



# Stearns County Soil & Water Conservation District

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## Partnerships Help Improve Water Quality and Wildlife Habitat

Since 2002, the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources (MNDNR) has partnered with the Board of Water & Soil Resources (BWSR) and Pheasants Forever Inc. to administer a grant program to help implement the Federal Farm Bill. The purpose of the program is to promote and implement conservation programs that result in more acres of grass and wetlands for water quality and wildlife habitat. The State has awarded several grants to Minnesota Soil and Water Conservation Districts (SWCD) to hire staff for the promotion and implementation of the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP), Continuous Conservation Reserve Program (CCRP), Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP) and Wetlands Reserve Program (WRP). "Pheasants Forever is grateful to the MNDNR-Division of Wildlife and BWSR for their leadership to help put sound conservation practices on the ground within the pheasant range," said Matt Holland, Pheasants Forever, Director of Conservation - MN. To date the grant program has helped enroll over 50,000 acres of land into conservation programs throughout Minnesota,

In 2004, the Stearns County Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD) took one step further and initiated CRP promotion partnerships with several local groups. The Stearns SWCD and Pheasants Forever Inc. now have agreements with the Sauk River Watershed District, North Fork Crow River Watershed District, South Two River Watershed District, Clearwater River Watershed District and the Grand Lake Association to promote and implement CRP within their respective areas of the county. "These partnerships allow us to pin point high priority areas of the county", said Jason Selvog - Pheasants Forever, Farm Bill Biologist. "Working with these local groups is a great benefit because they have knowledge of where these programs are needed within their areas, and in many cases, have names of landowners that have already expressed interest", said Selvog.

The Stearns SWCD and Pheasants Forever extensive partnerships has helped enroll over 2400 acres of new land into the various conservation programs in Stearns County. Staff estimates that they are on pace to achieve 5000 acres by the end of the fiscal year. "It is with expanded partnerships like in Stearns County that help make the program a success", said Tabor Hoek – BWSR, Board Conservationist.

For more information on CRP and other conservation programs contact Jason Selvog 320-251-7800 ext, 3.

Pheasants Forever is a non-profit conservation organization dedicated to the protection and enhancement of quail and other wildlife populations in North America through habitat improvement, land management, public awareness, and education. Such efforts benefit landowners and wildlife alike.

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.