Station 10:00 a.m.-

2:00 p.m.

—St. Peter Community Center 4:00-

7:00 p.m.

Living Snow Fence Program

save lives, save money, save time, save soil

Winter is over but its never too late to start planning for next year. *Closed roads . . . reduced visibility . . . whiteout conditions . . . farmsteads without access to emergency services . . . travel delays . . . dumped milk. . . stranded motorists . . . schools closed . .*

Have you noticed big snowdrifts on highways after a storm? Are you ever concerned about your safety during a blizzard? Did you know that something can be done to stop blowing snow? The Minnesota Department of Transportation is identifying sections of highway that experience snow blowing and drifting snow problems. MN/DOT and their partners are working with property owners to design and construct living snow fences that will control the blowing snow and fit into the property owners land use/farming operation.

Living snow fences are designed plantings of trees and/or shrubs and native grasses located along roads or around communities and farmsteads. Properly designed and placed, these living barriers trap snow as it blows across fields, piling it up before it reaches a road, waterway, farmstead or community. (adopted from MNDOT)



Typical Living Snow Fence Characteristics

- Eligible areas include locations along State Highways on the north and west sides.
- Typical fence is 1,320 feet long x 40 feet wide or about 1.2 acres in size.
- Living snow fence is typically setback from the highway about 150 feet.
- Living snow fence is 40 feet wide composed of 2 rows of shrubs with a 16.5 foot wide buffer of native grasses planted along each side.
- Shrubs usually consist of lilacs, red and gray dogwood, viburnums, cranberry, or nannyberry and get about 10 feet high.
- On average a typical landowner in the watershed would get paid a total of about **\$9,000 over 15 years or about \$500/acre!**
- 100% of installation and maintenance is paid for by the program.
- Contact the watershed project or local SWCD/ NRCS if you want more information.

Benefits of Living Snow Fences:

- ◇ Prevents big drifts that lead to stranded motorists
- ◇ Improving driver visibility to reduce vehicle accidents
- ◇ Reducing use of the public's money by reducing plowing
- ◇ Using fewer plow truck drivers
- ◇ Lessening impacts on our environment with less salt use, fewer truck trips and less fuel consumption
- ◇ Reducing shipping delays for goods and services
- ◇ Reduces soil wind erosion in the watershed

ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY INCENTIVES PROGRAM

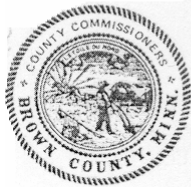
EQIP

2004 EQIP Practices

Conservation Practice	Type	Incentive Payment	Contract Lifespan
Contour Farming	Annual	\$7.00/acre	1-3 years
Pest management	Annual	\$2.00/acre	1-3 years
Cover Crop	Annual	\$8.00/acre	1-3 years
Nutrient Management with manure- with out manure-	Annual	\$4.00/acre \$2.25/acre	1-3 years
Residue Management- mulch till- no till, strip till- ridge till- seasonal-	Annual	\$15.00/acre \$30.00/acre \$30.00/acre \$7.00/acre	1-3 years
Use Exclusion Riparian- Specialty Crops- Other Crops-	Annual	\$15.00/acre \$175.00/acre \$75.00/acre	10 years

Conservation practices cost shared @ 50%: anaerobic digester, **animal mortality facility**, closure of waste impoundment, **composting facility**, **conservation crop rotation**, **contour buffer strips**, **critical areas planting**, cross wind strips, dam, **diversion**, **habitat development**, **environmental assessment**, livestock shelter, fencing, **field border**, filter strip, fish stream improvement, forest harvest trails and landings, forest stand improvement, forest site preparation, **grade stabilization structure**, grassed water way, heavy use area protection, hedgerow planting, natural wind barriers, irrigation water management., manure transfer, mulching, pasture and hay land planting, pest management, pipeline, pond, prescribed burning, declining habitat restoration, riparian forest buffer, **roof runoff management**, **sediment basin**, sinkhole treatment, spring development, **stream bank and shoreline protection**, strip cropping, **water control structure**, drain tile for waterways, terrace, **tree/shrub establishment**, underground outlet, upland wildlife habitat manag., veg. barrier, waste facility cover, **wastewater and feedlot runoff control**, **water and sediment control basin**, watering facility, livestock well, **well sealing**, **wetland restoration**, **windbreak**, **windbreak renovation**. (Practices in bold are most applicable to the Seven Mile Creek Watershed.)

NOTE: In some cases funds from local SWCDs and watershed projects can boost cost share rates from 50% to 75% and provide additional incentives. To learn more contact your local NRCS or watershed project.



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New Ulm, MN 56073

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New Ulm, MN 56073

District 3:
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New Ulm, MN 56073

District 4:
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28814 Co. Rd. #10
Sleepy Eye, MN 56085

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Brown County, Minnesota
Board of Commissioners

P.O. Box 248
Center & State Streets
New Ulm, MN 56073
Telephone (507) 233-6600



FILTER STRIP INITIATIVE

March 2, 2004

TO: Brown County Landowner

You recently received a letter and aerial photo of your property from the Brown County Soil & Water Conservation District. The letter was sent to encourage you to plant vegetated filter strips on farmland around and along water resources. As County Commissioners, we support this effort.

Having natural vegetation near water bodies serves several purposes. It reduces and filters water runoff. It promotes ground water infiltration and can even provide a diversity of habitat for wildlife. So installing filter strips, and thus improving water quality and wildlife habitat, is in everyone's best interest. On top of this, the state and federal programs currently available, CRP, RIM, and WRP are excellent opportunities for financial compensation to install filter strips. In most cases the payment rate, especially in poor crop areas, is more profitable than farming the land. However, keep in mind that these are voluntary programs that may not always be available.

Again, we fully endorse the efforts of the Brown SWCD, NRCS, USDA, and the Minnesota Board of Water and Soil Resources in promoting the establishment of filter strips in Brown County. We encourage you to call the NRCS office at (507)794-4491 and schedule an appointment to review your options. With the opportunity for financial compensation, the timing could not be better.

Sincerely,

Donald Wellner
Chairman, Brown County Commissioners

Ervin Windschitl
Chairman, Brown SWCD

DW:dk
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COTTONWOOD COUNTY ENVIRONMENTAL OFFICE

Agriculture Inspector ** Environmental Health ** Parks ** Planning & Zoning ** Water Planning
C. Michael Hanson, Administrator ** Assistants: Marlene J. Smith & Gregory G. Johnson
Brenda L. Anderson, Secretary ** Kelli Daberkow, Clean Water Partnership Coordinator
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SEPTIC SYSTEM UP TO CODE??

This may be a tough question for you as a county resident to answer. But, there is a fairly simple answer to this question. If you haven't done anything to, or updated your septic system since approximately 1996 there is a very high possibility that your system is not up to present day code. The odds are very high that your present day waste treatment system does one of two things: 1) the system probably has some type of tank which then either discharges to a tile line or 2) discharges directly to the ground surface. Neither one of these options provides any treatment for the waste and both are considered Imminent Public Health Threats.

Why is this important? There are a number of reasons. First of all it appears that the State of Minnesota is putting forth an effort to bring all non-complying (not up to code) septic systems into compliance as soon as possible. One of the reasons for this effort is to minimize the amount of pollutants reaching our creeks, streams, and rivers through surface or tile discharging septic systems.

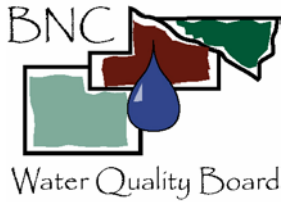
Another important issue is that if your septic system is identified as an Imminent Public Health Threat you only have ten months from the date of notice of violation to bring your system into compliance. Because of our short construction season this time line becomes a major factor in getting a new system installed.

Finally, the biggest concern is the availability of low interest loan money for septic system upgrades. If you live in either the Little Cottonwood River or the Watonwan River Watershed (see attached map) this is probably the last year that loan money will be available in these two watersheds. My concern is that once this money is gone it will be very hard to find other sources of funds to replace it. The bottom line is that if you have been thinking about upgrading your septic system or are concerned on how long your present one will continue to function, now is the time to act. The low interest loan money for septic system upgrades is available on a first come first served basis, and once it is gone it is probably gone for good.

If you are interested in bringing your septic system into compliance, are interested in the low interest loan money, or have any questions please feel free to contact me at the Environmental Office. PHONE: 507-831-2060

C. Michael Hanson
Cottonwood County Environmental Officer

Brown Nicollet Cottonwood Water Quality Board



Little Cottonwood River
Watershed Project
322 So. Minnesota Avenue
St. Peter, MN 56082

LCR Watershed Project
507-934-4140
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Staff
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Scott MacLean—Watershed Technician

Brown County NRCS
507-794-4491

Brown County SWCD
507-794-2553

Cottonwood County NRCS/SWCD
507-831-1550

WATERSHED WEBSITE

Want to learn more about what's happening in your watershed? A new website was recently created to highlight conservation and water quality related activities within the Little Cottonwood River Watershed and surrounding areas.

<http://mrbdc.mankato.msus.edu/org/bnc/index2.html>



Website Features

- ⇒ Up-to-date information on water quality projects and programs.
- ⇒ Highlights farmer conservation stewardship and conservation practices.
- ⇒ Download recent three-year nitrogen rate study to determine which rate maximizes yields and profits.
- ⇒ Download past newsletters, publications and reports.
- ⇒ Take a "virtual" tour of the Little Cottonwood River Watershed.
- ⇒ Learn more about Red Top Farms agronomy and water quality research
- ⇒ More! Much, much, more.

SEPTIC SYSTEM LOAN PROGRAM CONTINUES

Last year, the legislature charged the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency to create a 10-year plan to correct on-site sewage treatment problems, develop a system to ensure compliance by July 1, 2005, and recommend enhanced funding mechanisms to help homeowners make the necessary upgrades. In 2001 the LCR watershed project received \$150,000 in low-interest loan money for people interested in upgrading their system. Most of that money was spent within the first year. The watershed project is happy to announce that another \$150,000 was awarded to the watershed project. The loan amount is estimated to fix another 20 homes in the watershed. If you need to upgrade your system don't miss out on this opportunity, it will most likely be your last chance. To learn more about the program contact the Brown County Planning and Zoning Office at 507-233-6640 or Cottonwood County Environmental Services at 507-830-1419.