

The Clearwater SWCD Conservator



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Fall 2012

Clearwater SWCD...

- Provides **information** to residents doing conservation projects along lakes, rivers & wetlands
- Offers **cost sharing** on conservation projects that prevent erosion & protect water quality
- Brings **conservation dollars** to local farmers, lakeshore owners, contractors & other county residents

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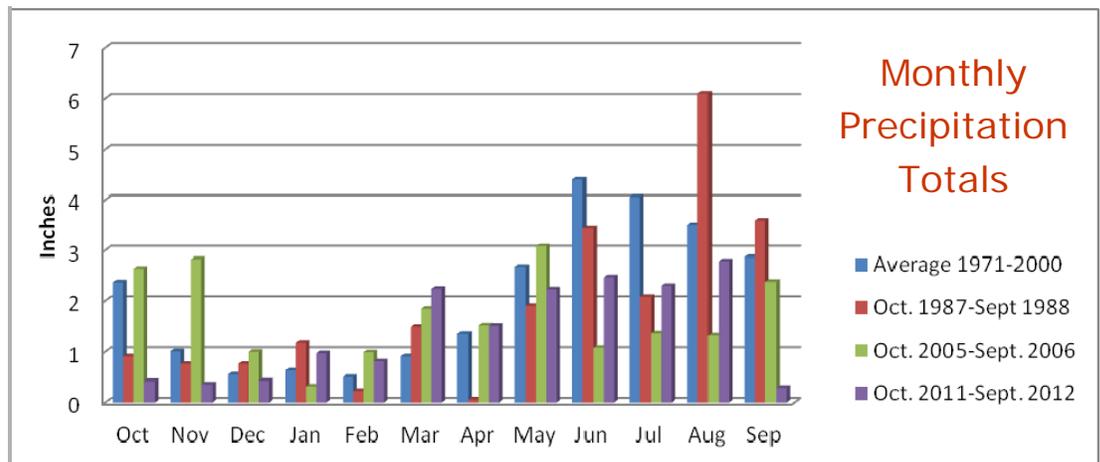
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How dry is it?

The 2012 drought has been one of the most extreme in decades. Drought conditions in 2012 were compounded by precipitation shortages experienced last fall and winter. On average Clearwater County receives 24.84 inches of precipitation in a year. However the 12 month period starting in October of last year yielded only 16.83 inches. This leaves Clearwater County 8 months short of average with only 66% of the normal amount of precipitation. Other droughty years with similar precipitation amounts such as 2006 were not as severe due to good moisture levels the preceding fall and winter.

Article and graph by Nathan Nordlund, Program Technician, Clearwater SWCD



Dry Days Call for Special Tree Care

Trees have been under stress again in 2012. Above average heat and summer drought conditions have provided a less than ideal situation. Here is some helpful information for fall care of trees and shrubs.

Watering is important to a newly planted tree as well as more established trees on your landscape. Since watering is such a time consuming task, you may have to pick and choose the trees that you want to water. I recommend watering any newly planted

trees and any trees that have shown stress, disease or insect problems through the growing season. The dry conditions from late-summer/fall of 2011 all the way through 2012 place stress on trees, the effects of which may not be seen until 2013 or even later. Be sure to get out and water trees until the ground freezes to prevent excessive winter damage to trees and shrubs.

Water newly planted and existing trees over the root zone of the tree. Roots of trees can vary from 1.5 to 3 times as

wide as the canopy. Avoid frequent light watering and instead water infrequently and heavily. You will want to wet the soil to a 6 - 8 inch depth and then let the soil dry out in between. Use a rod to determine when you have wetted the soil to that depth.

Believe it or not, you can overwater trees, which will starve the roots of oxygen and cause roots to rot. If fall rains are averaging one inch every week, watering will probably not be necessary. Generally,

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Profile in Conservation Success: Pat and Les Roos of Pine Lake

Les and Pat Roos, property owners on Pine Lake, were concerned about the excessive shoreline they were losing each year.

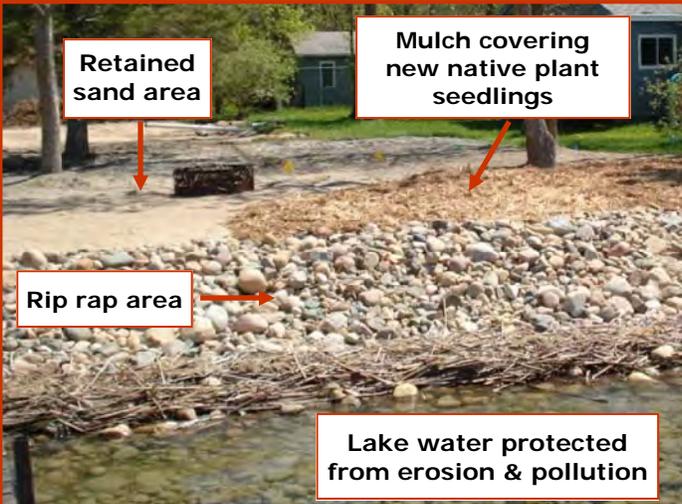
They approached the Clearwater SWCD to see what could be done to solve the problem. SWCD staff developed a plan to prevent further erosion while preserving desired sand and lawn areas.

Planting a deep-rooted native plant border, or buffer, upland from rip rap holds the soil in place and filters out harmful pollution.

The final project at the Roos' site included rip rap protection and an adjacent upland buffer. The native plants will stabilize the shoreline and filter contaminated runoff, reducing the amount of phosphorus and other pollutants entering the lake. The rip rap was installed in November of 2011 and native perennials were installed in May of 2012.

Over the coming years, the Roos will enjoy blooming flowers, hearty grasses and a stabilized bank that will protect their property and investment. By preserving their shoreline they are also doing their part to help protect the water quality of Pine Lake for us all!

By Kathy Rasch, Clearwater SWCD



Initial stage of protection: stabilized lakeshore after project installation. Coming years will show plant growth and color.

In situations like this taking action to stabilize lakeshore protects water quality for everyone's fishing, swimming and outdoor enjoyment. Eroding soil diminishes water clarity and typically carries contaminants directly into the lake.

Effective ways to stabilize vulnerable shoreline include installing biodegradable coir logs or rock rip rap.

Conservation at Work: Landowners interested in conservation efforts such as the lakeshore protection project described above may be eligible for **up to 75% cost sharing** through Clearwater SWCD programs. Call our office for more information!

Coming Soon: SWCD Elections!

This November Clearwater County voters head to the polls to elect, among other positions, supervisors for the Clearwater Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD). Positions on this year's ballot will include those representing Nomination Districts 1, 2 and 5.

Nomination District 1 includes Falk, Itasca, North LaPrairie, Central LaPrairie, South LaPrairie, Long Lost Lake, Minerva, Nora and Rice Townships; and the portion of Itasca State Park which is in Clearwater County. Nomination District 2 includes the townships of Bear Creek, Copley (excluding the City of Bagley), Moose Creek and

Shevlin. Nomination District 5 includes Eddy, Hangaard, Holst, Pine Lake and Winsor Townships. Candidates are elected county-wide, but must reside in the nomination district up for election.

Those who serve on the Clearwater SWCD board play an important and rewarding role in public service. Supervisors address a wide variety of resource management issues aimed at protecting and improving water quality, managing wetlands and preventing soil erosion. District projects include the state cost share program, Clean Water Fund grants, the Comprehensive Local Water Management Plan, lake monitoring and tree sales.

SWCD employees work with landowners and other units of government in rural, town and lakeshore settings to provide financial and technical assistance for these conservation efforts.

SWCDs are local units of government, and supervisors are elected to four year terms. Terms are staggered so approximately half the board is up for election every two years. The board meets monthly for business meetings and members also attend various conferences throughout the year.

Learn more about SWCD elections and the work of the SWCD by visiting our website at www.clearwaterswcd.org



you want to have an adequate amount of moisture before the ground freezes up in late fall, especially with coniferous trees. My Minnesota Woods website (www.myminnesotawoods.umn.edu) has additional information on seasonal watering of trees and shrubs: <http://z.umn.edu/98m>.

Fall and winter usually bring increased deer and rabbit browse on young trees and shrubs. You can minimize damage from rabbits with screens on the trunk and taller fencing to prevent deer browse. Another option is to apply deer/rabbit repellent. These repellents may last up to 4-6 months, depending on the product. Plantskydd brand repellent can be purchased from

the Clearwater SWCD.

Sun scald is another winter threat to sensitive trees. It can be prevented by wrapping the trunk with a commercial tree wrap, plastic tree guards or any other light-colored material. Put the wrap on in the fall and remove it in the spring after the last frost. Wraps should be used primarily on new deciduous trees.

Pruning can also be done this time of year on many trees. It is safe to prune oaks and elms from late fall until next spring. During the dormant season serious disease problems are less problematic. Hold off on apple trees until the best window for preventing disease spread, which is late winter (late-February to

early-March).

Another helpful publication is the University of Minnesota article "Pruning Trees and Shrubs" located on the University of Minnesota Extension website at: (www.extension.umn.edu/distribution/horticulture/DG0628.html) or by calling most University of Minnesota Extension Offices. This publication is a good 'how to' guide for pruning trees.

Article adapted by Kathy Rasch, District Manager, Clearwater SWCD, from an article by Nathan Winter, University of Minnesota Extension Service



Fall care, especially during dry years, plays a key role in the long term survival of trees.

Conservation at Work: Watering trees before winter makes sense when you consider that "a mature tree can lose up to 238 gallons of water per day under warm, sunny conditions" —and we sure had a lot of those days in 2012!

(Info according to Vrecenak in <http://www.myminnesotawoods.umn.edu/2008/04/seasonal-care-of-trees-shrubs-watering/>)

Improve Grazing with Cover Crops

The drought of this last growing season has left many cattle producers in the region in a tough spot. Feed prices are high and production is low. One way producers in the region are coping with shortages of feed is through the use of cover crops. Cover crops are grown either before or after cash crop harvest.

In this part of Minnesota, cover crops are an excellent fit after cool season cash crops or early harvest crops. The use of diverse cover crops can not only help reduce feed costs by providing additional forage, but cover crops also allow more rest time for pastures and range.

However, when grazing cover crops, only about 50% of the available plant material should be grazed; in other words 50% for your livestock and 50% for your soil. This is critical if you wish to see the additional benefits cover crops provide like: **increased organic matter and water availability, soil compaction reduction, improved soil fertility, reduced weed pressures, and improved crop yields.**

The benefits of cover crops are realized because of the biology of the soil (bacteria, fungi, nematodes, worms, etc.). Cover crops provide

cover for the soil surface, provide a living root in the soil longer than just a cash crop and add diversity to the soil system.

The integration of crop systems and livestock through grazing cover crops is the pinnacle of soil health, where soil health equals producer wealth.

For more information regarding cover crops, including cover crop mixes and grazing, please contact your local Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) office. Cost share assistance may be available.

Written by Heather Dose, Area Resource Soil Scientist, Natural Resource Conservation Service



A cover crop mix of 5 species planted Aug. 5, 2012, to be grazed later this fall. Photo taken on Sep. 24.



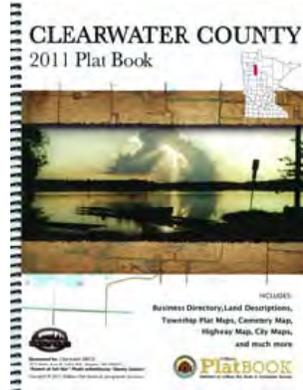
The USDA is an equal opportunity provider and employer.

Contact the Bagley NRCS Office at 218-694-6584



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It makes a perfect gift for the person who has (almost) everything.

Clearwater SWCD carries the newest full color plat book edition available, published in 2011. Stop by our office today to purchase a book for only \$28.00.



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Our mission is simple - to promote the wise use and improvement of our county resources, in order that future generations will inherit an economically viable county that has made wise choices in resource management.

Now is the time of year to protect your trees and shrubs from winter damage!

- Use screens around trunks to protect from rodents
- Wrap young trunks in light-colored material to prevent sunscald
- Spray generously with a repellent such as *Plantskydd** to discourage deer browse
- Use fences to exclude deer from new tree plantings
- Mulch trees with straw or woodchips to protect sensitive roots from extreme cold
- Seek additional tips at:
www.extension.umn.edu/distribution/horticulture/DG1411.html

* Remember Clearwater SWCD sells *Plantskydd* in 1 liter spray bottles and 1 or 2.2 lb boxes!



Cost Share Corner

Want to become a better steward of your property, but worried you can't afford the cost?

Clearwater SWCD offers cost share opportunities for landowners who agree to implement specific practices that include: **windbreaks, filterstrips, grassed waterways, streambank and shoreline protection, feedlot waste-**

water control, unused well-sealing and numerous other practices.

We know that anywhere from a few hundred to a few thousand dollars can make all the difference between having a good conservation idea and getting an effective, completed project on the ground.

With 50-75% of costs reimbursable through a cost share contract, we can

help you make your conservation plans a reality.

To apply, call the Clearwater SWCD office. Let us know about your area of concern and we'll let you know how we might be able to help.

It's always a great time to protect our soil and water—call us today!

Conservation at Work: Since January 2011, Clearwater SWCD has brought over **\$23,000** directly into our community through cost share contracts with local farmers, lakeshore owners, townships, non-profits and others.