



# East Otter Tail

Soil & Water Conservation District

## 2020 YEAR IN REVIEW

### WATER QUALITY PROJECT FEATURE

#### City of Vergas Boardwalk Trail

We met during the summer with the City of Vergas to put together a proposal for a shoreline restoration along their new trail. The plan included restoring the side slope of the trail going down to the boardwalk that goes along Long Lake in Vergas. In order to treat all of the rainwater coming off the road and trail and to better stabilize the bank, we utilized native plants to filter any not-so-good nutrients out of the water runoff before it can reach Long Lake and the roots will bind to soil, increasing stability. In late July we teamed up with the city and volunteers to plant 2,085 square feet of shoreline along the trail - it took 5,616 native grass and wildflower plugs and nearly 2 pounds of native seed mix. This project will save 240 lbs/year of sediment, 60 lbs/year of soil, and .25 lbs/year of phosphorus from entering Long Lake. Be sure to check it out the next time you're in Vergas!



### CORONAVIRUS PANDEMIC

By nature, SWCD staff work under highly dynamic conditions and easily adapt to whatever is thrown at us - whether it be a last minute tree planting or the coronavirus. With a few adjustments and added safety precautions, SWCD work has been able to continue as usual for the most part. Most of our staff have been healthy and we hope the same can be said for you!



# TREES AND NATIVE SEEDING

## Tree Sales and Planting

In 2020 we sold over 55,000 conservation grade trees (that's 6,000 more than in 2019) in our annual tree sales. We planted 4,700 trees followed by 18,000 linear feet of tree matting — that's almost 3.5 miles!



## Native Seed

This spring we planted 47 acres of native seed on nine different sites across East Otter Tail County using our no-till drill. We sold enough seed for 55 acres, and many landowners utilized our rental drill.



## WHY NATIVE SEED?

Native plants are plants that were found in Minnesota prior to European settlement. They attract pollinators like bees and butterflies, and provide food and shelter to native insects and animals.

## Rentals

We have a 10 foot no-till Haybuster drill, an ATV Dewdrop no-till drill, and a tree planter available for rent on a first-come first-serve basis. Our staff can also be hired for tree planting, matting, or custom seeding. Contact our office for more information.



**2021 TREE SALES ARE GOING ON NOW! ORDER EARLY FOR BEST AVAILABILITY.**

# SHORELINE

With the help of the Conservation Corps Minnesota & Iowa and the West Otter Tail Soil & Water Conservation District, we restored 11,470 square feet of shoreline with 5,303 native grass and flower plugs, 230 feet of coir logs, 1,357 square feet of erosion control fabric, and 7 pounds of native seed on 10 projects covering 7 lakes! Whew, we made it through!

While these projects may seem small in size, they will reduce pollutant and sediment runoff from getting into our lakes and rivers. In EOT, **these projects saved 2,160 lbs/year of sediment, 260 lbs/year of soil, and 1.5 lbs/year of phosphorus from entering our lakes!** Talk about doing your part to improve water quality! Great work, guys!



*If you have a lake home on Big Pine Lake, Little Pine Lake, South Lida Lake, Wall Lake, or Walker Lake you may have noticed there may be areas of high disturbance, increasing phosphorus, or frequent algae blooms. We have a special grant opportunity to help you address stormwater or wave action that's causing erosion and contributing to excess nutrients. Give us a call or shoot us an email to learn more!*

# WATER PLANNING

## Nitrate Testing

The EOT SWCD holds free nitrate testing clinics a few times each year with the help of the WOT SWCD. This year 37 samples were tested at the two clinics and most tested well below the 10 ppm limit, with the average result being 3.8 ppm.



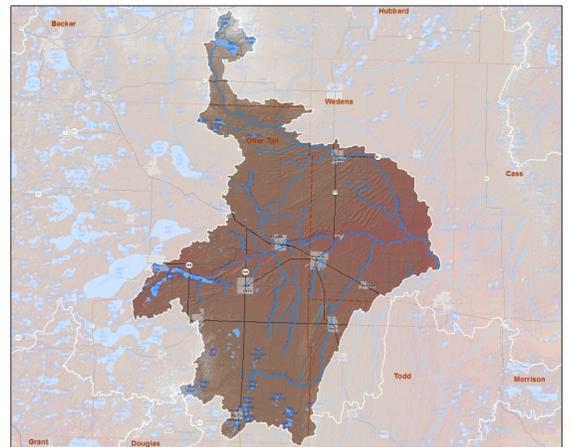
## What are nitrates?

Nitrates are a common contaminant found in many wells throughout Minnesota. Shallow wells, dug wells, and wells with damaged or leaking casings are the most vulnerable to nitrate contamination. Major sources of nitrate contamination can be from fertilizers, animal waste, and human sewage. It is highly recommended to test your drinking water supply on a regular basis.



## Otter Tail WRAPS

The Otter Tail Watershed Restoration and Protection Strategies report moves forward and is expected to be finished in 2021, with a comment period available this spring. This report will be used to identify impaired and pristine waterbodies so they can be restored or protected as needed. It will include a list of actions, priorities, and risks, as well, that will be useable by the SWCD and other water resource professionals. This report guides our work as an SWCD and shows us useful target areas.



REDEYE RIVER MAJOR WATERSHED

## Redeye River One Watershed, One Plan

The Redeye River One Watershed, One Plan was completed and approved (with high praises) by the Minnesota Board of Water & Soil Resources - Woohoo! This plan was years in the making with several different organizations and the public providing input as to what was important to them. This watershed plan will guide our conservation efforts and grant dollars.

One goal of the Redeye River One Watershed, One Plan is to increase the amount of land in the watershed with best management practices, such as cover crops, grazing plans, and forest stewardship plans. These practices will help improve and maintain good water quality that we can all enjoy!

# NRCS Natural Resources Conservation Service



CRP planting



Wetland restoration



Cover crops in corn

## 2020 Review for East Otter Tail County

- **Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP)**  
23 applications with 7 contracts funded
- **Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP) Renewals**  
3 applications with 2 contracts funded
- **Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP) General**  
14 applications with 0 contracts funded
- **Conservation Reserve Program (CRP)**  
259 extensions, re-enrollments, and new contracts

Both East Otter Tail Soil & Water Conservation District and USDA are an Equal Opportunity Provider and Employer

## SWCD UPDATES

Hayley Courneya served as our 2020 summer intern. Some of her duties as intern included assisting staff with irrigation scheduling, mapping noxious weeds, working on shoreland projects, taking photos, organizing files, and other various SWCD projects. Hayley grew up in Vergas, Minnesota and graduated from Frazee High School. She is currently in her second year at NDSU where she is majoring in Natural Resource Management. She likes to spend her time kayaking and boating at the lake, as well as hanging out with friends and family.



### 2020 EOT SWCD Budget Summary

Income	
County Income	\$201,167.00
State Income	\$726,410.00
Building Income	\$51,119.00
Charges for Services	\$393,183.00
Misc. Income	\$18,054.00
<b>Total Income</b>	<b>\$1,389,933.00</b>
Expenses	
Personal Service	\$861,441.00
Operational Expense	\$55,928.00
Project Expense	\$410,201.00
Building Expense	\$27,669.00
<b>Total Expenses</b>	<b>\$1,355,239.00</b>

# AGRICULTURE

## NEW: Cover Crop Grant

In 2020 we were pleased to offer a cover crop grant for producers. Cover crops cover the soil after a crop has been harvested, or it can be planted in between rows of a crop. Covering the soil reduces the amount of erosions and helps keep the nutrients where they belong - in the ground!

We teamed up with the Central Lakes College, UMN, NRCS, Lacrosse Seed and area producers to plan three cover crop demonstration plots, which included 40 different plantings!

Out of the 31 producers that applied for the grant, we were able to fund 22 producers in Wadena & Otter Tail Counties (3 of those producers were in the Perham Wellhead area). 1,842 acres were planted to cover crops



## Irrigation and Nutrient Management Clinic

It was a very cold and blustery February day for our 2020 Irrigation and Nutrient Management Clinic, but that didn't stop 68 producers from coming out to hear about the latest advancements in agriculture! Guest speakers talked about nitrogen technologies for crop production, irrigation research, nutrient management with cover crops, and the latest activity with the MDA's Groundwater Protection Activities.



## Nutrient Management Initiative

This year staff worked with 8 producers and 4 crop advisors to install NMI plots with assistance from the MDA. We partnered with the University of Minnesota and the MDA to install an advanced test plot to determine the economic return of different nitrogen rates on a producer's field. The NMI program helps producers offset the cost of experimenting with different practices on their farm with the goal of reducing input costs, increasing yield, and limiting environmental impact.



## County Ag Inspector

In 2020, the SWCD received a grant from the MDA for controlling wild parsnip and common tansy in East Otter Tail County. These funds are available to landowners, townships & cities to help control the spread of these weeds in 2021. For more information or to get an application, give us a call!

The SWCD continued to map common tansy, wild parsnip, leafy spurge, and other noxious weeds in 2020 and plan to continue mapping weeds in 2021.

This will give us a base knowledge of what weeds EOT has and where they are located.



Pictured above are common tansy (left) and wild parsnip (right). The sap of wild parsnip can cause skin irritation, including redness & blistering, to those who touch it. Unlike poison ivy, everyone reacts to wild parsnip.

## Buffer Program



Now that the Buffer Law has been in place for a few years, our current task is to review every parcel in the county on a three year basis. This includes aerial imagery review and site visits. In 2020, we had 3 parcels that were noncompliant in the northern third of East Otter Tail County, and all have since come into compliance.



## Minnesota Agricultural Water Quality Certification Program

In 2020, Jim and EOT SWCD staff helped 22 farming operations become certified in the North Central area, plus 9 endorsements for soil health, integrated pest management, and wildlife were awarded.

Tyler Synstelien's farm became Water Quality Certified in 2020. Tyler is back on his family's farm and is careful to protect water and soil resources as he manages his land and cattle. He maintains grassed filter strips along the small lakes on their farm. His rotation includes wheat followed by alfalfa.

Babe Winkelmann, along with his family and friends, worked hard to make the Winkelmann farm a wildlife haven. In this team effort, they have planted 9,000 fruit trees and 1,500 oak trees, and they established 60 acres of native prairie.

Wayne Enger's (SWCD board member) management of his farm results in conservation of natural resources. Water quality is protected and soil erosion rates are very low. Wayne also has a native shoreline buffer.

# AGRICULTURE

## Irrigation Scheduling Program

2020 was overall a good year for crop production! Major storms rolled through the area in July resulting in significant crop damage near the Battle Lake area. Overall though the extra rain and warm temperatures made for great yields!

We had 80 fields for 36 farmers in the 3 county area enrolled in the program. All rain gauges were pulled around September 9, 2020 for a total of 17 weeks of irrigation scheduling!



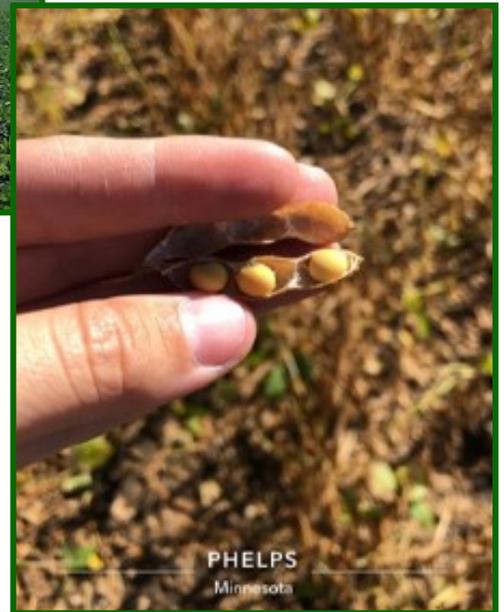
### **In Wadena & Todd Counties:**

- 9 Corn Fields—Averaged 16.36" of Rain & 3.14" of Irrigation
- 8 Soybean Fields—Averaged 15.69" of Rain & 2.54" of Irrigation
- 2 Alfalfa Fields—Averaged 13.96" of Rain & 4.96" of Irrigation
- 1 Oat Field—Averaged 15.11" of Rain & 3.32" of Irrigation
- 1 Black Bean Field—Averaged 11.61" of Rain & 3.74" of Irrigation
- 1 Sorghum Field



### **In Otter Tail County:**

- 28 Corn Fields—Averaged 16.66" of Rain & 4.97" of Irrigation
- 19 Soybean Fields—Averaged 17.22" of Rain & 3.44" of Irrigation
- 7 Kidney Bean Fields—Averaged 13.7" of Rain & 4.89" of Irrigation
- 2 Wheat Fields—Averaged 9.9" of Rain & 3.47" of Irrigation
- 1 Alfalfa Field—Averaged 19.47" of Rain & 4.92" of Irrigation
- 1 Clover Field—Averaged 13.99" of Rain & 1.5" of Irrigation



*DID YOU KNOW?*

- \*Most corn was planted around May 10th\*
- \*Most dark red kidney beans were planted around May 20th\*
- \*Most soybeans were planted around May 20th\*

A background image of a field with a weather station. The text is overlaid on the image, framed by a large bracket-like shape.

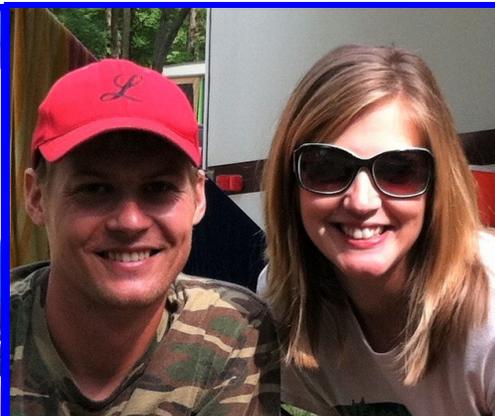
## WADE SALO, ONE OF OUR GREAT TECHNICIANS,

sadly passed away in August 2020 after an ongoing battle with cancer. Wade was a hard worker, always had a grin on his face, and could talk to anyone. Even through the pain, he remained positive and brave, and we are so proud of the fight he gave cancer! A self proclaimed stubborn Finlander, Wade fought cancer with every ounce he had!

*"Wherever a beautiful soul has been,  
there is a trail of beautiful memories"*



We have many good memories of our time spent with Wade. One favorite memory is of Wade's singing: He would always sing in the truck to whatever song was on the radio. It was usually country, sometimes he'd surprise us by busting out the hit pop song of the moment. Wade would always encourage you to sing along with him - There have been some outstanding duets that only the SWCD truck has heard! But nothing tops the awkwardness that our summer interns felt when riding with Wade the first few times. They weren't prepared for a karaoke session and we delighted in hearing how their first irrigation route went and more importantly, if they sang along with Wade or left him doing a solo act. More often than not, our interns would finally give in to their inner Garth Brooks and belt out "Low Places" with Wade by the end of the summer. Wade would always say that his singing kept him going on those long irrigation routes when the sun was beating through the windshield just right, as many of you have probably discovered the same thing!



**Our Staff:**

District Manager: Darren Newville

Shoreland Specialist: Aimee Duchene

District Technician: Liz Wiese

Farm Bill Technician: Mitchell Ness

Administrative Secretary: Chantal Tougas

District/Irrigation Technician: Trisha Demarais

Irrigation/Nutrient Management Specialist: Nathan Wiese

Area Certification Specialist: Jim Lahn

Water Planner/Watershed Coordinator: Ben Underhill



*Back row, left to right: Trisha Demarais, Nathan Wiese, Jim Lahn, Ben Underhill*

*Front row, left to right: Darren Newville, Mitch Ness, Chantal Tougas, Liz Wiese, Aimee Duchene*

**EOT SWCD Supervisors:**

Chairman: Lyle Dittmann

Vice Chairman: Steve Inwards

Public Relations: Wayne Enger

Secretary: Terry Greenwaldt

Treasurer: Denny Reynolds

- ◆ Board meetings are held at 7:30 a.m. the 3rd Wednesday of each month at the EOT SWCD office. The public is welcome to attend!
- ◆ The office is currently closed to the public due to coronavirus. We can do business over the phone or email. Outdoor site visits are still occurring.
- ◆ The office is closed on all federal holidays



# East Otter Tail

## Soil & Water Conservation District

• 801 Jenney Ave SW, Suite 2 •

•Perham, MN 56573 •

•(218)346-9105 •

• [www.eotswcd.org](http://www.eotswcd.org) •

