



Stearns County Soil & Water Conservation District

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Stearns County SWCD Honored for Private Land Conservation

Stearns SWCD Receives Minnesota Pheasants Forever 'Brood Booster' Award

Brooklyn Park, Minn. - January 10 -

Pheasants Forever (PF) awarded Stearns County Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD) with its Brood Booster award during PF's Minnesota State Convention earlier this month. The award recognizes those who have demonstrated exceptional accomplishments in enrolling private lands into conservation programs that boost pheasant and other wildlife populations. Many U.S. Department of Agriculture and Minnesota conservation programs assist farmers and landowners at implementing the best land practices to conserve habitat, water, soil, and our wildlife heritage. The honor is awarded annually to an entity that excels at enrolling land into conservation programs.

"We applaud Stearns SWCD and local partners who support the Farm Bill Biologist position and the Stearns County landowners for their stewardship," said Ralph Feld, Stearns County Pheasants Forever Chapter President. "This award speaks to a mix of good programs, good partners, and landowners who want to take care of our soil, water, wildlife and quality of life here in Stearns County."

Stearns County SWCD is a participant in Minnesota's Farm Bill Assistance Partnership. The partnership provides state and private funds to employ a Farm Bill Biologist, whose task is to take full advantage of the conservation opportunities provided in the Federal Farm Bill. During 2008, Stearns County SWCD technician, Vince Manderfeld and Stearns County Pheasants Forever Farm Bill Biologist, Jason Selvog helped enroll over 2000 acres of new Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) in Stearns County; including over 1500 acres in the Back Forty Pheasant practice. Stearns County funding partners include the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources, Minnesota Board of Water and Soil Resources, Stearns SWCD, Stearns County PF, Sauk River Watershed District, North Fork Crow River Watershed District, Rice Lake Association, Koronis Lake Association and the Initiative Foundation.

Dennis Fuchs, administrator of the Stearns County SWCD, can attribute the SWCD's success to the SWCD's ability to partner with these other agencies and employ an additional person to help market federal Farm Bill programs. "This opportunity gives us the ability to reach more people and implement more conservation," Fuchs says.

"These partnerships allow us to pin point high priority areas of the county," said Selvog. "Working with local groups is a great benefit because they have knowledge of where these programs are needed within their areas, and working with someone like Vince who has almost 30 years of experience working with private landowners is invaluable," Selvog added.

Since 2003, when Stearns County SWCD started housing a Pheasants Forever Farm Bill Biologist, over 18,000 acres of habitat in Stearns County has been impacted. "Stearns County SWCD and their partners really deserve recognition for what is getting done on the ground for wildlife," said Eran Sandquist, PF regional biologist for northern Minnesota. "Farm Bill conservation programs like CRP are where we really see habitat hitting the ground to improve water, farm operations, soil, and wildlife."

All programs and services of the Stearns County Soil and Water Conservation District are available without regard to race, color, national origin, sex, religion, age, disability, political beliefs, and marital or familial status.